

2021

Understanding The Lived Experiences, Self Efficacy, And Engagement Of A Group Of Legacy Students At A More Selective University

Grace Hindman Fend

William & Mary - School of Education, gracehend@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wm.edu/etd>



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Fend, Grace Hindman, "Understanding The Lived Experiences, Self Efficacy, And Engagement Of A Group Of Legacy Students At A More Selective University" (2021). *Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects*. William & Mary. Paper 1616444505.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.25774/w4-ewac-9w42>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses, Dissertations, & Master Projects at W&M ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects by an authorized administrator of W&M ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@wm.edu.

UNDERSTANDING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES, SELF EFFICACY, AND ENGAGEMENT
OF A GROUP OF LEGACY STUDENTS
AT A MORE SELECTIVE UNIVERSITY

A Dissertation
Presented to the
Faculty of the School of Education
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

By
Grace Hindman Fend
January 2021

UNDERSTANDING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES, SELF EFFICACY, AND ENGAGEMENT
OF A GROUP OF LEGACY STUDENTS
AT A MORE SELECTIVE UNIVERSITY

By

Grace Hindman Fend

Approved December 1, 2020 by

Pamela Eddy, Ph.D.
Chairperson of Doctoral Committee

Virginia Ambler, Ph.D.

Judith Harris, Ph.D.

Dedication

To my father, who always knew I could do this. To my son, whom I hope feels empowered to attend whatever institution makes him come alive.

Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful for the support and encouragement I have received from so many. I am especially thankful to my dissertation committee who stood with me as I plodded along in this process. My chair, Dr. Pamela Eddy was a constant source of encouragement, guidance, and direction. From the time that I first discussed my topic with her, she has encouraged me, inspired me, and pushed me to think in new and challenging ways. I am deeply thankful for her never-ending optimism; her continual reminders of the value of my work; and for the time invested in editing, revising, and discussing this research. Dr. Judi Harris gave me the tools and skills to undertake this research and inspires me to perfect my writing and my analysis. And a thanks to Dr. Virginia Ambler who not only pushed me to take my first course in the doctoral program (with her), but also gave me my first opportunity to study legacy students. I am grateful that you saw this in me.

I am also thankful for my fellow higher education graduate students who have been on this journey with me. In particular, to Alana Davis, who has been my greatest support and friend: if it were possible to write a dissertation together, I know we would have knocked it out of the park. Thank you for serving as my peer reviewer in this study and helping to clarify my thinking. But most of all, thank you for all the ways you have supported me both academically and professionally. I am so grateful for your friendship. I look forward to the ways we will continue to work together as graduates of this program.

To the students of State University—thank you for sharing your experiences and journeys with me. The student participants' experiences and reflections provided a window into the legacy student experience at an elite institution. Your stories were a joy to hear and I am immensely grateful for the time and effort each of you contributed to further this research.

Most of all, I want to express my deepest thanks to my family. Without their love and support this day would not have come. Thanks first to my wonderful parents, David and Teri Hindman. Your belief in me, your wisdom, and the abundance of love you share in your family are the greatest gifts a child can receive. Thank you, Dad, for always knowing before I do what I am capable of. Thank you for introducing me to William and Mary, for always reading my work and highlighting my run-on sentences, and for telling me from the beginning that I would earn my PhD. Mama, thanks for opening up your home to me so that I could pursue this degree, for listening as I thought through the challenges of this research, and for helping me stay sane with girls' days and nights, and many homecooked meals.

To my son Addison who had no idea that any of this was going on, but somehow made it easier for me to finish, all of this I have done for you. I hope that you find joy in lifelong learning, and always know that there is a college that is perfect for you, regardless of where your dad or I went. And to my husband Marc I am forever grateful. When we first met I was just beginning this journey and you have made many sacrifices to make sure I reached the end. Thank you for your love, patience, and encouragement. I'm grateful that I get to share this life with you.

Table of Contents

Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	vi
List of Tables.....	viii
List of Figures.....	ix
Abstract.....	x
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	2
Problem Statement.....	8
Literature Review Summary.....	10
Methods Summary.....	11
Significance of Study.....	12
Definition of Terms.....	13
Summary.....	14
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	15
Legacy Students in Higher Education.....	16
Persistence and Engagement.....	26
Self-Efficacy Theory.....	33
Conceptual Framework.....	30
Summary.....	43
CHAPTER 3: METHDOLOGY.....	45
Research Approach.....	46
Research Paradigm.....	48
Participant Selection and Research Context.....	49
Data Generation and Collection.....	51
Data Analysis.....	56
Quality Criteria.....	58
Delimitations, Limitations, Assumptions.....	65
Summary.....	67
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS.....	68
Site Description.....	69
Participant Descriptions.....	70
The Legacy Experience: Admission.....	77
The Legacy Experience: Impacts on Self-Efficacy and Engagement.....	96
Self-Efficacy.....	111
Engagement across Campus.....	120
Family Bonds.....	138
Summary.....	143
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS ..	145
Summary of Findings.....	145
Discussion.....	151
Implications for Practice.....	168
Recommendations for Future Research.....	173

Conclusions.....	175
References.....	178
Appendix A: Researcher as Instrument	195
Appendix B: Potential Participant Email Solicitation.	202
Appendix C: Participant Indication of Interest Form	203
Appendix D: Email Response to Interested Participants	208
Appendix E: Guiding Interview Questions.....	209
Appendix F: Crosswalk Between Individual Interview Questions and Literature	211
Appendix G: Online Questionnaire	214
Appendix H: Consent Form for Student Participants	228
Appendix I: National Survey of College Student Engagement <i>The College Student Report</i> Item Usage Agreement.....	231
Appendix J: Peer Reviewer Confidentiality Agreement.....	233
Vita.....	234

List of Tables

Table 1. Participant Demographic Information.....	71
--	----

List of Figures

Figure 1. Bean and Eaton's (2002) Psychological Model of College Student Retention.....42

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the perceptions of a group of legacy students regarding their experiences at a public, more selective institution. Selective institutions have a long history of providing preferential admission review of legacy students. Legacy students are often admitted to selective institutions with lower standardized test scores and lower high school academic achievement than their peers. However, little research exists on how legacy students experience college, in particular their levels of self-efficacy and engagement. My study employed a phenomenological research approach, using a theoretical framework of Bean and Eaton's (2002) psychological model of college student retention. Data were generated with 16 participants at a more selective, public institution, on their perceptions of their legacy status, self-efficacy, and engagement, and the relationships among these three factors on their college experience. All participants expressed ways in which their legacy status had impacted their collegiate experience. I found that these students felt their legacy status most strongly during admission to the institution, but also when engaging with their family, other legacies, or at legacy-specific events hosted by the institution. While participants did not perceive their legacy status as a large part of their overall college experience, it did play a contributing role in their self-efficacy and engagement. Their experiences at the institution and their own experiences as legacies impacted their perceptions of how they intended to engage with their own children and the institution as alumni. Contrary to prior research on legacy students that highlights the deficits of legacy students in college settings, this research found that this group of students did not question their ability to be successful at their selective university.

Keywords: legacy student, self-efficacy, engagement, persistence

UNDERSTANDING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES, SELF EFFICACY, AND ENGAGEMENT
OF A GROUP OF LEGACY STUDENTS
AT A MORE SELECTIVE UNIVERSITY

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Legacy students, who are collegiate students who attend the same institution as a sibling, or one or both of his or her parents, have continued to receive admission preference over the past century in spite of pressure to end other preferential admission policies such as affirmative action. This preference not only contributes to the strength of alumni connections, but also boosts yield for institutions, as legacy students are more likely to attend when offered admission (Bowen et al., 2005). Yet, preferential treatment in the admission process due to family connections is under scrutiny.

On March 12, 2019, national headlines disclosed a criminal conspiracy to influence undergraduate admission decisions at a number of highly selective colleges and universities. Federal prosecutors alleged that upwards of 30 parents paid more than \$25 million between 2011 and 2018 to an organization that assisted in either cheating or bribing to obtain admission for their children at elite universities (Medina et al., 2019). The outcome of this scandal resulted in rescinding admission decisions, firing athletics officials, and even expelling a student from one institution. Additionally, the national conversation that ensued focused on the admissions cycle and the ways in which preference is granted to applicants, due to race, ethnicity, athletic prowess, financial gifts, or family connections to the institution. According to two surveys conducted by the Higher Education Analytics Center at the National Opinion Research Center and the Associated Press following the scandal, 38% of respondents said they believe the college admissions process is *fair*, 36% said it is *unfair*, and 25% said it is *neither fair nor unfair*

(Davoren, 2019). These figures highlight concern from the public about the equity of college admission.

Admission standards, diversity, and persistence are of significant concern to higher education leaders as they seek to enroll not only a student body that reflects the changing demographics of the world, but also one that will persist to graduation and meet the needs of employers. Challenges for admission offices to yield enough students are also prevalent, as recent lower high school graduation numbers mean a decrease in traditionally aged students available for admission recruitment (Hechinger Report, 2018).

One study indicated that in the United States 50% of legacy applicants are from the top quartile of the income distribution and just 6.7% of legacy applicants are members of underrepresented minority groups (Bowen et al., 2005). For example, in the class of 2022 at Harvard University, a quarter of all White admitted students were also legacies (Koppelman, 2020). The lack of diversity that legacy admission preference generates has raised questions of whether legacy applicants are academically on par with their peers (Hoover, 2017; Jaschik, 2017, 2018a, 2018b). Only 13% of individuals believe that legacy status should be given consideration during the admission process (Davoren, 2019). Legacy students are also more likely to enter institutions with lower standardized test scores and high school academic achievement than their peers (Espenshade et al., 2004; Martin & Spenner, 2009; Massey & Mooney, 2007). The admission pattern of legacy students, who are more likely to be White and less academically prepared than their peers, raises questions about competitive universities' commitment to advancing equity and diversity.

Particularly as admission preference has become more widely discussed and debated due to legal challenges or illegal activity, it is possible that legacy students are thinking more

critically and are more aware of their own admission preference and the negative perceptions that others may hold of them (Golden & Burke, 2019; Hartocollis, 2018; Pinsker, 2019). Stereotype threat is defined as the “risk of confirming, as self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one’s group” (Steele & Aronson, 1995, p. 797), which may contribute to limited academic success and involvement during college (Massey & Mooney, 2007; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Legacy students may be susceptible to stereotype threat because of their potential admission with lower high school GPAs and standardized test scores than their peers. Additionally, the open discussion of the admission preference legacy students are perceived as receiving is heightened given the charges of parental bribery in recent admission scandals (Bruenig, 2019; Davoren, 2019; Golden & Burke, 2019; Medina et al., 2019).

Understanding that they may have been admitted to their institutions due to familial connections rather than their academic merit, legacy students may believe they are less prepared than their peers to succeed academically (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Since family income is an important factor for student success, legacy students, often coming from higher income backgrounds, may feel less inclined to engage or devote attention to their academics because of the safety net they perceive through family support (Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, 2016).

Since its conception, stereotype threat has been used to illuminate performance gaps between marginalized and non-marginalized groups, with marginalized groups facing the threat of confirming a negative stereotype about their group’s ability or competence (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Research on stereotype threat has focused on achievement of underrepresented groups, primarily defined by race and ethnicity or gender (Ambady et al., 2001; Spencer et al., 1999; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Stone, 2002). There is a long history of prejudice, discrimination, and

exclusion against members of these marginalized groups and the extent of that discrimination extends beyond the classroom and academic achievement. In looking at stereotype threat, I do not intend to equate the experiences of legacy students, a historically privileged group, with those who have faced a great deal of prejudice and discrimination. Rather, I have chosen to look at stereotype threat because of its prior use to look at academic achievement of legacy students (Massey & Mooney, 2007).

Massey and Mooney (2007) looked at the results of what they consider three affirmative action programs on academic performance. For the purposes of their study they identified affirmative action as policies that provided an admission benefit to students of minority races, students who were recruited to play athletics for the institution, and legacies, or students who were attending the same institution as a parent or sibling. Understanding that “affirmative action” is most often used to describe the legal requirement to include historically excluded populations in college selection pools, the authors used the term to describe all three populations in their study to highlight the fact that minority students are not the only group to receive beneficial consideration during the college admission process. They found that when legacy students had lower average admission scores than their peers, lower grades were earned when in college, and there was an increase in the likelihood that they would decide to leave before graduation; these findings align with classification of legacy students as susceptible to stereotype threat. Massey and Mooney (2007) also found that these results of lower performance in college were exacerbated at institutions where there is a stronger commitment to legacy admission preference. However, for schools where there was a strong commitment to minority admission preference, minority students were actually more likely to persist. This finding suggests that institutions who are committed to preferential admission policies may also provide additional support systems to

ensure success for those students who may be admitted with lower high school achievement than their peers. These differences in student outcomes highlight the need for institutions to better understand legacy students so that they can provide support more robust to this group.

Because of the potential for admission preference, legacy students may find themselves confronted with a negative stereotype similar to those of marginalized groups. Namely, legacy students may question whether they were admitted to an institution because of their belonging to a particular group or because they deserved to attend, and may face negative reactions from their peers or faculty about why they chose to attend, their attachment to the institution, or their academic preparation. This level of self-doubt about being admitted based on their merits versus family connections may lead to lower levels of self-efficacy (Bean & Eaton, 2002; Martin & Spenner, 2009). Self-efficacy is defined as an individual's perception of their abilities to perform tasks or deal with certain situations (Bandura, 1986). For college students this can range from their perceptions of their abilities in the classroom to their abilities to make meaningful relationships and have an engaging social life.

Students' beliefs regarding their abilities to perform well academically, the support of family, peers and institutional faculty and staff, and their prior preparation for success shape how students experience college. Bean and Eaton (2000, 2002) created a psychological model of college student retention based on the understanding that students enter institutions with specific personal characteristics: self-efficacy, normative beliefs, and past experiences. Their model posits that interactions and assessments that students face on campus are circular and self-fulfilling. Students' entry characteristics and institutional loyalty influence self-efficacy and engagement, with positive self-efficacy leading to improved grades. These improved grades can affirm a student's integration into the campus community, potentially leading to greater academic

success and engagement in other areas of campus. Negative experiences and self-efficacy, greatly impacted by stereotype threat, can lead to disassociation for students and a lack of integration that can prove detrimental to the persistence of these students.

Research has shown that many legacy students not only enter institutions with lower high school achievement and standardized test performance than their peers, but they also have less human capital than their peers (Espenshade et al., 2004; Martin & Spenner, 2009; Massey & Mooney, 2007). Human capital, as defined by Martin and Spenner (2009), is “the knowledge, skills, health and values that people possess” (p. 626). For college students, academic and intellectual skills, self-esteem, and academic effort contribute to their human capital. Although legacy students often have greater advantages than their peers in terms of opportunity, household income, and access to cultural activities, studies have found that legacy students report lower academic effort than their peers, have less confidence, possess less interest in their student identity, and are more likely to leave the institution (Martin & Spenner, 2009; Massey & Mooney, 2007). However, there is evidence that after their first college year, legacies start to show similar academic achievement to their peers who also have parents with college degrees. This finding could indicate that as students progress through their collegiate education, with positive engagement experiences leading to a greater sense of connection with the campus community and collegiate experience, they are able to overcome their human capital deficits, placing greater emphasis on their academic efforts, and thus are more likely to persist to graduation. This contrasts with other students who may struggle throughout college to overcome the stereotypes associated with their identification. For those who have outward presentations of their unique population affiliation (race, gender, active participation in religious or athletic organizations), their identity is more easily identifiable by others which may lead to an increase

in awareness of the negative stereotype others hold about them. Because of this there may be a higher likelihood that the stereotypes associated with their identities will be more prevalent throughout their collegiate experience. For example, women (who are often easily identifiable) are assumed to not excel in mathematics, and as they progress in science, technology, engineering, and math (commonly referred to as STEM) might continue to find math challenging as they face the stereotype of their gender and mathematics ability (Steele, 2011). Because women cannot easily hide or separate from their gender identity, their stereotype follows them throughout their collegiate experience.

It is possible, however, that legacies may be more likely to overcome the negative stereotypes associated with their status, as their standing as a legacy student is an internal identification and may become less a part of their identity as they progress through college. Students develop throughout their college years and rely less on external affirmation of their choices to more internal forms of self-authorship and identity construction (Astin, 1993; Kuh, 2002). Unless a legacy student discloses their status, there is no particular outward characteristic to disclose this identity. As legacy status is strongly associated with admission, legacy students may identify less with their status as they move further from the admission process and integrate more fully into the institution.

Problem Statement

Integration into the campus community, both through engagement in academic pursuits as well as through engagement outside the classroom, is essential to student development and persistence to graduation. Engagement leads to greater integration into the campus community and thus commitment and drive to persist (Astin, 1984, 1993; Bean & Eaton, 2000; Braxton et al., 1995; Horn & Nunez, 2000; Tinto, 1975). Since positive self-efficacy leads to greater

integration and thus persistence and development at an institution (Bean & Eaton, 2002), it is necessary to understand the relationship between legacy student self-efficacy and engagement so that institutions can support legacy students, encouraging integration and persistence. Lower levels of academic preparation and lack of persistence of legacy students (Massey & Mooney, 2007) points to the vulnerability of this group of students despite their historically privileged status.

The legacy preference at colleges and universities has been the focus of past research (e.g., Espenshade et al., 2004; Golden, 2006; Hurwitz, 2011; Martin & Spenner, 2009; Massey & Mooney, 2007). However, much of this previous work has concentrated primarily on the admissions benefit of having these students in entering classes, but has failed to address the legacy student experience, their engagement on campus or their self-efficacy during their collegiate years. Gaps exist in the research surrounding legacy students, with the primary focus of other studies centered on quantifying the admission benefits legacy students receive. As institutions seek to serve all students and ensure their persistence, it is necessary to understand not only the preference that legacy students receive, but also how they engage with their institution and how their self-efficacy and engagement shapes their collegiate experience. In considering the experiences of selected legacy students, their self-efficacy and their engagement, this study provides the opportunity to further understand how some legacy students experience and understand stereotype threat and uncover in greater detail how the participants make sense of their legacy privilege and the ways it affects their experiences.

Due to these gaps in relevant literature, this study explored the experiences, self-efficacy beliefs, and perceptions of engagement (Astin, 1984, 1993; Bean & Eaton, 2002) of a group of

traditionally aged undergraduate legacy students at a more selective public university. The following were the specific research questions addressed in this study:

1. How do selected legacy students describe their college experience?
2. How do selected legacy students perceive and describe their self-efficacy, including changes (if any) to it?
3. How do selected legacy students perceive and describe their engagement, both in and outside the classroom, and changes (if any) to it?

Literature Review Summary

The literature review in Chapter 2 highlights the history of legacy preference in America, particularly its beginning as a mechanism to prevent certain populations of students, especially Jews, from enrolling at prestigious universities in the 1920s (Karabel, 2005). Next, it reviews the admission boost that legacy students often receive today, a preference that varies from institution to institution. This literature highlights an emerging theme that legacy students, even those with lower SAT scores than their peers, are more likely to be admitted (Avery et al., 2003; Bowen et al., 2005; Espenshade et al., 2004; Hurwitz, 2011; Martin & Spenner, 2009; Massey & Mooney, 2007). The review also explores research showing that while legacy students often come from privileged backgrounds, they are also likely to have lower academic performance than their peers for a variety of reasons including less interest, lower self-esteem, and self-reporting less time spent on academics (Martin & Spenner, 2009; Massey & Mooney, 2007).

Literature on self-efficacy and engagement are also reviewed. Engagement, defined as “the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience” (Astin, 1984, p. 297), is considered of utmost importance to student persistence and ultimate graduation from an institution (Astin, 1984; Tinto, 1975). Similarly, self-efficacy,

defined as an individual's perception of their abilities to perform tasks, is also critical to a student's ability to engage and persist to graduation (Bandura, 1986).

Finally, a conceptual framework is presented that utilizes Bean and Eaton's (2002) Psychological Model of College Student Retention, in which self-efficacy is defined using Bandura's (1986) self-efficacy theory, and engagement is defined using Astin's (1984) Student Involvement Theory. Bean and Eaton's (2002) model supports the understanding that persistence is impacted by a student's psychological decisions related to institutional loyalty, self-efficacy, engagement, and the characteristics that each individual student brings with them to campus. This conceptual framework, in looking at the relationships between various factors that relate to legacy students, guided the methods and interpretation of data generated.

Methods Summary

This study used a phenomenological approach to understand the lived experiences of a group of legacy students, and how those legacy students perceive their status, self-efficacy, and engagement to influence their college experience. Since much of the prior research has focused on more selective, private institutions, to contribute to the literature, this study was conducted at a more selective, public university. A total of 15 participants engaged in two individual interviews (initial and final) each and completed an online survey. The survey included both the College Self-Efficacy Inventory (Solberg et al., 1993), and questions from the *The 2018 College Student Report* (National Survey of Student Engagement [NSSE], 2018). One participant engaged in only the initial interview and completed the same online survey as other participants. Interviews were transcribed and constant comparison analysis was used to determine themes contributing to the study findings. Incentives were provided to students who participated in all phases of data generation. Additionally, analysis of available institutional documentation related

to legacy students occurred to provide information about how the institution marketed to legacy students and to build a context to understand the descriptions of institutional events by participants during their interviews. All appropriate steps were taken to ensure the study was conducted in an ethical manner.

Significance of the Study

This study attempted to address the gap in research about legacy student success, self-efficacy, and engagement after admission to an institution. As the national narrative about privilege in college admission shifts, and institutions seek to promote access and diversity among their student body, while also ensuring student persistence and ultimately graduation (U.S. Department of Education, 2016), it is important to examine the legacy student experience and the relationship between legacy status, self-efficacy, and engagement. Understanding how legacy students perceive their legacy status, self-efficacy and engagement and the role of each in their collegiate experience can provide insight regarding their persistence to graduation.

Massey and Mooney's (2007) work highlighted that even those with privilege are susceptible to stereotype threat and its negative impacts. This study sought to explore the perceptions of selected legacy students who understand that they may have received an admission preference based on their familial connections. Because faculty and student peers may stigmatize students whom they perceive receive special treatment or who have some aspect of privilege (Tucker et al., 2016), it is important to understand better the legacy student experience.

Findings from this study can help faculty and student life administrators gain a greater understanding of how to support students both in and outside of the classroom who are or may perceive themselves to be less prepared for success than their peers, and students may recognize ways to overcome stereotype threat and more fully engage in their collegiate experience. Finally,

this study also provided the opportunity for the student participants to think critically about the factors that influence their collegiate experience and to reflect on how their legacy status influenced their college experience.

Definitions of Terms

The three primary constructs in this study are self-efficacy, student engagement, and stereotype threat. The following definitions are also central to understanding what was measured and interpreted in this study.

Legacy Student. For this study, *legacy student* is defined as a collegiate student who attends the same institution as a sibling, or one or both of his or her parents.

More Selective University. A *more selective university* is defined as an institution where 75% of admitted students achieved a score of greater than 21 on the ACT (SAT scores are converted to ACT scores for this measure). Institutions that are considered more selective make up the 80th to 100th percentile of selectivity among all 4-year institutions (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2018).

Self-efficacy. *Self-efficacy* is defined as an individual's perception of their abilities to perform tasks or deal with certain situations (Bandura, 1986).

Stereotype Threat. For this study, *stereotype threat* is defined as the "risk of confirming, as self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one's group" (Steele & Aronson, 1995, p. 797).

Student Engagement. For this study, *student engagement* is defined as the extent to which students engage (contributing both time and energy) in empirically confirmed best educational practices. Utilizing previous research on college student development that continues to show that students who are actively engaged both inside and outside the classroom are most successful in learning and development, the *College Student Report* (2018) measures the

following four engagement themes: (a) level of academic challenge, (b) learning with peers, (c) experiences with faculty, and (d) campus environment.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the perceptions of a group of legacy students regarding their experiences at a public, more selective institution. Chapter 2 provides a literature review of the history of legacy preference, legacy student achievement, college choice, persistence, engagement, and self-efficacy. Chapter 3 reviews the study design, research context, and the process for data generation and analysis. Chapter 4 includes an analysis of data generated, and Chapter 5 provides an interpretation of the findings, implications for practice, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the perceptions of a group of legacy students regarding their experiences at a public, more selective institution. Other research on legacy preference at colleges and universities focused primarily on the admissions benefit legacies receive; however, little research on the self-efficacy and engagement of students after they matriculate at their legacy institution exists (Espenshade et al., 2004; Golden, 2006; Hurwitz, 2011; Martin & Spenner, 2009; Massey & Mooney, 2007). As self-efficacy impacts engagement and knowing that engagement is critical for persistence, it is essential to understand the experiences and perceptions of legacy students after they are admitted. In increasing this understanding, institutions will be better situated to support this student population and thus support their persistence to graduation.

This literature review explores topics that are central to this study's research questions. First, I review the history of legacy students in the United States. Next, the current research regarding admissions preference is presented, which specifically highlights the gap in the study of legacy student success. Because student engagement has been shown to be vital to student development (Astin, 1993; Kuh, 2002; Pace, 1980; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005), research on engagement theory is summarized. Finally, this chapter summarizes how the intersection of the literature reviewed helps to understand the experiences of legacy students. I also present a conceptual model for examining legacy student self-efficacy and engagement.

Legacy Students in Higher Education

Research on legacy students in higher education has focused primarily on the history of legacy preference and the admissions benefit that legacy students receive. I first provide an overview of the historical context of legacy preference from its inception in the early 20th century to the present. I then discuss the research on legacy admission preference and their academic performance. Finally, I review the literature on college choice and privilege.

Historical Context

Legacy preference in the college admission process emerged in the early 1900s. As prestigious colleges and universities changed admission standards to serve a larger portion of society, institutions saw a drastic increase in applications from highly educated Jewish immigrants (Karabel, 2005). To offset what was seen as an unfavorable influx of Jewish immigrant applications during a rise in anti-Semitism on college campuses, institutions responded with what became known as the legacy preference, an admission edge given to children of alumni (Schmidt, 2010). Dartmouth College, one of the first universities to respond to the increase in Jewish applications and enrollment, announced in an official statement that they encouraged the admission of “all properly qualified sons of Dartmouth alumni” (Levine, 1988, p. 142). Other colleges soon followed Dartmouth, with Princeton claiming in 1922 that they had solved their “Jewish problem” (Karabel, 2005, p. 76). In providing this legacy preference, institutions were able to populate incoming classes with students from families that were perceived as prestigious and exclude those students who were unwanted based on religion and immigration background. This move, in conjunction with other actions intended to control the makeup of a student body, such as sharp increases in tuition, review of character, and asking

for submission of photographs to be considered for admission, enabled institutions to perpetuate the student norm as that of White, male, and wealthy (Schmidt, 2010).

During the Great Depression, colleges began to rely heavily on alumni donations to ensure their survival (Schmidt, 2010). To encourage contributions and continue familial ties to their institutions, universities continued to rely heavily on legacy preferences. In 1932, 30% of Yale's entering class were legacy students, up from 13% in 1920 (Karabel, 2005; Synnott, 2010). By promoting the preferred admission of the children of alumni, schools believed they could count on donations to continue from wealthy alumni, and thus ensure their future existence, particularly as enrollment declined during World War II. Similar challenges continue to arise today as smaller colleges struggle to remain open due to financial hardship and dwindling enrollment (Busta, 2019). When these institutions are able to remain open, it is often due to incredible financial support generated through alumni (Selingo, 2015).

In the aftermath of World War II, the landscape of higher education changed, particularly as the G.I. Bill of Rights of 1944 expanded access to institutions across the country. While institutions were flooded with applications from soldiers returned from the war, selective institutions became more exclusive by raising admission standards and focusing on prestige rather than access. The 1960s saw various institutions such as Harvard and Princeton debate the merit of legacy preference, but in the end, these institutions decided to continue their admission policies under pressure from alumni (Schmidt, 2010).

The 1970s witnessed an increase in the diversity of applicants due to changing social norms and the breakdown of formal racial and gender exclusivity. However, legacy admissions continued to retain a stronghold in elite universities. As state budget cuts limited higher education resources, maintaining alumni financial support became crucial to institutions.

Throughout the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s legacy populations continued to make up a sizeable portion of college enrollments, as evidenced by self-reported data among the top 75 universities in the *U.S. News & World Report* (2007) in which all but one of these institutions noted legacy preferences. Similarly, among the top 100 ranked liberal arts colleges, only one explicitly stated that it did not have legacy preferences, whereas 60 reported favoring legacies (Shadowen et al., 2009). Today legacy admission preferences continue at many institutions under the assumption that due to familial ties, families will continue to donate, and that students will enroll and remain committed to the institution and the traditions familiar to them through their families (Thomas & Shepard, 2003). What remains unknown is how legacy students fare once admitted to the university or college.

Legacy Admission Preference

Colleges and universities are under increasing pressure to meet enrollment targets as declining high school graduation rates create more competition in admission (Seltzer, 2016). Yet, concurrently there is also a pressure to maintain prestige, which is often displayed through admission numbers reflecting an increased number of applications that build a competitive pool and result in lower admission rates. These factors all play a role in the determination of national rankings (U.S. News & World Report, 2018). As legacy students are more likely than other applicant pools to enroll once accepted, it is beneficial to institutions to admit legacies to boost their yield rates and thus ensure continued funding and institutional survival (Bowen et al., 2005). To ensure prestige is not impacted, legacies are often admitted in much higher numbers than their peers, typically at two to five times the overall rate (Golden, 2010). This practice enables institutions to ensure high yield rates while also maintaining their prestige through lower overall admission rates.

In order to increase these yield rates, research shows that legacies are often provided with a boost to their application that enables those who are less competitive to be as competitive as other applicants in the pool (Avery et al., 2003; Bowen et al., 2005; Espenshade et al., 2004; Hurwitz, 2011; Martin & Spenner, 2009; Massey & Mooney, 2007). One study suggested that legacy students are twice as likely to be accepted at an institution as non-legacies. This increase in likelihood of acceptance is equivalent to approximately 160 SAT points (based on the 1600-point exam) added to a student's raw SAT score (Espenshade et al., 2004). Importantly, Espenshade and colleagues (2004) found that preference for legacy students is contingent upon the individual admissions officer and the institutional objectives that admissions officer are trying to meet in the creation of the entering class. Thus, the weight of legacy privilege may vary even within a single institution. Similarly, Bowen et al. (2005) found that based on SAT scores, an applicant who might otherwise have a 40% chance of admission at an institution, would have a 60% chance if they were a legacy student. Additionally, applying early decision or early action also provides an increased likelihood of acceptance for legacy students at rates of 50%–70% relative to non-legacy applicants (Avery et al., 2003).

Supporting a portrait of special privileges bestowed on legacy students, a study at one elite institution found that 44% of legacy students, making up 20.4% of the entire student body, had lower SAT scores than the institutional average (Martin & Spenner, 2009). Additionally, due to public scrutiny of government funding, the type of institution (public or private) plays a role in the advantage for legacy students; private institutions provide an advantage of about 21% points for legacy students, compared with an advantage of 5.5% points at public institutions (Bowen et al., 2005). The fact that legacy students receive a boost at all in public institutions underscores the ways in which this group of applicants is set apart from their peers. Yet existing research

neglects to study how legacy students, particularly at public institutions, engage once they are admitted.

Legacy Student Academic Performance

Academic performance for students during their first year in college is impacted by high school performance, standardized test performance, and human capital. Human capital consists of academic and intellectual skills, self-esteem, and academic effort (Martin & Spenner, 2009). Although legacy students often come from a place of more advantage and privilege than their peers in terms of opportunity, household income, and access to cultural activities, Martin and Spenner (2009) found that legacy students had lower levels of high school achievement, less academic confidence, less interest in their student identity, and less human capital than their non-legacy peers. These findings are supported by Massey and Mooney's (2007) study on stereotype threat which found that among preference groups (e.g., minorities, athletes, legacies), when a student entered the institution with lower average SAT scores than their peers, a student was more likely to leave school, have lower grades, or self-report lower academic effort than their peers. This lack of confidence and interest could be due to stereotype threat, with legacy students internalizing the negative stereotype that they perceive about themselves and thus rationalize their poor performance through lack of effort, not their legacy status (Massey & Mooney, 2007; Steele & Aronson, 1995).

Even though legacy students tend eventually to close the academic gap between themselves and other students throughout their collegiate career at an institution (Martin & Spenner, 2009), the difference in academic performance in their first year is crucial to note as it is often during the first year that students decide to leave an institution (National Student

Clearinghouse, 2014). The influence of academic performance on a legacy student's self-efficacy is important to understand, especially given the contributions of self-efficacy on persistence.

Legacy Student Experiences

Very few research studies have looked in-depth at the experiences of legacy students. Those that do exist however, found that while legacy students often initially downplay the familial connection to the institution, their experiences and decisions throughout their collegiate experience indicate their legacy status plays a significant role (Arendt, 2008; Warshaw, 2010; Warshaw et al., 2017). One study found that legacy status, coupled with the denominational tradition found at the religious institution those students attended, positively impacted student persistence and retention (Arendt, 2008). Even though students indicated that they did not feel pressure to attend the same institution as their family members, the familiarity with the college prior to enrolling, helped them to feel more comfortable as they transitioned to collegiate life (Arendt, 2008; Warshaw, 2010). Another study found that students sought to distance themselves from the family connection their legacy status granted, yet still perceived that they were following in their family's footsteps as they pursued similar majors to their parents or participated in similar organizations and extracurricular activities (Warshaw et al., 2017). These findings highlight a need for further study surrounding legacy student perceptions of their status, as well as research into their engagement and how their status and engagement affects their perceptions of their collegiate experience.

Interviews with legacy students highlight the pressure that legacies feel during the admission process to be admitted to their parent's or sibling's alma mater followed a sense of self-doubt if they are admitted, as to whether or not they would have received admission without the legacy connection (Golden, 2006). This perception reinforces the notion that legacy students

might feel a sense of marginalization on campus, despite their assumed privilege. Once on campus, legacies indicate a desire to join traditional organizations, such as fraternities, sororities, or social clubs, or focus on traditional rites of passage that make up the social life of the university. In participating in such traditions, or joining these organizations, legacy students not only self-segregate into traditionally White organizations but also are able to keep ties to the collegiate experiences and traditions of their parents and other family members (Golden, 2006; Whipple et al., 2015). However, these anecdotal findings are not based on a research study, thus further inquiry is necessary to better understand aspects of the legacy student experience.

The lack of literature focused on the legacy student experience, highlights the need for further inquiry into how this population perceives their collegiate experience. If institutions intend to serve the entirety of their student body and provide the needed resources for their success and persistence, it is necessary to look closely at legacy student perceptions, which have been largely left out of the narrative.

Privilege and College Choice

College choice is a direct indicator of student success and achievement (Perna & Thomas, 2006). However, research shows that students who come from families with low incomes are less likely to graduate from college, or even to take the necessary steps to apply to college (Fitzgerald, 2004). Similarly, students from low-income families who do attend college are more likely to enroll at a public 2-year institution than at private 4-year or public 4-year institutions (Baum & Payea, 2004). Understanding that students' educational decisions, particularly as they relate to college choice, are greatly impacted by their habitus (demographics, family background, human capital) as well as resources, it is important to examine legacy students who typically

come from a background of privilege, both in terms of financial resources and parental experience with higher education (Perna, 2006).

Perna (2006) created a model of college choice that had several layers identified that shape an individual's college choice decisions. The first layer, habitus, consists of demographic characteristic, cultural capital, and social capital. The second layer, school and community context, reflects the resources and support an individual receives that aid or restrict college choice. The third layer, higher education context, reflects the role colleges and universities play in a student's college choice in terms of marketing, location, and the way institutional characteristics align with a student's desires. The fourth layer, social, economic, and policy context, recognizes the social forces, economic conditions, and policies that play a role in the greater world and thus affect college choice.

For legacy students, their choice may be greatly impacted by all four layers of Perna's (2006) model. Since legacy students are typically from higher socio-economic backgrounds and have at least one parent who graduated from college, they have the social capital and cultural capital that will prepare and encourage them towards particular institutions (Schmidt, 2010). These students are also likely to receive more support from teachers and counselors in terms of preparation for college and assistance in the application process. Colleges and universities market directly to legacy students, encouraging them to continue the family tradition at their institution. Finally, public policy does not impede legacy preference; to date there is only one legal case against legacy preference, with the legal opinion that legacy preference could be upheld (*Rosenstock v. Board of Governors of University of North Carolina*, 1976).

Legacy students may respond to many factors not only encouraging their decision to attend college, but also perhaps to attend a particular college. With legacy students coming from

primarily White, privileged socio-economic backgrounds (Schmidt, 2010), this population is already poised to find greater success because of their familial background and the influence of their parents, schools, and institutions of higher education on their college choices (Chetty et al., 2014). However, it is necessary to dive deeper into how legacy students interact and engage with their college or university once they have made their decision to attend. With all of the resources and support available to legacy students, how are they perceiving their self-efficacy, engagement, and collegiate experience?

Parenting

For legacy students, there is a direct connection between their parent's educational experience and their own. As Perna's (2006) model indicates, a student's educational decisions are impacted by their family background. A parent, through the way they engage with their child has the potential to greatly impact their child's decisions and thus the trajectory of their educational experience. Parenting style can play an influential role in how a child perceives the connection between their educational experience and their parents and the decisions they make about their own experience. Baumrind's (1966) definitions of parenting styles—*authoritarian*, *permissive*, and *authoritative*—are widely accepted standards used to describe parenting approaches and styles, particularly as it relates to college student development.

Authoritarian parenting is identified by parents who exert control over their children's behaviors and actions (Baumrind, 1966). Parents who are authoritarian often place strict expectations on their children, are restrictive in what is allowed, and offer little support to help their child meet those expectations. Authoritarian parents are often emotionally distant and family relationships lack warmth. Children who experience authoritarian parenting styles often

report low levels of emotional well-being, greater fear of failure, and poor relationships with their parents (Love & Thomas, 2014; G. J. Smith, 2006; Wintre & Yaffe, 2000).

In contrast, permissive parents place few, if any, restrictions on their children and are not likely to set expectations. They embrace their children's impulses and desires without placing external controls on their actions (Baumrind, 1966). Children raised by permissive parents report lower self-efficacy while also exhibiting less test anxiety and fear of failure than children who experience other parenting styles (Love & Thomas, 2014; G. J. Smith, 2006). Because of the relationship between self-efficacy and engagement, this lower self-efficacy in college has the potential to lead to lower levels of engagement.

Authoritative parents balance between the authoritarian and permissive styles—setting expectations but providing freedom and trust. Children of authoritative parents are better able to develop their problem-solving and decision-making skills in a family that provides emotional and functional support (Baumrind, 1966). These children are also more likely to report greater levels of academic success, emotional adjustment, and higher self-efficacy (Love & Thomas, 2014; G. J. Smith, 2006; Turner et al., 2009; Wintre & Yaffe, 2000).

A final parenting style that has become more prevalent in dialogue in recent years is helicopter parenting. Helicopter parenting describes “overly involved and protective parents who constantly communicate with their children, intervene in their children's affairs...and remove obstacles their children encounter” (Odenwell et al., 2014, p. 408).

Although legacy students are often from more privileged backgrounds in terms of race and socio-economic status (Schmidt, 2010), the parenting style they are raised with also has the potential to impact their academic success, integration, and self-efficacy once on campus. As legacy students already have a close tie to their parents through their collegiate institution, it is

important to also understand the role their parents' parenting style may have had in their college choice, their self-efficacy on campus, the ways they choose to engage both inside and outside of the classroom, and their perceptions of themselves as legacy students.

Persistence and Engagement

Student persistence in higher education has been a focus of research for many years (Alexander & Gardner, 2009; Astin, 1984; Bean & Eaton, 2000; Braxton et al., 1995; Tinto 1975; Strauss & Volkwein, 2004). Persistence is defined as “the enrollment of individuals over time that may or may not be continuous and may or may not result in degree completion” (Tinto & Pusser, 2006, p. 1). Longitudinal research has shown that social and academic integration, personal and family aspirations, and background characteristics with which students enter an institution are strongly associated with student persistence and degree completion (Astin, 1993; Braxton et al., 1995; Horn & Nunez, 2000; Tinto, 1975). However, research has also found that specifically for legacy students, the stronger the commitment to legacy admissions by the institution, the greater the chance that a legacy student will leave that institution (Massey & Mooney, 2007). This contrasts starkly with the assumption that students should feel more connected to their institution given their familial ties. What remains unknown is how the legacy students' self-efficacy contributes to their persistence and engagement.

Tinto (1975), a seminal theorist on student persistence, first posited reasons students leave college. His research led to the development of a dropout model, which defined individual student characteristics and institutional characteristics that influence student persistence. Tinto's (1975) model suggested that family background, pre-college schooling, sex or gender, race, ability, as well as other experiences prior to enrollment had both direct and indirect impacts upon a student's performance and ultimate persistence. Since legacy students often come from

backgrounds that would indicate greater collegiate success and persistence to graduation, improving understanding of legacy engagement and self-efficacy can provide valuable information to practitioners who wish to bridge the divide between the experiences students bring to campus and their lived experiences on campus. What remains unknown is if legacy students react to stereotype threat due to their legacy status by having lower levels of self-efficacy.

A report issued in 1984 found that of three factors—assessment and feedback, high expectations, and student involvement—student involvement was the most important factor in student development and achievement in college (Schroeder, 1996). Research over the last few decades affirms this statement, that engagement, both inside and outside the classroom, correlates with student success and development, persistence, and academic achievement (Astin, 1984, 1993; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Kuh, 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Much of this research concludes that all students benefit from engagement, regardless of background. However, data highlights that students susceptible to stereotype threat, particularly minorities and low SES students, may encounter more impediments, both institutional and personal, that may lead to disengagement and lower persistence (Allen, 1985; Sirin, 2005).

In the last decade, the Association of American Colleges & Universities, outlined 11 high-impact practices that increase student retention and engagement—first-year experiences, common intellectual experiences, learning communities, writing-intensive courses, collaborative assignments and projects, undergraduate research, diversity/global learning, ePortfolios, service learning or community-based learning, internships, and capstone courses or projects (Kuh, 2008). When students devote time and effort to these presented opportunities at their institution, they positively influence their overall learning experience.

Astin's Student Involvement Theory

Research on persistence, which built on Tinto's (1975) original model, recognizes the importance of engagement and involvement of students with the campus environment. In 1984, Astin sought to propose a streamlined student development theory. His Student Involvement Theory argues that student involvement is critical to student development and persistence, a finding confirmed by later research (Kuh, 2008). This involvement encompasses both academic pursuits as well as involvement outside the classroom and was defined as "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (Astin, 1984, p. 297). Astin (1984) defined a highly involved student as one who studies regularly, participates in organizations and clubs, is present on campus, and seeks out interactions with their faculty and peers. However, some research studies concluded that legacy students are less likely to study or put in academic effort as their peers (Martin & Spenner, 2009; Massey & Mooney, 2007).

Involvement is contingent upon behavior, and not intention. Thus, a student is only considered "involved" if they behave in a way that is identified as involvement, rather than simply showing an intention to be involved (Astin, 1984, p. 297). As such, it is how a student actually behaves that is most critical to defining their involvement, not how they feel. In a longitudinal study, this involvement, particularly involvement in extracurricular activities, was shown to reduce the likelihood of dropout and increase student persistence (Astin, 1975). The following are the five basic postulates of Astin's (1984) involvement theory:

1. Involvement refers to the investment of physical and psychological energy in various objects. The objects may be highly generalized (the student experience) or highly specific (preparing for a chemistry exam).

2. Regardless of its object (group, focus of attention, decisions about where and how to spend their time), involvement occurs along a continuum; that is, different students manifest different degrees of involvement in a given object, and the same student manifests different degrees of involvement in different objects at different times.
3. Involvement has both quantitative and qualitative features. The extent of a student's involvement in academic work, for instance, can be measured quantitatively (how many hours the student spends studying) and qualitatively (whether the student reviews and comprehends reading assignments or simply stares at the textbook and daydreams).
4. The amount of student learning and personal development associated with any educational program is directly proportional to the quality of student involvement in that program.
5. The effectiveness of any educational policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase student involvement. (p. 298)

Even though Astin's (1984) theory has contributed a great deal to research on student involvement on a large scale, what remains unknown is how involvement theory relates to the sub-group of legacy students and their level of involvement during college given their family history.

The National Survey of Student Engagement

In 1998, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) was established through a grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts to assess student engagement (Kuh, 2002). Annually, NSSE surveys college students at colleges and universities in an effort to help institutions identify areas of strength and growth across campus. *The College Student Report*, NSSE's

instrument, utilizes previous research on college student development that continues to show that students who are actively engaged both inside and outside the classroom are more successful in learning and individual development. Thus, more engagement links to higher levels of persistence and student completion.

The NSSE (2018) results focus on four themes of engagement:

1. **Academic Challenge:** Challenging intellectual and creative work is central to student learning and collegiate equality. Colleges and universities promote high levels of student achievement by emphasizing the importance of academic effort and setting high expectations for student performance.
2. **Learning with Peers:** Collaborating with others in solving problems or mastering difficult material prepares students for the problems they will encounter daily during and after college. Additionally, by interacting and learning with others from diverse backgrounds, students are prepared for civic engagement in a diverse world.
3. **Experiences with Faculty:** Students see first-hand how experts think about and solve practical problems by interacting with faculty members inside and outside the classroom.
4. **Campus Environment:** Students perform better and are more satisfied at colleges that are committed to their success and cultivate positive working and social relations among different groups on campus.

By developing and offering an instrument that provides valid, reliable, rich data about undergraduate engagement, NSSE (2010) presents a framework for understanding student's experiences and provides the tools to help administrators improve student success and persistence. However, while *The College Student Report* explores demographic data and

identifies students who might receive admission preferences (e.g., minorities and college athletes), no information is provided that would allow institutions or administrators to understand the experiences of legacy students. With various studies showing both positive and negative impacts of legacy status on student retention, persistence, and engagement, as the leading instrument in the field of student development, it would be useful to include legacy status in *The College Student Report* (Arendt, 2008; Bowen et al., 2005; Marra, 2006). Thus, further research is needed to understand if this particular student population experiences college engagement differently than their peers, so that administrators may better serve them.

The NSSE is a widely respected instrument used by institutions to identify areas of strength and weakness in the experiences of college undergraduates and by prospective college students, parents, and other stakeholders to better understand the experiences of students at particular institutions. However, as with all instruments, there are critiques of its usefulness and validity, in particular critiques that raise questions about the ways in which data collected from the NSSE are interpreted and utilized.

In an age in which assessment and evaluation are hallmarks of institutions, surveys of students are the most popular and largest data sources (Porter, 2011). However, existing research calls into question whether or not institutions can rely on students to accurately self-report their habits or even to report their habits using the same benchmarks (Garry et al., 2002; Kuncel et al., 2005; Pace & Friedlander, 1982; Thompson, 1982). Even though students are more likely to recall distinctive or unique events than those occurring frequently or considered typical or mundane (Garry et al., 2002), their ability to recall even unique events fades after several weeks (Thompson, 1982). In asking students to self-report the frequency of classroom activities that are not distinctive—or asking students to summarize the total of their semester, year, or collegiate

experience—researchers run the risk of obtaining inaccurate information that vastly over or underestimates student engagement.

Other research has highlighted the challenge that every individual interprets response options differently. When responses are provided, such as with the NSSE, of *occasionally*, *often*, and *very often*, without quantifiers indicating what is meant by each category, the validity of the measure is called into question (Pace & Freidlander, 1982). When one student considers occasionally to mean several times a year, and another considers it to mean several times a month, researchers are left with data that is difficult to interpret and does not accurately reflect the frequency with which students engage in an activity.

In addition to concerns about the validity of student responses, Campbell and Cabrera (2011) questioned whether the benchmarks identified in the NSSE effectively predict relevant student outcomes. In a study conducted at a large, public, research-extensive university, Campbell and Cabrera (2011) found that only one of the benchmarks had a significant effect on cumulative GPA and that there was substantial overlap between three of the benchmarks, calling into question the ability of each individual benchmark to predict a distinct dimension of student engagement. While their study was only conducted at a single university, it affirmed similar results found in samples across multiple institutions (Carini et al., 2006; Pascarella et al., 2010). Thus, even though the NSSE is useful in terms of collecting large amounts of data on significant portions of the student body, there are shortcomings in its predictive validity.

A final critique comes in the form of a review of the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), a survey similar to NSEE that utilizes identical or similar benchmarks but with application in a community college context. A review of the CCSSE by Nora et al. (2011) acknowledges the benefits of the holistic view of student engagement that the

CCSSE provides, but the authors take issue with the lack of distinction between active and passive engagement. As Astin (1984) articulated, “student involvement refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience” (p. 518). Nora and colleagues (2011) argued that the CCSSE fails to capture the attitudinal aspects of engagement, which are critical to a student’s decisions and ultimate success in college. They propose that the CCSSE incorporate additional measures that help identify “students’ mental or psychological engagement” so that institutions can make decisions and evaluations of their effectiveness with a more holistic view of the motivations and psychological engagement of students (p. 126).

Highlighted in all critiques, is the idea that while a useful tool, the NSSE cannot be relied upon to provide the most accurate and holistic representation of student engagement. To understand fully the motivations of students, the actual extent of their engagement, or the perceived impact of various activities on their success, it is necessary to probe beyond the survey itself. With these concerns in mind, this study sought not to use data collected using the NSSE to quantify student engagement, but rather as a tool to aid data generation regarding engagement in the interview process. By discussing legacy student engagement in detail during interviewing and reviewing their answers to the survey, I was able to highlight potential discrepancies in their perceptions and ask probing questions to further understand the extent of and perceptions of their engagement and the role it plays in their collegiate experience and success.

Self-Efficacy Theory

The construct of self-efficacy is founded on Bandura’s (1977) argument that every individual has beliefs about their ability to exercise control over their own lives. Self-efficacy

theory recognizes that individuals' perception of their abilities to perform tasks or deal with certain situations influences their motivation and subsequent behavior (Bandura, 1986).

According to Bandura (1977, 1997), self-efficacy is impacted by five sources: *performance, accomplishments, vicarious learning, social persuasion, and emotional arousal*. Performance accomplishment focuses on past behaviors or experiences in performing tasks or behaviors. If a student believes they are competent, based on previous experience, they are more likely to persist in their efforts and ultimately to reach their desired outcomes. Vicarious learning occurs when an individual observes and learns from how others behave, and social persuasion is reflected in situations where others provide reinforcement for behavior, and thus an individual has higher self-efficacy for that behavior. Once a student arrives on campus, their assessment of their self-efficacy continues as they consider the institutional environment, receive feedback from the institution, and perceive the modeling of other key individuals in their lives. Finally, emotional arousal takes into consideration emotional and mental information that influences behavior such as an individual's ability to cope with stress, their mental health and physical well-being.

Prior to, and throughout their collegiate experience, students are making assessments based on these four sources of information about their ability to successfully tackle various tasks (Bandura, 1986). Students also make personal assessments based on peer references, with students considering their relative rank among classmates or making direct comparisons of their own abilities with their perceptions of the abilities of their peers (Bandura, 1977). It is important to note, because individuals are continually re-evaluating and assessing their capabilities, self-efficacy beliefs are not stable and can vary in strength as individuals evaluate new information (Bandura, 1986).

Individuals who make positive assessments of their abilities are hypothesized to put in greater effort and persist when they encounter challenges, as opposed to those who make negative assessments of their abilities and doubt their capability to succeed (Schunk, 1991). Thus, college students who believe they are capable of achieving a certain level of success are more likely to devote time and energy towards meeting their achievement goals. What remains unknown is if legacy students begin college questioning their ability to succeed, and how their initial conceptions of self-efficacy ultimately influence their achievements.

At the same time, self-efficacy is also considered independent of an individual's subjective or objective skill. For example, a student who believes himself capable of making friends with his hall mates can be said to have self-efficacy for relationship development. This self-efficacy is independent of whether the student is actually capable of making friends. However, this perceived self-efficacy may lead to increased motivation to make friends, the development of positive relationships, and thus, increased self-efficacy. Self-efficacy may also vary based on a student's attribution to effort and ability (Bandura, 1986). To increase their self-efficacy, students must experience success from skill rather than luck. Similarly, by excelling at more challenging tasks, self-efficacy will improve because of the value placed on more advanced skills.

Self-efficacy and Academic Success

Statistically significant relationships have been found between a student's self-efficacy beliefs and their academic performance (Gore, 2006; Lent et al., 1986; Multon et al., 1991). Students with positive self-efficacy perform better academically and are more likely to persist in their academic pursuits. However, if negative assessments occur, leading to negative self-efficacy, the experience can lead to disassociation for students (Bean & Eaton, 2002).

A number of studies have identified three aspects of self-efficacy that have the greatest impact on academic success: self-regulatory efficacy, academic self-efficacy, and social self-efficacy (Klassen et al., 2008; Majer, 2009; Zajacova et al., 2005; Zimmerman, 1995). Self-regulatory efficacy refers to students' belief of their capability of managing academic demands. Low self-regulatory efficacy may lead to increased academic anxiety and thus low learning motivation (Zimmerman, 1995). A study of 456 undergraduate students indicated that self-regulatory efficacy was the most predictive variable of lower procrastination tendencies (Klassen et al., 2008). These procrastination tendencies can ultimately lead to poor grades and lower academic performance, negatively impacting a student's assessment of their ability or desire to engage with their institution.

Academic self-efficacy refers to "personal judgements of one's capability or organize and execute courses of action to attain designated types of educational performance" (Zimmerman, 1995, p. 203). Majer (2009) investigated the impact of academic self-efficacy, finding a positive significant relationship between academic self-efficacy and cumulative GPAs. Other studies have found that academic self-efficacy is strongly associated with academic performance and adjustment in the first year of college (Chemers et al., 2001). Academic self-efficacy, rather than academic stress, is a more reliable predictor of academic performance (Zajacova et al., 2005). These findings reinforce the understanding that positive academic self-efficacy is critical not only to academic achievement, but also to the ability of students to adjust and integrate themselves into the campus community. When students have high levels of academic self-efficacy, they are able to overcome other forms of academic stress. Studies have shown that students from underrepresented racial populations and first-generation college students experience significantly lower academic self-efficacy than their peers (Wang & Castaneda-

Sound, 2008). Even though we know that legacy students may enter college without strong levels of academic self-efficacy (Martin & Spenner, 2009; Massey & Mooney, 2007), it is unknown how they assess their self-efficacy after they enter. Thus, is it important to understand better how their assessments of self-efficacy and how they note this contributes to their college experience.

Social self-efficacy also affects academic success (Bandura et al., 2001). Social self-efficacy refers to students' beliefs of their ability to engage in social situations and maintain relationships (Sherer & Adams, 1983; H. M. Smith & Betz, 2000). Researchers have found that positive social self-efficacy indirectly affects academic pursuits and achievement (Bandura et al., 2001; Ferrari & Parker, 1992; Patrick et al., 1997). Social self-efficacy also significantly impacts first-year transitions and persistence with positive social self-efficacy linked to greater confidence in the transition to college and higher intention to persist to graduation (Patterson & O'Brien, 1997).

Research on student athletes of color found a positive correlation between academic self-efficacy and social self-efficacy, indicating that as academic self-efficacy increases for this population, so too does their social self-efficacy (Ayiku, 2005). Students' perceptions of their abilities to make friends and connect with others socially provides an important variable in student engagement, academic success, and persistence, as well as in understanding how students make meaning of their collegiate experience. Although research exists focused on the connections between social self-efficacy and academic success and persistence for all college students and some unique student populations, legacy students have been left out of prior studies. By looking more closely at perceptions of self-efficacy of legacy students, I hope to fill this gap to further understanding of the role self-efficacy plays for this population.

Social skills also play a critical role in a student's ability to engage with their institution, and this type of engagement plays a vital role in academic achievement and persistence.

Understanding that studies have found legacy students self-report lower academic confidence (Martin & Spenner, 2009), gaining a greater understanding of the self-efficacy of this population at various stages within their collegiate experience may provide opportunities for greater support by administrators and faculty to ensure students develop stronger self-efficacy beliefs.

College Self-Efficacy Inventory

In an attempt to understand the role of self-efficacy in Hispanic student college adjustment, Solberg and colleagues (1993) developed the College Self-Efficacy Inventory (CSEI). The CSEI is the only known self-efficacy instrument that looks beyond college students' academic performance to encompass the social aspects of the collegiate experience. As such, the CSEI assesses respondents' self-efficacy for academic, social, and personal domains (Solberg et al., 1993). By encompassing all three domains, the CSEI is consistent with college student development theory, which acknowledges the important role that academic pursuits, as well as interpersonal and intrapersonal development play in student growth and persistence (Astin, 1984; Baxter Magolda, 2009; Solberg et al., 1993; Tinto, 1993). Most of the research using the CSEI or other methods to analyze self-efficacy have focused on how self-efficacy contributes to the overall academic performance of college students. What is not known is how legacy status impacts student self-efficacy and the perceived role it plays, if any, in engagement for legacy students.

Self-efficacy is shown to impact academic success for students and influence engagement (Bandura et al., 2001; Majer, 2009; Solberg et al., 1993). The cycle of self-assessment that students conduct prior to attending college and throughout their collegiate experience have a

great impact on their motivation to succeed and their drive to integrate themselves more fully into the institutional environment (Bean & Eaton, 2002). Understanding the critical role that self-efficacy plays in the collegiate experience, this study aimed to fill gaps in the literature by looking at how legacy students perceive their self-efficacy and the role it plays in their experience. Particularly through the use of the CSEI, I looked at the self-efficacy of specific tasks, encompassing both academic and social self-efficacy.

Conceptual Framework

Many theories on persistence and retention have been based in sociological approaches. Yet, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) pointedly stated, “developmental theories and the research based on them suggest that other important student traits may be overlooked if the perspective is strictly sociological” (p. 58). In response to this critique, Bean and Eaton (2002) developed a psychological model of college student retention. Like Astin (1984), Bean and Eaton believed that behavior is critical to a student’s persistence and integration into an institution. The foundation of their model focuses on the psychological processes that occur for students in their integration to the college. Their model stemmed from their belief that “individual psychological processes form the foundation for retention decisions” (p. 73). By understanding a student’s psychological attributes, colleges and universities are better able to engage with students in a positive way to encourage retention and persistence to graduation (Tinto & Pusser, 2006).

Bean and Eaton’s (2002) research informs institutions of the decision-making processes students use with regard to remaining at an institution, or deciding to leave. As with other models, there is the understanding that students enter institutions with specific psychological factors, with the most important being self-efficacy, normative beliefs, and past experiences that shape the psychology of the entering student. A student’s belief in their ability to perform well

academically, the support of others, and their preparation to succeed shape how a student interacts initially with the institution.

These interactions come in many forms and can be both positive and negative. Their model posits that interactions and assessments that students face on campus are circular, with positive self-efficacy leading to improved grades, which affirm a student's integration into the campus community. Building on the work of Astin (1984, 1993), this model follows the concept that the level of constructive engagement (identified as Intermediate Outcomes in Figure 1) on campus can then lead to greater academic success and engagement in other areas of campus life. Understanding that research highlights that legacy students often lag behind their peers in terms of academic success, it may be helpful to understand the self-efficacy of this population in order to understand the role that plays in their engagement and ultimate persistence.

Studying legacy student experiences at more selective institutions through the Bean and Eaton's (2002) Psychological Model of Student Retention lens can help explicate legacy student experiences. As legacy preference is more prevalent at more selective institutions, it is more likely that legacy students at more selective institutions enter the university with lower test scores than their peers and are more susceptible to stereotype threat as they recognize that they have been granted this preference (Massey & Mooney, 2007; Shadowen et al., 2009). Bean and Eaton's (2002) model focuses not only on entry characteristics and on institutional loyalty (which can be greatly influenced by family), but also on the critical influence of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986) and engagement (Astin, 1984) on persistence.

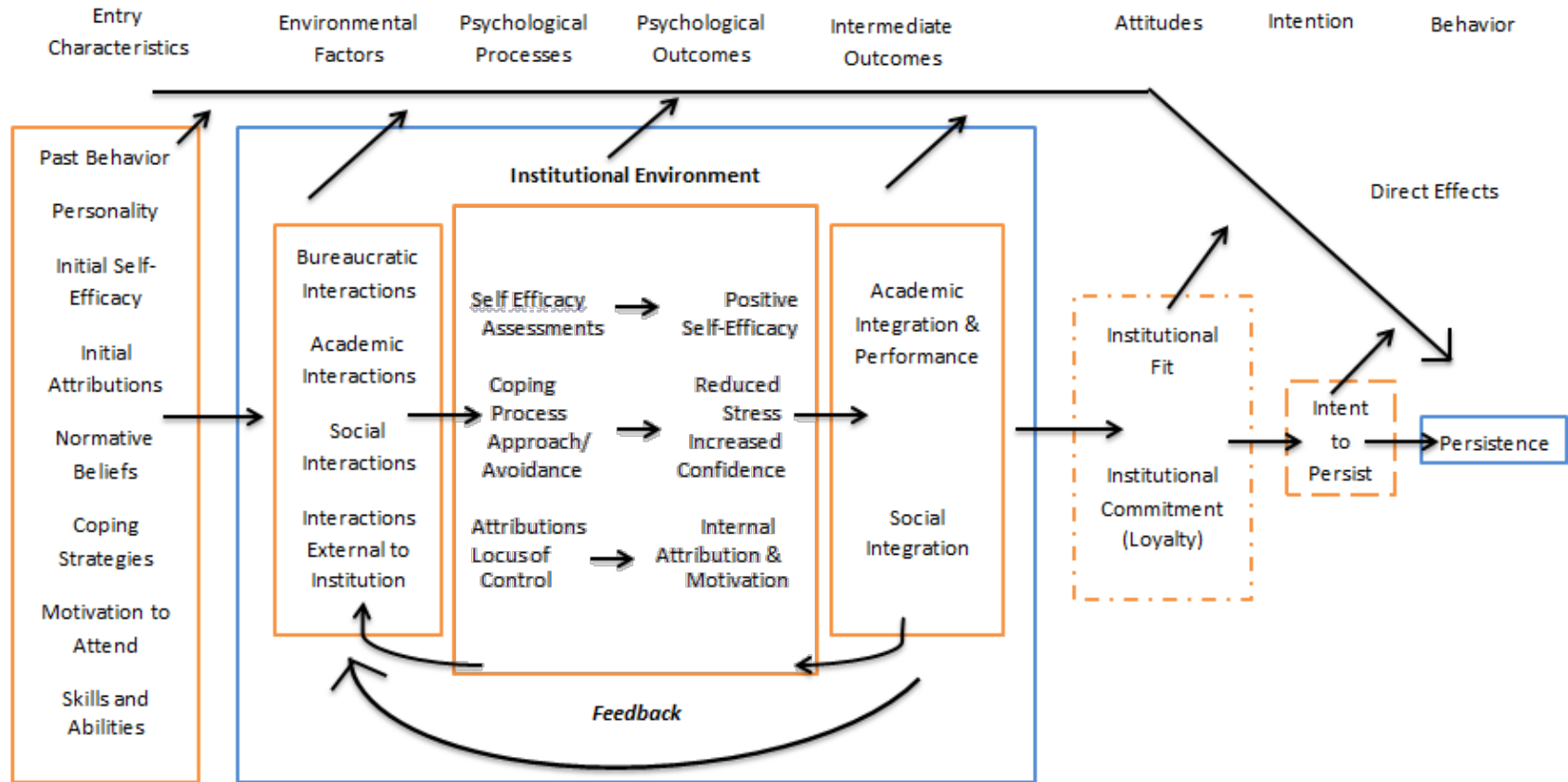
Legacy students' collegiate experience is situated within all of these interrelated and influencing factors. Institutional understanding of those factors and how they impact legacy

students' collegiate experience can enable colleges to create an environment with the support systems necessary to encourage persistence to graduation.

As noted in Figure 1, entry characteristics are the attributes an individual enters an institution with, shaped by their prior experiences, their abilities, and their beliefs (Perna, 2006). Students then interact with the institution academically, socially, and bureaucratically, while also interacting with individuals outside of the institution (peers, parents, family, employers, etc.). Through these interactions, which are influenced by their entry characteristics, students engage in self-assessments, and connect their experiences with their feelings about their collegiate experience. The reactions a student has based on these assessments influence the ways in which students engage (academically and socially) with the institution. Those students who have positive reactions to their assessments are more likely to have positive feelings about their fit at the institution, feel a greater sense of loyalty, and are thus feel greater motivation to and are more likely to persist. The issue of fit and loyalty, along with entry characteristics may have particular bearing for legacy students, due to the family history of loyalty with the institution.

Figure 1

Psychological Model of College Student Retention



Note. Adapted from “The Psychology Underlying Successful Retention Practices” (p. 76) by J. Bean and S. B. Eaton, 2002, *Journal of College Student Development*, 3(1), 73-89. <https://doi.org/10.2190%2F6R55-4B30-28XG-L8U0>

For the purposes of this study, I sought to look at students who have the entry characteristic of legacy status. I focused my study on the feedback loops of interactions, self-assessment of self-efficacy, and integration, and how that loop shapes legacy student attitudes. Even though it is known that legacy students are more likely to have an institutional commitment due to the family background and loyalty (Bowen et al., 2005; Golden, 2006), there are significant gaps in the literature related to the institutional environment and the role of factors of self-efficacy and engagement in the legacy student collegiate experience. By utilizing this framework for my study, I hope to minimize those gaps and provide a more holistic understanding of the legacy student experience.

Summary

The literature reviewed in this chapter helped outline key issues contributing to legacy student admission and persistence. Because much of the previous research has focused on more selective institutions, the focus for this study will also be on a more selective institution. This review included coverage of the history of legacy preference, what is known about legacy student academic success, and how self-efficacy and engagement play a role in persistence for all students.

What is missing from the current literature is a study of the lived experiences of legacy students. Research highlights how self-efficacy and social engagement contribute to student persistence, and ultimate graduation. By looking further into legacy student perceptions of self-efficacy and engagement, it will be possible to understand better the motivation of legacy students, the decisions they make to choose an institution and become involved, and how their self-efficacy and experiences of engagement play into their decision to remain at that institution.

Legacy students who recognize their status of special consideration for admission may have different levels of self-efficacy and engagement relative to other students who do not consider their legacy status as influencing their experiences. It is important to understand the entry characteristics of these students, as well as their self-efficacy and integration through engagement with their collegiate experience.

The findings from this research on legacy students may inform institutional actions. In understanding the experiences of this group of students, institutions can provide the support necessary to legacy students, or make changes in their admission policy to ensure that students who are admitted not only meet institutional goals but also have the capacity to succeed. This study provides institutional leaders with insight into how some legacy students experience college and how their legacy status plays into their decisions on campus. It also provided student participants the opportunity to reflect on the impact of their legacy status on their experience and contributes to the literature on legacy students that has to this point largely focused on admission preference. The next chapter outlines the methods for this study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research methods, data generation, and data analysis used to help answer the proposed research questions. This study was designed to examine how selected legacy students' self-efficacy and student engagement influence their college experiences. As outlined in Chapter 2, the theoretical framework for this research used Astin's (1984) Student Involvement Theory, which was complemented by Bean and Eaton's (2002) Psychological Model of College Retention. This chapter presents the research design of my study and justifies the use of a phenomenological study design.

Because selective institutions continue to grant admission preference to legacy students (Golden, 2003), it is important to understand the engagement and self-efficacy of those students. Understanding the experiences of selected legacy students at a public, more selective institution might provide a way to improve student persistence and engagement in college for other legacy students and could also inform practices for other students with lower levels of self-efficacy and engagement. Although research exists on the experiences of other unique student populations (e.g., students of color, women, athletes, etc.), little research exists on the experiences of legacy students.

As noted in previous chapters, although many studies focus on the admission preference legacy students receive, those studies do not shed light on the actual experiences of legacy students once they are admitted to these institutions. Legacy students' lower academic success in their first year and their self-reported indication of lower academic effort, suggest that these students may not have the self-efficacy or the understanding of how to engage on campus and

find success (Martin & Spenner, 2009; Massey & Mooney, 2007). If institutions intend to continue to offer admission preference to legacy students, it is essential that those institutions understand the challenges for these students to experience success and to provide the necessary resources to ensure those students persist to graduation. In an effort to address this need as well as the gap in the extant literature, the following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. How do selected legacy students describe their college experience?
2. How do selected legacy students perceive and describe their self-efficacy, including changes (if any) to it?
3. How do selected legacy students perceive and describe their engagement, both in and outside the classroom, and changes (if any) to it?

Research Approach

Qualitative inquiry is a research umbrella term that seeks to explore and understand “the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2014, p. 4). As The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the perceptions of a group of legacy students regarding their experiences at a public, more selective institution, a qualitative inquiry enabled me to explore and understand this phenomenon.

My goal was to understand how a group of legacy students perceived their status and to understand the role of self-efficacy and engagement in how those legacy students perceive their college experiences. This purpose warranted a research approach based on exploring and understanding a particular phenomenon. Thus, a phenomenological approach lent itself to my purpose. Phenomenology emphasizes the researcher’s attempts to describe a particular phenomenon and to understand how that phenomenon manifests itself to an individual experiencing it (Moran, 2002). Vagle (2018) defines phenomena as “the ways in which we find

ourselves being in relation to the world through our day-to-day living” (p. 20).

Phenomenological research is designed to explore and understand the ways in which a phenomenon is experienced. It was appropriate for this research that phenomenological research does not focus on the individual, but on the phenomenon itself. A focus on individual legacy students would not provide a holistic understanding of this phenomenon; rather, by focusing on the phenomenon of legacy student status, I aimed to understand the essence of the legacy experience.

Phenomenology is concerned with exploring, identifying, and describing the subjective experiences of participants, and seeks to understand the essence of human experiences as it relates to the phenomenon. Especially important to phenomenological research is the inclusion of rich description of participants’ lived experiences and the ability of the researchers to set aside their own judgments about the phenomenon (Finlay, 2009, p. 8).

Bracketing is a strategy used by researchers to set aside their own opinions and biases. Bracketing, along with the related concept, bridling, is the intentional act of researchers to separate their own personal experiences and expectations of the phenomenon being studied from their observations of the phenomenon throughout the research process. On the one hand, bracketing requires researchers to set aside their past knowledge about the phenomenon so that this past knowledge does not determine the outcomes of the current study. Bridling, on the other hand, not only takes into account the bracketing of past knowledge, but is also the active process of reflexivity and openness throughout the study to ensure that the researcher does not make assumptions about the data too quickly (Vagle, 2018). In order to both to bracket and bridle, I set aside my own opinions and impressions created from my relationships with legacy students, my educational experience in my doctoral program, and kept an open and reflective mind throughout

the study so that I was open to the various ways the participants in my study experienced the phenomenon. To address this need, I completed a Researcher as Instrument statement (Appendix A), in which I reflected on my past experiences, providing a reflection of my own opinions, experiences, and biases regarding the phenomenon of legacy students, to bracket my knowledge and how these experiences might have influenced me as an observer and researcher in this study. This statement was written prior to the generation of data and enabled me to bracket my own ideas from the lived experiences of the participants of this study. Additionally, by using a reflexive journal throughout the research process to document details about the decisions made, methods used, challenges, and reactions, and reflections related to data generation and analysis, I bridled my changing understanding of the phenomenon.

Research Paradigm

Because I sought to understand the research participants' views of the phenomenon based on their experiences (Creswell, 2014), I employed an interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivism is primarily concerned with understanding phenomena through the meanings that individuals assign to them (Willis, 2007). Thus, this approach provides an opportunity to understand the phenomena better through the subjective experiences of the participants. Researchers who utilize the interpretivist paradigm seek to gain insight and in-depth information related to the understandings and experiences of their participants often through interviewing (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). Within this paradigm, researchers interpret what the participants share, even as they are seeking to understand the research foci from the participants' perspectives. I sought to work with my participants to interpret their perspectives on what it means to be a legacy student at a more selective institution and how, if at all, they perceived their legacy status impacted their self-efficacy and engagement.

Participant Selection and Research Context

I selected 16 participants through stratified purposive sampling. Purposive sampling involves selecting participants who have the characteristics that pertain to the objective of the study (Creswell, 2014). Since my purpose was to understand the phenomenon of legacy student college experiences as deeply as possible, my goal was to recruit a heterogeneous group of full-time legacy students as participants. I recruited participants who were not only legacies but also represented the student body in terms of age, class year, gender, and race. By ensuring that I had participants from a variety of backgrounds, I gained a deeper understanding of the legacy phenomenon that allowed me to generate a more complex synthesis of the lived experiences of my participants. Yet, because legacy students have historically been White, demographics of the participants did not match the overall college population in terms of racial background.

Much of the previous research on legacy students has focused on legacies at private institutions. However, little is known about the legacy experience at a public institution. More selective public institutions often have similar admission requirements to private universities and investigating legacy status at a public university provides a different site context relative to previous research. Thus, to generate new knowledge about legacy students, I situated my study at a public institution, for the purposes of this study referred to as State University.

State University is classified as a “Doctoral University; Higher Research Activity” and is considered a “more selective” institution according to the most recent Carnegie Classification (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2018). State University has an undergraduate enrollment of approximately 6,800 students, of which about 9% are legacy students (as defined by the institution, which only tracks legacies based on parent attendance). This percentage is close to representative of findings that legacy students generally make up 10–

25% of the student body at more selective institutions (Golden, 2010). The university is also considered highly residential, with at least half of all undergraduate students living on campus and 80% attending full-time (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2018), which mirrors the profile at more selective private institutions.

After securing institutional permission from William & Mary's School of Education Internal Review Committee (EDIRC) as a doctoral requirement, I secured formal permission from State University to conduct my study. I first requested a list of all students at State University who self-identified as a legacy student, as defined by this study, during the admission process. I then emailed all self-identified legacy students, providing general information about the study (Appendix B) and requested that they complete an online survey to indicate their interest in participation and provide further details about their demographic backgrounds (Appendix C). Of the 579 students who self-identified as legacy students during the admission process, 150 indicated interest in participating. I evaluated each volunteer's alignment with selection criteria, looking at their understanding of their legacy status and the potential admission preference they might have received; gender; class year; race; and legacy relationship (whether their mother, father, both parents, or sibling had attended State University) to ensure that I had as representative a group as possible. A total of 16 participants were selected. To evaluate participants, I first identified students who recognized that their legacy status set them apart as a distinctive group on campus and that they might have received preferential treatment during the admission process. From this subset of legacy students, I then separated these qualified participants into class years, followed by gender, then race/ethnicity, and finally by their legacy connection (single parent, both parents, sibling). I sought to find balance that not only

represented the legacy population as a whole, but that also ensured that a variety of voices and experiences were represented.

Following initial interest from a student, and the selection of potential participants I sent a follow up email providing greater detail about the requirements of the study and additional information about participation (Appendix D). Information about securing fully informed consent and the incentive of \$50 in cash for participation was included in the invitation. Of the 16 participants I selected, 14 responded and confirmed their interest in participating. I then selected two additional participants who were also responsive and scheduled initial interviews.

Data Generation and Collection

This study relied on two primary forms of data: individual interviews (initial and final) and an online questionnaire completed in a 2-week period between the two interviews. Vagle (2018) indicates that interviews are an important and frequently used method for generating data in phenomenological research, because they enable the researcher to discover as much about the phenomenon as they can from each individual participant. Even though questionnaires are not identified as a primary type of data generation in phenomenological research, the information generated through the questionnaires in this study helped guide the second set of interview questions and provided participants with the opportunity to reflect further on their understanding of the phenomenon as they thought about engagement and self-efficacy in terms that are more concrete. In addition to interviews and the online questionnaire, I also analyzed available institutional documentation relating to legacy students.

Interviews

Even though Vagle (2018) encourages the use of unstructured interviews when conducting phenomenological research, he leaves open the opportunity to use a variety of

interview strategies and techniques. For the purpose of this study, I used semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are flexible “in how and when” prepared questions are asked and allow the interviewer to probe further based on answers given by the interviewee (Edwards & Holland, 2013, p. 29). In order to maintain an in-depth focus on the phenomenon, I used a list of guiding questions during initial interviews. Anticipated questions for the initial interview focused on the relationships students had with State University prior to deciding to enroll, how they chose to apply to and attend State University, how they were engaged both inside and outside the classroom, their level of confidence in their success at State University, and how they saw their family’s relationship impacting their own relationship with State University (Appendix E).

A crosswalk table that shows how the individual interview questions link to my study’s research questions and how the literature supported each question is included in Appendix F. Although I referred to these questions to prompt and guide my conversations with participants, I also asked follow-up questions that were not on the list, and omitted and reordered predetermined questions as necessary, based on the answers provided by the participants during the interviews. According to Vagle (2018), follow-up questions are critical “to the ongoing and deepening understanding of the phenomenon” (p. 92) and provide the opportunity to assure my understanding of the meanings of participants’ responses. I also utilized member checking, the process by which participants are asked for feedback to ensure I accurately understand their experiences and perspectives (Creswell, 2014).

I conducted two interviews, approximately one hour each, with each participant, except for one student who did not schedule a final interview, over the course of the study. With the permission of my participants, I made audio recordings of each interview. Prior to the initial

interview, participants had the opportunity to review and sign the consent form (Appendix H). In between the initial and final interviews, participants were asked to complete an online questionnaire (described in the next section), to prompt further reflection by the participants on their self-efficacy and engagement, and to promote further discussion of the phenomenon in the final interview. Final interview questions were developed based on the data generated from the first interviews with all participants and responses the online questionnaire. Several identical questions emerged for all participants, and the remainder were individualized. Final interviews focused more on self-efficacy, engagement, participants' perceptions of the institution, and specific aspects of their collegiate experiences. In doing so I reached data saturation—the point in which no new themes are being uncovered (Morse, 1995).

After each interview, I transcribed the recording verbatim. I then compiled a summary of topics discussed and sent it to each participant for their review. Participants then provided corrections or clarifications to my understanding. During this review, participants requested minimal changes, with clarifications of language being the primary corrections offered. Following the final interview, I also had each participant review an emailed summary of all data generated and analyzed related to their individual experience as a legacy student. Participants then made clarifications, as needed, to my understanding and interpretation. Again, there were minimal corrections with participants simply providing language clarifications or additional thoughts they had about their legacy experience after the interviews occurred.

Online Questionnaire

Following the initial interview, participants completed an online survey (see Appendix G), which included two already established instruments: a) the College Self-Efficacy Inventory (CSEI) developed by Solberg et al. (1993) to measure self-efficacy for the college experience

and (b) *The 2018 College Student Report*, published by the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE, 2018) to measure student engagement. Permission to use the NSSE items was requested and granted from the NSSE prior to conducting the study (Appendix I). The CSEI is an open source instrument and thus needed no additional permission for use.

My goals in utilizing the two survey instruments were threefold: first, I hoped to gain a better understanding of the specific ways in which legacy students are engaged and their feelings of self-efficacy; second, I hoped that completion of the survey prompted participants to reflect on the specific ways in which they are engaged in and outside the classroom and their self-efficacy as it relates to a wide variety of collegiate experiences; and finally, I hoped that as participants spent time thinking about these specific modes of engagement, deeper conversations would occur in final interviews.

While both instruments generate participant scores for statistical analysis, for the purposes of this study, the online survey was used solely to inform data generation in the final interviews. I did not score the survey instrument; however, I did compare participants' answers with national averages and with other participants within the study. Following on the initial interview with participants in which they discussed their perceptions of their self-efficacy and engagement, the online survey provided an opportunity for greater specificity regarding participants' positive engagement and self-efficacy because the survey was based on validated and reliable survey instruments that measure these factors (CSEI, 1993; NSSE, 2018). By having participants complete the online survey, I was able to generate questions for the final interview based on their survey responses and any discrepancies between their perceptions presented in the first interview and their survey responses.

The College Student Report. *The College Student Report*, the instrument of the NSSE, represents “the multi-dimensional nature of student engagement” through 10 indicators of engagement, which are organized within four engagement themes: (1) level of academic challenge, (2) active and collaborative learning, (3) student-faculty interaction, and (4) supportive campus environment (NSSE, 2015).

The validity and reliability of *The College Student Report* were established through an exploratory factor analysis and a confirmatory factor analysis (Miller, et. al., 2020). In terms of validity, the four engagement themes were shown to have “sufficiently strong construct validity evidence to support their use for college and university assessment efforts” (Miller, et. al., 2020). In order to establish the reliability of the instrument, internal consistency statistics are collected yearly with reliability coefficients above 0.76 for all engagement indicators (NSSE, 2017). This level is satisfactory as 0.7 is an acceptable threshold to assure survey reliability (Nunnally, 1978).

CSEI. The CSEI was developed to measure student perceptions of self-efficacy as it relates to the whole collegiate experience. The inventory was developed with three factors identified, (a) course, (b) roommate, and (c) social. Reliability of the inventory was established with reliability coefficients of .93 for the entire inventory, and .88 for each individual factor. Convergent and discriminant validity were established through a principal components analysis (Solberg et al., 1993).

Timeline

I used a linear timeline in which all initial interviews were conducted prior to survey data generation, and final interviews took place once all surveys were completed, with the exception

of the one participant who did not schedule a final interview but did complete the survey.

Throughout the process I engaged in ongoing and recursive analysis of the data.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in phenomenological research “uses the analysis of significant statements” and the identification of common themes to develop a description of the essence of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2014, p. 196). In order to develop this description of the essence, Vagle (2018) recommends using the “whole-part-whole analysis method” (p. 110). This method involves a holistic reading of all of the data, followed by a line-by-line reading to identify meaningful parts and identify questions and ideas. It is important during this analysis that I used a reflexive journal to bridle my own thoughts and interpretations of the data generated (Shenton, 2004). I maintained a digital reflexive journal to document details about the decisions made throughout the study, methods used, any challenges, reactions to data generation and analysis, as well as my thoughts and reflections related to data analysis (Creswell, 2014; Watt, 2012).

As I generated subsequent data, I conducted more holistic readings and line-by-line readings of all generated data, focusing on each individual participant. I then completed a second and third line-by-line reading (and more, when necessary) of segments of the interview that were particularly relevant to the study’s focus. Finally, I conducted another reading of all of the data in its entirety to identify themes and patterns of meaning. Critical to this process was my own willingness to reflect continually on and re-analyze the data that I generated to ensure that my own understanding matched the data, and that my conclusions accurately reflected the participants’ experience of the phenomenon.

To analyze data, I compiled interview transcripts and survey responses using Dedoose (www.dedoose.com). Dedoose allowed me to upload these written texts and divide the text into meaningful phrases by attaching codes and memos. Memos detail both the surface content of the text and the latent content. Understanding that content analysis is concerned with the identification of categories but not the relationships among them (Cho & Lee, 2014), codes and their definitions served initial category identifiers and the memos noted the relationships among coding categories. Once my data were compiled and initially coded in Dedoose, I was able to sort through and codify texts for reflection and analysis, identifying common themes and results. I used my conceptual framework to develop priori codes for analysis of the data generated. As noted, the focus of my analysis was on the student's perceptions of their legacy status, self-efficacy (academic, social, and self-regulatory), engagement (inside the classroom and outside the classroom), entry characteristics, and attitudes. Therefore, I assigned a code in my coding schema for each of these factors and utilized subcodes as they emerged through data generation.

In addition to my own analysis, I used a peer reviewer. Peer review consisted of another individual providing feedback on my coding techniques to help ensure the validity of the coding process (Creswell, 2014). My peer reviewer signed the confidentiality statement (Appendix J) and independently coded two interview transcriptions that I had already analyzed using the priori codes identified from my theoretical framework. After the peer reviewer coded the interview transcriptions, we discussed each of our interpretations to ensure there was agreement and alignment of my coding schema. This process was useful, in that the peer reviewer highlighted their interpretations of aspects of the interview that had seemed less significant in my own analysis. Through the peer review process I identified additional subcodes that had not emerged during my own analysis and the discussions with my peer reviewer highlighted topics I explored

further with participants in the final interview. The analysis of my peer reviewer strengthened my own analysis of other transcriptions as I was intentional about looking at the data from different perspectives as I analyzed it.

Triangulation

Triangulation is a common practice in qualitative research as it helps facilitate validation of results. Triangulation involves the use of multiple data sources and types to construct a rich description of the findings (Shenton, 2004). Vagle (2018), however, argues that this is not as necessary in phenomenological research as “sometimes a single statement, from one participant, at one moment in time is so powerful that it needs to be amplified” (p. 109). Vagle recommends leaving open the possibility that isolated results may be just as essential as those gleaned from multiple data sources. Thus, throughout the data analysis process I aimed for triangulation to develop a rich description of the findings but left open the possibility that a single utterance might be just as critical to the development of my understanding of the essence of the phenomenon.

Quality Criteria

Quality criteria are tools used by researchers to ensure that their research designs and results are sound (Shenton, 2004). Researchers rely on these criteria to ensure that their methods are consistent with a research approach and provide language by which other researchers can evaluate the study. I used Tracy’s (2010) big-tent criteria for qualitative research. Tracy recommends that researchers select a worthy topic that is researched with rich rigor. Researchers must generate and analyze data with sincerity and credibility and aim for findings that create resonance for readers and are a significant contribution to the field. Finally, researchers must

take steps to ensure their research is conducted in an ethical manner and achieves meaningful coherence. These terms are explained below.

Worthy Topic

Tracy (2010) defines a worthy topic as research that “is relevant, timely, significant, interesting, or evocative” (p. 840). To identify a worthy topic, Tracy recommends considering topics that emerge from contemporary controversies or that challenge assumptions. As discussed in Chapter 2, the topic of legacy student engagement and self-efficacy is certainly timely, as admission policies are being reviewed to ensure equity for all students. This, coupled with the continual push by institutions for persistence and positive student development, attests to the relevance and significance of studying this phenomenon. Regarding the final two characteristics of a worthy topic—interesting and evocative—Tracy (2010) explains, “studies of little-known phenomena or evocative contexts are intrinsically interesting” (p. 841). Even though the study of legacy students may not necessarily seem a little-known phenomenon, the fact that most research on legacy students has focused on the admission benefit they receive, makes this study on how students make meaning of their legacy status a less-researched phenomenon.

Rich Rigor

Rigor refers to the diligence in data generation and the ways in which those data are analyzed. Tracy (2010) uses the interview as an example, noting that interview rigor is demonstrated not only in the number and in length of the interviews but also the appropriateness of the sample, the questions asked, the level of detail in the transcription, the steps taken to ensure accuracy, and the analysis of the interview. I ensured rigor by conducting two detailed interviews with each participant and by following Vagle’s (2018) steps for data analysis. Further,

through triangulation and a mind toward data saturation (Morse, 1995), I worked to create as complete an understanding of the phenomenon as possible.

Sincerity

Sincerity refers to the researcher's honesty and transparency about my own biases and goals through self-reflexivity and transparency. Self-reflexivity requires me to be honest about my own assumptions and biases as well as noting my reactions throughout the entire research process. Transparency "refers to honesty about the research process" (Tracy, 2010, p. 842). To ensure sincerity through self-reflexivity and transparency, I maintained a reflexive journal throughout the research process. The reflexive journal, documenting all steps taken during the research process enabled me to provide rich, detailed descriptions of my research practices and bridle my own interpretations of data throughout the research process. Additionally, I completed a Researcher as Instrument statement (Appendix A). This statement is a written reflection of my own opinions, experiences, and biases related to the phenomenon of legacy students, written prior to generating any data. This exercise enabled me to bracket my own pre-existing ideas from the lived experiences of the participants in my study.

Credibility

Whereas sincerity focuses on the data generation and analysis, "credibility refers to the trustworthiness, verisimilitude, and plausibility of the research findings" (Tracy, 2010, p. 842). In order for a study's results to be credible, they must provide thick description of the data with researchers providing enough detail so that readers can come to their own conclusions about how, if at all, to use the study's results in their own work. In order to have thick descriptions, researchers must study their participants and settings closely to provide description not only of surface level details but also of the values of participants.

Credibility also requires that multiple forms of data from multiple sources are acquired (triangulation) and that member checking takes place. Tracy (2010) views triangulation as the opportunity to examine the same issue or phenomenon from multiple perspectives and thus provide richer data. My use of multiple interviews and an online questionnaire enabled me to examine the phenomenon through multiple types of data and through multiple conversations with participants. Additionally, throughout my study I conducted member checks. I confirmed with participants that I understood their responses, not only during the interviews themselves but also by sending summaries of the interviews for participants to read and correct and by sending findings at the conclusion of my study.

Resonance

Resonance is achieved when readers are affected by the research. This outcome can be achieved “through aesthetic merit, evocative writing, and formal generalizations as well as transferability” (Tracy, 2010, p. 844). Even though I am limited in controlling how readers are affected, I took steps to increase the likelihood that my findings have an impact on my audience. As I wrote my findings, particularly when describing my participants and the essence of their experience as a legacy student, I attempted to write in a way that was engaging and invited readers to view themselves and their experiences through the experiences of my participants. Finally, the recommendations I present in Chapter 5 might have resonance for higher educational leaders and policy makers as they make decisions about how to support legacy students and how legacy students are situated within their student body.

Significant Contribution

While there is no way to know in advance how my study might contribute to the current body of research, Tracy (2010) outlines four types of significance that researchers should strive for: theoretical, heuristic, practical, and methodological.

Theoretical Significance. Theoretical significance is achieved when research applies existing theories and concepts to new contexts. Much of the previous research on legacy students has taken place at private institutions. My study, taking place at a public institution looked at the legacy student experience related to engagement and self-efficacy (a relatively under-researched phenomenon) in a new context.

Heuristic Significance. Heuristic significance is achieved when the findings of the study lead readers to want to learn more about the topic. I have little control over heuristic significance, but it can be encouraged through suggestions for future research. Because current research on legacy students is limited, my hope is that through conducting this study and providing thoughtful and engaging findings, readers will be encouraged to continue to look at the phenomenon and uncover further information.

Practical Significance. Practical significance is achieved when readers find the research useful, whether in confronting current issues or problems or in reframing ideas (Tracy, 2010). To encourage practical significance I included information on the implications of my research findings.

Methodological Significance. Methodological significance occurs when research is conducted on a topic using a new methodology (Tracy, 2010). While there is a great deal of research on legacy students as this group of students relates to admission benefit and academic success, there is relatively little qualitative data on legacy students. By conducting a

phenomenological study, I interpreted data in a new way that might lead to new theoretical insights or practical uses.

Ethics

Conducting ethical research relies on a collection of best practices: procedural, situational, relations, and exiting (Tracy, 2010). This section outlines how I addressed these components in my study.

Procedural Ethics. Procedural ethics relate to the standards mandated by review boards or institutions. To ensure this study met procedural ethics guidelines, research only began once permission was granted from William & Mary's EDIRC), per the requirements of my doctoral program. State University agreed to honor the approval from William & Mary's EDIRC. I generated pseudonyms for all participants and the institution where my study took place. I safeguarded procedural ethics by adhering to William & Mary's EDIRC guidelines, including the use of a consent form with all participants (Appendix H), accurate reporting of my findings, and continual member checking throughout the research process. If a participant had not provided their consent or requested to terminate their participation, data collected on them until that point would have been destroyed. Finally, all research data were secured and protected during the study and will be destroyed upon doctoral dissertation completion (Creswell, 2014).

Situational Ethics. Situational ethics relate to my constant reevaluation of the research context to ensure that ethical research practices are being followed. In order to ensure this study was situationally ethical, I documented my thoughts throughout the study in my reflexive journal. Additionally, the consent form (Appendix H) that was signed by participants affirmed their right to terminate participation at any time. While no participants made such a report, through member checking particularly the summaries after each interview, I ensured that

participants had the opportunity to report any negative effects related to participating in my study.

Relational Ethics. Relation ethics requires the researcher to share plans, processes, and findings transparently with participants throughout the research process. I safeguarded relational ethics by being clear about the purpose of my research and obtaining the participants' informed consent prior to generating data. Additionally, through member checking, participants had the opportunity to provide feedback to ensure that I am accurately reflecting their experiences. Finally, as my participants were full time students, I worked diligently to respect their time, was flexible in scheduling interviews, and worked to accommodate their schedules.

Exiting Ethics. Exiting ethics refers to how a researcher presents their findings and the individual stories of participants at the conclusion of data generation. Exiting ethics are especially imperative when research applies to marginalized and underrepresented populations whose stories might be misused to further marginalize participants. I shared a summary document of my findings with my participants at the conclusion of the study to ensure they felt as though they are accurately represented. Additionally, I worked to report my findings in a way that focuses on the phenomenon itself and respects the individual and unique experiences of each participant.

Meaningful Coherence

A meaningful, coherent study achieves its stated purpose, uses methods and representations that are situated within theories and paradigms, and connects literature with the research foci, methods, and findings (Tracy, 2010). The researcher must choose an approach and framework that complement each other and work well with the phenomenon being explored. Additionally, the approach, framework, and plans to generate and analyze data should be situated

within the extant literature related to the phenomenon. In essence, prior research, frameworks, methods, and reporting must all work together to achieve meaningful coherence. I achieved meaningful coherence through my literature review and my stated research plan, which demonstrated the choices I made regarding my study and how the phenomenon I investigated is situated within the existing research.

To further ensure meaningful coherence, I used established and accepted practices and theories that align with my research approach. I accomplished this as I added to the understanding of legacy students and their engagement and self-efficacy, while adhering to phenomenological research practices. By following Tracy's (2010) quality criteria, I demonstrated a commitment to achieving meaningful coherence. As I utilized a phenomenological research approach, it is appropriate to select quality criteria that support the underlying assumption that there are various versions and pathways to the truth of a phenomenon.

Delimitations, Limitations, Assumptions

Assumptions address what I believe contributes to the backdrop of the study. Delimitations are factors within the researcher's control that may affect the study's outcomes. Limitations are factors beyond the researcher's control that may affect the study's outcomes. In the sections that follow, I identify the assumptions, delimitations, and limitations of my study.

Assumptions

A primary assumption I brought to this study is that legacy students experience college engagement and self-efficacy uniquely in comparison to their non-legacy peers. I also assumed that research participants would be forthcoming and would articulate their own perceptions of their engagement and self-efficacy. My focus on legacy students also indicated an assumption

that institutional leaders wish to better understand how this unique population of students perceives their self-efficacy and engages with their collegiate institution to ensure they are successful and persist.

Delimitations

My research is delimited to undergraduate legacy student participants at a single public co-educational liberal arts more selective institution. Generalizing the results of this study to all legacies or other types of student populations and institutions may not be appropriate. An additional delimitation was my decision to define a legacy student as one whose sibling(s), mother, father, or both parents attended their institution. Many institutions identify legacies based on other familial relationships and thus generalizing this research to other institutions with different definitions of legacy may not be appropriate. The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the perceptions of a group of legacy students regarding their experiences at a public, more selective institution. It is not meant to address legacy admission policies. However, it could provide useful information to institutional leaders, in both student engagement and enrollment, on how legacy students experience their collegiate experience.

Limitations

The primary limitation for this study was demographics. Because legacy admission preferences have historically favored White individuals and my participant group was small, I did not expect to have a fully representative mix of students based on race, gender, and ethnicity as compared to the overall makeup of the undergraduate student body. However, I sought to find variety in my sample population to represent different experiences and perspectives. Additionally, as the weight that is given to legacy students during admissions has changed over time and may change in the future, this study offers a snapshot in time related to the experiences

of these legacy students at this institution. Therefore, this study's results may not be generalizable to later generations of legacy students, even at the institution that hosted this study.

Summary

Given the findings of research on engagement and self-efficacy, it is safe to assume that engagement and self-efficacy play a critical role in college student persistence. Legacy students, as recipients of admission benefits, are susceptible to stereotype threat, which can negatively impact self-efficacy and thus engagement both in and outside the classroom (Massey & Mooney, 2007; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Although there is some research related to the admission benefit legacy students receive and their academic success once admitted, less is understood about how legacy students understand their status and how they perceive their self-efficacy and engagement as it relates to their legacy status. Using a conceptual framework of Bean and Eaton's (2002) Psychological Model of College Student Retention incorporated with Astin's (1984, 1993) Student Involvement Theory, and Bandura's (1986) Self-Efficacy Theory, and guided by phenomenological research methods, I interviewed 16 legacy students to understand better their experiences at a public, more selective university and how their self-efficacy and engagement relate to that experience. I used multiple interviews and an online survey to better understand the phenomenon of how legacy students make meaning of their experience at a public, more selective institution.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This chapter outlines the findings from my study based on the research questions that focused on how legacy students understood their identity. All of the study's participants were undergraduate students at a more selective university, which identifies students as legacies based on the student's indication that at least one parent or sibling had attended the institution. Several participants also identified that they had grandparents attend the university, in addition to their parent or sibling. The participants included four first-years, four second-years, four third-years, and four fourth-years. The group was comprised of 8 women and 8 men.

Common patterns appeared within and across the generated data. The students had many comparable college experiences, as well as individualized interactions with the phenomenon of being a legacy student at the university. Their experiences provided an understanding of the essence of legacy student experiences at a single more selective university. Common themes, which are groups of data patterns connected conceptually to each other and the study's focus, emerged (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Five overarching findings emerged from my data. The first finding was that students primarily associated their legacy status with the admission experience and not their collegiate experience. The second was that while legacy status was not a large component of their experience at State University, it did play a contributing role in participants' self-efficacy and engagement, both inside and outside the classroom. The third finding focused on participants' positive self-efficacy and the confidence they felt in their ability to be academically successful at State University. The fourth finding highlighted the ways in which participants engaged both

inside and outside of the classroom and the impact that engagement or lack thereof had on their perception of their collegiate experience. The fifth finding focused on students' relationships with their parents and the roles that relationship had on their legacy experience and vice versa. Each finding is presented separately, with illustrative quotations highlighted from particular participants and data from the online survey.

This chapter first presents a description of the university site for this research, followed by an overview of each of the participants. Next, a summary of each of the five findings of the study are presented.

Site Description

State University is a public, 4-year doctoral university. It is considered a medium size university and most students are undergraduates. It is highly residential, with at least half of all undergraduates living on campus and more than 80% attending full-time. It is considered a most competitive institution based on the median SAT or median composite ACT exam score, high school class rank, high school grade point average, and the percentage of students accepted (Barron's Educational Series, 2017).

Information about legacy students at State University comes primarily from the university's alumni association. The university admission website displays a blog post about the weight that legacy status plays in the admission process, stating that legacy status is used only to differentiate between two similar candidates and does not provide a significant boost. However, there is no specific policy regarding legacy status stated by the undergraduate admissions office online and the office does not indicate that they provide special services to legacy students.

The alumni association website, however, has a page devoted to legacy students and their families. This online presence provides information about specific programs that are offered both

before legacy students are admitted and throughout their time at State University. The website indicates that through this programming they honor and celebrate the connection legacy families continue to have with the institution. The alumni association builds on alumni relations to foster connections to newly admitted legacy students.

Participant Descriptions

Eight participants identified as male and eight identified as female. Four participants were first-years, four were second-years, four were third-years, and four were fourth-years. Nine (i.e., 56%) of the participants were in-state students, whereas 65% of State University's undergraduate students were in-state at the time of the study. Ten (i.e., 63%) of the participants were actively involved in a social sorority or fraternity, whereas 27% of State University's undergraduate students were active in Greek life. The group of participants was less diverse than the overall State University student demographic. Whereas State University's last admitted class was 57% White, 75% of participants for this study identified as White, with 25% identifying as White and another race, either Hispanic or Latinx, Asian or Asian American, or American Indian. Table 1 provides demographic information for this study's participants.

Table 1*Participant Demographic Information*

Pseudonym	Year	Gender	Age	Race	Residency	Legacy Relationship
Alice	Third-Year	F	21	W	O	1, 2, 3
Caitlin	Second-Year	F	22	W, H	I	1, 2, 4
Charles	First-Year	M	18	W	I	1, 4
Colin	Third-Year	M	21	W	I	1
David	Second-Year	M	19	W	I	2
Emily	First-Year	F	19	W, A	O	1
Frank	Third-Year	M	21	W	I	1, 2, 5, 7, 8
Henry	First-Year	M	18	W	O	1, 2
Jessica	Second-Year	F	20	W	O	2
John	Fourth-Year	M	22	W	I	1, 2
Julia	Fourth-Year	F	22	W	O	1, 2
Katherine	First-Year	F	19	W	O	2
Lauren	Third-Year	F	22	W, I	O	2
Mark	Second-Year	M	19	W	I	1, 2
Matt	Fourth-Year	M	21	W	I	2, 3, 5, 6
Shannon	Fourth-Year	F	22	W, H	I	1

Note. Race: W = White; H = Hispanic or Latino/a; A = Asian or Asian-American; I = American Indian; Residency: I = In-State; O = Out-of-State; Legacy Relationship: 1 = Mother; 2 = Father; 3 = Brother; 4 = Sister; 5 = Paternal Grandfather; 6 = Paternal Grandmother; 7 = Maternal Grandfather; 8 = Maternal Grandmother

Of the 16 participants, one completed the initial interview and the survey, but never scheduled a final interview. For this participant, data were only analyzed based on his initial interviews and his survey answers.

The following individual participant descriptions provides context about the participants' backgrounds that help to situate the study's emergent themes. The individual descriptions make evident that each student's experience as a legacy student at State University was different. In their interviews and surveys, the participants shared details of their collegiate experience that helped to identify factors associated with their legacy student experience, engagement, and self-efficacy. All of these data were used to explore and interpret the phenomenon, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Alice

Alice, who identified as a White female, was an out-of-state student from a state in the northeast. Prior to attending State University, she attended a public high school. She was a third-year, majoring in biology with a minor in marine science. She was active in a social sorority, engages in research, and works a part-time job. Alice's parents and her older brother attended State University and she described the strong sense of pride she felt attending the same institution as the rest of her family.

Caitlin

Caitlin, who identified as a White and Hispanic/Latina female, was an in-state student. Prior to attending State University, she attended a private boarding school in the same state as State University. She was a second-year, majoring in history. On campus, she was active in a social sorority and an acapella group on campus and at one point held an on-campus part-time job. Caitlin's parents and her older sister attended State University and she described her legacy status as having a positive impact on her experience at State University as it gave her a greater sense of connection to the school.

Charles

Charles, who identified as a White male, was an in-state student. Prior to attending State University, he attended a public high school. He was a first-year, intending to pursue a major in international relations. He was active in international relations club and worked in a policy research lab on campus. Charles mother attended graduate school at State University but did not graduate and his sister transferred into State University in the same term that he matriculated as a first-year. Past the admissions application, Charles does not define himself as a legacy student and considers himself a “weak legacy” because no one in his family had graduated from State University prior to his attending.

Colin

Colin, who identified as a White male, was an in-state student. Prior to attending State University, he attended a private high school. He was a third-year, pursuing a major in government. He was active in international relations club, a social fraternity, and holds leadership roles in both organizations. Colin’s mother attended State University, which instilled a sense of familiarity with the campus that he did not find when considering attending other schools. However, he considers his legacy experience different to his peers who had either both parents or more family members who had attended the university.

David

David, who identified as a White male, was an in-state student. Prior to attending State University, he attended a public high school. He was a second-year, pursuing a major in classical studies. He was active in a social fraternity and several organizations related to classical studies. David enrolled at State University after his father, who attended, told him that he would not pay for him to attend any other institution. Because of the coercion he felt to attend, David does not

feel a strong connection to the campus and often considers transferring. David did not participate in a final interview.

Emily

Emily, who identified as a White and Asian or Asian-American female, was an out-of-state student. Prior to attending State University, she graduated from a public high school. She was a first-year, intending to major in biology. She was active in symphony orchestra, a small musical ensemble, a theater troupe focused on diversity, and a competitive biology research lab. Emily's mother attended State University and she believes that her legacy connection has provided her with a stronger support system and sense of connection to the campus.

Frank

Frank, who identified as a White male, was an in-state student. Prior to attending State University, he attended a public high school. He was a third-year, majoring in business analytics and data science, with a minor in economics. He was active in a social fraternity, the sports business club, works as an intern for the athletics department, and works as a paid tutor for the business school. Both of Frank's parents, both of his grandfathers, and one of his grandmothers, attended State University. He described his legacy connection to State University as an important part of his experience growing up, and that his attending has strengthened the already close connections he had with his family.

Henry

Henry, who identified as a White male, was an out-of-state student. Prior to attending State University, he attended a public high school. He was a first-year, and was undecided about his major. He was not actively involved in any organizations on campus, but described a close group of friends that were the core of his social experience. Both of Henry's parents attended the

law school at State University. He described his legacy experience as different from others because he was an out-of-state student and because his parents did not attend State University for their undergraduate degrees.

Jessica

Jessica, who identified as a White female, was an out-of-state student. Prior to attending State University, she attended a private high school. She was a second-year, majoring in history. Jessica was active in a social sorority, a music sorority, and was a reviewer for an academic journal on campus. Jessica's father attended the law school at State University and she believes that her status as a legacy student has had a positive impact on her overall experience at State University and has brought her closer to her father.

John

John, who identified as a White male, was an in-state student. Prior to attending State University, he attended a public high school. He was a fourth-year, majoring in kinesiology and health sciences with a minor in computer science. John was active in a service fraternity, co-founded a robotics club, and worked off-campus as an EMT and a security contractor. Both of John's parents attended State University, and he felt that his legacy status better prepared him for the academic rigor and expectations he would face as a student.

Julia

Julia, who identified as a White female, was an out-of-state student. Prior to attending State University, she attended a private high school. She was a fourth-year, majoring in psychology with a minor in classical studies. Julia was not active in any extracurriculars. Both of Julia's parents attended State University. She describes her legacy status as something that has

created a new connection between her and her parents, but not something that makes her feel more connected to the institution.

Katherine

Katherine, who identified as a White female, was an out-of-state student. Prior to attending State University, she attended a public high school. She was a first-year, intending to major in history. Katherine was active in a social sorority, a service fraternity, and a club athletics team. Katherine's father attended State University but she did not bring up her legacy status as she did not like the assumption that others make that she only chose to attend State University because of her family connection.

Lauren

Lauren, who identified as a White and American Indian female, was an out-of-state student. Prior to attending State University, she attended a private high school. She was a third-year, majoring in international relations and economics. Lauren was active in a social sorority, a competitive club athletics team, and worked as a paid tutor on campus. Lauren's father attended State University. She described her legacy experience as something that has given her an additional community within State University and that it has strengthened her relationship with her dad, his college friends, and their children who have also attended State University.

Mark

Mark, who identified as a White male, was an in-state student. Prior to attending State University, he attended a private high school. He was a second-year, majoring in physics. Mark was active in a social fraternity and volunteered at a local free clinic. Both of Mark's parents attended State University. While he stated that he enjoys and appreciates his unique experience as a legacy student, he indicated that it was not something that was very present in his day-to-day

experience on campus unless his parents were on campus and they were experiencing State University together.

Matt

Matt, who identified as a White male, was an in-state student. He was a fourth-year, majoring in accounting and minoring in history. Prior to attending State University, he attended a public high school. Matt was active in a social fraternity. Matt's father, older brother, younger brother, paternal grandfather, and paternal grandmother attended State University. Matt described his experience and the connection between his family and the school not in terms of the fact that they had all attended, but as a connection they all felt with the State University football team.

Shannon

Shannon, who identified as a White and Hispanic or Latina female, was an in-state student. Prior to attending State University, she attended a public high school. She was a fourth-year, majoring in finance and Hispanic studies. Shannon's mother attended State University. Shannon participated in a club athletics team and held leadership roles within the international relations club. Shannon does not feel as though her legacy status has played any role in her experience at State University but that it has strengthened her relationship with her mother as they have found shared connections in their individual experiences.

The Legacy Experience: Admission

The participants in this study most strongly identified with their legacy status during the admission process. All participants indicated that when applying to State University their legacy status played a role and they recognized that their status provided them an advantage in the admission process. For all of the participants, their legacy status was a key factor in their

decision to apply or attend State University. While all participants indicated that they recognized that their legacy status may have provided them an advantage in the admission process, many felt that the legacy preference they may have received was not as problematic as other admission preferences or that they were admissible to the institution regardless of their legacy connection.

Deciding to Apply

Most participants indicated that when initially considering colleges, they purposefully did not initially consider State University because of their family connection. The desire to have their own experience, separate from that of their family members was a motivating factor for participants to avoid consideration of State University. Katherine stated that “I would feel a little bit like it was his [her dad] thing versus mine.” David expressed similar sentiments reflecting, “The fact that my dad went here kind of turned me off a little bit too, because I didn’t want to feel like I was just, you know, becoming a carbon copy of him and it just kind of felt weird to go to the same place as him.” However, despite these initial hesitations, all participants ultimately did apply and decide to attend. A variety of factors influenced their decisions to apply: pressure from parents, academic opportunities, and positive pre-conceived notions of college and the college experience based on early exposure to State University.

Parental Pressure. Eight participants indicated that they felt clear pressure from their parents to at least consider State University. For four of these participants, their parents required that State University be among the schools they applied to, regardless of their interest. Two others indicated that their parents required them to visit for an official college tour and two attended legacy specific admission events.

Emily described the initial reason she applied to State University as heavily influenced by her mother, saying:

She encouraged me to go to any school that I wanted to. But me and my older sister were very encouraged to apply to State University. She kind of made us apply whether we wanted to go to that school, whether we wanted to end up coming here or not.

When looking back on her experience, Emily is confident that her mom would have been happy with wherever she attended. But Emily also indicated that she always knew that her mother hoped one of her daughters would attend State University and the requirement to apply highlighted that desire.

Mark described a similar experience, reflecting that while he was uninterested in applying to State University, his parents required that he apply there, along with a similarly academically rigorous institution in the same state, describing the experience stating, “my parents essentially forced me to apply.” This requirement by parents to at least apply to their alma mater, reflects a high level of parental involvement in the college admission process, which Perna’s (2006) research has shown to be important in overall college choice. While participants, with the exception of David whose father withheld tuition funds unless he attended State University, were confident their parents would support their decision to attend an institution other than State University, their parents involvement simply in their decision on whether or not to apply inevitably played a role in their college choice and their trajectory to attending State University.

Every participant indicated that they were aware of their family connection to State University and they considered that connection when deciding to apply. For some, there was hesitation to apply because of their legacy status due to a concern that they would not be forging their own path. For others, the legacy connection increased their desire to attend because they knew of the positive experiences of their family at State University. However for the majority of

participants, regardless of their feelings about their family connection to State University or the pressure they felt to apply, personal considerations about how the institution fit into their goals and how they felt about campus based on their visits and interactions with others on campus also played a role in their decision to apply.

Academic Alignment. State University is well-known for its academic rigor and the opportunities it presents students in a wide variety of fields. Although none of the participants indicated that their parents spoke about the academic expectations of State University, their legacy status increased their awareness of the institution and placed State University in the field of options they wanted to consider. Yet it was the academics for some that was ultimately the draw. Six participants indicated it was the availability of programs and majors that fit their own professional goals that was a key factor in their decision to apply to State University. Emily, who intends to major in biology, indicated that the curriculum that State University offered gave it a leg up over the other institution she was seriously considering. In particular, during a visit to campus, she saw the work being done in one of the biology labs on campus and was excited about the possible opportunity to work in the lab, something that came to fruition in her first year on campus.

Alice also noted how academics at State University played a role in her college choice. When looking at colleges, she only looked at institutions in which she would have the opportunity major or minor in marine science. Thinking back to her experience choosing between institutions she said,

If State University hadn't had a marine science program, I wouldn't have gone here. That was the one thing that I knew I needed to go to school for and I stuck with it. I didn't even consider any schools that didn't have marine science.

The happenstance of availability of particular majors or opportunities available at the college served as an influencing factor for some of the participants.

Matt and Charles also saw the availability of particular academic programs they were interested in as a factor in their decision, but they commented on the overall ranking of the institution as playing a role too. When asked about his decision to apply to State University, Matt highlighted the school's business program as being a big draw, but also that it was the "best academic school" in comparison to others he considered. Charles reflected in similar ways on his decision, stating:

It went very much from like the local college that I wouldn't want to go, to me realizing oh this is actually one of the best schools in the country, especially for what I want to study. Right before I started applying it went from, I didn't want to think of applying [to State University] to I ended up applying early decision because of program rankings.

As Perna's (2006) college choice model notes, students are more likely to attend institutions with characteristics that align with their own personal and social identities. For participants, the need to attend an institution that had academic opportunities that aligned with their own interests and that would provide them the opportunity to grow intellectually (whether through coursework or other academic-related engagement) was a component of how they made their decision of whether or not to apply to State University. As legacy students are inherently raised in homes of college graduates where one can assume there is an emphasis on the importance and value of academics and intellectual pursuits, the personal and social identities of these participants may have been shaped to look for an institution similar to State University in terms of rigor and academic opportunities regardless of their legacy status.

Perception of College. Participants who had visited the campus of State University regularly growing up felt that their vision of what a college campus should look like and what the collegiate experience should be was shaped by their time on campus as a child. When deciding to apply to State University, the participants commented on their perception of what college “should be” based on the influence of their childhood campus visits. The model of a college came up for many as a primary factor in their decisions to attend. Jessica grew up hearing about how transformational State University was for her father who attended the law school after a less than positive undergraduate experience at another institution. She indicated that her emotional attachment to State University, and the familiarity she felt with the campus influenced the way she viewed other schools when deciding where to apply. Although she considered other schools in the same state as State University, she said, “I also didn’t want to go to those schools because I cared more about State University already. I started looking at other schools along with State University and [State University] just continued to be the baseline throughout the process.” Similarly, Alice visited campus often as a child because of her parents’ love of the college and the surrounding area. Even though she was hesitant to apply to State University because of her family connection, she realized as she was looking at other schools that she was always comparing them to State University. She reflected, “I expected that every campus and everything would be like State University. I think having that early exposure kind of gave me a little bit of a preconceived notion of what college was going to be like.” All the participants indicated that they believed they would have been aware of State University regardless of their family connection. Yet those with a close connection with campus prior to the application process due to their parent’s connection to the college felt their ideas of college were strongly shaped by their experiences growing up visiting the State University campus.

Parents are influential in students' college decision-making process. However, college choice models focus primarily on the encouragement to attain higher education in general and the benefits of growing up in a household in which there is already knowledge of the college search process (Iloh, 2018), not on legacy status. A factor that perhaps may be unique to legacy students is the role of family exposure to a particular institution, their parents' alma mater, plays in students' college choice. As indicated by participants in this study, their exposure to a single institution growing up appears to be a positive influencing factor on college choice.

Identifying as Legacy

While the identification of legacy varied in strength among all participants, two students cited clear hesitation about their identification as a legacy student when applying to State University. Once Mark decided that he was interested in attending State University, he went back and forth about whether to identify as a legacy. Ultimately, Mark, recognizing the benefit his legacy status afforded him in the application process, completed the family education background information on the application to identify that he was a legacy. He noted his decision was based on the fear he might be denied otherwise. Mark described his thought process:

For a while I didn't have legacy on my application because I wanted an honest answer as to if they thought I would do well [at State University] and not admit me based on the fact that I was a legacy. And then I didn't end up doing that just because I was worried I wouldn't get in.

Mark clearly understood that having a legacy status held the potential of tipping the scale for admission.

For Charles, the hesitation to identify as a legacy came from the fact that he did not consider himself a legacy in a traditional sense. His mother had not graduated from her doctoral

program at State University and his sister was applying to transfer to State University while he was applying to attend. Prior to completing his application, he described meeting with a representative from the admissions office for clarity on whether he was even considered a legacy student. Despite his own perception that he was not a legacy student, admissions informed him that he was, and he ultimately identified as such on his application. Both Mark and Charles realized that in checking the box indicating their legacy status that they may receive differential treatment in the application process.

Deciding to Attend

As participants discussed the process by which they first considered attending State University and then their final decision to enroll, four primary themes arose: familiarity with the campus and university, distance from home, cost, and their legacy status and family pressure. Perna's (2006) model of college choice identifies four layers of influence that shape an individual's college choice decisions that range from family to external policy makers. However, for these participants, it was primarily the first and second factors, habitus and school and community context, which played the most important role for these participants.

A Familiar Place. A common theme for participants was a familiarity with the institution that arose from frequent childhood visits, relationships with their parent's friends from their time at State University, and an understanding of the institution from stories they had heard growing up. Just as several participants saw their familiarity with State University and their perception of it as what a college should be as a key factor in their decision to apply, participants also saw this familiarity as a deciding factor in their decision to commit to State University.

For Lauren, having grown up hearing stories of her dad's experiences at State University and being close with many people from her dad's college years, there was a sense of familiarity

with the institution that she believed was an underlying factor in her decision to attend. She described this familiarity saying, “I knew the school a lot better and would hear my dad’s stories about how much fun he had. It was a more well-known school to me. It made the school feel like a place I could see myself.” This ability to see herself on campus because of the stories she heard from her father and the visits she had growing up to campus, helped her make the decision between State University and another institution. Lauren felt confident in attending as she could see herself on campus at State University and saw the potential of having the same positive experience as her father. The option of attending another college did not have the same sense of fit or belonging.

Frank similarly used his familiarity when choosing between State University and what he considered a similar institution. He reflected on his decision, saying:

I’m comfortable with State University. My parents exposed me to State University much more than they would have if they hadn’t gone here, so I really got to understand everything about this school and that was the more important thing.

He saw this early and consistent exposure to the institution by his parents as something that not only helped him understand more about State University, but also increased his comfort level with the institution, which he would not have had elsewhere. Although he seriously considered another similar institution, the comfort he felt with State University gave it an added boost in his preference and ultimate decision to attend.

Distance From Home. Institutional location is an important factor in college choice (Perna, 2006). Students are more likely to be aware of an institution based on its proximity to their home region or targeted marketing within their region. Institutions of higher education seek to shape how prospective students in the region perceive the college or university and the value

of their particular institutions. This heightened awareness and sense of value of the educational experience at State University was identified by all of the participants who were in-state (9) or from a state bordering that of State University (3). Several participants also noted that proximity to home was a contributing factor in their decision to attend. Matt, an in-state student who grew up in an urban area about 3 hours from State University, identified the distance as one of the biggest factors in his decision to attend. He shared how he had decided not to attend another institution because it was only a few miles from home, and he ruled out others in the southwest part of the country because they were too far. He considered State University to be “close enough, but far enough from family.”

Frank, growing up about an hour from State University not only saw the proximity of State University to his home as a key factor in his decision to attend, but also as a beneficial part of his overall experience, reflecting:

I thought State University was the perfect distance from home. I didn't want to be at [two other institutions in his hometown] where they could drop by whenever. But it's nice just having them be able to come here, hang out with me, and take me to a nice meal—just have mom and dad around for a little bit. That's been important.

For Frank, not only was the distance from home a primary factor in his decision to attend, he also saw his parent's ability and desire to visit as a beneficial part of his overall experience at State University.

Julia, an out-of-state student, also saw value in the location of State University. Julia highlighted the nearness of State University to her extended family as a contributing factor to her decision to attend. She reflected that even though State University was far from home, she had still had family nearby. Julia offered, “And so I was like okay, I'll be far from my nuclear family,

but I'll have all my relatives near me so it wouldn't be as big a deal.” The ability to connect to family members helped in selecting State University given the sense of support students felt.

Although no participants were from the town where State University is located, distance and accessibility to family played an important role in their decision to attend. Eight of the nine in-state participants and one out-of-state participant with family living near State University appreciated their ability to attend an institution some distance away from their home, but close enough to return home without many challenges that might arise from being farther away. This commitment to maintaining relationships with family, highlights a key component of the experiences of these legacy students—the strength of familial bonds and the powerful role they played in these student's decisions and collegiate experience.

Cost. As a public institution, in-state students highlighted the cost of State University, relative to other institutions they considered, as a primary factor in their decision to attend. It played such a role, that of the nine in-state participants, four participants stated that had State University not been a public in-state institution, they would not have even considered attending, regardless of their legacy connection and three indicated that State University would not have been their top choice if the cost increased significantly. Charles considered cost of attendance to be the primary factor in his decision to attend State University. Thinking back on his decision he stated, “I think it would have really impacted [my decision] financially. If it had been the cost of a comparable private school then it probably would have been off the list.” He continued this thinking when discussing his survey response where he indicated that if applying to college again he would “probably attend” State University, describing how if he had the opportunity again, he would have considered other schools and their financial aid packages, rather than applying only to State University early decision because now he knew the full extent of the financial burden.

Similarly, Caitlin saw cost as a large factor in her decision to apply, one that overrode the benefit of her legacy status at State University. She described her cost-benefit analysis saying,

If my mom had gone to a college identical to State University but it was [out-of-state], I probably would have picked a cheaper option in-state. I would've considered [State University], but I would have had to apply for scholarships, financial aid, things I did for other schools.

The rising cost of college weighs on the decision-making process for students and their families.

For the out-of-state students, the cost of attending State University was less of a factor, or did not play a role at all, because finances were not a primary concern in their choice or the price was comparable to the other private institutions they considered. Katherine, who considered attending State University and two other private schools recognized that her parents were willing to pay for whatever college she chose to attend, particularly as she considered schools with lower tuition than her older sister's. She stated "my parents were both happy that it was cheaper than the others, but they didn't really care—anything was cheaper than my sister's school, so they were just happy about that." Many other out-of-state participants only considered State University and private schools, indicating that they did not feel the same pressure that in-state students felt to attend a more affordable institution. Whereas all in-state participants indicated that cost played some role in their decision to attend State University, only two out-of-state students (one of whom will soon be eligible for in-state tuition) felt that it was an important factor in choosing between State University and other institutions.

For many participants, their ability to afford State University was a key factor in their decision to attend. For in-state students, the affordability of State University over other institutions led it to become a top college choice for them; for out-of-state students, their ability

to afford an out-of-state education enabled State University to be an option for them as they considered a number of comparably priced private institutions. The difference in the role that cost played in college choice for in-state and out-of-state students, indicates that the factor of legacy status may differ for students depending on family circumstances and personal choice regarding how much they are willing to pay for college.

Legacy Status and Family Pressure. Although four participants indicated they felt pressure to apply to State University, only one participant felt pressure to attend State University because of their legacy connection. Some of the participants did feel more inclined to choose State University over other institutions because they desired the family connection and legacy experience. Other participants, however, indicated that while they felt confident their parents would have supported their decision to attend another institution, they subconsciously felt as though their parent's connection and the ability to make their parents happy by attending State University played a role in their decision.

David, the only participant who indicated that he did not want to attend State University, felt forced by his father to attend. He described his father during the admission process as encouraging him to apply to continue the legacy tradition, and then slowly becoming more forceful about him choosing to attend saying:

Towards the end he was like, "If you don't go to State University, I'm not going to help pay for your college." So, he twisted my arm into coming here. Because I put down a deposit at another institution and he just immediately cut my 529. I didn't feel that pressured up until decisions came out. Once decisions came out, it was full stop do this or I'm not helping you and that was super stressful for me.

David continued his reflection, indicating that while he had never felt that State University was a good fit for him, the immense pressure he felt from his father only strengthened his dislike of State University. He described his reaction to having to attend reflecting, “It upset me a lot to come here after explicitly not choosing to come here and then just being forced to backtrack and come.” Even though David felt compelled to give in to the pressure he felt from his father so that he could receive financial assistance in paying for his education, he held negative feelings about his admission experience and his onboarding into State University because of his father’s pressure regarding his legacy status. This negative perception led him to seriously consider transferring from State University, something he said he decided against due to the fact that his father would not provide financial support if he left State University, as well as his increased feeling of belonging due to his fraternity membership and through choosing a major that he enjoyed. However, in his survey responses he stated that he was not sure if he would return to State University the next year—a fact that was not further discussed since David did not participate in the final interview for the study.

In contrast, Jessica could tell that attending State University would make her father happy, but she also sensed that he gave her room to make the decision herself. When reflecting on the college search process she said, “My dad never tried to push State University. He wanted me to make my own decision, but I knew things I knew it would make him happier and that factored into the college decision.” While she was confident that it was the best fit for her and that it was a place she would be successful, she was aware that her father, and her desire to please him, had some influence on her decision.

Alice felt that her legacy status pushed her to attend because of her own desire to have the legacy connection with her family. When thinking back to her decision to attend State

University, she indicated that she realized that even though she might have been happy initially at another institution, down the road she could see herself feeling left out of the family connection to State University since not only had her parents attended State University, but her only other sibling was already a legacy student at State University. Thus, she made the decision to attend, saying, “I think having that family bond and connection as a result of being at the school I think it was something that was attractive because this is pretty cool that we get to continue this family tradition we have.” For Alice, she saw how her brother’s legacy status strengthened his relationship with their parents and created a special bond and she decided that that was also important for her to have throughout her collegiate experience. In her case, the strength of her legacy connection was linked to the fact that not only had both of her parents attended State University, but also her only sibling. The strength of these connections played a role in her decision making to attend. Alice noted had she not gone to State University, she would be left out of an experience that the rest of her family shared.

For students who saw their legacy status as the reason they attended State University, the way in which it impacted their decision to attend also impacted their collegiate experience. For David, the negative experience he had permeated the rest of his collegiate experience and ultimately his relationship with his father. He indicated that he has not spoken to his father much since he matriculated at State University and that throughout his first year, he was less inclined to engage on campus because he had no desire to be a part of the campus community. On the other hand, Alice and others who saw their family connection as a positive reason to attend State University, felt that their family connection to the institution not only made for a more positive overall collegiate experience, but beneficial to their relationship with their family.

Perception of Legacy Status and Other Admission Preference

At the time of data generation in 2019, college admissions were at the forefront of the news, focused on Operation Varsity Blues, a case in which parents paid up to \$500,000 to manipulate test scores or bribe university officials in relation to their children's admission to elite universities (Bruenig, 2019; Davoren, 2019; Golden & Burke, 2019; Medina et al., 2019). In discussion of this college admission scandal, participants reflected on their own perceptions of admission preference and their feelings regarding the possibility that they had received admission preference as a legacy student.

Participants were quick to delineate between the bribery and illegality they saw as a part of Operation Varsity Blues, and legacy status, which they considered to be a legal admission preference. No doubt the participants sought to be clear on this delineation to highlight that the admission preference they received was legal and appropriate and that their parents did not use bribes to gain their admission like others have (Golden, 2006). However, several did note that they were surprised those engaged in the scandal resorted to illegal measures to assist in their children's admission when the participants saw other legal ways in which a parent could bolster their child's chances for admission.

Lauren reflected on her perception of her peers applying to college and the ways she saw their families using any means necessary to boost their admission chances. She reflected on her high school experience, saying about some of her peers:

Their parents would just donate a building. People would say they got in because of this x, y, z connection. I don't even put it past those kids at my high school for their parents doing something like [what the varsity blues parents did].

Similarly, Katherine saw her peers having private college counselors and paid help to navigate the admission process.

John saw the benefit of admitting legacies over other students, reflecting that admissions may not want to “roll the dice on somebody who might be a first generation college student who might drop out” as opposed to admitting a legacy student “who was consistent, that wants to be here, who has that pressure to stay here.” Although John seemed to recognize the privilege he potentially received due to his parents’ collegiate experience, he did not believe that he was less capable or less worthy of admission. Instead, he saw his connection as beneficial to the institution and more of a guarantee of his academic success and persistence compared to students who receive other admission preferences.

When asked about how they saw their own legacy preference in contrast to the admissions scandal, participants recognized that they may have received a benefit from their family connection, but did not see a connection between their preference and that of students whose parents had used finances to impact their child’s admission. Critically, however, they did understand that they may have received differential treatment in the admission process.

Considering the Weight. Participants indicated an uncertainty as to how much weight their legacy status gave to their application for admission to State University. Even though all participants were confident that they were admissible based on their own merit and high school performance, several reflected that they were not sure, and would never be sure, how much of an impact their legacy status played.

For many participants, their knowledge of how they compared to their peers in high school led to increased confidence in their admissibility regardless of their legacy status. Colin, who attended a private high school, indicated that his high school had provided information on

all of the students in his class saying, “you could look at everyone’s GPA and SAT that got into every school and I knew based on mine I was above what most people who got [into State University].” Because of his ability to see where he ranked in comparison to his peers and the schools that they were admitted to, he felt that he was a strong candidate for State University and that that played a larger role in his admission to State University than his legacy status.

Julia also saw her high school having a large role in her confidence that her academics played a large role in her admissibility. However, she also indicated some doubt of this based on the family connections she had at all of the schools to which she was admitted. When describing the role her high school preparation held in her admissibility, she reflected:

I went to a college prep school and having that background and I was one of the top students. State University is a good school but it’s not impossible to get into—I felt like this was more in the middle of my range of schools.

Despite her confidence in her admissibility, she noted that she struggled with the connections she had to the schools where she was admitted saying “I only got into these three schools—what if the reason I got in was because of my personal connection and I’m not good enough to be there.” While she stated that this doubt about family connections playing a large role in her admission had faded as she found success at State University, it was something that had been a large concern when going through the admission process. Despite this, once on campus, her concerns over why she was admitted and whether she was capable of meeting the academic standards dissipated as she found herself performing on par with her peers and finding academic success.

Contrast With Other Admission Preference. When asked to think about the college admission scandal and their own legacy status and the admission preference it may have granted them, participants often cited other admission preferences that they perceived as stronger than

legacy status. Participants cited race or ethnicity, athletic ability, financial status, and residency as more important to admission committees than a family connection.

Charles highlighted that on-campus he felt as if there was greater discussion about the fairness of in-state admission versus out-of-state, and that based on discussions with his peers he felt that a student being in-state provided the greatest advantage and admission preference. He reflected, “there’s a lot of discussion of equity in admissions and unfair advantage and I would say the highest one is in-state/out-of-state.” Although he was an in-state student and at the time of admission did not see his residency giving him an unfair advantage, once on campus, he felt that others saw his in-state status as playing a role in his admission, more so than his legacy status. Because of the requirement that State University admit a certain percentage of in-state students, he felt that out-of-state students saw themselves at a disadvantage as they had increased competition for a smaller percentage of space in the incoming class. Importantly, Charles himself did not perceive his in-state and legacy status as providing him with a double advantage in the admission process.

Mark perceived that athletes were given a large admission preference that did not serve the institution well. While he believed that the athletic admission policy at State University promoted the admission of a more diverse pool of students, he saw the policy as one that simply looked to admit athletically competitive students, not academically competitive students. Mark felt as though he would rather see State University be a Division III school in which students are more likely to have academic merit weighed equally against athletic merit. He expanded on his stance saying,

Why not give scholarships to the kids who are top academically that are black and Hispanic and LGBTQ or wherever we see our weak spot—why do it through athletics where it’s just an excuse to put more money in the athletics department?

This perception shaped his feelings on the athletics program at State University and his feelings about the institution’s approach to improving diversity among the student body. Even though he did not personally know any of the students who benefitted from an admission preference because they were recruited for an athletics team, he perceived that it detracted from the mission of State University.

The Legacy Experience: Impacts on Self-Efficacy and Engagement

Although participants felt that their legacy status was a large part of their admission experience at State University, the majority of participants felt that it was not something they identified with strongly after arriving on campus. Several common themes arose about the impact of their legacy status on their collegiate experience. First, participants did not feel that they were negatively stereotyped by their peers and faculty at State University based on their status. Second, those who did identify with their legacy status as students found that the moments when they felt most strongly connected to their status was when engaging with other legacy students, whether through friendships or through institutional events specifically for legacy students and their parents. Additionally, many participants felt that their legacy status increased their self-efficacy and positively impacted their engagement, both academically and outside of the classroom. Finally, participants saw their legacy status as playing a role in the ways they intended to continue to engage with State University as alumni.

Facing the Stereotype

Stereotype threat is defined as the “risk of confirming, as self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one’s group” (Steele & Aronson, 1995, p. 797). Opinions among the general public have shifted in recent years with less of the population believing there is value in legacy admissions, and critics claiming that the preferential treatment of legacy students in the admissions process favors students of a lesser caliber simply because of their family connection to the institution (Editorial Board, 2019). Aware of the negative perceptions that exist about legacy status, participants in this study highlighted the ways in which they faced this negative stereotype and how it impacted their experience at State University. Although participants felt there was a negative stereotype of their legacy status because of the assumption of preferential admission treatment, most participants were most struck by the perception of others that as a legacy student their sole reason to attend State University was because of their legacy connection. Four participants felt that the negative perception that they knew or believed their peers held about their legacy status compelled them to work harder academically and be more involved to prove that they deserved to attend State University and were not simply “coasting through” as a result of their parents’ connections to the institution. Importantly though, in spite of their feelings that they must work harder and be more engaged on campus, no participants believed that they were in any way confirming the negative stereotype that they perceived others might have held about their status and possible preferential treatment during admission.

Defending Their Decision. Participants indicated that their peers, faculty, and staff often learned of their legacy status organically, through casual conversations about family or when the participants would mention their family connection to State University. Based on these conversations, the perceptions participants believed others held about them as legacy students

focused on their decisions to attend State University rather than preferential admission treatment. Many indicated that they perceived others thought the only reason they chose to attend State University was either because their parents made them or because of their family connections. They perceived that others did not view their choice to attend State University as wholly their own, which was actually true for David who felt coerced to attend State University. For the rest of the participants however, they felt strongly that they had made the decision to attend State University on their own based on their own preferences and desires.

Caitlin felt that most perceptions about her legacy status were positive; however, she noted that she had encountered some individuals that had negative or negative seeming reactions when they discovered her legacy status. She described these encounters saying “some people think it’s negative like you’re just [attending] because your parents did. It makes me feel sad. I try to like justify I ended up coming here because it was the best option for my family.” Her indication that this was best for her family, and not just for her, highlights the ways in which the college choice process is one that is multi-faceted and often extends beyond the student, including family and other factors that may restrict or impact a student’s decision (Perna, 2006). Although she did not feel that she changed her behaviors based on this specific perception of others, she did feel that she had to defend her decision to attend State University more than non-legacy students simply because of the assumption that others made that she only attended because of her family connection. This highlights the perception that certain motivations to attend an institution such as academic rigor, cost, or sense of belonging are perceived as better or more acceptable than others, such as a family connection (Nurnberg et al., 2012).

Lauren felt that she had experienced negative reactions from other students and perceived that when they questioned her legacy status they made assumptions about her admissibility and decision to attend. She reflected,

I've had interactions with other students who are like "Oh, you're legacy. Is that why you got in? Is that why you wanted to come here?" I don't like it because I don't think it's true. And I didn't come here because my dad went here. That's the connotation of legacy students, and I understand why it is, so I get it, but I don't really like it.

Having high school peers who had gotten into their respective institutions after their parents had made sizeable donations, Lauren understood the perceptions of others about the role her status might have played in her admission to State University, but she was still confident in her own admissibility and felt strongly that she had made the decision to attend on her own, outside of the connection her dad had with State University.

Making Their Mark. Research focused on stereotype threat often looks to negative academic performance by individuals who change their behavior after internalizing the stereotype that others hold about them (Spencer et al., 1999; Steele & Aronson, 1995). The stereotype associated with legacy status is that students are admitted to an institution because of their family connection, regardless of their academic achievements in high school or their preparedness for the institution. In this study however, several participants indicated that they combatted the negative stereotypes held by others about legacy students by performing well academically or intentionally seeking opportunities to engage across campus that would show that they deserved their place on campus at State University. While they did not believe themselves to be inferior or less prepared to be successful than their peers, they did feel the need

to change their behavior to combat the negative perceptions they believe others might have of them as legacy students.

Shannon felt that rather than a negative or positive reaction from others regarding her legacy status, most of her peers and professors were more surprised that she was a legacy student. She reflected on their surprise saying:

I feel like most people are really surprised for some reason that I'm a legacy. I think part of that is because I really worked pretty hard to make my spot on campus. I was never that student slacking or falling asleep in class. That was just never who I was. Most classes have that one kid where you're like, "How did you get here?" And I was never that kid.

The reactions from Shannon's faculty and peers highlights the assumptions about legacy students as being less than other students who were admitted without a family connection.

Engaging as Legacies

State University schedules several events throughout a student's collegiate experience that are marketed strictly to legacy students and their families. Prior to admission, students are invited to campus to participate in a weekend that is marketed as a way to learn about college admissions. During this weekend, legacy students are given the opportunity to interview with admission deans (something unavailable to the general applicant pool), and attend various workshops focused on how to be a competitive applicant at State University or other similar institutions. During parent and family weekend, a brunch event is held for legacy students and their families which typically includes a meet and greet with the president. Finally, during commencement weekend there is a brunch for graduating legacy students and their families. In addition to these annually scheduled events, the institution will often host legacy specific events

during campus-wide events celebrating the anniversaries of admission of specific populations to the institution.

Participants in this study had varied engagement with these activities with nine participants indicating that they had attended legacy events six indicating that they had not attended and one was unaware that these events existed. Although there did not seem to be any correlation between feelings on legacy status and decisions to attend these events, common themes that arose were feelings that these events were a positive way to connect with friends and other legacy families, students feeling that these events were tailored to parents, not students, that these events were marketing tools more than a way to connect, and that decisions to attend or not were often made based on decisions about how they wanted to spend time together as a family.

A Way to Connect. Some participants saw legacy events as a positive way to connect with other legacy families and to interact with students who were having similar experiences to their own. Mark described attending a legacy brunch during parent's weekend and the connection that he made between his friends and their parents. He described the event saying, "it's pretty fun, like we go there, and you sit down with your friend, and then their parents were friends with your parents and haven't seen each other in 20 years." He found that during these events he was able to make deeper connections with his legacy peers and that his parents were also able to reconnect with individuals from their own time at State University.

Henry was able to meet new people at the legacy event he attended. Going to a brunch during parent's weekend he said, "my dad knew a couple of people there and I was talking to their kids. It was a good way to connect with other people having similar experiences." Similar to the ways in which organizations on campus connect students of similar backgrounds or with

similar interests, Henry felt that the legacy event forged connections that he would not have found otherwise. Because of the positive experience he had at the event, he indicated that should his parents return to campus when similar events were taking place, he would like to attend again to continue to make those legacy connections.

For the Parents. For several participants, there was a feeling that while both parents and students were invited to legacy events, the events were more for parents than anyone else. Participants held this perception based on the fact that high level institutional officials were usually invited to speak, which led to parents wanting to attend for the opportunity for face-time, or because the students saw their parents more engaged with other parents than the participants were with other students.

Alice attended various events throughout her time at State University, including the legacy admissions weekend and a brunch during parents' weekend. She described her perception of the events saying, "I don't really understand the legacy thing, so I've always kind of thought it was a weird situation to have special events for legacies, but I did them because my mom wanted me to." For her mom, there was a desire to attend a brunch because the president of the institution would be there, and she wanted to have the opportunity to meet him. Regarding the admission events, Alice perceived that the primary purpose of the event was to satisfy parents and "maybe make the parents feel like 'whew, my kid's going to go to the school that I love.'" Although Alice was happy to attend these events to satisfy her mom, she did not personally feel a strong inclination to attend and saw the events as something that catered more to the interests of parents than students.

Shannon also attended a brunch at her mother's insistence but felt that it was more of a positive experience for her mom than for her. She recollected,

I just remember it being freshman year and being like this is ridiculous. I think she had a better time than I did because it was freshman year and I didn't know many people whereas she was talking to friends.

In spite of her discomfort in attending this event, Shannon did attend the legacy event taking place during graduation weekend, but found that even four years later, it was still mostly parents talking to each other or families keeping to themselves rather than large groups mingling and getting to know each other.

Emily also attended the legacy admission weekend and a brunch with her parents and just like Shannon and Alice, found that it was mostly parents making connections with each other. She described her experience saying "I would say it was fine, it was just something I went to with my parents. It was a lot of the parents talking to each other and discussing their time at State University." For Emily, the legacy connection at these events was strongest amongst the parents, and not something that increased the bond between the student and parent or connected students to each other through their common experience.

Participants who attended these events saw them more as something that highlighted their parent's nostalgia for the institution, rather than a way to foster a connection with legacy students and the institution. Instead of the students becoming more engaged at these events, the students who attended these legacy events throughout their time at State University saw consistently that students kept to themselves while their parents networked or that entire family units did not engage with others. Participants felt that by bringing in specific speakers to these events, often high-level institutional officials, their parents were more inclined to attend. Because of their parent's desire to meet and engage with those officials, participants perceived they were strongly encouraged to attend these events.

A Marketing Tool. There were some participants who perceived that these legacy specific events at State University were more of a marketing tool that the institution used, rather than a heartfelt way to connect legacy families with each other and the institution. John was preparing for graduation and noted that he was being invited to events simply because of his legacy status. He did not recollect being invited to other events during his time at State University other than when he was first admitted and felt that the institution was more focused on the business aspect of the legacy experience and the way it benefitted the institution, rather than on the experience of the student. He described his feelings saying:

When you get admitted it's all "rah, rah, rah" for the parents. And there's nothing for about 4 years and then the parents are back, you're graduating, and now all of a sudden there's a bunch of events. So you know, legacy seems to be important when it's convenient for the college and when it's convenient for the parents. As a student I think the legacy aspect is really for businesses benefit.

Because he felt that his legacy status was more of a marketing tool for the institution and that these events were simply a way to try to bring in more money from parents and future alumni, John did not see his legacy status as playing a large role in who he was as a student, it was simply another identifying factor that the institution used to track and market directly to him and his family.

Caitlin had similar feelings about the purpose of legacy events and saw State University using them as a way to encourage families to not only donate more money, but also to set up families to want to send their children to the institution in the future, guaranteeing more revenue for the school. While she had not attended any legacy events during her time at State University, she reflected on her perceptions of them saying:

I understand why it's positive, but it can be a fake image that you're trying to sell. It's a great marketing scheme—it's about family and getting your family to pay tuition, spend money on the college and give back.

For Caitlin it seemed that the institution's emphasis on legacy students and their families was not meant to strengthen connections to the school or to emphasize family bonds but was simply an attempt to ensure continued revenue.

Time Better Spent Elsewhere. Six participants indicated that they were aware of legacy events at State University but had not attended. Three stated that they had not attended because their parents did not visit campus and thus they did not feel inclined to go to an event tailored to both parents and students. For the other three, they perceived that their family was more inclined to spend time together or with their own friends through their own informal legacy events, than at an institutional event where they might now know any other attendees.

Frank discussed how during homecoming and parents weekend, when these legacy events are taking place, that his family was trying to make the most of their time together and with their friends, and thus do not include the institution's legacy events in their schedules. He described a typical parents or homecoming weekend stating,

They have a bunch of friends who are here and they have a big plan, so it's just a busy time. We have our own agendas, but we're also trying to spend as much time with each other as possible.

Because of the closeness of his family, and the fact that his parents still had many friends who were also closely connected to the institution and visited for these large weekend celebrations, there was less of an inclination to attend institutional events, so they could focus their time on the connections and relationships they already had by having their own shadow legacy gatherings.

Lauren perceived that her family did not attend legacy events because her parents did not care as much about their legacy status as much as they did about simply spending time together on campus. Although her parents did not attend parents weekend, she stated that they regularly attended homecoming and that they “have their own things that they’d rather be doing” than attending an institutional legacy specific event. She described their decision saying “we don’t really reflect on the fact that we’re a part of this legacy group” but rather just enjoy the fact that they are all together in the same place. Additionally, because her father is still closely connected with his classmate from his time at State University, she believes there is more of an interest in spending time with his friends and their children who are now at State University, than with a group of individuals they do not know but simply have legacy status in common.

The lack of interest in legacy events voiced by Julia stemmed from her parents’ preference for family time as well as what she perceived as their introverted nature. When discussing their decision to not attend these events she said, “my family likes to do celebration things with just our family; big get-togethers with these people we’ve never met before we’re just going to stand in a corner together.” Unlike Frank and Lauren, Julia’s family’s lack of interest in the events was not impacted by other relationships on campus that took precedence over a State University legacy event. Rather, there was little to no interest in making connections based on their legacy status with other families, particularly at times when they simply wanted to be together as a family unit.

Continuing the Legacy

Many legacy students have had alumni experiences through their parents, grandparents, or siblings. All participants in this study indicated that they had spent time at State University as

a child, had engaged with their parents' classmates, or had heard stories from their parents about their experiences at State University.

Participants in this study had clear visions of how they intended to engage as alumni with State University based on their family legacy and their own college experiences. For all participants, their individual experiences at State University and the ways they had engaged with the institution had the greatest impact on how they envisioned their future alumni experiences. As identified in Bean and Eaton's (2002) model, the institutional environment and the integration and self-efficacy participants found on campus impacted their attitudes and intentions to stay committed to State University post-graduation. Key themes that arose were if and how they intended to contribute monetarily to State University, if and how often they intended to visit the institution after graduation, and how, if at all, their parents' engagement as alumni influenced their own intentions as future alumni of State University.

Monetary Contributions. When asked to think about the ways in which they saw themselves engaging with State University post-graduation, donating to the school came up for many participants. Three-quarters of participants indicated that they did intend to donate to State University when they were alumni; however, each indicated that they perceived that their financial contributions to the institution would not start until they had been steadily employed for several years. Participants indicated that they were more likely to donate to specific areas on campus, whether that be to specific organizations, academic departments, or scholarship funds, rather than to the general fund. The perception of participants was that the general fund would not support the areas on campus that had impacted their own individual experiences and was not used to promote the mission of the institution. Caitlin, who had worked on-campus for the phone bank that reached out to alumni for donations, gave her thoughts on her future donations:

I kind of learned that if you donate to a specific fund, like student organizations or a scholarship fund, it's going directly to that. It's not going to build a new media center instead of a new dorm which is what we actually need, because students at the end of the day don't really get to decide what buildings are being built. So, I'd actually like to donate to the scholarship fund, because then I know where it's going.

This type of targeted giving highlights important elements of Caitlin's campus experience, and the feelings of connections she has to the campus. Like her parents, Caitlin already has fond memories of her college experience at State University.

Charles, also saw himself also being intentional and purposeful about where he donated money, indicating that he would donate to specific departments and campus organizations with which he was engaged. He expanded on his expectations saying that by donating "I don't see myself being connected as an alum to the college officially, it's more likely I would be connected to my organizations and people from those specific organizations." This decision to only contribute to specific areas on campus where he felt a personal connection, reflected his survey responses that indicated that his most positive on-campus experiences had been with students and his experiences with staff on campus had been more negative. Whereas he saw great benefits in the student relationships he had formed with classmates and friends within organizations, his overall perception of the institution through his interactions with faculty and staff were more negative and influenced the connection he felt to the school as a whole.

Returning to Campus. For many participants, the concept of being an actively engaged alum was closely tied to returning to campus to visit, either for official campus events, or on their own throughout the years. Depending on where they saw themselves living after graduation, participants saw themselves either visiting frequently or only occasionally for large

campus events such as homecoming. Matt, who was graduating a year early, planned to return more regularly during the first year as an alumnus to connect with his friends and in regards to the future said,

I feel like I'll come back for all the homecomings 'cause that would be fun. It's a great campus and I like it, so I know I'll be back probably once or twice a year as long as I can get the time off.

He expanded on this, stating that he hoped to stay involved with his fraternity, which would require regular visits to campus. He saw returns to campus not only as something that he wanted to do for his own pleasure, but also as a way to remain connected in important ways to an organization that was a key part of his college experience.

John saw his legacy connection as a driver in how often he saw himself visiting campus. He reflected:

As a legacy, I would say that I do feel a little bit more attached to the area. I've spent the better part of 20 years of my life with this place. It's not just college. I'd come back for sports events, whenever I just enjoy the area, the history, and my personal relationship with that. I'd be more likely to I think just show up out of the blue to visit. I'm probably more likely to do that than come back during homecoming.

He saw his relationship with State University and the surrounding area as different than his peers because of his legacy status and perceived that he would visit the area more often not just because of his time at the institution, but because he had grown up with the institution.

Family Impressions. The five participants who had very strong, positive feelings about their legacy status were more likely to see connections between how their parents were engaged as alumni and their own intentions to be actively engaged as alumni in the future. A common

thread for these participants was their parents' emotional connection to State University and many memories from their childhood surrounding State University, whether through visits, reunions, or frequent stories about their parents' time at the institution.

Growing up, Frank often visited State University with his family, for football games, tailgates, and casual visits to campus. He discussed how fondly he remembered those family trips and how he would like to continue a similar tradition with his own family one day:

I would like to come back more often when I have a family and kind of expose my family to State University similar to like my parents did because I knew that was an important aspect of my childhood. I thought what my dad, mom, and grandfather exposed me to when I was little was perfect. It's something that I really enjoyed and I hope that when I have kids then they can kind of experience something similar to that.

Lauren, who also had positive memories as a child attending get-togethers with her dad and his State University roommates, both on and off campus, saw her own alumni experience closely mirroring the ways in which she saw her father engaged. She described the influence her father's engagement had on her own potential engagement saying,

I see my dad's relationship with this school and I'm like that would probably be me because that's how I see an alum of State University acting. I'd like to see myself still hanging out with my college friends when I'm that old.

For Lauren, seeing her dad's experience not only inspired her to attend State University, but shaped her vision of the strength of relationships that is possible after graduation. By simply being a legacy student, Lauren was primed to have certain expectations about the college experience and the alumnus experience.

Nearly all participants saw their legacy status as a positive aspect of their experience, and also saw the benefits of staying connected to State University after graduation, whether through their own future families or through their collegiate relationships they hoped would last. Just as their views of what their collegiate experiences at State University would be like were shaped by their parents' experiences, their perceptions of how to engage as alumni and how to keep strong connections with the institution were influenced by their perception of their parents' alumnus experience. The level of self-efficacy held by students influences their college experiences.

Self-Efficacy

Student success and integration is impacted by each individual's self-assessment of their capabilities, which influences the ways in which they choose to engage with the institution. As Bean and Eaton's (2002) model indicates, students who have positive self-assessments are more likely to have positive feelings about institutional fit, feel more loyal to their institution, and are motivated to engaged and persist. These self-assessments focus on three aspects of self-efficacy: self-regulatory efficacy or the belief that they are able to manage themselves and the necessary tasks to meet academic standards and goals, academic self-efficacy reflecting their perception of their ability to meet their academic goals, and social self-efficacy which accounts for a student's belief of their ability to engage in social situations and maintain relationships.

Participants in this study indicated varying levels of each type of self-efficacy in their own self-assessments of their ability to persist and succeed at State University. In completing the survey, most participants indicated high self-efficacy in all three domains identified in the CSEI: academic, social, and personal. In interviews, highlighting the cyclical nature of learning from their experiences, many of the participants indicated high self-efficacy based on their past experiences. Other participants indicated that they felt confident in their abilities to be successful

because of their abilities to manage their time and academic demands they faced on campus. Lastly, some participants attributed their confidence in their abilities to succeed at State University to peer support and their ability to maintain strong relationships.

Transition to College

A key component of how students perceived their self-efficacy at State University hinged on their perceptions of their transitions to college life and the academic expectations of State University. In contrast to prior research on legacy students (Martin & Spenner, 2009), the participants in this study felt as though they were as prepared, if not more prepared, than their peers to succeed academically at State University. All of the participants indicated that their high schools had encouraged academic excellence and had pushed them to make greater academic efforts and helped them feel prepared to manage academic expectations. Additionally, some saw their abilities to transfer credit into their curricula at State University as a key component of their ability to transition into the academic discipline, whereas others saw their ability to take a gap year as critical in their adjustment to college. Finally, those who were involved in Greek organizations saw those communities as playing key roles in their abilities to be academically successful at State University. It is important to note that many of these transitions that aided in the participants' feelings of positive self-efficacy were rooted in privilege. As noted in other research on legacy students, this population often enters college with greater privilege than their peers (Martin & Spenner, 2009; Schmidt, 2010). The participants in this study confirmed their privilege when they noted attending their private high schools, their ability to afford to take gap years, and their ability to afford to join Greek organizations, which come with a significant financial burden in the form of dues and other monetary obligations.

High School Preparation. Based on Barron’s (2017) criteria, State University is considered a “most competitive institution” (p. 255). Colleges that are considered most competitive typically require high school rank in the top 10-20% and high school grades ranging from A to B+. The participants in this study came from varied high school experiences with students from public, private, and boarding schools. Despite these different experiences, many saw their high school experiences as an important factor in their confidence and ability to succeed academically. Preparation in high school was important to participants as it shaped their perceptions of their ability to be successful and for many provided a rigorous academic experience. This high school preparation helped negate the risk of stereotype threat for the participants as they knew that they were academically on par with their peers at State University. Katherine remarked “coming from my high school, which was very competitive and very like, trying to get you to be engaged, it was definitely kind of an easy transition for me” to be engaged in academics at State University. Caitlin expressed a similar sentiment, attributing her confidence that she was prepared for academics at State University, saying:

I think where my boarding school really excelled was teaching me how to read effectively and speak to others and create really good conversation and debate in the classroom...my school definitely prepared me for less busy work and more college type work.

Having these strong, positive high school experiences, helped participants in the transition to State University academics, but also made a positive impact on their self-efficacy and their belief that they would be successful academically in the future at State University.

Transfer Credits. State University has a liberal transfer credit policy, with most incoming first-year students bringing in transfer credit from pre-matriculation exams or dual

enrollment experiences. Institutional policy allows transfer credit to count directly towards major and minor requirements, as well as some general education requirements. This policy played an important role for three participants who saw their transfer credit as an important factor in their ability to be successful academically or to reduce the overall cost of their attendance. Colin attributed his success within his major to the fact that his Advanced Placement credit applied to introductory courses within his major, thus allowing him to quickly move into higher level coursework and home in on an area of interest within that major. Lauren expressed a similar sentiment, indicating that her transfer credit allowed her to complete her primary major quickly and thus she was able to add on a second major that provided her with a well-rounded academic experience for her future career. For Matt, his ability to bring in transfer credit reduced the number of credits necessary for graduation, enabling him to graduate a year early and focus more on preparation for becoming a Certified Public Accountant. These students felt that their ability to bring in transfer credit reduced their stress about the academic curriculum as they were able to move more quickly through the requirements and could direct their focus away from pre-requisites and towards higher level coursework. Additionally, their college level credit indicated they had previous success with college level coursework which could counter the negative implication that they were only admitted due to family connections.

Gap Year Experience. Two of the students in this study participated in gap year experiences. Emily spent a year working for Americorps and Lauren spent her gap year studying abroad in South America. During their gap year experiences, both Emily and Lauren felt that they gained the skills and focus necessary to navigate their collegiate experience. Lauren described the positive impact of her experience living alone abroad as giving her the “confidence to be fine living in a college dorm and meeting new people.” By having this experience away

from her parents and having to navigate unfamiliar territory on her own, she felt that she gained a skill set that prepared her to navigate the college experience and feel confident that she would navigate it successfully. Emily described a similar experience, explaining that her gap year had helped her learn new responsibilities and how to be an adult. As a result, for both Lauren and Emily, they came into college feeling less concerned about the transition to being on their own without their parents and more confident in their ability to tackle the challenges that might arise during their time at State University.

Greek Support. Ten participants were active in social sororities or fraternities and felt strongly that their Greek organization was valuable in their transition to State University and that it provided the necessary support to encourage their academic efforts. David described the role his fraternity brothers played in his experience:

The brothers in my fraternity have helped me a lot with my grades. My grades have been pretty poor since getting here, 'cause just the lack of engagement, a total lack of desire to go to my classes. They really helped me pull out of that kind of [that] tailspin and keep me engaged.

Katherine similarly saw her sorority as a valuable resource, something the organization put a large emphasis on. She remarked, “they have different study hours that you can attend, and they definitely are pushing being able to have that resource within the sorority.” Katherine saw this resource and structure as beneficial to her own academic experience as it pushed her to focus more on her academic efforts.

Even though research has shown that participation in Greek life has a negative effect on academic performance (De Donato & Thomas, 2017), the legacy participants in this study who were actively engaged in social Greek organizations perceived that their engagement in those

organizations was beneficial and aided in their academic success. Legacy Greek participants believed that their Greek organizations were key in not only encouraging their academic engagement, but also in helping them find success as they transitioned from high school to State University academic standards.

Past Success Leads to Future Success

For many participants, experiencing success in the classroom and in academic pursuits led them to feel more confident and believe they would find continued success in their future academic endeavors. Hannah described her self-assessment saying “it was mostly just that I felt like if I had done so much beforehand I was like, I can figure this out...I can handle this.” Similarly, Charles described an increase in his self-efficacy as he spent more time at State University:

That [feeling I could be successful] definitely is something that has changed in the past year. I came in very, I guess I wasn't super confident...kind of I guess insecure. But I think because of my experiences here and the success I've had has made me feel more confident. I think everyone's kind of nervous about it when they get to college if they don't know what to expect. Especially here because everyone in high school, was like good grades and then you get here....But like if this is stuff I'm doing in my fall semester and spring semester my first year, then like, I can do it for the next few years.

However, he also recognized the flexibility of his self-efficacy and that he would continue to reevaluate and go through self-assessments based on grades and how he felt he was doing academically. At the culmination of his first year he was feeling positive about his ability to manage his academic experience and be successful, and he recognized that his assessment might change as he encountered new challenges and experiences.

Managing it All

The ability to manage their time played a large role in how participants perceived their self-regulatory efficacy. Self-regulatory efficacy is an individual's belief that they can manage themselves and the necessary tasks to meet academic standards and goals (Zimmerman, 1995). Noting another aspect of privilege in his experience, Colin indicated that he felt high self-regulatory efficacy, mostly because he did not face certain restrictions that others might face such as needing to hold a job while enrolled and he was also able to move off campus. He indicated:

I don't have to work while I'm here...so like that frees up time for me to be able to apply all my time to class. I was able to move off campus...and I think that just frees up your lifestyle so you can really be in control of how you spend your time.

Henry described feeling nervous about his transition to college and whether or not he would be able to manage his time well since he had not been responsible for that in the past, however as he gained "a pretty solid grasp on my classes and my workload" and was now more confident that he would continue to be successful at State University.

Katherine also felt that her ability to manage her time well was an important factor in her self-regulatory efficacy. However, despite her confidence, she indicated that she had not managed her time well when she first arrived on campus, but as she learned to manage it more effectively, her self-efficacy increased dramatically. She reflected:

I didn't know how to manage my time because in high school I'd go to school and then do homework. It was very structured versus when I got here it was like I have a random 3-hour block in my day, what am I going to do now? [I figured it out through] a lot of trial and error.

This trial and error came about through watching others in her organizations and learning how she was most productive during those free times that she had not encountered before. But through learning how to manage her time and finding herself becoming more productive and prepared for her academics, Katherine felt her self-efficacy increase and she felt confident it would continue to increase as she kept managing her time well throughout her time at State University.

A Network of Support

Social-self efficacy is indicated by a student's confidence in their ability to make and maintain friendships and relationships (Sherer & Adams, 1983; H. M. Smith & Betz, 2000). For most of the participants, social engagement was a vital aspect of their collegiate experience. In completing the online survey, most students' self-perception was that they were *very to extremely confident* in their ability to engage in social interactions ranging from socializing with roommates to making friends. Discussing their survey answers in the second interview, participants indicated that these social interactions and relationships provided a layer of support that impacted their self-efficacy and confidence in their ability to be successful at State University. Frank described his social fraternity as a key resource in his ability to navigate and feel confident in the academic landscape of State University, saying "I think that's just helped me so much. I know parts of freshman year were tough adjusting academically...and just having guys you can talk to about it and share those experiences with and see what you're going through." Similarly, Alice indicated that she saw her strong relationships with her family as invaluable in helping her feel more confident in her academic abilities. Seeing her own confidence heavily impacted by the confidence her family had in her abilities, Alice indicated that she relies on her family to a great extent when she faces overwhelming challenges in her

academic experience. However, knowing that they believed in her, led her to have higher self-efficacy and feeling very confident that she would find continued success in her academics.

Legacy Leg-Up

For several participants, the fact that they were legacy students, impacted their self-efficacy as it related to their ability to be academically successful. Colin explained the positive impact his legacy connection through his mom had on his self-efficacy as:

You kind of have that feeling that everything's going to be okay because you could see that someone where it was okay...I knew I could talk to my mother about that to a deeper extent than I think most of my peers could have.

From his perspective, seeing that his mother had been successful and survived her own experience at State University, and knowing that he could reach out to her, increased his own confidence in his abilities that he too would make it through the academic challenges.

John, perceiving that other legacy students were more successful than non-legacies, attributed that success and his own confidence in his ability to manage the academic rigors of Statue University to legacy status. He described how growing up hearing about the academic culture at State University helped him feel more prepared and helped him manage his own expectations of how he would master the academics he had heard so much about as a child saying,

State University does have a pretty wild work ethic that has persisted for a long time, so you know I was under no illusions that I was coming to a party school and that I was going to have an easy time of it. So I knew how to set my expectations.

Because he grew up with an in-depth understanding of State University from his parents, John felt that he knew how to prepare himself for the academic experience and had a greater sense of self-efficacy about his ability to tackle the tasks necessary to be academically successful.

Engagement Across Campus

According to Astin (1984), “student involvement refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience” (p. 518), which includes both classroom and out-of-classroom experiences. This theory of student involvement highlights that students must make decisions throughout their collegiate experience as to how much time and energy they wish to devote to various endeavors whether they be focused on the in-class experience or experiences outside of the classroom. This decision making requires that students be intentional about how they spend their time on campus. For all of the participants who were actively engaged in activities outside of the classroom, this intentionality was a key part of their experience.

Except for Julia, engagement outside of the classroom was often mentioned as the participants discussed their experiences at State University. However, all participants in this study perceived that they were actively engaged in their academic experience as well, not only through classroom participation but through study abroad experiences, participation in research, and through regular interaction with their faculty.

As discussed, students’ interactions with the institution and individuals within the institution influences the ways, in both breadth and depth, in which students engage during their higher education experience (Bean & Eaton, 2002). The influence of institutional interactions and their interactions with others, particularly family members who also attended State University, contributed to students’ perceptions of the role of their engagement and the decisions

they made about how to be engaged. Many participants discussed intentionality about the choices they made. For example, some chose organizations to support their future goals or to provide a respite from academic stress. Others indicated a decision to pursue engagement in activities similar to those in which their family members engaged, or to increase their engagement because their family members had not been as engaged in their own collegiate experience.

In academics, participants saw their level of engagement motivated by perceptions of their peers and the feeling that they needed to work harder to be on par with their classmates. And while there was an outlier, participants felt that it was important to find a balance between academics and engagement outside of the classroom. Others chose organizations and manners of engagement to make up for ways in which the institution did not meet their needs in areas such as mental well-being and to increase their awareness of the experiences of diverse populations. Finally, some saw their engagement as a way to not only give back to the campus and make a place for themselves, but also as a way to validate their admission to the institution and ensure they were contributing to the campus. The one outlier, Julia, who came from a more introverted family, chose to not engage outside of the classroom, placing all of her focus and engagement on academics.

A Well-Rounded Experience

For the 15 participants who were actively involved outside of the classroom, participants saw their engagement as a benefit to their collegiate experience and a way to ensure that they were staying connected both to the institution and their academic requirements.

Katherine, who is involved in a social sorority, a service fraternity, and a club athletics team saw her engagement in these different organizations as having a strong, positive impact on her time at State University. She described the role they played in her experience saying “they’ve

definitely given me a great group of friends, fun opportunities, and the ability to feel a part of something. I feel like I'd be a little be lost without them.” Especially during her first year, Katherine saw that her engagement in these organizations enabled her to quickly find a group that would support her and help her to navigate various aspects of her collegiate experience, which kept her from feeling lost or actually getting lost in the social scene and academic requirements of the institution.

Henry was not actively involved in any organizations but felt that his strong relationships with his friends provided ample opportunity for engagement across campus. However, he did perceive that over time he would begin to engage more on campus, indicating that eventually he hoped that he could have leadership roles within an organization. He reflected that “I’m hoping to get more involved. It was just at the beginning of the year I was doing stuff for orientation so I didn’t have much of an opportunity [to get involved].” By prioritizing his acclimation to campus, he did not find specific organizations to join, but he knew that it was something that would benefit his experience and would provide him opportunities to engage in new ways with the institution.

David found that his engagement outside of the classroom helped him stay connected to his peers, but also helped him to stay focused on his academic commitments. A member of a social fraternity and several organizations that related to his major, David perceived that the relationships he built in these groups helped him to have a well-rounded and successful experience at State University, even though he regularly thought about transferring out. His fraternity was instrumental in making sure he went to class and was engaged, and he saw that his major related to extracurricular engagement, which was crucial in keeping him engaged with his coursework. He reflected on his experiences saying, “It’s nice to be with a group of people who

have all gone through the struggle with me.” By interacting with individuals who understood his experiences with course content and being a part of organizations that encouraged academic success, David found comradery and the support he needed to persist. The support he found through his peers in his organizations outside of the classroom were critical in his success inside the classroom and his somewhat precarious commitment to persisting at the institution. Although he saw benefits in the social interactions these organizations provided, it was their ability to support him in his academic pursuits that he saw having the most positive impact on his experience at State University.

As Bean and Eaton’s (2002) model suggests, these positive social interactions lead to greater confidence and positive self-efficacy, seems to have led participants to feel a greater sense of integration on campus. Following the feedback loop identified in their model, participants who had these positive interactions felt greater integration on campus and thus felt more encouraged to consider their engagement with their social groups and with those areas that supported their academic success.

Family Influence

Most participants indicated that they joined various organizations on campus or participated in activities outside of the classroom based on their own interests and goals, several highlighted the ways in which their family’s experiences at State University or suggestions of their parents, influenced their decision to get involved. Even though participants indicated that they knew of the variety of ways in which their parents were engaged on campus during their time at State University, it was Greek involvement that held the most connection for 10 of the participants. Other participants indicated that their parents suggested they engage on campus in

particular ways, however these suggestions were more activity based and not encouragement to join specific organizations on campus.

Greek Life. At State University, approximately 27% of undergraduate students are members of a social fraternity or sorority. However, among the participants for this study 62.5% of men and women were involved in Greek life. Even though the participants indicated involvement in a variety of organizations and activities across campus, the majority were involved in social fraternities and sororities. Participants indicated their desire to participate or not participate in these organizations stemmed from their family's experiences with Greek life. Of participants who were involved in Greek organizations, there were no trends in the specific chapters that students considered or eventually joined. Alice discussed her decision to join a social sorority in this way, "because I think because my whole family has been in Greek life, I think I just kind of, it, it did kind of become in my head, just a part of the college experience." Lauren expressed similar sentiments when explaining her choice to join a social sorority:

That was definitely my parents. My dad when he went here was president of a fraternity. My mom went to [a large public university in the south] and was in a sorority. She was also like a fraternity sweetheart and little sister and like I just have the most Greek life parents ever of all time. So I actually considered Greek life in my college search...but I always knew even when I was younger that I wanted to be part of Greek life.

Conversely, although a minority voice among the participants, John expressed an aversion to Greek life, saying "So I came into school with an aversion to Greek life. My mother was in a sorority, [and my] father was very opposed to Greek life, so I came up with a decently negative view." He explained that because of the negative view of his father and the neutral views of his mother he was exposed to from his parents and then interactions he had with individuals

involved in social Greek organizations, he did not see himself fitting into that type of organization. However, he appreciated the social aspect that came from Greek involvement and instead chose to join a service fraternity where he felt that he would make the social connections and engage with an organization that he felt better represented his priorities and goals.

Influenced by their parents, the normative beliefs students entered State University with played a role for the participants in setting initial expectations and perspectives on either promoting or not Greek involvement. The fact that many of the legacy students in this study did join a sorority or fraternity at levels almost double those of the general student population suggests a strong link between legacy status and Greek involvement. As noted with John too, parental influence was strong in setting up views of Greek life on campus. As Bean and Eaton's (2002) model highlights, such normative beliefs influence the interactions students have on campus and in this case the interactions participants had with Greek life seem to have impacted their desire to engage or avoid these organizations.

Suggested Engagement. Participants indicated that a primary way in which their parents impacted their engagement outside of the classroom was through making suggestions about resources to utilize or reminders about various activities going on across campus. Most participants felt that this parental influence was natural and was not an indication of their parent's connection to the institution, but simply a result of their parents understanding of higher education resources. One participant, however, felt that her mother's love of State University led her mother to be more connected to what was happening across campus and thus increased the suggestions from her as to how to engage across campus.

Alice described how her mom uses social media to keep apprised of daily activities happening across campus, and then shares and encourages Alice to participate. Although Alice is

engaged in many organizations across campus on her own, she found that her mom's suggestions pushed her to try smaller activities that were not tied to the organizations in which Alice was already involved, and she commented that she would not have experienced otherwise. Alice explained that her mom once encouraged her to go to a special dinner being held at one of the dining halls and "she'll send me things all the time from different State University accounts, the programming and the postings that State University has. That's helped me a lot [to figure out how to be engaged on campus]." While Alice thinks that her mom would have encouraged her in similar ways had she attended another institution, she sees her mom's love of State University and her understanding of the campus and institution as a whole as playing a role in how much her mom follows online and how much pressure she puts on Alice to participate in various activities. Because of her mother's connection to State University, she may have been more aware of the options available outside of class and how to access information about these opportunities.

For Matt, he saw his dad's experience and connection to State University as playing a role in the way he engaged with resources outside of the classroom. Matt's dad, who is actively engaged in alumni activities is still closely connected to the institution and is on campus often for various events. As a student in the business school, Matt participated in various recruiting and networking activities. To aid in his preparation and find ways to make connections, his dad encouraged him to use the career center, identifying where the building was on campus and what resources and tools they could offer him.

While many participants felt as though the institution had changed drastically since their parents attended, many still found ways that their parent's connections to the school influenced their social and academic engagement. In particular, students who described their parents as still

closely connected to the institution, found their parents offering advice, both solicited and unsolicited, about how to make the most of their time on campus. However the advice came to them, the participants who received such suggestions from their parents always followed through with their parent's suggestions and felt that the guidance their parents provided them benefitted them and had a positive impact on their engagement and experience at State University.

Peer Pressure

Although all of the participants perceived that they were actively engaged in their academic and classroom experience, how they perceived their peers seemed to play a key role for some in motivating them to put in greater effort. Caitlin, Frank, and Mark all reported GPAs ranging from 3.3–4.0, each perceived that they needed to put in more effort than their peers to find this academic success. Caitlin felt as though her private boarding school prepared her well for college academics but once she arrived on campus,

I started to compare my performance with other students who are around me. I realized that I wasn't doing as well...and that kind of pressured me in a positive way to do better...I kind of realized that my success needs to have a higher bar.

While she did not attribute this self-doubt to stereotypes, she later indicated that she regularly questions the weight her legacy status and identification as a Latina gave her application and whether or not she was admissible without her ethnicity and family connection.

Mark attributed his ability to be successful to the work ethic his parents instilled in him, and saw the role this played in his own experience saying "I do feel like I work harder than the majority of people here because a lot of people here kind of coast on natural intelligence." Although he recognized that he was academically successful and was an "above average

student,” he attributed his getting to that point as a direct result of the fact that he worked harder than his peers and put in more effort to achieve his success.

Frank saw what he identified as the campus stress culture as something that both annoyed and motivated him to stay engaged academically. He defined the stress culture on campus as a culture in which students were constantly comparing themselves to their peers, trying to prove that they had more work to do than each other, and always pushing themselves to achieve higher grades. He described how the stress culture motivated him saying:

It’s more of an annoyance. But like at another school where people aren’t working this hard I think I would work less hard. But here you’re seeing everybody else do it and you almost feel bad at times if you’re not doing something when you could be. And I think that’s really helped me get this GPA I have now, so I can’t really complain about it.

In watching his peers devote so much energy to their academics, even if he felt that they were unnecessarily stressing themselves, Frank was motivated to stay engaged academically and put in more effort than he would have otherwise in his academics. He was confident in his ability to be successful academically but saw his peers’ engagement as a motivator to push him to be more engaged academically than he would be elsewhere and a key factor in his academic achievement.

Except for Caitlin, participants did not indicate directly that their legacy status played a role in their motivation to push themselves to increase their academic engagement or in their feelings that they needed to work harder. However, their perception of their peers’ academic drive and success played a key role in their engagement and influenced the effort they put into academic experience and in the success they found.

Balancing Academics

Astin's (1984) theory of student involvement discusses how intense academic engagement can prove restrictive of social engagement, stating that "being academically involved is strongly related to satisfaction with all aspects of college life except friendships with other students" (p. 525). This proved true for Julia, who was very involved in her classwork and research related to her major but did not have any strong social relationships on campus.

Although she had tried out several organizations across campus throughout her time at State University, she did not commit to what she saw as the work of forming relationships because of concern it would detract from her academics. She described her thought process saying:

Having to organize to see and socialize out of class means that I have less time to do my work. So it's like do I want to take that gamble and go out and do something with someone if maybe I won't get my work done?

Although Julia did not see her lack of friendships on campus as detrimental to her experience, when completing the survey she self-evaluated her social self-efficacy as lower on average than other participants. In part, the manifestation of Julia picking a focus on academics over forming relationships also connects to the "stress" culture noted above.

Unlike Julia, other participants sought to find a balance between academics and extracurricular engagement, noting that their ability to foster friendships and pursue activities that were not academically focused was helpful for their overall well-being. Other than Julia, all participants indicated through the survey and interviews that they perceived high levels of self-efficacy related to both academic and social activities. By finding a balance between their academic pursuits and their social activities, these participants felt that they were better able to meet their personal academic goals. While Katherine acknowledged that her academics took up a

significant amount of her time, she reflected on her decision to prioritize her engagement in her social sorority and on an intramural athletic team saying, “I feel like I’d be a little lost without them. They’ve given me the ability to feel a part of something and gave me a nice structure for taking on my classwork.” For Katherine there was enormous value in her organizations and the friendships she developed through them. Although her participation in them required more effort to balance her time and academic commitments, she knew that her extracurricular engagement and her relationships in them were just as important to her collegiate experience. By balancing her extracurricular and academic engagement she felt that she was invigorated and well-prepared to take on her academic experience.

Similarly, John saw the relationships he built outside of the classroom and the organizations he participated in as tied into his academic engagement. For him, he felt that he spent more time on his pursuits outside of the classroom than on those directly related to his courses. However, all of his extracurricular engagement, and often his friendships, related in some way to his academic interests, thus making all of his engagement at State University feel as though it was academically related. John reflected on the balance and connections he found saying:

I think when you look at college, you’re engaged way more out of the classroom than in. It’s just the nature of it. I’ve kind of covered the gambit [in my extracurriculars] but the ones I’ve stuck with relate to my courses. And a lot of the classes I’m in have outside components and with friends we all get together and talk about the content of our courses. A lot of people at this university seem very excited to talk about academic topics outside of the academic environment.

John felt that his relationships with his friends often were grounded in academic interests and his extracurricular engagement supported his academics. These connections enabled him to spend more time focused on his experiences outside of the classroom, while still maintaining a focus on his academic pursuits.

A common theme for participants was the importance of academic engagement. However, as important as they felt it was, most participants recognized the value in a holistic collegiate experience. Although they pushed themselves to reach their academic goals, they sought balance in their engagement so that they would be able to keep the drive necessary to be successful.

Additional Support

When completing the survey, 11 participants stated that they believed State University only provided *some* or *very little* support for their overall well-being, and 13 stated they thought State University only provided *some* or *very little* help with managing non-academic responsibilities. Thus, most of the students in this study expressed a lack of institutional support for supporting their non-classroom experiences. When asked to explain their perception, participants indicated that they felt there was consensus across campus that there was not enough support for student mental well-being. Participants saw this as a challenge that students faced as they understood that having support for their mental health was not only good for their safety, but also for their overall well-being and ability to have a positive collegiate experience.

As students discussed their perceptions, a common theme that arose was that the counseling center was not adequately staffed to meet the needs of students seeking services. However, the wellness center as a whole, which provides various services and opportunities for engagement, was viewed positively by students, with many saying that the resources available in

the center were a step in the right direction in supporting student well-being and providing resources for students to manage their responsibilities. Additionally, participants, who felt that they lacked the support they desired from the counseling center, indicated that they found support in other ways through their engagement across campus.

Emily reflected on why she indicated that State University only provided some support for her overall well-being saying:

The student wellness is a great initiative, but they just don't have the ability to support the entire student body. I have to do long term mental health care and I went to the counseling center and they're like we can't see you for 6 weeks, you need to find something off campus.

While she was able to find a way to get the care she needed away from State University, she also stated that she used her engagement across campus as a way to further support her mental well-being. In addition to being involved in a research lab and musical performance groups, Emily was inspired to join a theater organization that focuses on diversity and mental health. She described her involvement saying:

I've been writing poetry for a while about my mental health. And just seeing them perform, I felt like I found a good, supportive community with them. And being able to share diverse stories where I can educate people is really impactful.

For Emily, her ability to share her own experiences, and also be a part of an organization where she felt supported in her mental health journey, helped to bridge the gap that she felt from the lack of institutional resources.

Mark described a similar experience with the counseling center, where he felt the need to seek professional help and was told that he could not meet with anyone for 4 months. Although

he was able to find the counseling help he needed off campus, he felt that the school did not adequately provide the resources necessary for his well-being and to help him manage his responsibilities. In addition to finding support of campus, Mark described how he regularly spent time with friends at the gym doing a variety of activities. For him, he saw this physical activity and engagement as extremely beneficial to his overall well-being, both physically and mentally, and a way to take a break from the stress and pressures of the academic aspect of his collegiate experience.

In addition to the flaws with the counseling center, some participants indicated that other support services on campus were lacking. Jessica reflected on her experience when she needed a car for off-campus health services and when seeking to relocate her residence on campus due to issues with her roommate. After reaching out to accessibility services and residence life for both situations, Jessica felt that her requests were never addressed, even with frequent follow-up on her part. She reflected, “there’s just been a lack of consistent communication between student services that I’ve experienced with this that’s made it a little frustrating.” When she did not find the support she desired, she found other options to get the transportation she needed and adjusted her academic schedule to limit her time with her roommate. Jessica found her own ways to cope through her social organizations and supportive relationships on campus.

Although the majority of participants saw flaws in the support that the institution provided for their well-being, they found ways to be engaged across campus that helped to offset those flaws and in the case of Emily, to hopefully make a positive impact on other individuals on campus who were perhaps facing similar struggles to her own. For the students who did not feel that there were gaps in the institutional support for well-being and non-academic responsibilities

they either had found success in receiving services or had not felt that they needed any additional support from the institution.

Diverse Engagement

For many participants, they saw value in their interaction with individuals of different backgrounds than themselves. As Kuh (2008) has identified, exploring cultures and worldviews different from their own is a high-impact educational practice that increases student retention and engagement. Of the students in the most recent admitted class at State University, 55% of students identified as White. All participants in this study identified as White, with four participants (25%) also identifying with a second race. Participants saw value in interactions with students of different socio-economic and racial backgrounds than their own, yet more than half the participants indicated on the survey that they felt as though State University did not provide as many opportunities or as much encouragement of this interaction and engagement. However, despite this shortcoming that many participants saw on the part of the institution, most participants indicated that they had found ways to engage with other students of different backgrounds than their own.

Lack of Diverse Student Population. Participants in this study did find ways to interact with students of different backgrounds, and many saw these interactions as a benefit to their own ability to understand and empathize with others. Although State University's ethnic diversity was between 30–45% for the last admitted class, many participants perceived that there was room for improvement across the university in terms of racial and ethnic diversity as well as socioeconomic diversity. Several participants perceived the cost of attendance at State University as prohibitive of promoting a diverse student body that would provide this engagement

opportunity more easily to all students. Charles reflected on his perception of a lack of socioeconomic diversity saying,

I feel like the fact that it's the highest in-state cost of attendance of any in-state school and then any out-of-state students almost always comes from a fairly affluent background...I think there is a diverse pool of applicants but the cost prevents a diverse [student body from enrolling].

He and others found ways to engage with diverse student populations, yet there was a feeling that if there were more diverse students on campus, this engagement would be more common and a more integral part of every student's experience. Although participants saw value in their ability to engage with diverse populations, none mentioned that this was a factor in their decision to attend State University and was not something they recognized as a potential issue when considering the institution as their college choice.

Lack of Inclusive Organizations. Some participants saw the policies or practices of individual organizations as prohibitive of promoting engagement with students of different backgrounds. Colin saw the organizations that he was a part of as prohibitive of this kind of engagement, reflecting "they can be really inaccessible for people from different backgrounds that don't have enough money, or sometimes there's even a race or class thing." Emily describe similar concerns, describing how she had seen that "everyone breaks up into separate social groups, with one background." Even in organizations on campus that seemed to promote diversity were still majority White and did not have a diverse membership. Colin also saw the ways in which students boxed themselves into one area of engagement and one type of organization in which they participated as prohibitive of diverse engagement as students failed to open themselves up to the possibility of meeting and interacting with students who had different

interests and experiences. For those who were actively engaged in Greek organizations, participants indicated that they intentionally joined other organizations outside of the Greek system to diversify their interactions with their peers and avoid only having relationships with a largely homogenous population of students.

Intentional Engagement With Diverse Populations. A common sentiment among participants who did find that they had opportunities to engage with students of backgrounds different from their own, was that they had to be intentional about seeking out those opportunities. When completing the online survey, 10 of the participants indicated that they felt that State University provided only *some* or *very little* emphasis on contact among students from different backgrounds. However, each of those 10 participants also indicated that in spite of the lack of encouragement they felt from the institution to engage with students of different backgrounds, they were *often* or *very often* interacting with students of different backgrounds than their own in the last year. For these participants, they saw a benefit in having these interactions and were intentional in their search for opportunities to engage with other students across campus in a variety of ways. Mark described his experience when he chose to take a course on racial disparities in education as an eye opening experience because “there are a lot of people from a lot of different backgrounds and the whole class was about cultural awareness and understanding the biases that really setback groups.” For Mark, his experience taking the course was eye-opening and something he saw as having a beneficial impact on his overall experience at State University. However, he considered his experience something that 99% of students on campus would not have.

Shannon similarly discussed how she was proactive during her collegiate experience, taking courses that would enable her to interact with students who were different than her,

joining organizations that were known to have diverse membership, and working hard to get to know people on her residence halls who were different from her. She described her actions stating, “I very purposely picked different pockets within the school so that I could meet more people.” Engaging with diverse populations was something that she saw as an important part of her collegiate experience, and something that she wanted to make sure she experienced. Shannon infused this intentional engagement into all aspects of her experience at State University, from her choice of academic coursework to the organizations she chose, to simply making an effort to get to know all the students she came into contact with across campus.

Making a Space for Themselves

Participants who were actively involved referenced their commitment to active engagement as a way in which they saw themselves proving their worth at State University to show that they deserved to be a part of the campus community and as a way to give back to the campus and to future students.

Lauren saw her leadership role on her club athletic team and within her social sorority as beneficial to her time at State University and an important part of her engagement outside of the classroom. Despite the larger time commitment required in engaging and providing leadership in her student groups, she saw her time spent leading as providing value to her overall experience at State University. She described her perception saying:

It makes me a lot busier than I would have been, but it shapes who I hang out with and the lasting impact I have here. It lets me be a role model for younger kids—if I wasn’t doing these things I feel like I’d be wasting an opportunity and just be cruising through, which I don’t want.

She saw her engagement and the role that it could play in the experiences of others as a key component of how she envisioned her time in college. Lauren did not want to simply go through the motions during her four years at State University, she wanted to have an impact and make a difference, and she found leadership in extra-curricular opportunities as a way to do this.

Hannah also saw her leadership in her club athletic team as important. She described her leadership role saying:

I'm very active, I always try to contribute a lot. I really just am like, "Well, the people before me made it better and made it what it was for me." So I want to give other people that same experience.

For Hannah, her ability to give back to others in the way that she felt others had given her a positive experience was important and something she saw as a valuable part of her engagement.

Family Bonds

Relationships with parents impacted the students' development. For many participants, the parenting style they perceived their parents used particularly during high school impacted how they went through the admission process. Others described how their relationship with their parents had either strengthened or weakened through their attendance of State University, and several indicated that their parents parenting style impacted how they perceived they would parent their own children.

Relationship Before Admission

For the most part, participants perceived their relationships with their parents to be positive prior to starting the college admission process. A common theme was that although participants felt that their parents set high expectations for them to be successful and high-

achieving students in high school, they also felt there was a good deal of trust between themselves and their parents.

Henry—whose parents are divorced—described a positive, trusting relationship with both of his parents, despite not living with both full-time. He perceived that his mom was more actively engaged than his father, but that both trusted that he would not get into trouble or have any issues. He saw this engagement persisting through the college admission process saying,

My mom took me for a lot of school visits and was always encouraging me to check out extra schools and my dad didn't really push anything. He just sort of expected that I would go to [the local university] because that was closest...but they were both very supportive.

Despite the different ways in which his parents engaged with him prior to college and during the admission process, because of the trust he felt growing up Henry felt confident that they would support whatever decision he made and knew that his parents trusted him to make the decision that was best for him.

Jessica expressed a similar sentiment about her father who attended the law school at State University. Although she perceived moments of tension with her father when they would have a difference of opinion, she also felt a great deal of support from him. She described his parenting style saying:

He's not super hands-on—he's always present but not a helicopter parent. He always would be there, which felt very supportive, and in moments where I was stressed or unsure of what to do he...would always offer his advice.

She saw this approach continue during the college admission process as she never perceived that her father pushed State University and tried to be unopinionated about her interest in State

University. While her father would offer advice about her college search, she was confident that he would support whatever decision she made about where to attend.

Relationship During College

Except for David, the participants did not see believe their relationship with their parents changing throughout their time at State University. However, while they did not perceive that their relationships had changed, in their descriptions of their relationships before and after their attendance at State University, participants highlighted how they saw their positive relationships with their parents strengthening. Their initial assumption at the beginning of the interview was that their experience at State University had not affected their parental relationships; however, upon closer examination in responses to the interview prompts, the participants noted various ways in which their legacy experience did influence those relationships. Additionally, two participants felt that their parents' relationship with State University changed due to their new insight into the institution through their child's experiences.

With the pressure he felt to attend State University, David saw his relationship with his father deteriorate. Even though he indicated that he was not particularly close with his father prior to attending, the coercion he felt further strained their relationship. He reflected on the change saying:

We've never had a great relationship to begin with. But I definitely don't talk to him as much as I used to. Even when I didn't live with him, we still talked daily on the phone.

But now we're in contact maybe once a month. I'm not even going home this summer to see him. So, it's not a great relationship anymore.

Because he felt that he was pressured to attend State University simply because he was a legacy, David perceived a growing resentment towards his father and felt that his relationship with him,

while already not one he would consider positive, was becoming increasingly negative. While students often wean from their parents and become self-sufficient on their way to self-authorship, David's distancing from his father seemed to be less about finding his independence and personal identity, but rather in protest of what he perceived as unfair pressure, or even coercion, to attend State University.

In contrast to David, Shannon saw her relationship with her mom strengthened by her legacy experience. She described how she and her mom were able to share traditions with her dad, who had not attended State University, and that they found common ground in their experiences. She described the ways in which they connected saying:

It's pretty cool because like we have another connection. It turns out sophomore year I lived in the room across the hall from where she lived, and we always go to [a local restaurant] and she talks about how it's just as good as when she was here.

Shannon felt that her ability to share similar experiences, to see her mom reliving some of her college experiences through her, and to have something that the two of them understood together brought her closer to her mom.

John, who described his parents taking a more authoritarian stance growing up, perceived that they were disappointed by the ways in which State University had changed since their time on campus and in the fact that the institution was not taking a more parental role in his life. He described the discontent he perceived from his parents saying:

I've done things while here that they don't approve of and that has sort of created this association with the college that I'm off doing things and we can't control that and now State University is enabling this activity. I think they have a vision that I was going to have the exact same experience they did. So, when I've told them that things are not like

that or my experience differs, I think they've been disappointed in the college. When I've told them about certain things the college promotes, they don't necessarily agree with it and that creates a lot of tension there—I think some of the stuff I have told them made them reduce their donations in a large way.

While he perceived that his parents were happy that he had chosen to attend State University, and saw ways in which it was positive for their parent-child relationship that they had this shared experience with the institution, John also saw that his attendance gave his parents a window into the institution that did not necessarily promote a positive image of the institution for his parents. Because of the authoritative parenting style that he experienced growing up, he believed that his parents had strong guidelines about what was acceptable behavior for him to engage in in college and strong guidelines about the college's responsibility to promote certain ideals and a specific type of education for their child.

Parental Aspirations

For several participants, they saw their own legacy experience as impacting the ways in which envisioned themselves parenting in the future. Regardless of parenting type, they felt cautious about the role they could play in how their own children might perceive State University and possibly feel pressure to attend.

David, who felt that his father had been authoritarian in his requirement that he attend State University, indicated that if he has children, he would not only avoid pressuring them to attend State University, but he would also discourage them from attending. He described his vision of this future encounter saying "I'd probably push them away from applying here. Based on how my dad has involved himself, I'm going to have a very hands-off approach to my kids in terms of college applications. I definitely won't force them to come." He perceived that his

experience with his father had been so negative that he would parent in the exact opposite manner in hopes that his children would not have the same experience as him.

Even though Alice felt strongly that her legacy status positively impacted her collegiate experience, she acknowledged that sub-consciously her mother's overzealous love of State University may have played a role in her perceptions of the institution, decision to attend, and feelings of loyalty that permeated her time at State University. In recognizing this possibility, she indicated that if she has children, she wants to be cautious about how she presents her relationship with the institution to try to avoid the potential that her children might feel some pressure to attend. She described her rationale saying:

I'm not going to be like you've got to go to State University. My mom was always telling us about State University and how wonderful it was, and we should always look into it. I probably won't do that quite as much just because I don't want, other people might feel pressure. I love it, but I'm not going to push it on my kids or like talk about it at all.

For Alice, even though she perceived that her parents were more authoritative and that she was always confident that she could choose whatever institution was best for her, she perceived that children could easily be pressured to attend an institution simply because of their parents' love of the school. While she acknowledged that the legacy connection was positive for her, and something that she would enjoy continuing with her family, she was more inclined to be cautious with her own children in how she presented her experience in an effort to prevent any perceived pressure to attend State University.

Summary

The 16 participants all expressed ways in which their legacy status had impacted their experiences with State University. For many the greatest impact was felt during the admission

experience, whether from pressure to apply from parents or from the increased knowledge they had of the institution due to their legacy status. However, despite the potential external influences in their decisions to attend, all but one participant indicated that they felt that State University was a good fit for them, whether academically or in terms of their ability to be engaged in meaningful ways.

Despite the overall positive experiences these participants felt they had, they also internalized their own perceptions or those of others about their legacy status. They believed that this internalization of expectations of them as legacy students played a role in their motivation to engage both in and outside the classroom. All of the participants were aware of and recognized that negative perceptions exist about legacy students, either related to academic skill or the decision to attend State University. However, all felt confident in their abilities to be successful academically, due to high school preparation and the successes they found quickly in the college classroom.

Finally, participants in this study did feel that their legacy status impacted their relationships with the university and with their parents. Experiences ranged from some students pulling away from their parents because of their parents' connections to State University, others finding a closer relationship to the institution, and yet others feeling that there was minimal impact on their relationships. Participants also ranged in their expectations for their relationships with State University after graduating, with those who most closely identified with their legacy status desiring a continued connection to the institution and those who did not identify strongly as a legacy feeling more ready to loosen the connection after graduation. These results highlight opportunities for future study focused on this population, the institutions that serve them, and the families that support them.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to gain a better understanding of the perceptions of a group of legacy students regarding their experiences at a public, more selective institution. The participants' experiences highlighted how many students in the study's sample felt the most influence of their legacy status during the admission process to the institution. Additionally, their legacy status allowed them to gain personal insights about the connections between themselves, their parents, and the institution because of their common attendance at State University and their engagement on campus. Their experiences also highlighted how students of a particular group, while having a common thread in their collegiate experience, may still have varied and different experiences related to their identification with that group.

This study's results supplement the limited research on legacy students' experiences. In the first section of this chapter, I summarize the findings of this study. Next, I discuss the participants' experiences focusing on the research questions and Bean and Eaton's (2002) model and discuss the implications for practice. Recommendations are offered for students, parents, and administrators at institutions that enroll legacy students. Finally, I make recommendations for areas of future research based on the limitations of this study, and findings that emerged from this study.

Summary of Findings

Through the course of this study, all 16 participants expressed the various ways in which their legacy status had impacted their collegiate experiences. The students in this study came from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. Participants had attended both public and private

high schools, were both in-state and out-of-state, and were from all year levels. Most participants were active in Greek life (63%) and the majority identified as White (75%). Students indicated that they felt the greatest impact during the admission experience due to the influence, whether direct or subconscious, of their family. Participants indicated that they did not dwell on their legacy status after the admission process, yet when pressed they noted the ways in which their experience at State was affected by their status. All but one participant felt that State University was a good fit and they had made a good decision in choosing to attend, whatever the reason.

In questions to further probe their experiences, participants reflected that an internalization of their own perceptions of their status and the perceived perceptions of others related to their academic achievement and ability to succeed. There was some evidence of stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995) as some participants highlighted an urge to prove their ability because others perceived they were admitted only because of their legacy status, but all felt confident in their capability to be successful academically. As Mark reflected, “I think it was more of a comfort I gained, a level of confidence and comfort rather than learning a new skill. It’s just like now, now I know what I’m doing.” Mark initially felt a need to prove himself among his peers as being qualified to have been accepted at State University, regardless of being a legacy student, and felt unsure of himself at first even though he knew how to study and participate in college classes. As he found that his study skills and academic engagement were meeting the standards of his faculty, he became confident that he would continue to be successful academically.

Participants also indicated that legacy status influenced their relationships with the university and their families. The participants reported a range of experiences, with those having more positive feelings about their legacy status more likely to indicate continued strong

connections to the institution and a strengthened relationship with their family. Participants whose feelings about their legacy status leaned toward negative feelings indicated corresponding negative feelings about the institution and their family. Finally, those who did not view their legacy status as an important factor in their experience were more likely to feel neutral or less connected to the institution, commenting that attending State University had not changed their family relationships. These results highlight opportunities for further research focused on this student population and the role of institutions and families in their experiences.

Approximately 10% of State University's undergraduate students are legacy students who are identified through the application process when the applicant indicates the college history of their parents and siblings. As discussed earlier, all of my study's participants were legacy students with at least one member of their immediate family having attended State University, and often times multiple members of the immediate family or extended family. How their legacy status impacted their experience at State University featured prominently in their stories. Each student engaged with State University in their own way, yet common themes emerged. First, while legacy status played a key role in participants' decisions to apply or attend State University, for all but one participant, it was not the only factor or even the most important factor in those decisions. Second, family relationships were impacted by the student's decision to attend State University. Support structures within the institution, found through various forms of engagement, were pivotal for student's self-efficacy. This engagement was often unique to the student's interests and was not reflective of their parent's engagement as student's chose organizations that spoke to their individual interests. Greek life however was more prevalent among participants than the student body and 90% of the participants involved in Greek organizations had at least one family member who was also in a Greek sorority or fraternity. This

engagement played a key role in engagement across the collegiate experience for active participants.

College Choice

The first theme centered on the role of family in the college choice process. Even though participants recognized that their decision to attend State University was in some ways impacted by their legacy connection, all but one felt that they would have made the decision to apply or attend on their own had they not had family influence. However, many recognized that their legacy status could have played an unconscious role in their decision. Tying into Perna's (2006) model of college choice, habitus and school and community context seemed to play a key role in the participants' decisions to apply to and attend State University. As legacy students, none of the participants were first generation students and thus came from backgrounds where attending college was normalized, if not expected. Additionally, many participants indicated that their high school preparation played a large role in their self-efficacy. They discussed the strong support they felt from teachers and counselors to prepare for college and ultimately be successful at State University.

For the participants in this study, their decision to attend State University was layered. First, their parents' connection to the institution brought the institution to the forefront as a college option due to familiarity with the university. For some, their parents required them to apply, and one participant (David) was required to attend or not receive parental financial support to pay for college. However, for the remaining 15 participants, there was an appeal to the institution whether related to the academic opportunities it might offer or the community that they felt existed there. While no participants indicated that there faced tremendous difficulties affording State University, seven participants noted that had State University been more

expensive they would have considered other institutions. Finally, the participants who had grown up visiting State University regularly, and who also felt that their parents were more vocal in their admiration of the institution, perceived that their experiences with their family might have played an underlying role in their choice to attend. Whether due to the fact that their first understanding of college was rooted in their exposure to State University or because of their relationships with their parents and an unconscious desire to make them happy, one in four of the participants saw their legacy status as potentially having a stronger influence than they realized at the time of admission.

Family Bonds

All participants felt that they had positive relationships with their legacy family member prior to attending State University, and all but one felt that their attending State University had created a stronger bond between them and that family member. The connection that participants felt between their own collegiate experience and that of their parents was a common topic of discussion during interviews. However, while they felt this strong connection, participants felt that they were developing into their own person and having their own unique experience at State University.

Support Structures

The ability to find and maintain positive support systems was identified by participants as a key reason for their positive self-efficacy. Although many participants reported that they did not feel that State University provided support for their engagement or their academic success, they identified ways in which they built their own support systems during their time at State University. Within my study, legacy participants identified support primarily in both the academic and social areas. Surprisingly, participants did not mention faculty as a form of

support, with two participants highlighting particularly negative interactions with faculty. In comparison, participants felt they had a range of peer and family support that aided in their persistence and perceived success. Students felt that they could rely on their peers to hold them accountable to their academic requirements and were able to help when they struggled with their coursework. In particular, students in Greek life discussed the accountability they felt from their brothers and sisters to stay engaged academically. Their friends both in and out of the organizations they joined also provided the emotional support they needed to navigate the emotional and social side of their academic experience. Those close to their family, physically and emotionally, felt confident in their family's willingness to talk through challenges, offer advice, and simply connect when they needed the comfort and familiarity of family and home. Although they felt the institution did not provide opportunities for them to engage in meaningful ways with diverse populations and did not provide the mental health support needed by many students, participants were confident that their peers and family were supportive of their experience and were crucial in their ability to be successful.

Greek Life

For the students who were active in Greek life, nearly 2 of every 3 participants, their participation in Fraternity and Sorority life played an important role in their experience. Pointedly, about 27% of State University's undergraduate students are active in Greek life, whereas 63% of the participants in this study were actively involved in a social sorority or fraternity. This engagement contributed to their sense of belonging, their engagement outside of the classroom, and was also perceived as a key factor in their academic success and engagement. David spoke about the push he felt from his brothers to attend class, study, and stay focused on his coursework, even as he struggled with dissatisfaction with the institution. Katherine

appreciated the structure that her sorority provided and the ways in which it provided an almost instant social outlet. This type of instant community and positive interaction helped the students feel more attached to the campus.

Even though this study did not focus on Greek life or look into the relationship between legacy students and Greek participation, the connections found among these participants were noteworthy. Of the 10 Greek participants, 90% had one or more immediate family members who were also Greek. Overall, among the 16 participants, 70% had family members who attended State University and were active in Greek life. And 20% were legacies not only at State University, but also in the Greek chapter they joined. These numbers indicate a potential relationship between legacy attendance of a university and continuing the legacy of engagement in Greek life. Several participants who were active in Greek organizations acknowledged the weight their parents' own experiences had on their decision to engage in Greek life, but none recognized or acknowledged the legacy component of Greek organizations. While only three participants joined the same Greek organization as that of a family member, thus identifying both as a legacy member of their organization and their school, the experiences of participants highlighted the strength of the family bond with the Greek system overall.

Discussion

The discussion of the research findings occurs in four sections, comprising a review of the existing literature on legacy students and analysis of how the research findings extend understanding of this status. The first section reviews the legacy student experience. Next student engagement and the impact of legacy status on it will be reviewed. Third, self-efficacy as it relates to legacy status and engagement will be discussed. Finally, the findings are discussed in

light of Bean and Eaton's (2002) model, which comprised the theoretical framework for the study.

Legacy Status

Much of the literature that exists related to legacy students is quantitative in nature and looks closely at admission data (e.g., Avery et al., 2003; Bowen et al., 2005; Espenshade et al., 2004; Hurwitz, 2011; Martin & Spenner, 2009; Massey & Mooney, 2007). The results of this study confirmed the findings of the limited research beyond admission on legacy students. Despite students minimizing the effect of their family and legacy status, the ways in which these legacy students engaged with their institution indicates that their status does play a role as they look to their family members for guidance or inspiration for how to engage with the institution (Arendt, 2008; Warshaw, 2010; Warshaw et al., 2017). This study sought to look deeper at the legacy student experience and the role that this status played in the collegiate experience. As in prior research, most participants in this study were most aware of their status during the admission process. Yet, they also noted that campus marketing and sometimes their interactions with others brought their legacy status to the forefront. For example, their invitations to legacy events for family weekend and homecoming and the questioning of their peers about their college choice because of their status reminded participants that for others their status was not simply a checked box on their college application. Their status also impacted the choices they made in how to engage on campus.

Participants in this study discussed their awareness of their status primarily around the admission experience. Either through attending a legacy admission event on campus at State University, or being encouraged to apply by their parents, students were aware that they potentially had an advantage in the admission process as a legacy student. This advantage gave

some participants pause, as they considered whether to identify as legacy (or to identify other preferential statuses), but ultimately all decided to indicate their familial connection on the application. The limited literature on legacy student experiences found that legacy students downplayed or limited their acknowledgement of their family connection to an institution (Arendt, 2008; Warshaw, 2010; Warshaw et al., 2017). This study aligns with those findings with the participants indicating that their status was not important or a large part of their identity on campus after admission and choosing to attend State University.

For the participants in this study this lack of identification with their status may have resulted from the negative reactions or what they perceived as negative perceptions of their status by their peers. However, participants indicated that these negative reactions or perceptions were only encountered occasionally, with most not able to identify any specific instance of a negative response to their legacy status. Only one participant indicated a very negative response from a professor who was surprised to learn she was a legacy student as she was an actively engaged student. This faculty reaction supports the traditional findings on legacy students that they perform at a lesser level than non-legacy students and have lower GPAs (Martin & Spenner, 2009; Massey & Mooney, 2007; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Other participants felt that there was a perception by their peers that they only chose to attend State University because of their family connection and attended because their parents forced them to attend. While this was actually true for one participant, David, who was required to attend by his father, the rest of the participants felt that they had chosen the institution because of other factors such as the academic opportunities and the community they found at State University. Participants expressed frustration over regularly having to explain their reason for attending, which they said led to them not offering the information about their status openly, but rather only sharing when it was

directly asked about or among close friends. Because these remarks by peers and faculty were not encountered frequently, participants expressed frustration and considered them an annoyance, but not worthy of concern about their admissibility or place on campus. By not hearing these negative perceptions with any regularity, participants found it easier to brush them aside and not internalize a negative perception of their legacy status. Because of their ability to separate themselves from the negative perceptions of others, participants in this study did not indicate that they changed their behavior to fulfill the negative stereotype that others might have about their legacy status. The fact that these students did not feel that they fulfilled the stereotype may be the result of the culture of State University, which participants identified as competitive, high stress, and focused on academic achievement, or it may be the result of the psychological resilience of these particular students.

Participants in this study indicated that they most clearly identified with their legacy status at the time of admission and that their perceptions of their status had not changed over time as it was not something they thought of often as a key part of their identity. Despite the lack of attention, the participants paid to their legacy status post-admissions, participants felt that the school continued to view their status in a positive light during their college years. At large university events such as homecoming, parents' weekend, and commencement, legacy events were offered to students to join in family celebrations tailored to legacy families. One participant had not been invited—perhaps because his mother had attended but not graduated—but all the other participants had been invited to at least one of these events. Responses to the university events varied, with some finding them as a positive way to make connections with other students who had the same connection to the institution. Participants whose parents were still actively connected to the institution and returned to campus regularly with their college friends, were not

inclined to attend the university events, preferring to spend time with their parents, parents' friends, and their legacy children. In essence, this group of students and their families created their own, smaller, legacy events that occurred in parallel to the formal programming offered by the university. However, the overwhelming response was that the events were largely catering to the parents and felt like more of a marketing ploy than a legitimate desire to foster connection.

All of the participants in this study felt that they had made their collegiate experience their own, with minimal influence from their legacy relations. Yet in small ways, they highlighted ways their legacy status impacted their engagement. Greek life participation in particular seemed to be impacted by family engagement. Participants who had family members who were Greek were more likely to be involved in a Greek organization, and those who indicated negative associations with the Greek system avoided joining a sorority or fraternity.

In other ways, legacies followed the lead or guidance of their family members who attended State University. Participants looked to their families when seeking out assistance on campus, learning how to navigate both the physical campus and the bureaucratic side of campus, and learning about opportunities taking place from their parents who continued to remain invested in the institution.

Legacy students are in a unique position. They are able to reap the potential reward of their preferential admission status and are given special events by the university simply because of their family connections. However, because their status is not visible, they are able to use or ignore it when it is most convenient. Unlike students from racially underrepresented groups who may benefit from affirmative action, and then are clearly identifiable on campus, legacies have the privilege of potential admission preference, and then being able to hide or disassociate with their status (Massey & Mooney, 2007). Similarly, athletes are more easily identified due to the

nature of the requirements of their sport. If there are negative stereotypes about the admission or merit of students who benefit from affirmative action or admission based on athletic skill, peers of those students and faculty and staff can more easily identify those populations. For legacies however, they are better able to hide their status and thus limit the ways in which they identify themselves as a legacy. Because of this ability to step away from their status, they may be less likely to receive negative feedback from others, but also may feel more uncomfortable or marketed to when the institution highlights their hidden status through university events.

Prior research on legacy students and the roles stereotypes may play in their academic success found that legacy students entering with lower SAT scores than their peers were more likely to leave school, have lower grades, or self-report lower academic effort than their peers (Massey & Mooney, 2007). Even though the participants in this study did not provide SAT scores to compare to the overall range of students at State University, they did not seem to face the challenges found in Massey and Mooney's (2007) study. As legacy status is but one aspect of a student's identity, prior research may have indicated more correlation and not causation between legacy status and stereotype threat.

Student Engagement

Literature on student engagement shows that it is a critical factor in student persistence (Tinto & Pusser, 2006). As Astin's (1984) engagement theory posits, higher quality involvement leads to greater student learning and personal development. Engagement, as quantified in the NSSE (see <https://nsse.indiana.edu/nsse/index.html>), occurs both inside and outside of the classroom. In this study, participants also highlighted engagement as a key component of their collegiate experience and was identified as an important factor in their satisfaction and success.

All but one participant was engaged in extracurricular activities. This engagement ranged from service organizations, to Greek life, and academic focused organizations. What was constant across the spectrum, was the meaning participants found in their engagement. Academic organizations, such as major honor societies, research labs, and academic publications, enabled participants to feel more connected to their coursework, or enabled students to experience fields they were not able to fit into their academic schedule. Participants in service organizations highlighted their desire to give back and do something for the greater good while in college. Greek life provided participants with a strong sense of community and a deeper connection to tradition.

In this study, all of the participants indicated that they were actively engaged in the classroom. Literature on student engagement finds that when students are engaged in high-impact practices such as undergraduate research, capstone courses, writing-intensive courses, and common intellectual experiences, their overall learning experience is positive (Kuh, 2008). Participants in this study were conducting research, working closely with faculty, engaged in study groups, and looking for ways to do more than experience a lecture. This desire to be engaged in the classroom in meaningful ways was aided by a strong sense of connection and interest in the material they were learning and positively influenced their academic experience and their overall experience at State University.

Several participants indicated that they chose to attend State University because they knew it had the field of study they were interested in. Others entered intending to major in one area and switched after finding that they had different interests. Yet all of them felt that they were challenged academically. They found they were learning to think and engage with their studies, and this enabled them to engage deeply engaged their academic interests.

The participants in this study seemed to have a desire to be engaged with other students of diverse backgrounds. As literature on student success recommends, global learning and a diverse campus atmosphere positively impacts the student experience by allowing students of diverse backgrounds to feel less isolated and those from less diverse backgrounds to expand their worldview and learn skills such as empathy, and develop relationships (Hurtado et al., 2012; Kuh, 2008). As a part of the survey for this study, participants were asked about how often they engaged with students of different backgrounds and whether or not they thought State University encouraged and provided opportunities for that engagement. In response approximately 90% of participants indicated that they had found ways to engage with other students from different backgrounds, but only 38% of participants felt that this engagement was encouraged by the institution. Individually the participants in this study saw value in this diverse engagement and intentionally sought it out in their organizations and activities across campus. The value these students saw in the diverse engagement they did have, aligns with the literature's findings that such engagement positively impacts the overall student experience and provides a depth and richness to the relationship's students build with their peers (Hurtado et al., 2012; Kuh, 2008; UCLA Center X, 2018). As this was clearly of importance to the students, elite institutions should assess the ways that engagement is encouraged and put more emphasis on diversity. Especially since legacies tend to be White and from higher socio-economic statuses, ensuring they have ample opportunities for engagement with different populations will provide them with the opportunity to understand the lived experiences of their peers and expand their worldview.

We know that friends and peers promote active engagement both inside and outside the classroom and that as students engage more with others, they are more likely to persist (Tinto & Pusser, 2006). Aligning with the literature on engagement, relationships were of the utmost

importance for participants in their perceived success at State University. Participants reported that their on-campus relationships with friends and classmates were an important factor in their continued engagement. In finding meaningful engagement on campus participants highlighted the ways in which they made their collegiate experience their own, even if sometimes influenced by their family. Not only did it provide them the academic opportunities they sought out by attending an elite institution, it provided support structures that helped them find connection and community. The participants in this study saw the value in their engagement, and found it to be one of the most important factors in their self-efficacy and persistence to graduation and seemed to believe that this would have been true, even if they were not a legacy student.

Self-Efficacy

Literature on student persistence and success has often looked to self-efficacy as an important factor (Bandura, 1986; Bean & Eaton, 2002). Legacy students in particular may have lower levels of self-efficacy due to the negative perceptions around their admission preference and the possibility of admission with lower academic achievement and human capital (Espenshade et al., 2004; Martin & Spenner, 2009; Massey & Mooney, 2007).

The participants in this study confirmed that their self-efficacy was important in their persistence. As they found success academically and socially, they were encouraged to pursue greater challenges and continue to tackle their academic goals. Interestingly, their self-efficacy was greatly impacted by their high school achievements, and their belief that they were admitted with similar or higher high school standards to their peers and that they entered State University with the same level of ability as their classmates, regardless of their legacy status.

This study did not generate quantitative data regarding the high school achievement of participants to compare in relation to the admission profile of State University. However, in the

interviews with participants, the students highlighted that on their own they had compared their high school GPA and test scores with their peers and the admission profile of the institution and felt that they were on par with, if not exceeding those averages. This perception directly contradicts the literature on legacy student admissions data, indicating that the academic preparation of legacies may differ depending on how legacies are weighed at the point of admission or based on the admission standards of the institution (Avery et al., 2003; Bowen et al., 2005; Espenshade et al., 2004; Hurwitz, 2011; Martin & Spenner, 2009; Massey & Mooney, 2007). However, self-efficacy theory posits that students make personal assessments based on peer references, with students considering their relative rank among classmates or making direct comparisons of their own abilities with their perceptions of the abilities of their peers (Bandura, 1977). This aligns with the experiences of the participants in this study. Based on their perceptions of their alignment with the capabilities of their peers, and the success they did find in the classroom these students were confident they would persist to graduation.

The results of the survey showed that participants overall felt high self-efficacy about their ability to be successful and engage in their academic experience. The one area in which there was lower self-efficacy reported related to social engagement. One participant reported low self-efficacy about their ability to make new friends, one about their ability to join a student organization, and four indicated that they were less confident about their ability to get a date. This lower self-efficacy in socialization led one participant to simply not engage with her peers outside of the classroom but did not seem to deter the other participants from still attempting to find ways to engage with other students. Recognizing the importance of the social aspect of the collegiate experiences, students were willing to continue to try and develop the confidence and self-efficacy to engage in new ways. Student development theory posits that as a student moves

through their collegiate experience, their learning and cognitive skills increase as well as psychosocial skills (Baxter-Magolda, 2009; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005). In particular from first to fourth year, research indicates that students' relational systems change as well as smaller shifts in their ability to create and maintain interpersonal relationships. This study found that to be true for participants as first-year and second-year students were more likely to indicate lower confidence in social areas than others through the survey. One departure from the literature on student development (Astin, 1984) was with Julia, a fourth-year, who did not have confidence in her social skills and thus chose to not engage with her peers in social settings.

Finally, the legacy students in this study saw their relationships both on and off campus as a powerful tool in their positive self-efficacy. As Bandura's (1977, 1997) research on self-efficacy theory states, vicarious learning and social persuasion are powerful tools in student self-efficacy. Vicarious learning, or the learning of how to behave from others and social persuasion, or the reinforcement of behavior by others, play a role in a student's perception of their self-efficacy. Research on peers and self-efficacy has found that student's beliefs of their ability to engage in social situations and maintain relationships positively impacts academic achievement (Bandura et al., 2001; Ferrari & Parker, 1992). In the successful relationships students had on and off campus with family and friends and the lessons learned from them through vicarious learning and social persuasion, students felt greater confidence in their ability to be successful on campus. Through the support they felt from their family, and the support they found in peers who pushed them to succeed, participants felt they had a system to fall back on when they were facing challenges on campus. Those who felt that had especially strong support systems were more likely to report satisfaction with their collegiate experience.

Fit of the Model

Bean and Eaton's (2002) Psychological Model of Student Retention recognizes that psychological processes take place for students in their integration to an institution. Their model recognizes that students enter institutions with specific psychological factors such as self-efficacy, normative beliefs, and past experiences. These factors shape how a student interacts with the institution and can impact their decisions to persist or leave. Their model posits that interactions and assessments that students face on campus are circular, with positive self-efficacy leading to improved grades, which affirm a student's integration into the campus community.

Participants in this study affirmed the tenets of Bean and Eaton's (2002) model. The cycle of feedback in their model involves both academic and social interactions that influence individual self-efficacy assessments, which then influences social and academic integration, leading to feelings of institutional fit and loyalty and thus a desire or lack of desire to persist to graduation. Participants in this study entered State University perceiving they received a rigorous high school preparation, with general confidence about their admissibility based on their merit and having family backgrounds that influenced their understanding of the collegiate experience.

Legacy participants in this study identified the feedback loop of Bean and Eaton in their own experiences at State University. Institutional loyalty, fit, and engagement helped them feel more connected which led to positive self-efficacy. Additionally, for those who felt positively about their legacy status there was a feeling of a stronger connection to the institution, its traditions, and to their ability to succeed.

Institutional Loyalty. Institutional loyalty, or the feeling that attending this institution in particular is important to an individual, was important to most participants. Except for David, who indicated that he felt no loyalty to the institution, all participants felt that State University

was the right school for them and that they were committed to their decision to attend. Even those participants such as Mark and John who said that they might have considered other institutions if they had the admission process to do again, felt a commitment to State University and were happy with their decision to attend. This confidence in their decision and loyalty to their collegiate experience at this institution in particular, gave participants a sense of pride in their experience, a determination to be successful, and a desire to make the most of their experience through the engagement in and outside the classroom.

As legacies, particularly those with family members who had a positive experience, students are primed to be loyal to the institution. They have seen that it is possible to be successful, they have heard about the rewarding collegiate experience of their family member, and they have witnessed the ways in which the institution has positively impacted their family member's life. In witnessing this, legacies may be more likely to see that positive experience and success as attainable and that having it at the same institution as their family is important. Thus, legacies may be more likely to follow their family's example and find meaningful engagement, work to be successful, and thus have positive self-efficacy as they navigate and find joy in their collegiate experience.

Institutional Fit. A sense of belonging at college has been identified as a factor in student success and engagement leading to students engaging more fully in their academic experience and building strong relationships (Gopalan & Brady, 2019; Strayhorn, 2012). All participants in this study highlighted the importance of institutional fit, or the feeling that they fit in at the institution. Those who visited campus regularly with their families growing up felt that they knew the institution, were familiar with it, and grew up with an image of State University as the quintessential college. For those who were less connected growing up, their visits during the

admission experience solidified that the institution would support them and provide the community and academic experience they were looking for. Aligning with the literature on belonging, this feeling that they fit into the institution and the institution fit their goals and image of college, led to confidence that they would finish their degree and graduate from State University. Throughout their time at State University, as this fit was affirmed through their engagement, participants felt more confident in their ability to be successful.

Legacies who identify closely with their family members may be more likely to feel this fit strongly. As they see the ways in which their family member fit into the institution, they may also see their own ability to fit in in similar ways. Additionally, as legacies come from homes with at least one person who has attended a college or university, they are more likely to understand the ways in which students should look for fit as they choose an institution, and thus are better prepared to look critically at fit during their college choice process.

Engagement and Self-Efficacy. Their own engagement on campus, both in and outside the classroom often led to positive self-efficacy which made them feel more encouraged to integrate themselves further into campus life. As Astin's (1984) theory posits, higher quality involvement leads to greater student learning and personal development. For all legacy participants, finding ways to be involved in their campus experience, whether through extracurricular organizations or through their academic pursuits, led to greater feelings of satisfaction with their time at State University and a sense that they were growing and developing into well-rounded individuals. For the students who were less confident in their ability to make social connections (friendships or romantic) or join organizations, they found meaning in their academic pursuits and in the friendships they did develop with their classmates, hallmates, and peers in their organizations. The relationships built through their engagement and

the satisfaction they found helped students feel as though they were successful at the institution and were having the collegiate experience they sought. The positive impact on their self-efficacy led participants to continue to seek out ways to engage on campus, whether in pursuing greater academic opportunities or striving to take on leadership roles within their organizations.

Legacy status played a role in the integration for several participants. Alice discussed how her mother's loyalty to State University led her to follow the institution's many social media accounts and then share events and activities that were taking place. Frank and John felt that their transition to campus was eased by their frequent visits to campus as children. In being familiar with campus, they already knew where things were and what opportunities there were for engagement. For participants who felt this familiarity and connection because of their legacy status, they were more encouraged and confident in their integration on campus. This integration then led to a sense of positive self-efficacy which reaffirmed their engagement.

Legacy Student Model. When thinking about retention and persistence of legacy students, key parts of Bean and Eaton's (2002) model were identified through this study. The motivation to attend, or even apply, as well as the initial self-efficacy based on high school success and preparation, directly impacted the ways in which the participants interacted both academically and socially. For all the participants these interactions created a generally positive feedback loop. As they felt prepared to succeed and found success, either immediately or gradually, students saw their interactions as positively impacting their self-efficacy and engagement. It is important to note that even David who did not want to attend State University and regularly considered transferring, felt that his interactions on campus made his experience more positive. This perception by David highlights the strength of engagement and the power it has in a student's overall collegiate experience. The institutional environment directly affected

participant perceptions of institutional fit and loyalty. Their positive interactions with friends and academics led to more positive feelings about institutional fit and loyalty. This positive experience was associated not with their legacy status and their feeling of family connection to the institution, but rather because of the community that they built on campus and the ways in which they found meaning in their engagement. But for those students who had negative bureaucratic interactions, in particular with the counseling center or other administrative areas of the institution, loyalty was negatively affected. The negative effect on loyalty was not perceived as a desire to transfer or not persist at State University, but rather a lack of desire to engage or a desire to engage in more intentional ways with the institution as alumni. As students had greater engagement with the institution, they developed their interpersonal skills and built their internal philosophical foundation. As a result they saw the world as less black and white and were able to identify the ways in which the institution did not meet or exceed their expectations and they found criticisms that impacted how they viewed their future relationship with the school.

However, Bean and Eaton's (2002) model does not capture all of the intricacies of the legacy student experience for this group of students. College choice played a much larger role in the perception of their experience for the participants in this study. Perna's (2006) research suggests that a student's educational decisions are impacted by several layers, including demographics, school and community context, higher education context, and social, economic, and policy context. Participants in this study indicated that the first three layers all played a key role in their decision to attend State University. Their demographics and the fact that they came from a family of college-educated individuals, particularly from State University, made it clear that they would attend college—most likely one of the same caliber as State University. Additionally, every participant indicated that they were encouraged or required to apply to State

University, which automatically made it a part of their schools to consider. All of the participants also indicated that they had attended high schools that were either rigorous or provided challenges that prepared them for State University. They were encouraged to attend an institution that would continue to push them, such as State University. Finally, as legacy students they were directly marketed to by State University. In particular, two participants indicated that they attended a special admission weekend for legacy students. All but one legacy student participant at State University reported that they did not feel pressure to attend State University. However, many acknowledged that they were aware of the fact that, should they attend, their parents would be happy about the connection and they indicated that they were not sure how much this awareness might have impacted their decision to attend. One participant in this study did indicate that he felt direct pressure, in the form of monetary support for college, to attend State University. By feeling forced to attend an institution that he was not interested in, David related that he regularly thought about transferring, and felt he was having an unsatisfying collegiate experience. While having a family connection to an institution can be positive and can create deeper bonds both within the family and to an institution, placing such overt pressure on a child can have negative consequences. David discussed his negative feelings about State University, but also reflected that the pressure from his father to attend had negatively impacted his relationship with his father, to the point that they rarely spoke. By strengthening the factor of college choice to encompass more of the layers of Perna's (2006) model, Bean and Eaton's (2002) model would better capture the ways in which choice is impacted by the entry characteristics, but also impacts the perception of the student of their fit and loyalty to the institution.

As administrators look to serve this population of students, it is important that they think of the unique ways that the legacy experience impacts our understanding of retention and persistence and the fit of the legacy experience into retention models.

Implications for Practice

Valuable ideas for practice surfaced during my study. These implications provide ideas for future research because we know that admission preference and its impact is being examined regularly in mainstream media (Bruenig, 2019; Larkin & Aina, 2018; "End legacy college admissions", 2019). We also know that previous research has noted that legacy students often enter higher education with lower high school achievement and standardized test performance than their peers and with less human capital than their peers (Espenshade et al., 2004; Martin & Spenner, 2009; Massey & Mooney, 2007). However, this study found that by their own accounts, students believed they would have been admitted regardless of legacy status, as their high school GPA and test scores were on par with or exceeded their peers. Participants in this study also noted a discomfort with legacy status and the preference it potentially awarded students. The implications for practice are furthered with recommendations for legacy students attending an elite institution, for the families of students who are or may become legacy students, and for the administrators at these elite institutions that often have a legacy student population.

Implications for Students

All but one legacy student participant in this study reported that they were satisfied with their decision to attend State University and with their overall experience at the institution. Bean and Eaton's (2002) research indicates that students who have positive interactions with an institution are more likely to persist to graduation. Several important ideas for encouraging such positive interactions emerged from my study's data, including students thinking critically about

the type of institution they choose to attend, actively seeking out engagement that adds to their overall experience, and fostering relationships that provide support.

Even though their legacy status was a key reason why participants were aware of and applied to State University, participants who identified with the campus culture or felt that the institution would offer the academic experience they sought, felt more confident that they were attending the best institution for their personal growth. Therefore, legacy students should take the time to think about their college choice, identify what factors are important to them when choosing an institution, and to the best of their ability choose an institution based on their own interests, not simply because of a family connection.

While some participants were engaged in the same or similar organizations and activities as their family members, each identified some aspect of engagement that they sought out on their own. Just as engagement and involvement is encouraged at institutions for all students, legacy students too should seek out engagement that fulfills them and find ways to create their own experience at their legacy institution. Some of this engagement may coincide with that of their family member's experience on campus, yet more importantly, being intentional in why they choose to engage in various ways is important and may lead to a more fulfilling experience.

Because of their family connection to the institution, legacy students can build on and nurture their relationships with their family while they are in college when they need support. Further, students can seek out meaningful connections with others across campus so that should they face challenges or moments of doubt about their abilities, they will have a strong support system in place to provide guidance and encouragement. Additionally, because legacy students may face negative reactions about their status, finding friends who do not have those perceptions,

or connecting more with other legacy students in meaningful ways can help to counteract any negative influence from others.

Implications for Families

An important idea emerged from my study's data for family members who wish to limit the influence they may exert in the college choice process and avoid their student feeling pressured to attend the same institution as them, and for family members who wish to support their legacy student once enrolled at the same institution.

For all but one participant in this study, there was a great deal of confidence that State University was the right choice for the college experience. However, many indicated that they believed their family's connection to the institution or their family's desire for them to at least apply to State University may have played a role in their decision to attend. During the college search and choice process, parents should, to the best of their ability, provide support to their child but also provide the space for their child to make their own decision. Parents can provide support through a challenging experience for young adults, but also to encourage their child to choose the institution they feel will be best for them—regardless of legacy status. Although parents might want to encourage their child to attend an institution that they believe would be a good fit for them and where they themselves had attended, there could be negative repercussions by forcing their child to attend an institution they are adamant is not the right choice.

As students move through their collegiate experience, there are still opportunities for parents to continue to support their child. Participants in this study discussed the ways in which they looked to their parents for support, either through understanding of the academic challenges they were facing or for guidance in engagement across campus. Parents of legacy students are uniquely posed to provide even greater support to their child than other parents because of their

knowledge not only of the college experience but of the college experience unique to the institution their child is attending. By continuing to show the same support offered during the college search process, parents can challenge their child to seek out meaningful opportunities on campus, while also providing the reassurance that it is possible to succeed in a rigorous academic environment. However, some participants also noted that parents should recognize that their experience, while similar to the student's experience, is uniquely that of the student. Finding the balance between support and allowing their child to discover and engage in their own ways on campus will give legacy students the opportunity to create their own enriching collegiate experience.

Implications for Administrators

Several important ideas emerged from my study's data for administrators at selective institutions serving legacy students. Participants acknowledged that State University was an institution with high academic standards for admission, a focus on engagement, and what they identified as a "stress culture" towards academics. The institution played a pivotal role in student's perception of their experience at State University and their perception of their legacy status.

For participants, the primary way in which they understood the institution's perception of their legacy status was through legacy events around admission and institution wide celebrations. For many, these events felt more like a marketing gimmick and a way to promote future giving. In doing so, participants felt that their legacy status was not as much about a family connection to the institution but rather a fundraising opportunity. When developing events that are meant to cater to legacy students and their families, institutions should think critically about their goals in having such an event. If the purpose is to promote the family connection and allow students and

families with similar experiences the opportunity to connect and bond, then the event should provide ways and opportunities for students to feel engaged and messaging related to financial giving should be limited.

Participants in this study discussed their perceptions of their parents' roles in their college search and choice. While most participants felt that their parents would support whatever decision they made regarding the institution they chose to attend, many highlighted the fact that they were aware of what would make their parents happy or felt pressured to at least apply to or consider State University. As institutions offer opportunities for not only students, but parents, to explore their school as a potential option, campus offices working with parents could increase their offerings to include resources for parents around providing useful support during the college choice process. This support information would allow parents to have a better understanding of the ways they might inadvertently influence their child's choice, and also provide them with tools to make sure they are providing constructive support to their child as they navigate this important decision.

The participants in this study highlighted mental health resources and diverse engagement as key areas where State University did not provide enough support. As legacy students are more likely to come from backgrounds of privilege, whether racial, socioeconomic, or educational, institutions that promote the admission of legacy students should work to make sure they provide ample opportunity for and encourage engagement of students with individuals from different backgrounds. Additionally, if an institution does provide an admission boost to legacy applicants, they must recognize that in doing so they may reduce the diversity of their student body. Finally, in a time when there are increasing pressures to succeed in college and students are more easily able to compare themselves to their peers, institutions must ensure that

they have the resources available for mental health and that students do not feel as though their mental well-being is less of a priority for the institution.

Finally, participants in this study highlighted their plans to be intentional about how they might support State University post-graduation. Those who felt that they would be inclined to donate later in life discussed how they would earmark any donations toward specific aspects of campus or student support services. The participants discussed their concerns that any money given to a general fund may be used in ways that would not support the collegiate experiences they hoped other students would have. Rather they felt that by giving directly to a scholarship fund, mental health support services, or directly to organizations that were important to them during their time on campus, they would ensure a positive experience for future students. As institutions seek to maintain financial relationships with legacy students, providing opportunities to give to specific organizations or funds that had made the students' experiences rewarding may reap greater financial benefits to the institution as alumni may be more willing to give to those specific areas. In some cases, highlighting the students' legacy status may align with giving, but for others targeting organizations, support services, or other groups an alumnus identifies with might resonate with legacy alumni more.

Recommendations for Future Research

As stated in Chapter 2, the research-based understanding of legacy students' experiences is limited. This study used a qualitative design to explore the experiences and perceptions of a group of legacy students; in particular, their perceptions of their legacy status, self-efficacy, and engagement. Prior research focused on the weight that legacy status placed on a student's application, in comparison to other affirmative action programs such as those based on race or athletic skill (Espenshade et al., 2004; Martin & Spenner, 2009; Massey & Mooney, 2007). What

remains unknown is how legacy students' legacy status, self-efficacy and engagement influence their collegiate experience.

My research was delimited to a group of undergraduate legacy students at a single public, 4-year doctoral university. Therefore, generalizing the results of this study to other types of institutions is not appropriate. Replication studies to gain an understanding of legacy students at different types of institutions (e.g., private, single gendered, etc.) are required.

My study asked students to reflect on their experience, self-efficacy, and engagement at a specific period during their academic experience at State University. A longitudinal study throughout a student's academic career and beyond would demonstrate how time changed the participants' perspective of their college experience and would enable tracking of students who transferred out of the institution. How, if at all, does self-efficacy and engagement change as student's move through their collegiate experience? How, if at all, does the perception of legacy status shift from admission to graduation? If a student transfers out of the institution what factors led to that decision, and where do they intend to go? The ways in which participants respond could generate new data that would benefit college administrators as they seek to support legacy students in their academic journey. Additionally, such studies could provide institutional leaders and policymakers insight into how, and if, legacy students should be recognized, recruited, and supported.

This study only sought perceptions of a group of legacy students on their experience at State University. A study that includes both legacy students and their non-legacy peers would provide insight into how legacy students are alike or differ from other students at the same institution. How, if at all, does legacy self-efficacy differ from that of non-legacy students? Is there a difference in the ways in which legacy students are engaged in their collegiate

experience? How exactly do non-legacy students perceive legacy students at an institution? Such a study would provide new depth to the research on legacy students and would help to clarify how, if at all, the legacy experience differs from the general student population.

Participation in Greek life was considerably more prevalent among the participants in this study than in the overall population at State University. Research has shown that participation in Greek life can have a negative effect on academic performance (De Donato & Thomas, 2017), however the participants in this study perceived that it had a positive impact on their academic performance and overall engagement at State University. A study that looks closer at the relationship between legacies and Greek organization participation would help to unpack the relationship that may exist between these two student identities. Additionally, a study that compared the legacy experience at institutions with varying degrees of Greek life would provide more knowledge about the legacy student experience.

Conclusions

This phenomenological study described the ways in which a group of legacy students understood their legacy experience, their self-efficacy, and their engagement at an elite college. The 16 student participants' experiences related to the psychological processes that take place as a student decides how to integrate themselves into an institution adds to previous research by highlighting the legacy student experience beyond the point of admission. It was important to understand how legacy students perceived their status and their collegiate experience so that institutions and family members can better support these students.

The participants' lived experiences at an elite university supported persistence to graduation. These legacy students felt they had a close connection and allegiance to the institution. Through this bond, participants felt prepared to integrate themselves into

organizations, relationships, and into the social life of the university. There were some times in which students had doubts about their ability to succeed, and these provide insight into how institutions and families can encourage legacy students. Participants grappled with their understanding of the role that their legacy status played in their admission. They also reacted to what they perceived as a stress culture at the institution. Even though they did not always attribute their concerns about their ability to succeed to their legacy status, all of the participants in this study at least recognized that their legacy connection may have given them an advantage in the admission process. No participants perceived that they had changed their habits and actions to fulfill a negative stereotype about themselves as legacies, several did feel the need to push themselves to achieve at the same rates of their peers and to assure themselves of their deserving a place at the institution.

My study found this group of legacy students were often happy to have the family connection to the institution but were aware of how other's might have a negative perception of their status. This negative perception, along with a stressful academic culture led to moments of lower self-efficacy related to academic abilities, but not an overall feeling of inability to be successful and persist to graduation. While no participant stated that they stopped disclosing their status, for those who perceived negative reactions they stated that they did not readily share their status with others. Much like the existing research, two of the participants in my study felt initially concerned about their ability to take on the academic expectations of the institution. However, after finding success on campus and identifying their support systems, all felt confident in their ability to achieve their goals.

Elite institutional leaders and parents can benefit from this study and the surfaced results add to our understanding of the experiences of these legacy students. By delving into the legacy

experience, we can better understand the role of family in college choice, how legacy students may make meaning and engage in their collegiate experience, and how they perceive their own privilege and status in comparison to other students. The research captured many of the elements of the legacy student experience. Such information enables practitioners to better understand how legacy students interact and engage with an elite institution and provides parents with an understanding of how their institutional loyalty may impact their child's college choice. However, it is important to note that while there were common threads among the participants' experiences, each participant understood their legacy status and experience uniquely. Each individual's lived experience was individually based on their perceptions, their self-efficacy, and the ways in which they chose to engage on campus. Importantly, the group of participants highlighted that while they all had common experiences, their individual experiences were made of many layers, of which legacy status was one component. Overall, this study contributes to the existing research on legacy students' higher education experience by providing the students' experience at a public, more selective university.

References

- Alexander, J. S., & Gardner, J. (2009). Beyond retention: A comprehensive approach to the first college year. *About Campus, 14*(2), 18-26. <https://doi.org/10.1002abc.285>
- Allen, W. R. (1985). Black student, White campus: Structural, interpersonal, and psychological correlates of success. *The Journal of Negro Education, 54*(2), 134-147.
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/BF01112008>
- Ambady, N., Shih, M., Kim, A., & Pittinsky, T. L. (2001). Stereotype susceptibility in children: Effects of identity activation on quantitative performance. *Psychological Science, 12*, 385-390. <https://doi.org/10.1111%2F1467-9280.00371>
- Arendt, B. (2008). *Student persistence at a small, private, religiously-affiliated college: An examination of retention theory* (Publication No. 3340180) [Doctoral dissertation, Western Michigan University]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.
- Astin, A. W. (1975). *Preventing students from dropping out*. Jossey-Bass.
- Astin, A. W. (1984). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Development, 25*, 297-308.
- Astin, A.W. (1993). *What matters in college: Four critical years revisited*. Jossey-Bass.
- Avery, C., Fairbanks, A., & Zeckhauser, R. (2003). *The early admissions game: Joining the elite, with a new chapter*. Harvard University Press.
- Ayiku, T. Q. (2005). *The relationships among college self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy, and athletic self-efficacy for African American male football players* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Maryland]. Digital Repository at the University of Maryland.
<https://drum.lib.umd.edu/handle/1903/2701>

- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84(2), 191-215. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.84.2.191>
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Prentice-Hall.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. Henry Holt.
- Bandura, A., Barbaranelli, C., Capara, G. V., Pastorelli, C. (2001). Self-efficacy beliefs as shapers of children's aspirations and career trajectories. *Child Development*, 72(1), 187-206. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0022-3514.76.2.258>
- Barron's Educational Series. (2017). *Profiles of American colleges* (33rd ed.).
- Baum, S., & Payea, K. (2004). *Education pays 2004: The benefits of higher education for individuals and society*. College Board.
- Baumrind, D. (1966). Effects of authoritative parental control on child behavior. *Child Development*, 37, 887-907. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1126611>
- Baxter Magolda, M. B. (2009). *Authoring your life: Developing an internal voice to navigate life's challenges*. Stylus.
- Bean, J., & Eaton, S. B. (2000). A psychological model of college student retention. In J. M. Braxton (Ed.), *Reworking the student departure puzzle* (pp. 48-61). Vanderbilt University Press.
- Bean, J., & Eaton, S. B. (2002). The psychology underlying successful retention practices. *Journal of College Student Development*, 3(1), 73-89. <https://doi.org/10.2190%2F6R55-4B30-28XG-L8U0>
- Bowen, W. G., Kurzewil, M. A., & Tobin, E. M. (2005). *Equity and excellence in American higher education*. University of Virginia Press.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*. SAGE.

Braxton, J. M., Vesper, N., & Hossler, D. (1995) Expectations for college and student persistence. *Research in Higher Education*, 36(5), 595-612.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02208833>

Bruenig, E. (2019, March 13). The college admissions scandal isn't fair. Nothing about our social mobility system is. *The Washington Post*.
https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-college-admissions-scandal-isnt-fair-nothing-about-our-social-mobility-system-is/2019/03/13/79d4eb30-45ab-11e9-8aab-95b8d80a1e4f_story.html

Busta, H. (2019, February 20). How many colleges and universities have closed since 2016? *Education Dive*. https://www.highereddive.com/news/how-many-colleges-and-universities-have-closed-since-2016/539379/?referrer_site=www.educationdive.com

Campbell, C. M., & Cabrera, A. F. (2011). How sound is NSSE? *The Review of Higher Education*, 35(1), 77-103. <https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2011.0035>

Carini, R. M., Kuh, G. D., & Klein, S. P. (2006). Student engagement and student learning: Testing the linkages. *Research in Higher Education*, 47, 1-32.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-005-8150-9>

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. (2018). *The Carnegie classification of institutions of higher education*. <https://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/>

- Chemers, M. M., Hu, L., & Garcia, B. F. (2001). Academic self-efficacy and first-year college student performance and adjustment. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 93*(1), 55-64.
<https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0022-0663.93.1.55>
- Chetty, R., Hendren, N., Kline, P., & Saez, E. (2014). *Where is the land of opportunity? The geography of intergenerational mobility in the United States* (Working Paper No. 19843). National Bureau of Economic Research. <https://www.nber.org/papers/w19843>
- Chickering, A. W., & Gamson, Z. F. (1987). Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. *AAHE Bulletin, 39*(7), 3-7.
- Cho, J. Y., & Lee, E. (2014). Reducing confusion about grounded theory and qualitative content analysis: Similarities and differences. *The Qualitative Report, 19*(32), 1-20.
<https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol19/iss32/2>
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE.
- Davoren, A. (2019). *Perceptions of college admissions scandal*.
<https://www.norc.org/Research/Projects/Pages/perceptions-of-college-admissions-practices.aspx>
- De Donato, A., & Thomas, J. (2017). The effects of Greek affiliation on academic performance. *Economics of Education Review, 57*, 41-51.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2017.01.004>
- Editorial Board. (2019, September 7). End legacy college admissions. *The New York Times*.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/07/opinion/sunday/end-legacy-college-admissions.html>
- Edwards, R., & Holland, J. (2013). *What is qualitative interviewing?* Bloomsbury Academic.

- Espenshade, T. J., Chung, C.Y., & Walling, J. L. (2004). Admission preferences for minority students, athletes, and legacies at elite universities. *Social Science Quarterly*, 85(5), 1422-1446. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0038-4941.2004.00284.x>
- Ferrari, J. R., & Parker, J. T. (1992). High school achievement, self-efficacy, and locus of control as predictors of freshman academic performance. *Psychological Reports*, 1, 515-518. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.2466/PR0.71.6.515-518>
- Finlay, L. (2009). Debating phenomenological research methods. *Phenomenology & Practice*, 3(1), 6-25. <https://doi.org/10.29173/pandpr19818>
- Fitzgerald, B. (2004). Federal financial aid and college access. In E. P. St. John (Ed.), *Public Policy and College Access: Investigating the Federal and State Roles in Equalizing Postsecondary Opportunity* (pp. 1-28). AMS Press.
- Garry, M., Sharman, S. J., Feldman, J., Marlatt, G. A., & Loftus, E. F. (2002). Examining memory for heterosexual college students' sexual experiences using an electronic mail diary. *Health Psychology*, 21(6), 629-634. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0278-6133.21.6.629>
- Golden, D. (2003, January 15). Family ties: Preference for alumni children in college admission draws fire. *Wall Street Journal*.
http://online.wsj.com/public/resources/documents/Polk_Alumni.htm
- Golden, D. (2006). *The price of admission: How America's ruling class buys its way into elite colleges—and who gets left outside the gates*. Crown.
- Golden, D. (2010). An analytic survey of legacy preference. In R. D. Kahlenberg (Ed.), *Affirmative action for the rich: Legacy preferences in college admissions* (pp. 71-99). Century Foundation Press.

- Golden, D., & Burke, D. (2019, October 8). The unseen student victims of the “Varsity Blues” college admission scandal. *The New Yorker*. <https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-unseen-student-victims-of-the-varisty-blues-college-admission-scandal>
- Gopalan, M., & Brady, S. T. (2019). College students’ sense of belonging: A national perspective. *Educational Researcher*, 49 (2), 134-137.
<https://doi.org/10.3102%2F0013189X19897622>
- Gore, P. A. (2006). Academic self-efficacy as a predictor of college outcomes: Two incremental validity studies. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 14, 92-115.
<https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1069072705281367>
- Hartocollis, A. (2018, December 20). The Harvard bias suit by Asian-Americans: 5 key issues. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/20/us/harvard-asian-american-students-discrimination.html>
- Hechinger Report. (2018, September 10). Colleges set to fight for fewer students. *U.S. News and World Report*. <https://www.usnews.com/news/education-news/articles/2018-09-10/colleges-set-to-fight-for-fewer-students>
- Hoover, E. (2017, August 3). Wait, will anyone investigate legacy admissions? *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Wait-Will-Anyone-Investigate/240850/>
- Horn, L., & Nunez, A. (2000). *Mapping the road to college: First-generation students’ math track, planning strategies, and context of support* (NCES 2000-153). National Center for Education Statistics. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2000153>
- Hurtado, S. Alvarez, C., Guillermo-Wann, Cuellar, M., & Arellano, L. (2012). A model for diverse learning environments: The scholarship on creating and assessing conditions for

- student success. In J. Smart et al. (Eds.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research*. Springer.
- Hurwitz, M. (2011). The impact of legacy status on undergraduate admissions at elite colleges and universities. *Economics of Education Review*, 30, 480-492.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2010.12.002>
- Iloh, C. (2018). Toward a new model of college “choice” for a twenty-first-century context. *Harvard Educational Review*, 88 (2), 227-244. <https://doi.org/10.17763/1943-5045-88.2.227>
- Jaschik, S. (2017, August 21). Quantifying the advantage for legacy applicants. *Inside Higher Ed*. <https://www.insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2017/08/21/data-provide-insights-advantages-and-qualifications-legacy-applicants>
- Jaschik, S. (2018a, February 5). Are admissions gatekeepers diverse enough? *Inside Higher Ed*. <https://www.insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2018/02/05/article-renews-debate-over-whether-admissions-officials-are-diverse>
- Jaschik, S. (2018b, February 15). Student groups urge review of legacy admissions. *Inside Higher Ed*. <https://www.insidehighered.com/quicktakes/2018/02/15/student-groups-urge-review-legacy-admissions>
- Karabel, J. (2005). *The chosen: The hidden history of admission and exclusion at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton*. Houghton Mifflin.
- Klassen, R. M., Krawchuk, L. L., & Rajani, S. (2008). Academic procrastination of undergraduates: Low self-efficacy to self-regulate predicts higher levels of procrastination. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 33, 915-931.
<https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2007.07.001>

- Koppelman, C. (2020, March 4). *Harvard acceptance rate for legacy students*. The Koppelman Group. <https://www.koppelmangroup.com/blog/2020/3/4/harvard-acceptance-rate-for-legacy-students>
- Kuh, G. D. (2002). *The National Survey of Student Engagement: Conceptual framework and overview of psychometric properties*. National Survey of Student Engagement.
- Kuh, G. D. (2008). *High-impact educational practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter*. Association of American Colleges & Universities.
- Kuncel, N. R., Crede, M., & Thomas, L. L. (2005). The validity of self-reported grade point averages, class ranks, and test scores: A meta-analysis and review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 75(1), 63-82.
<https://doi.org/10.3102%2F00346543075001063>
- Larkin, M., & Aina, M. (2018, November 4). *Legacy admissions offer an advantage—and not just at schools like Harvard*. NPR. <https://www.npr.org/2018/11/04/663629750/legacy-admissions-offer-an-advantage-and-not-just-at-schools-like-harvard>
- Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Larkin, K. C. (1986). Self-efficacy in the prediction of academic performance and perceived career options. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 33, 265-269. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0001-8791\(89\)90048-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/0001-8791(89)90048-1)
- Levine, D. O. (1988). *The American college and the culture of aspiration 1915-1940*. Cornell University Press.
- Love, K. M., & Thomas, D.M. (2014). Parenting styles and adjustment outcomes among college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 55(2), 139-150.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2014.0013>

- Majer, J. M. (2009). Self-efficacy and academic success among ethnically diverse first-generation community college students. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 2(4), 243-250. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0017852>
- Marra, K. J. (2006). *They who persist: A longitudinal qualitative study case study of a university student cohort* (Publication No. 3239313) [Doctoral dissertation, University of San Diego]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.
- Martin, N. D., & Spenner, K. I. (2009). Capital conversion and accumulation: A social portrait of legacies at an elite university. *Research in Higher Education*, 50, 623-648. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-009-9136-9>
- Massey, D. G., & Mooney, M. (2007). The effects of America's three affirmative action programs on academic performance. *Social Problems*, 54(1), 99-17. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2006.04.004>
- Medina, J., Benner, K., & Taylor, K. (2019, March 12). Actresses, business leaders and other wealthy parents charged in U.S. college entry fraud. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/12/us/college-admissions-cheating-scandal.html>
- Miller, A. L., Sarraf, S. A., Dumford, A. D., Rocconi, L. M. (2020). *NSSE construct validity study*. <https://nsse.indiana.edu/nsse/psychometric-portfolio/construct-validity.html>
- Moran, D. (2002). *Introduction to phenomenology*. Routledge.
- Morse, J. M. (1995). The significance of saturation. *Qualitative Health Research*, 5, 147-149. <https://doi.org/10.1177/104973239500500201>
- Morse, R., & Brooks, E. (2018). *Frequently asked questions*. <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/rankings-faq>

- Multon, K. D., Brown, S. D., & Lent, R. W. (1991). Relation to self-efficacy beliefs to academic outcomes: A meta-analytic investigation. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 38, 30-38.
<https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0022-0167.38.1.30>
- National Student Clearinghouse. (2014). *First-year persistence rate of college students declines*.
<https://www.studentclearinghouse.org/nscblog/first-year-persistence-rate-of-college-students-declines-with-biggest-drop-among-youngest-students/>
- National Survey of Student Engagement. (2010). *Benchmarks of effective educational practice*.
Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research.
- National Survey of Student Engagement. (2015, July 23). *Engagement indicators and high impact practices*. https://ipar.ecu.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/130/2020/01/EIs_and_HIPs_2015.pdf
- National Survey of Student Engagement. (2018). *Survey instrument*.
https://survey.indiana.edu/nsse/survey/2020/test/main/1/edit.cfm?sectionList=main,demo_us,closing&packaged=true
- National Survey of Student Engagement. (2019). *NSSE 2019 Engagement indicators: Internal consistency statistics by class level*. <https://nsse.indiana.edu/nsse/psychometric-portfolio/internal-consistency.html>
- Nora, A., Crisp, G., & Matthews, C. (2011). A reconceptualization of CCSSE's benchmarks of student engagement. *The Review of Higher Education*, 35(1), 105-130.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2011.0036>
- Nunnally, J. C. (1978). *Psychometric theory*. McGraw-Hill.

- Nurnberg, P., Schapiro, M., & Zimmerman, D. (2012). Students choosing colleges: Understanding the matriculation decision at a highly selective private institution. *Economics of Education Review*, *31*(1), 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.3386/w15772>
- Odenwell, K. G., Booth-Butterfield, M., & Weber, K. (2014). Investigating helicopter parenting, family environments, and relational outcomes for millennials. *Communication Studies*, *65*(4), 407-425. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10510974.2013.811434>
- Pace, C. R. (1980). Measuring the quality of student effort. *Current Issues in Higher Education*, *2*, 10-16.
- Pace, C. R., & Friedlander, J. (1982). The meaning of response categories: How often is “occasionally,” “often,” and “very often”? *Research in Higher Education*, *17*(3), 267-281. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1007/BF00976703>
- Pascarella, E. T., Seifert, T. A., & Blaich, C. (2010). How effective are the NSSE benchmarks in predicting important educational outcomes? *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, *42*(1), 16-22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00091380903449060>
- Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (1991). *How college affects students: Findings and insights from twenty years of research*. Jossey-Bass.
- Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (2005). *How college affects students: A third decade of research*. Jossey-Bass.
- Patrick, H., Hicks, L., & Ryan, A. M. (1997). Relations of perceived social efficacy and social goal pursuit to self-efficacy for academic work. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, *17*(2), 109-128. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0272431697017002001>

- Patterson, R. M., & O'Brien, K. M. (1997). *An analysis of social self-efficacy in college students: A test of theory and implications for counseling* [Paper presentation]. American Psychological Association Annual Convention, Chicago, IL, United States.
- Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education. (2016). *Indicators of higher education equity in the United States: 2016 historical trend report*.
http://pellinstitute.org/downloads/publications-Indicators_of_Higher_Education_Equity_in_the_US_2016_Historical_Trend_Report.pdf
- Perna, L. W. (2006). Studying college access and choice: A proposed conceptual model. In J. C. Smart (Ed.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* (pp. 99-157). Springer.
- Perna, L. W., & Thomas, S. L. (2006). *A framework for reducing the college success gap and promoting success for all*. National Postsecondary Education Cooperative.
https://nces.ed.gov/npec/pdf/Perna_Thomas_Report.pdf
- Pinsker, J. (2019, April 4). The real reasons legacy preferences exist. *The Atlantic*.
<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2019/04/legacy-admissions-preferences-ivy/586465>
- Porter, S. R. (2011). Do college student surveys have any validity? *The Review of Higher Education*, 35(1), 45-76. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1353/rhe.2011.0034>
- Rosenstock v. Board of Governors of University of North Carolina. 423 F. Supp. 1321. United States District Court M.D. North Carolina, Durham Division (1976).
- Schmidt, P. (2010). A history of legacy preferences and privilege. In R. D. Kahlenberg (Ed.), *Affirmative action for the rich: Legacy preferences in college admissions* (pp. 33-69). Century Foundation Press.

- Schroeder, C. C. (Ed.). (1996). The student learning imperative [Special issue]. *Journal of College Student Development*, 37(2), 118-122.
- Schunk, D. H. (1991). Self-efficacy and academic motivation. *Educational Psychologist*, 26(3), 207-231. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.1991.9653133>
- Selingo, J. J. (2015, June 22). Loyal alumni make it extremely difficult to close a college. Just ask Sweet Briar. *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2015/06/22/loyal-alumni-make-it-extremely-difficult-to-close-a-college-just-ask-sweet-briar/>
- Seltzer, R. (2016, December 6). The high school graduate plateau. *Inside Higher Ed*. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/12/06/high-school-graduates-drop-number-and-be-increasingly-diverse>
- Shadowen, S. D., Tulante, S. P., & Alpern, S. L. (2009). No distinctions except those which merit originates: The unlawfulness of legacy preferences in public and private universities. *Santa Clara Law Review*, 49, 51-136.
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22, 63-75. <https://doi.org/10.3233/EFI-2004-22201>
- Sherer, M., & Adams, C. (1983). Construct validation of the Self-Efficacy Scale. *Psychological Reports*, 53, 899-902. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.2466/pr0.1983.53.3.899>
- Sirin, S. R. (2005). Socioeconomic status and academic achievement: A meta-analytic review of research. *Review of Educational Research*, 75(3), 417-453. <https://doi.org/10.3102%2F00346543075003417>

- Smith, G. J. (2006, April). *The impact of different parenting styles on first-year college students' adaptation to college* [Paper presentation]. Society for Research in Human Development Conference, Fort Worth, TX, United States. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED494313>
- Smith, H. M., & Betz, N. E. (2000). Development and validation of a scale of perceived social self-efficacy. *Journal of Career Assessment, 8*(3), 283-301.
<https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1177/106907270000800306>
- Solberg, V. S., O'Brien, K., Villareal, P., Kennel, R., & Davis, B. (1993). Self-efficacy and Hispanic college students: Validation of the college self-efficacy instrument. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 15*(1), 80-95.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/07399863930151004>
- Spencer, S. J., Steele, C. M., & Quinn, D. M. (1999). Stereotype threat and women's math performance. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 35*, 4-28.
<https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1006/jesp.1998.1373>
- Steele, C. (2011). *Whistling Vivaldi: How stereotypes affect us and what we can do*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Steele, C., & Aronson, J. (1995). Stereotype threat and the intellectual test performance of African Americans. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 69*(5), 797-811.
<https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0022-3514.69.5.797>
- Stone, J. (2002). Battling doubt by avoiding practice: The effect of stereotype threat on self-handicapping in white athletes. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 28*, 1667-1678. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014616702237648>

- Strauss, L. C., & Volkwein, J. F. (2004). Predictors of student commitment at two-year and four-year institutions. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 75(2), 203-227.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2004.11778903>
- Strayhorn, T. L. (2012). *College students' sense of belonging: A key to educational success for all students*. Routledge.
- Synnott, M. G. (2010). *The half-opened door: Discrimination and admissions at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, 1900-1970*. Routledge.
- Thanh, N. C., & Thanh, T. T. L. (2015). The interconnection between interpretivist paradigm and qualitative methods in education. *American Journal of Educational Science*, 1(2), 24-27.
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. University of Chicago Press.
- Thomas, D., & Shepard, T. (2003, March 14). Legacy admissions are defensible, because the process can't be "fair." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 49(27), B15.
- Thompson, C. P. (1982). Memory for unique personal events: The roommate study. *Memory and Cognition*, 10(4), 324-332. <https://doi.org/10.3758/BF03202424>
- Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Educational Research*, 45(1), 89-125.
- Tinto, V. & Pusser, B. (2006). *Moving from theory to action: Building a model of institutional action for student success*. National Postsecondary Education Cooperative.
https://nces.ed.gov/npec/pdf/Tinto_Pusser_Report.pdf
- Tracy, S. J. (2010). Qualitative quality: Eight "big-tent" criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(10), 837-851.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800410383121>

- Tucker, K., Morgan, B.J., Oliver, I., Kirk, O., Moore, K., Irving, D., Sizemore, D., Turner, W., & Emanuel, R. (2016). Perceptions of college student-athletes. *Journal of Undergraduate Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 27-33. http://www.juempsychology.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Tucker_et-al_JUEMP_2016.pdf
- Turner, E.A., Chandler, M., & Heffer, R.W. (2009). The influence of parenting styles, achievement motivation, and self-efficacy on academic performance in college students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 50(3), 337-346. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1353/csd.0.0073>
- UCLA Center X. (2018, April 5). *Sylvia Hurtado: Diversity, dialogue, and democracy*. <https://centerx.gseis.ucla.edu/sylvia-hurtado-diversity-dialogue-and-democracy/>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2016). *Advancing diversity and inclusion in higher education: Key data highlights focusing on race and ethnicity and promising practices*. <https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/advancing-diversity-inclusion.pdf>
- Vagle, M. (2018). *Crafting phenomenological research*. Routledge.
- Wang, C., & Castaneda-Sound, C. (2008). The role of generational status, self-esteem, academic self-efficacy, and perceived social support in college students' psychological well-being. *Journal of College Counseling*, 11(2), 101-119. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.161-1882.2008.tb00028.x>
- Warshaw, J. B. (2010). *I want to be my own person: The meaning-making and psychosocial process of legacy students at Bucknell University* [Master's thesis, Bucknell University]. Bucknell Digital Commons. https://digitalcommons.bucknell.edu/masters_theses/20/
- Warshaw, J. B., Henne-Ochoa, R. B., & Murray, J. L. (2017). Institutional generativity or reproduction of privilege? How campus context and parental involvement affects legacy

- students. *Journal of Student Affairs Industry*, 3(1), 1-30.
<https://jsai.scholasticahq.com/article/2003-institutional-generativity-or-reproduction-of-privilege-how-campus-context-and-parental-involvement-affects-legacy-students>
- Watt, D. (2012). On becoming a qualitative researcher: The value of reflexivity. *The Qualitative Report*, 12(1), 82-101. <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol12/iss1/5>
- Whipple, E. G., Baier, J. L., & Grady, D. L. (2015). A comparison of black and white Greeks at a predominantly white university. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 28(2), 140-148. <http://doi.org/10.1080/00220973.1991.11072198>
- Willis, J. W. (2007). *Foundations of qualitative research: Interpretive and critical approaches*. Sage.
- Wintre, M. G. & Yaffe, M. (2000). First-year students' adjustment to university life as a function of relationships with parents. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 15(1), 9-37.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0743558400151002>
- Zajacova, A., Lynch, S. M., & Espenshade, T. (2005). Self-efficacy, stress, and academic success in college. *Research in Higher Education*, 46(6), 677-706.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-004-4139-z>
- Zimmerman, B. J. (1995). Self-efficacy and educational development. In A. Bandura (Ed.), *Self-efficacy in changing societies* (pp. 203-231). Cambridge University Press.

Appendix A

Researcher as Instrument

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the perceptions of a group of legacy students regarding their experiences at a public, more selective institution. I plan to conduct a phenomenological study in order to understand what the essence of their experience is. As I construct this study, it is critical that I state my own experiences with the topic, clarify my beliefs and values, what I expect to find, what I am willing to discover, what I am not willing to discover, and what I hope the outcomes of the study will be.

A researcher's personal experience with their topic of interest undoubtedly has an impact on the finished product. Four key experiences play a role in how I approach this study. First, a member of my immediate family was a legacy student. Second, as an undergraduate, I knew many students either who were legacies or who had wanted to be legacies at a different institution. Third, my spouse is a legacy student with both of his parents attending the same institution, as well as both of his siblings. Finally, as a higher education professional, I have worked with legacy students and students who are working to make sense of who they want to be in college and have seen how self-efficacy and engagement impact their experience.

Experiences

In my immediate family, there was always an assumption that my siblings and I would attend college. My parents insisted that higher education was a right, not a privilege, and that attending was inevitable. Growing up, stories of the higher educational experiences of both my parents were common. Most often, we heard how much my father's collegiate experience had changed him and shaped him into the man we knew. We learned how his alma mater had challenged him, had been the perfect place for him to mature and develop, and how those he met

there continued to be positive influences long after he graduated. We heard of his time in a fraternity – how even though it was not something he was always proud of today, that it had impacted his concept of leadership and brotherhood. We grew up knowing that his alma mater was the one to root for, particularly when someone brought up his rival school.

When it came time for my brother to start looking at colleges, due to personal concerns my parents encouraged him to look at smaller institutions so that he could have more contact with faculty. While they did not push my father's alma mater into the mix of schools to look at, its small size made it a contender. After considering larger, more diverse institutions, my brother decided to attend my father's alma mater, recognizing that it had been a powerful place for my father and hoping it could be the same for him.

My brother only spent one year at my father's alma mater. He struggled academically and personally to find a space in a student body that he found more privileged than our own upbringing. He attempted to engage with my father's fraternity and was not welcomed, even having the door literally shut in his face on one occasion. My brother did not know how to make a place for himself within the institution. At the end of his first year, he left and spent the next several years bouncing between community colleges, trying to figure out the institution that would work best. He eventually ended up at the larger, more diverse institution he had originally considered, graduating and going on to graduate school at a prestigious institution.

The idea of being a legacy was never pushed on the children in our family. I was never inclined to attend my father's alma mater, as I knew that I wanted to go to a very different kind of institution and I felt confident in my ability to succeed and make my own path elsewhere. My brother didn't have that confidence in high school and it's always seemed to me that he became a legacy because he wasn't confident, didn't know exactly what he wanted, and saw my father's

alma mater as the easy choice. My family doesn't often talk about my brother's experience, but the dialogue in our family has changed from one of discussing how exceptional our institutions were for us to talking more about the transformative power of a college education in general and how it's important for individuals to choose the place they attend because they feel strongly compelled is the place where they can be confident and engage with their peers and faculty in a beneficial way.

One of my very close friends at my undergraduate institution had applied as a legacy student at another more selective institution. He was rejected and ended up at my institution as a second choice. He spent a great deal of time lamenting their rejection, talking about how he felt slighted for not being admitted, and avoiding involvement in campus organizations because he was confident they would transfer to their legacy institution. He ended up staying at my undergraduate institution, but never gave up the conversations about what might have been his experience if he had been admitted as a legacy elsewhere. During the time we were friends, I also became friends with his brother, who had been admitted as a legacy. In contrast to his brother, he regretted the decision to attend the legacy institution, often talking about how he was not sure that he belonged there and talking about how he decided to attend because of their father's experience, but never felt that he was having the same transformative experience as their father. This contrast in experiences always seemed to be a topic of discussion between the brothers, even several years after each had graduated from college. While I would ask questions about their decisions to attend their respective institutions, I never fully understood how their decisions and experiences were impacted by their own relationship as brothers and the way in which other family dynamics played into their decisions and understanding of their experiences.

My spouse was a legacy student at a more selective, public institution. At the time that he attended, his parents had both graduated from the same institution, and his older brother had graduated from the same institution. His younger sister, as well as several cousins would also go on to attend the same institution. His decision to attend as a legacy student was motivated primarily due to the rigor of an academic program he wished to major in, and a desire to go to a school different from his high school that had a larger student body from diverse backgrounds. However, he has stated that his decision to get involved in various organizations was greatly influenced by his brother's experience. He chose to join the same social fraternity as his brother – something he has said he probably would not have done had he not been a legacy.

In contrast, his younger sister has stressed that she felt increasing pressure to attend as a legacy student, especially as the youngest child and the one to ensure that they entire family attended the same institution. She indicated that she was given limits to the schools she could consider for undergraduate study, and felt as though her parents would be disappointed if she did not attend as a legacy student. While she always expresses that she had an enjoyable experience, she is always ready to discuss the other schools she wishes she had attended and the ways in which she did not feel that her experience as a legacy student was ideal.

Having had a legacy sibling, known legacies and those who wished they were legacies, and marrying into a family of legacy students, I truly believe that each legacy student (even if in the same family) has a truly unique experience. How a student perceives their status as a legacy student is greatly influenced not only by a child's relationship with their parents, but also with their siblings, and their own confidence in making their own decisions.

Finally, in my roles in higher education, I have worked closely with students in transition, particularly transfer students. Through my work with these students, I often heard stories about

how students had not found their niche at their previous institutions, whether that was personally or academically. They told stories about how their inability to find fulfilling involvement left them feeling dissatisfied with their collegiate experience. They discussed how the ideas of what they had hoped college would be did not match with the reality of the first institution they attended. These anecdotal experiences, along with my understanding of student development from my coursework that continually discusses how engagement leads to greater development, have greatly shaped my understanding of how much institutional fit and a student's ability to engage in ways that are fulfilling to them can shape a student's collegiate experience and ultimately their persistence.

I first took a hard look at legacy students during my first course in my doctoral program. As a part of a course on student affairs, I was required to write a paper on a specific student population and come up with a handout that my classmates could use in future practice as they worked with that population. Thinking about my sibling's experience, I chose legacy students as my population and took a dive into the literature. As a fairly green higher education professional, I knew the basics about legacy students, but had never taken a hard look at the data on this population. My discoveries about the magnitude of preference that is given to legacy students astonished me, but more than anything I was surprised by the realization that the primary reason to encourage legacy students is financial (even though studies have shown that legacy preference does not increase alumni giving).

Since I began my doctoral program and started to focus my research interests on legacy students, I have seen the topic of legacy students pop up with some regularity in higher education news. The question of legacy admission preference is often brought up as a part of the larger discussion around all admission preference and makes the argument that if leaders wish to

abolish affirmative action, then legacy preference must also go. As I have continued to study this student population and listened to the news that covers legacy preference, the motivation behind legacy preference has continued to pose problems for me. Affirmative action is intended to promote equity in higher education, but legacy preference today is meant to strengthen family bonds with an institution and hopefully ensure greater alumni giving. I believe that while affirmative action is meant to serve a greater good, legacy preference perpetuates a policy of meritocracy.

Every time legacy preference is defended, for whatever reason, I think back to the literature and the gaps in the research related to legacy student engagement and self-efficacy. I truly believe that if we are to continue to allow legacy admission preference to continue, that we must better understand the impacts of it on students, and come up with a better idea of how it benefits institutions.

Beliefs

As I have defined and redefined my own beliefs about the legacy student experience, there are several key ideas that surfaced:

- The reasons students choose to attend an institution can have an enormous impact on their decisions to engage with their institution, both in and outside of the classroom. If a student chooses an institution due to external pressures or expectations, they are less eager to engage.
- Positive self-efficacy is vital for students to succeed. If a student is not confident that they can succeed at their institution or even confident in their decisions relating to the institution they attend and the way they engage with that institution, they are less prepared to succeed academically and personally.

- Each legacy student experience is different, but I believe legacy status is always a player in their collegiate experience.

As I begin this study, I expect these beliefs to influence my interpretation of what students share with me. I expect to see legacy students engaging with their institution in a variety of ways with varying levels of self-efficacy. I expect to find that each legacy student chose to attend this institution and that the reasons they chose to do so, impact their engagement and self-efficacy.

What I am not willing to discover, or at least what I do not want to discover is that legacy students have a negative view of their collegiate experience. I believe in the transformative power of higher education, and I truly want all college students to grow and develop in positive ways during their time in college. Even though I know that there are always negative aspects of an experience, I hope that the students who participant in my study are having positive experiences.

The ultimate hope of any researcher is that her findings will have an impact on future research or practice. I hope that my study will impact how educational leaders view legacy student admission policies, and will shape the way they work with this unique student population.

Additionally, I hope that it will push readers to think about how we message higher education to students, how we talk to high school students about how to choose an institution, and what to expect once they arrive on campus. Finally, I hope to fill the gaps in literature that exist around the legacy student experience and how engagement and self-efficacy play a role in student understanding of themselves as legacy students.

Appendix B

Potential Participant Email Solicitation

Dear [State University] student,

As an undergraduate legacy student (an individual attending the same institution as their parent(s) or sibling(s)) at [State University], you are being invited to participate in my dissertation research. The purpose of this study is to explore the legacy student experience and how student engagement and self-efficacy relate to that experience. Students who are chosen to participate must not only self-identify as a legacy student, but also recognize that their legacy status may have garnered preferential treatment in the admission process.

I am looking for legacy students to participate in this study. Each participant will be asked to participate in two interviews (initial and final) and complete a 15-20 minute online questionnaire.

As an added incentive, **each selected participant who successfully completes all parts of this study will receive \$50 in cash.**

Should you choose to participate, you will be provided with a consent form. All data will remain confidential.

If you **recognize that your legacy status may have benefited your admission or sets you apart from your peers** and are interested in participating, please complete the following form ([Interest Form](#)) and you will be contacted shortly with more information on the details of the study. Please note, I am looking to find a wide variety of participants who are as representative of the student body as possible. Submitting your interest does not guarantee that you will be selected to participate in this study.

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to me at ghfend@email.wm.edu.

Thanks in advance for your time!

Sincerely,

Grace Fend

Appendix C

Participant Indication of Interest Form

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study. Please complete the following form if you wish to be contacted to participate in this study. Please remember, all information will remain confidential. If you have any questions or concerns, you may contact Grace Fend (ghfend@email.wm.edu, 757-532-0225) or her dissertation advisor, Dr. Pamela Eddy (pamela.eddy@wm.edu, 757-221-2349).

Please read the following before proceeding:

I understand that I am expressing interest in participating in a dissertation research project conducted by Grace H. Fend. I understand that, should I be chosen, I will be asked to participate in two interviews and complete a web-based questionnaire about my in- and out-of-class campus engagement and my overall sense of self-efficacy. I understand that my responses will be confidential and that no reference will be made in any oral or written report that would link me individually to the study. I am aware that I may report dissatisfaction with any aspect of this study to the Chair of the Protection of Human Subjects Committee, Dr. Tom Ward (757-221-2358 or tom.ward@wm.edu) or Dr. Jennifer Stevnes (757-221-3862 or jastev@wm.edu) at William & Mary. I am also aware that I must be at least 18 years of age to participate. By writing my name in the following field, I signify my interest in voluntary participation in this project and acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent statement.

Do you consent to participate in this study?

Yes

No

Please write your full legal name.

Please provide your student email address.

Please indicate all family members who attended [State University].

Mother

Father

Brother

Sister

Prior to the invitation to participate in this study, were you aware of your legacy status?

Yes

No

Unsure

Prior to the invitation to participate in this study, were you aware that legacy students may receive preferential treatment in the admission process?

Yes

No

Unsure

What is your age?

Please indicate your class year.

Freshman

Sophomore

Junior

Senior

Other

How would you describe yourself? (Select all that apply)

American Indian, Alaska Native, First Nations, or Indigenous

Asian or Asian-American

Black or African-American

Hispanic or Latino/a

Middle Eastern or North African

Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

White

Multi-Racial

Other

I prefer not to respond

With what gender do you identify?

Agender

Androgynous

Bigender

Male

Female

Gender Fluid

Non-binary

Transgender

Other

Please indicate with which pronoun you identify.

he/him/his

she/her/hers

they/them/theirs

Other

Thank you for indicating your interest in participating in my dissertation study. Should you be selected to participate in the full study, you will be contacted via the email you provided within two weeks.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at ghfend@email.wm.edu or 757-532-0225!

Appendix D

Email Response to Interested Participants

Dear [Student],

Thank you for your interest in participating in my study. As a participant, I will ask you to participate in an initial individual interview, approximately one hour in length. Following this interview, I will ask that you complete an online survey that should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. There will then be a final interview, about one hour in length. At the conclusion of your final interview, you will receive compensation of \$50.

At the time of your first interview, you will be provided with an explanation of my study, my expectations of you as participant, and a consent form. At all stages of the study, your information will remain confidential, and I will communicate with you throughout to verify my interpretation of your responses, correcting them as necessary.

I would like to schedule your initial interview between (two week period to be determined upon approval by EDIRC and ability to begin data generation). Please respond with your availability for the initial one-hour interview.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out at any time.

Thank you,

Grace Fend

Appendix E

Guiding Interview Questions

Definitions to share prior to each interview:

- A legacy student is a collegiate student who attends the same institution as a sibling, or one or both of his or her parents.
- Self-efficacy is an individual's perception of their abilities to perform tasks or deal with certain situations (Bandura, 1986).
- Student engagement is the extent to which students contribute both time and energy to their learning and development both inside and outside the classroom (*College Student Report*, 2013).

For first interview only:

- What was your experience with State University prior to deciding to attend?
 - How did you make the decision to attend State University?
 - How important was it to you that your sibling/mom/dad had attended State University?
 - What was a key factor in your decision to apply to State University?
 - What was a key factor in your decision to attend State University?
- To what extent, if at all, and how, are you engaged in your classroom experience?
 - Do you speak with your faculty outside of class?
 - Do you participate in research?
 - Do you work with other students outside of class on projects?
 - Why did you choose to engage in those ways?
 - How, if at all, has your engagement changed throughout your collegiate experience?
- To what extent, if at all, and how, are you engaged outside of the classroom?
 - With what, if any, social organizations are you involved?
 - Do you work on or off campus?
 - Why did you choose to engage in those ways?
 - How, if at all, has your engagement outside the classroom changed throughout your collegiate experience?
- How confident are you in your ability to succeed at State University?
 - What factors contribute to your confidence/lack of confidence, and how do those factors contribute to your confidence/lack of confidence?
 - What prepared you the most to feel confident in your ability to succeed at State University?
- How, if at all, has your confidence changed during your time at State University? (for second-years, third-years, fourth-years)
 - What factors contributed to those changes?
 - What could have helped you to feel more confident?

- How if at all, has your confidence changed or do you think your confidence will change during your time at State University? (for freshmen)
 - What factors will contribute to those changes?
- Would you tell me more about how, if at all, your family's relationship to State University impacts your collegiate experience?
 - How often does your family visit State University? Are these visits aligned with official State University events?
 - What type of stories did your family member(s) tell you about State University? How have these stories held true/or not for you?
 - How, if at all, have the impacts of your family's relationship to State University on your collegiate experience changed over time?
- Have you heard the news of Operation Varsity Blues college admissions scandal?
 - What have been your perceptions of the case?
 - How, if at all, have you thought about your own admission experience in relation to the case?
- Is there anything else I should be thinking about to understand better the experience of legacy students on campus?

Appendix F

Crosswalk Between Individual Interview Questions and Literature

Interview Questions	Research Questions	Literature
<p>What was your experience with State University prior to deciding to attend?</p> <p>a. How did you make the decision to attend State University?</p> <p>b. How important was it to you that your sibling/mom/dad had attended State University?</p> <p>c. What was a key factor in your decision to apply to State University?</p> <p>d. What was a key factor in your decision to attend State University?</p>	<p>1. How do legacy students describe their college experience?</p>	<p>Bean & Eaton (2000, 2002)</p> <p>Martin & Spenner (2009)</p> <p>Perna (2006)</p> <p>Perna & Thomas (2006)</p> <p>The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education (2016)</p>
<p>To what extent, if at all, and how, are you engaged in your classroom experience?</p> <p>a. Do you speak with your faculty outside of class?</p> <p>b. Do you participate in research?</p> <p>c. Do you work with other students outside of class on projects?</p> <p>d. Why did you choose to engage in those ways?</p> <p>e. How, if at all, has your engagement changed throughout your collegiate experience?</p>	<p>1. How do legacy students describe their college experience?</p> <p>3. How do legacy students perceive their engagement, both in and outside the classroom, and changes (if any) to it?</p>	<p>Astin (1975, 1984, 1993)</p> <p>Bean & Eaton (2000, 2002)</p> <p>Braxton, Vesper, & Hossler (1995)</p> <p>Kuh (2002)</p> <p>Pascarella & Terenzini (1991, 2005)</p> <p>Tinto (1975)</p> <p>Tinto & Pusser (2006)</p>

<p>To what extent, if at all, and how, are you engaged outside of the classroom?</p> <p>a. With what, if any, social organizations are you involved?</p> <p>b. Do you work on or off campus?</p> <p>c. Why did you choose to engage in those ways?</p> <p>d. How, if at all, has your engagement outside the classroom changed throughout your collegiate experience?</p>	<p>1. How do legacy students describe their college experience?</p> <p>3. How are legacy students engaged throughout their collegiate experience?</p>	<p>Astin (1975, 1984, 1993) Bean & Eaton (2000, 2002) Braxton, Vesper, & Hossler (1995) Kuh (2002) Pascarella & Terenzini (1991, 2005) Tinto (1975) Tinto & Pusser (2006)</p>
<p>How do you define success for yourself at State University?</p> <p>a. How did you come to define success in that manner?</p> <p>b. Has your definition of success changed, or do you expect it to change?</p>	<p>1. How do legacy students describe their college experience?</p> <p>2. How do legacy students perceive their self-efficacy, including changes (if any) to it?</p>	<p>Bandura (1986) Bean & Eaton (2000, 2002) Martin & Spenner (2009) Massey & Mooney (2007) Solberg, O'Brien, Villareal, & Davis (1993) Steele & Aronson (1995)</p>
<p>How confident are you in your ability to succeed at State University?</p> <p>a. What factors contribute to your confidence, and how do those factors contribute to your confidence?</p> <p>b. What prepared you the most to feel confident in your ability to succeed at State University?</p>	<p>1. How do legacy students describe their college experience?</p> <p>2. How do legacy students perceive their self-efficacy, including changes (if any) to it?</p>	<p>Bandura (1986) Bean & Eaton (2000, 2002) Martin & Spenner (2009) Massey & Mooney (2007) Solberg, O'Brien, Villareal, & Davis (1993) Steele & Aronson (1995)</p>

<p>How, if at all, has your confidence changed during your time at State University? (for second-years, third-years, fourth-years)</p> <p>a. What factors contributed to those changes?</p> <p>b. What could have helped you to feel more confident?</p> <p>How if at all, do you think your confidence will change during your time at State University? (for freshmen)</p> <p>a. What factors will contribute to those changes?</p>	<p>2. How do legacy students perceive their self-efficacy, including changes (if any) to it?</p>	<p>Bandura (1986) Bean & Eaton (2000, 2002) Martin & Spenner (2009) Massey & Mooney (2007) Solberg, O'Brien, Villareal, & Davis (1993) Steele & Aronson (1995)</p>
<p>Would you tell me more about how, if at all, your family's relationship to State University impacts your collegiate experience?</p> <p>a. How often does your family visit State University? Are these visits aligned with official State University events?</p> <p>b. What type of stories did your family member(s) tell you about State University? How have these stories held true/or not for you?</p>	<p>1. How do legacy students describe their college experience?</p>	<p>Bean & Eaton (2000, 2002) Horn & Nunez (2000) Martin & Spenner (2009) The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education (2016)</p>

Appendix G

Online Questionnaire

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study! This questionnaire is made up of questions from the College Self-Efficacy Inventory (Solber, O'Brien, Villareal, Kennel, & Davis, 1993) and *The 2018 College Student Report* (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2018). Remember to allow 15-20 minutes to complete the questionnaire, as all the items must be answered in one sitting. If you have any questions or concerns, you may contact Grace Fend (ghfend@email.wm.edu, 757-532-0225) or her dissertation advisor, Dr. Pamela Eddy (pamela.eddy@wm.edu, 757-221-2349).

Please read the following before proceeding:

The general nature of this dissertation research project conducted by Grace H. Fend has been explained to me and I have signed a formal consent form previously. I understand that I will be asked to complete a web-based questionnaire about my in- and out-of-class campus involvement and my overall sense of self-efficacy. I further understand that my responses will be confidential and that no reference will be made in any oral or written report that would link me individually to the study. I know that I may refuse to answer any question asked and that I may discontinue participation at any time. I am aware that I may report dissatisfaction with any aspect of this study to the Chair of the Protection of Human Subjects Committee, Dr. Tom Ward (757-221-2358 or tom.ward@wm.edu) or Dr. Jennifer Stevnes (757-221-3862 or jastev@wm.edu) at William & Mary. I am also aware that I must be at least 18 years of age to participate. By writing my name in the following field, I signify my voluntary participation in this project and acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent statement.

Do you consent to participate in this study?

Yes

No

Please type your full legal name to indicate your consent to participate in this study.

How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?

Excellent

Good

Fair

Poor

If you could start over again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending?

Definitely yes

Probably yes

Probably no

Definitely no

Do you intend to return to this institution next year?

Yes

No

Not sure

Not applicable/Graduating

What have most of your grades been up to now at this institution?

- A
- A-
- B+
- B
- B-
- C+
- C
- C- or lower

What is the highest level of education you every expect to complete?

- Some college but less than a bachelor's degree
- Bachelor's degree (B.A., B.S., etc.)
- Master's degree (M.A., M.S., etc.)
- Doctoral or professional degree (Ph.D., J.D., M.D., etc.)

Which of the following best describes where you are living while attending college?

- Campus housing (other than a fraternity or sorority house)
- Fraternity or sorority house
- House, apartment, or other residence within walking distance to campus
- House, apartment, or other residence farther than walking distance to campus
- Not applicable: Homeless or in transition

How confident are you as a student that you could successfully complete the following tasks?

	Not at all confident - 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Extremely Confident - 10
Research a term paper	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Write course papers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do well on your exams	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Take good class notes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Keep up to date with your schoolwork	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Manage time effectively	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understand your textbooks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Get along with your roommate(s)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Socialize with your roommate(s)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Divide space in your apartment/room with your roommate(s)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Divide chores with your roommate(s)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Participate in class discussion	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ask a question in class	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Get a date when you want one	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Talk to your professors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Talk to university staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Make new friends at college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Join a student organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

During the current school year, about how often have you done the following?

	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Never
Asked questions or contributed to course discussions in other ways	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Come to class without completing readings or assignments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attended an art exhibit, play, or other arts performance (dance, music, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Asked another student to help you understand course material	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Explained course material to one or more students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Worked with other students on course projects or assignments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Given a course presentation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Combined ideas from different courses when completing assignments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Connected your learning to societal problems or issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Included diverse perspectives (political, religious, racial/ethnic, gender, etc.) in course discussions or assignments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from their perspective	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Connected ideas from your courses to your prior experiences and knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Talked about career plans with a faculty member	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Worked with a faculty member on activities other than coursework (committees, student groups, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Discussed course topics, ideas, or concepts with a faculty member outside of class

Discussed your academic performance with a faculty member

During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized the following?

	Very Much	Quite a Bit	Some	Very Little
Memorizing course material	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Applying facts, theories, or methods to practical problems or new situations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Analyzing an idea, experience, or line of reasoning in depth by examining its parts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Evaluating a point of view, decision, or information source	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Forming a new idea or understanding from various pieces of information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

During the current school year, about how many papers, reports, or other writing tasks of the following lengths have you been assigned? (Include those not yet completed.)

	None	1-2 Papers	3-5 Papers	6-10 Papers	11-15 Papers	16-20 Papers	More than 20 Papers
Up to 5 pages	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Between 6 and 10 pages	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11 pages or more	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

During the current school year, about how often have you had discussions with people from the following groups?

	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Never
People of a race or ethnicity other than your own	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People from an economic background other than your own	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People with religious beliefs other than your own	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People with political views other than your own	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

During the current school year, to what extent have your courses challenged you to do your best work?

1 - Not at all

2

3

4

5

6

7 - Very much

Which of the following have you done or do you plan to do before you graduate?

	Done or In Progress	Plan to Do	Do Not Plan to Do	Have Not Decided
Participate in an internship, co-op, field experience, student teaching, or clinical placement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hold a formal leadership role in a student organization or group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Participate in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Participate in a study abroad program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work with a faculty member on a research project	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Complete a culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, portfolio, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

About how many of your courses at this institution have included a community-based project (service-learning)?

All

Most

Some

None

Indicate the quality of your interactions with the following people at your institution.

	Poor - 1	2	3	4	5	6	Excellent - 7	Not Applicable
Students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Academic Advisors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Faculty	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student Services Staff (career services, student activities, housing, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other administrative staff and offices (registrar, financial aid, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How much does your institution emphasize the following?

	Very Much	Quite a Bit	Some	Very Little
Spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Providing support to help students succeed academically	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Using learning support services (tutoring services, writing center, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds (social, racial/ethnic, religious, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Providing opportunities to be involved socially	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Providing support for your overall well-being (recreation, health care, counseling, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Helping you manage your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attending campus activities and events (performing arts, athletic events, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attending events that address important social, economic, or political issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing the following?

	0	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	More than 30
Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, campus publications, student government, fraternity or sorority, intercollegiate or intramural sports, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Working for pay ON campus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Working for pay OFF campus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Doing community service or volunteer work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relaxing and socializing (time with friends, video games, TV or videos, keeping up with friends online, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Providing care for dependents (children, parents, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Commuting to campus (driving, walking, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Of the time you spend preparing for class in a typical 7-day week, about how much is on **assigned reading**?

Very little

Some

About half

Most

Almost all

Dear participant,

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. As stated earlier, your information will be kept confidential. If you have any questions or concerns about your privacy and the privacy of your responses, please feel free to contact me at anytime.

Now that you have completed the survey I will contact you shortly to schedule our final interview.

Thank you again for participating in my study!

Sincerely,
Grace

Appendix H

Consent Form for Student Participants

This investigation, entitled “Legacy Student Perceptions of Engagement and Self-Efficacy” is designed to explore how you, as a legacy student, perceive your own engagement and self-efficacy at your institution.

Studying your understanding of yourself as a legacy student and your engagement and self-efficacy will help me and fellow higher education practitioners better serve legacy student needs. Our focus on perceptions will hopefully shed light not just on how engaged you are in your collegiate experience, but how you make meaning of your engagement and self-efficacy. This study is being conducted for my dissertation in the William & Mary School of Education.

TIMELINE

Data generation will occur between May 2019 and June 2019. During this time you will be asked to participate in two interviews, approximately one-hour in length each, and complete an online questionnaire that should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. After each interview and throughout the study, I will reach out via email to check my interpretations of your responses. A summary of my findings will be provided to you in May 2019.

WHAT WILL I REQUEST FROM YOU?

- You will be asked to participate in an initial individual interview, approximately one hour in length, where you will be asked questions about 1) your relationship with your institution prior to enrolling, 2) your expectations about your collegiate experience prior to enrolling, 3) your confidence in various aspects of your collegiate experience, and 4) your engagement both in and outside of the classroom at your institution.
- Following the initial interview, I will ask that you complete an online questionnaire that should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. This questionnaire will ask questions about specific aspects of your engagement in and outside the classroom and your self-efficacy with various aspects of the collegiate experience.
- You will then participate in a final interview. This interview will also be approximately one-hour in length, and questions will be derived from the initial interview and your responses to the online questionnaire.
- At various times, I will communicate with you via email to ensure I am correctly understanding and interpreting your responses. You will have the opportunity to correct my interpretations.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Please know that:

- The confidentiality of your personally identifying information will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.
- Your name and other identifying information will be known only to the researcher through the information that you provide. Neither your name nor any personally identifying information will be used in any presentation or published work without prior consent.
- The audio recordings of the two interviews described above and the responses from the online questionnaire will be erased after the study has been completed.
- You may refuse to answer any questions during the interviews if you so choose. You may also terminate your participation in the study at any time. (to do so, simply inform the interviewer of your intention.) Neither of these actions will incur a penalty of any time.
- Your participation is completely voluntary. If you decline to participate, this decision will not endanger your relationship with your collegiate institution.
- A summary of the results of the study will be sent to you electronically once they are complete.

HOW CAN YOU CONTACT ME?

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact me, Grace Fend (ghfend@email.wm.edu, 757-532-0225) at William & Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia or my dissertation advisor: Dr. Pamela Eddy (pamela.eddy@wm.edu, 757-221-2349). If you have additional questions or concerns regarding your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish Dr. Tom Ward (tjward@wm.edu, 757-221-2358) or Dr. Jennifer Stevens (jastev@wm.edu, 757-221-3862), chairs of the two William & Mary committees that supervise the treatment of study participants.

By checking the “I agree to participate” response below, then signing and dating this form, you indicate your voluntary agreement to participate in this study, and confirm that you are at least 18 years of age.

- I agree to participate.
- I do not agree to participate.

A copy of this consent form will be given to you to keep.

SIGNATURES:

Participant: _____ Date: _____

Researcher: _____ Date: _____

Appendix I

National Survey of Student Engagement *The College Student Report* Item Usage Agreement



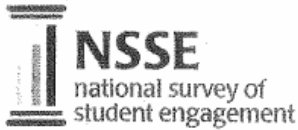
The College Student Report Item Usage Agreement

The National Survey of Student Engagement's (NSSE) survey instrument, *The College Student Report*, is copyrighted and the copyright is owned by The Trustees of Indiana University. Any use of survey items contained within *The College Student Report* is prohibited without prior written permission from Indiana University. When fully executed, this Agreement constitutes written permission from the University, on behalf of NSSE, for the party named below to use an item or items from *The College Student Report* in accordance with the terms of this Agreement.

In consideration of the mutual promises below, the parties hereby agree as follows:

- 1) The University hereby grants **Grace Fend** ("Licensee") a nonexclusive, worldwide, irrevocable license to use, reproduce, distribute, publicly display and perform, and create derivatives from, in all media now known or hereafter developed, the item(s) listed in the proposal attached as Exhibit A, solely for the purpose of including such item(s) in the survey activity described in Exhibit A, which is incorporated by reference into this Agreement. This license does not include any right to sublicense others. This license only covers the survey instrument, time frame, population, and other terms described in Exhibit A. Any different or repeated use of the item(s) shall require an additional license.
- 2) "National Survey of Student Engagement", "NSSE", and the NSSE logo are registered with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Except as provided in part 3c below, these elements may not be incorporated without permission in materials developed under this agreement, including but not limited to surveys, Web sites, reports, and promotional materials.
- 3) In exchange for the license granted in section 1, Licensee agrees:
 - a) there will be no licensing fee to use NSSE items for the purposes described in Exhibit A;
 - b) to provide to NSSE frequency distributions and means on the licensed item(s);
 - c) on the survey form itself, and in all publications or presentations of data obtained through the licensed item(s), to include the following citation: "Items xx and xx used with permission from *The College Student Report*, National Survey of Student Engagement, Copyright 2001-18 The Trustees of Indiana University";
 - d) to provide to NSSE a copy of any derivatives of, or alterations to, the item(s) that Licensee makes for the purpose of Licensee's survey ("modified items"), for NSSE's own nonprofit, educational purposes, which shall include the use of the modified items in *The College Student Report* or any other survey instruments, reports, or other educational or professional materials that NSSE may develop or use in the future. Licensee hereby grants the University a nonexclusive, worldwide, irrevocable, royalty-free license to use,

Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research
1900 East Tenth Street • Eigenmann Hall, Suite 419 • Bloomington, IN 47406
Phone: (812) 856-5824 • Fax: (812) 856-5150 • E-mail: nsse@indiana.edu • Web Address: www.nsse.iub.edu



reproduce, distribute, create derivatives from, and publicly display and perform the modified items, in any media now known or hereafter developed; and

- e) to provide to NSSE, for its own nonprofit, educational purposes, a copy of all reports, presentations, analyses, or other materials in which the item(s) licensed under this Agreement, or modified items, and any responses to licensed or modified items, are presented, discussed, or analyzed. NSSE shall not make public any data it obtains under this subsection in a manner that identifies specific institutions or individuals, except with the consent of the Licensee.

4) This Agreement expires on September 15, 2019.

The undersigned hereby consent to the terms of this Agreement and confirm that they have all necessary authority to enter into this Agreement.

For The Trustees of Indiana University:

Alex McCormick
Digitally signed by Alexander McCormick
 DN: postalCode=47405, o=Indiana University,
 street=900 E. 7th St., street=900 E. 7th St., st=IN,
 In=Bloomington, c=US, cn=Alexander McCormick,
 email=amcc@indiana.edu
 Date: 2019.03.28 15:21:25 -0400

Alexander C. McCormick
Director
National Survey of Student Engagement

Date

For Licensee:

Grace Fend
 Grace Fend
 Doctoral Student
 The College of William and Mary

3/21/2019
Date

For Advisor:

Pamela Eddy
 Dr. Pamela Eddy
 Professor and Chair, Educational Policy, Planning, and Leadership
 The College of William and Mary

3-25-19
Date

Appendix J

Peer Reviewer Confidentiality Agreement

I agree to participate as a peer reviewer in the doctoral dissertation of Grace Fend. I agree to maintain the utmost confidence throughout this peer review process by not sharing or disseminating in written or electronic form the transcription(s) of the student participant(s) in Grace Fend's study or any information gleaned from the review without prior written consent from Grace Fend. Additionally, I will not use any of the data that I am checking for other purposes.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Vita

Grace Hindman Fend

Birthdate: October 8, 1989

Birthplace: Newport News, Virginia

Education: 2014-2021 The College of William and Mary
Williamsburg, Virginia
Doctor of Philosophy

2011-2013 University of South Carolina
Columbia, South Carolina
Master of Library and Information Sciences

2007-2011 The College of William and Mary
Williamsburg, Virginia
Bachelor of Arts