Experiences and Perceptions of First-Generation, Low- Income Students' First Semester
of Dual Enrollment in Georgia

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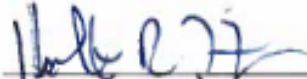B.S. University of Tampa, 1999

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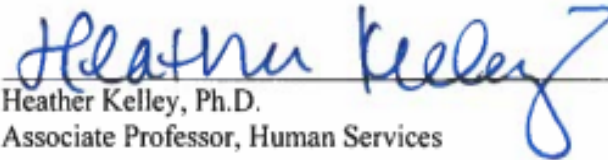
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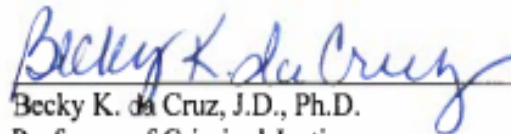
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ABSTRACT

This research sought to understand the experiences and perceptions of first-generation, low-income (FGLI) students enrolled in their first semester of a dual enrollment program (DEP) in a rural county in the southeastern United States. The study followed a basic qualitative design. Participants enrolled in their first semester of college courses during the 2019-2020 school year, were first in their family to attend college, and qualified for the Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL) program. Eight participants were selected, one from each of the following categories: male and female, White and non-White, and high- and low-grade point averages. Data were collected during three interviews and coded by In Vivo, Emotion, Process, and Pattern coding during the analysis process. Five themes were uncovered through the data analysis process including college readiness skills, anxiety, support systems, interactions, and persistence. Implications for practice are provided, including teacher recommendations and surveys within the application process and creating a mentor program to provide support systems for the students. Future research is suggested to include studying the differences in experiences and perceptions of FGLI students in DEPs at 2-year and 4-year colleges, the difference in persistence rates in academic and technical courses for the DEP at 2-year colleges, the differences in anxiety and self-confidence levels for female and male students, and the experiences and perceptions of FGLIs in a DEP during the Covid-19 global pandemic.

Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate my research to all first-generation students. I continue to be amazed at the benefits of dual enrollment, and I can only hope students listen to the research and take complete advantage of the programs. I wish them success in their futures and hope they continue to reach for those dreams.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Dual enrollment has grown in popularity throughout the last 10 years. The U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) reported 82% of high schools in the United States had students participating in dual enrollment classes in the 2010-2011 school year (Thomas, Marken, Gray, & Lewis, 2013). The researchers reported the number of high school students enrolled in college courses increased 7% annually between the 2002-2003 school year and 2010-2011 school year. Only 1.4 million high school students reported to have taken college courses in 2002-2003, while roughly two million high school students had enrolled in college courses by 2010-2011 (Thomas, Marken, Gray, & Lewis, 2013).

Researchers support the process of allowing students access to college coursework and believe the increase in participation in dual enrollment is largely due to the reported academic and social benefits related to the experience (An, 2013a; An, 2013b; Ganzert, 2012; Kim, 2014). Students who participate in a dual credit course tend to require less remediation in math and English courses, have a higher retention rate, more likely to persist until they earn a degree, and have higher grade point averages (GPA) than their counterparts who did not participate (An, 2013a; An, 2013b; Ganzert, 2012; Kim, 2014). Specifically, the researchers reported minority, low-income, and first-generation students reap even more significant positive benefits than continuing-generation students from middle-income homes whose parents attended college (An,

2013b; Barnett & Stamm, 2010; Fink, Jenkins, & Yanguira, 2017; Karp, Calcagno, Hughes, Jeong, & Bailey, 2008). Dual enrollment courses provide first-generation, low-income students (FGLI) the opportunity to learn and experience the college-going environment. Researchers report these students learn about the college culture, expectations of college-level work, and become acquainted with the admission process (Barnett & Stamm, 2010; Fink, Jenkins, & Yanguira, 2017; Karp, et al, 2008).

First-generation students (FGS) are identified as the initial member of a family to attend college. The characteristics of FGS are vastly different from continuing-generation students (CGS), or students whose parents attended college (Collier & Morgan, 2008; Cox, 2016; Mehta, Newbold, & O'Rourke, 2011). Differences between these groups include FGS are most likely to be working full-time to support their families, living off-campus, attending college classes in the evening. Variances in the family and social structures provide a different experience for the FGS when applying for, and attending, college classes (Engel & Tinto, 2008; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004).

Statement of the Problem

Dual enrollment provides the experiences FGLI students require to be successful in college (Fink, Jenkins, & Yanguira, 2017). Despite the multiple benefits listed for FGLI students, Engle and Tinto (2008) reported FGLI students are less likely to persist in dual enrollment. Engle and Tinto (2008) found FGLI students are four times more likely to not enroll in a second semester of dual enrollment. There is a disconnect between what the benefits students experience and what the students are experiencing to make them not want to continue with the dual enrollment programs.

There are very few studies examining the experiences and perceptions of FGLI students after their initial exposure to dual enrollment (Holles, 2016; Kanny, 2015; Olive, 2008). It was the goal of this study to gain an understanding of the experiences and perceptions of first-generation students from low-income families, situated in a rural county of north Georgia, as it relates to their participation in a dual enrollment program at a two-year college.

The proposed research was guided by the following question: What are the experiences and perceptions of first-generation, low-income students after their first semester in completing a dual enrollment course in rural, north Georgia. The study addressed the students' experiences both at their high school and college.

Summary of Methodology

The proposed study followed a basic qualitative research design allowing the researcher to study how the students interpret and attach meaning to their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Demographic information collected from a questionnaire determined participants. Each participant was a FGLI student. The researcher interviewed dual-enrollment students from a rural county in north Georgia. The participants completed their first semester of dual enrollment within the 2018-2019 school year at a postsecondary technical college in Georgia. The interviews are described further in Chapter III.

Conceptual Framework

Dual enrollment helps prepare high school students for postsecondary coursework and supports the entire process for college readiness starting with students initiating the application process through studying higher-level content within various courses. The

benefits resulting from participation in dual enrollment courses are supported by a variety of theories such as self-efficacy, social cognitive theory, and self-regulatory learning. The conceptual framework aligns with the theories surrounding college preparedness for FGLI students.

Dual Enrollment and College Preparedness

The role of being a successful college student includes more than just having the academic ability. Conley (2007) developed four key components of what it means to be *college and career ready*. Being *college and career ready* is about knowing "how to think, how to know, how to act, and how to go" (Conley, 2011, p.24). Conley (2011) explained students are considered college and career ready when they have acquired key cognitive strategies, key content knowledge, key learning skills and techniques, and key transition knowledge and skills without remediation. Student grade-point averages (GPAs) can be an indicator for how prepared students are for the more rigorous work in college (Conley, 2014). A student's GPA can predict the student's academic knowledge and determine their college and career ready skills. The GPA can explain the student's proficiency in their time management skills, goal setting skills, study skills, persistence, etc. These skills are necessary in determining if a student is college ready as well as academically ready for more rigorous coursework aligned with dual enrollment.

First-generation students (FGS) are those who come from families in which neither parent went to college. Researchers provided insights into the FGS population and their experiences throughout college. Hooker and Brand (2010) reported FGSs, specifically FGSs from low-income families, generally have less college knowledge than their counterparts whose parents attended college. These students encounter issues

throughout the application process and enrollment time-period. Conley (2007) further

stated students from middle to high income families were more likely to understand the

nuances of applying for financial aid than FGLI students. First-generation, low-income

students are more likely than their peers to require remediation courses and earn less

credits in a comparative amount of time. Engle and Tinto (2008) reported FGLI students

are four times more likely than CGS to leave college after the first semester of college.

The report stated only 11% of FGLI students had earned bachelor's degrees after six

years. After six years, 55% of CGSs had earned a bachelor's degree. FGLI students who

began their college studies at a four-year university, when compared to a two-year

college, were seven times more likely to earn a bachelor's degree (Engle & Tinto, 2008).

However, the number of students who earned a bachelor's degree remained a small

number (25%) (Engle & Tinto, 2008).

Dual Enrollment and Socialization

Dual enrollment provides students a strategy to form an understanding of what it

means to be a college student. Karp (2012) theorized students benefit from the

experience through *anticipatory socialization* and *role rehearsal*. *Anticipatory*

socialization to be the process where students learn the behaviors, attitudes, and values of

those whose role they wish to portray whereas r*ole rehearsal* is the acting out in a similar

fashion as the person the student wishes to portray (Karp, 2012). Role rehearsal provides

practice for the individual to learn those behaviors, attitudes, and values. Through dual

enrollment, a student "tries on" and practices how one can be an effective and successful

college student.

Attinasi (1989) related another variation of socialization as two conceptual schemes of behaviors and attitudes occurring before and after matriculation to college. In the first scheme, the concept of *getting ready* has the student learning from other people the behaviors, attitudes, and experiences that are part of being a college student. Students develop the expectations 1) they were to attend college and 2) what it will be like to be a college student (Attinasi, 1989). The second scheme illustrates the concept of *getting in* where the student has enrolled in college (Attinasi, 1989). The *getting in* phase can be described as the experiences of the student as they navigate their way through the college campus and courses. The changes and development as the student progresses from the *getting ready* stage to the *getting in* stage help determine if a student will be successful (Attinasi, 1989). The student must learn college policy, study habits, and how to communicate with other academic-minded peers and professors. Students unanimously remarked on the "bigness" of the college upon arrival, indicating not only size and complexity of the physical geography, but the social and academic geographies, as well (Attinasi, 1989). A student transitioned through the *getting to know* phase and navigated their way around the university to the "scaling down" phase when a major was decided. Attinasi (1989) stated the "majoring in" phase allowed a student to place themselves physically, socially, and academically into a narrower area of the college. It was then the student's "self-identity vis-à-vis the campus community was created" (Attinasi, 1989, p. 164).

Hooker and Brand (2010) agreed students preparing for college must attain *college knowledge*. C*ollege knowledge* is described as the admissions process, the application for financial aid, as well as the academic and cultural differences between

high school and college (Conley, 2007; Hooker & Brand, 2010). *College knowledge* involves both the logistical planning for college and learning how to identify as a college-going student (Conley, 2007; Hooker & Brand, 2010). Students must go into college with an idea of what the experience will be like. Hooker and Brand (2010) argued students need exposure to the post-secondary life. Students need to experience college-level coursework and learn the academic behaviors to help them be successful with the more demanding courses. Hooker and Brand (2010) suggested educators should start preparing students for college while they are young in order to believe it is attainable.

Collier and Morgan (2008) revised the concept of *role mastery* into components of *role playing* and *role making*. The student tends to begin role playing the part of a college student. Through continuous role playing while enrolled in college courses, the student begins to increase their mastery of the skills necessary for the role. The student eventually expands upon the roles that can be played and, therefore, master each role as they continue successfully learning and practicing the college-going experience.

Throughout Karp's (2012) anticipatory socialization and Attinasi's (1989) *getting ready* stage, the student is learning what it takes to be a college student. The student is listening to peers, parents, and others about the behaviors, attitudes, and values of a successful college student in preparation to becoming a college student. In turn, the student begins to rehearse the role (Karp, 2012) or transitions into the *getting in* phase (Attinasi, 1989). During this time, the student is experiencing the college environment, courses, and connections on the campus. The experiences a college student has on campus and how the student begins to make meaning from them will be the focus of the study.

First-generation, low-income students lack the college-going experiences related to them by relatives (Attinasi,1989; Karp, 2012). The FGS do not have the parental influence to help prepare them for the role they will play (Collier & Morgan, 2008). The researchers found continuing-generation students (CGS) enter college with a greater knowledge of college skills due to learning from their parents and family members' educational histories and experiences. The advantage of CGS is one can easily learn the roles and become *role experts* due to significant others providing information, anticipatory socialization, and both indirect and direct role rehearsal throughout pre-college years (Attinasi, 1989).

Significance of Study

While researchers have argued dual enrollment provides positive benefits for students, especially first-generation students, researchers also indicated FGLI students in dual enrollment do not return to the program after the first semester (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Fink, Jenkins, & Yanagiura, 2017). Two-year post-secondary institutions are enrolling increasingly more dual enrollment students, specifically FGLI students, even while Engle and Tinto (2008) report students are less likely to persist in these institutions than that of a four-year institution.

Through interviews, the researcher attempted to discover what social and academic experiences FGLI students had within their first semester of the dual enrollment courses. The significance of this study will assist educators and families in planning experiences and programs to build the FGLI student's academic and behavioral college preparedness culminating in students being more successful in a dual enrollment

program. By providing this population with effective skills and experiences, they will better be equipped to reach their goals and be more productive citizens.

Delimitations

For this study, first-generation students who come from low-income families were interviewed. Students were from one rural community in Southeastern region of the United States. Students had already completed their first semester of dual enrollment at a local two-year college during the 2019-2020 school year.

The participants were students characterized by the criteria set forth above only. The study did not involve professors, teachers, and guidance counselors, even while recognizing they do provide important insights into student behaviors. Interviews with school faculty and staff provide an opening for future research.

Research Questions

The questions guided this study are the following:

- RQ 1: What were the experiences of first-generation, low-income students throughout their first semester in a dual enrollment course at a two-year postsecondary institution in the rural south?
- RQ 2: What are the perceptions of first-generation, low-income students pertaining to their college preparedness throughout their first semester in a dual enrollment course at a two-year postsecondary institution in the rural south?

Definition of Terms

Advanced Placement (AP) Course: Course approved by the College Board in which the instructor and course syllabus meet a level of rigor equivalent to a college course.

Students might earn college credit if they earn a minimum score on the AP Exam (Wyatt, J. N., Patterson, B. F., & Di Giacomo, F. T., 2015).

Continuous-generation Student (CGS): A student who is not the first in the family to attend a post-secondary institution (Hooker & Brand, 2010).

Dual Credit Course: A course in which a high school student could earn both high school credit and college credit if they earn a satisfactory score (Fink, Jenkins, & Yanagiura, 2017).

Dual Enrollment Program: A program in which a student can participate in college courses while still enrolled in high school. Students must apply to the college and be admitted in order to participate in the program (Fink, Jenkins, & Yanagiura, 2017).

Ethnicity: Determines whether an individual is of Hispanic origin or not (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017).

First-generation Student (FGS): A student who is the first in their family to attend a post-secondary institution (Hooker & Brand, 2010).

Four-year College: A post-secondary institution that offers four-year baccalaureate degree programs (Fink, Jenkins, & Yanagiura, 2017).

Low-income Student: A student who qualifies for the federal free or reduced lunch program due to a low level of family income (An, 2013b).

Post-secondary Institution: A two- or four- year college or university in which a student could attend after high school with various degree and certification programs (Griffin & McGuire, 2018).

Race: A "person's self-identification with one or more social groups" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017, p. 1). The categories include White, Black or African American, Asian,

American Indian and Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, or

multiple (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017).

Socio-economic Status (SES): A family's level of income that might qualify the student

for federal assistance with free or reduced lunch programs. Students are generally

classified by socio-economic status in terms of whether they qualify or not for the federal

lunch program (An, 2013b).

Two-year College: A post-secondary institution that offers Associate degree or

certification programs that generally take one or two years in time. Two-year colleges

include Community Colleges, Junior Colleges, and Technical or Trade Colleges (Fink,

Jenkins, & Yanagiura, 2017).

Summary

Researchers have found traditional age, first-generation college students exhibit

low academic performance, limited behavioral socialization skills, and experience a lack

of knowledge as it pertains to the college experience. However, despite those findings,

high school students of similar backgrounds have demonstrated increasing enrollment

numbers in dual enrollment programs.

In Chapter 1, the focus of the study was discussed to be an examination of the

experiences the identified student population had throughout the first course in a dual

enrollment program and how such experiences shaped their perceptions of college. The

context for the research was framed by the existing theories and research demonstrating

the need for additional knowledge on the topic. In Chapter 2, I provide a review of the

literature and discuss what research is already available for the topic. Chapter 3 consists

of a discussion of the methodology, including data gathering and analysis choices.

Chapter 4 introduces the participants. Chapter 5 reports the findings from the interviews.

Chapter 6 will detail the analysis of the interview data and explain the themes uncovered

in the findings. Chapter 7 summarizes the study by providing a brief overview, detailing

the limitations and implications of the study, and make recommendations for future

research.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported nearly 2 million high school students enrolled in college-level courses during the 2010-2011 school year (Thomas, Marken, Gray, & Lewis, 2013). This number represents approximately 10% of high school students. The data provided depicts a 7% increase each year in the enrollment numbers from 2002-2003. Dual enrollment has become one of the fastest increasing trends in education.

Fink, Jenkins, and Yanagiura (2017) completed a six-year study between 2010-2016. The researchers followed dual enrollment students through a year of dual enrollment and five years after high school. The researchers found the dual enrollment students enrolled in more two-year colleges than four-year colleges during those years (Fink, Jenkins, & Yanagiura, 2017; Mealer, 2016). A concern to the researchers is that first-generation and low-income students are underrepresented in dual enrollment programs (Fink, Jenkins, & Yanagiura, 2017). Fink, Jenkins, and Yanagiura (2017) conducted a study through the Community College Research Center and reported a large difference in the number of low-income and high-income students enrolling in two-year and four-year colleges for dual enrollment programs. Nearly two-thirds of the dual enrollment students enrolling in two-year colleges came from low to middle-income families. Further research on the reasons for the gaps in access and enrollment of low-income students was recommended (Fink, Jenkins, & Yanagiura, 2017).

Professors report college students, in general, are lacking the cognitive and metacognitive skills and abilities required to be successful in college courses and college life (Collier & Morgan, 2008; Hooker & Brand, 2010). Cognitive skills are the mental processes used when a student is trying to learn, memorize, problem solve, reason, or make decisions. Metacognitive skills are the skills a student uses to be aware of their knowledge and thinking and are commonly referred to as self-regulatory skills (Zimmerman, 2002). There are three processes of self-regulatory learning (SRL): "self-instructing", "self-questioning", and "self-monitoring" (Zimmerman, 1989). These skills allow a student to work through a task well from start to finish. Self-regulatory skills consist of time management, goal setting, using diverse learning strategies, and self-assessment techniques (Zimmerman, 2002). The lack of these skills, and therefore preparation for college-level work, affects the failure rates, retention rates, and remediation courses needed by students when they get into college (Collier & Morgan, 2008; Hooker & Brand, 2010).

First-generation students report feeling even more unprepared than their continuing-generation peers in college-level courses (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014; Holles, 2016; Majer, 2009; Mehta, Newbold, & O'Rourke, 2011; Vuong, Brown-Welty, & Tracz, 2010). First-generation students, specifically, lack the self-efficacy experiences to guide them through the college process (Aspelmeier, Love, McGill, Elliott, & Pierce, 2012; Blackwell & Pinder, 2014; Cox, 2016; Mehta et al., 2011). The college process includes the college search and the financial aid applications and maneuvering through classes once on campus, academically and socially. Self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to accomplish a given task. Self-efficacy is not an appraisal of actual skill, but rather a

belief system of what a person thinks they can or cannot do (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy is also domain specific, meaning a student might have a high self-efficacy in one skill but not another (Schunk, 1996). Self-efficacy levels are impacted by four components: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, persuasion, and physiological reactions (Schunk, 1996). First-generation students generally lack the vicarious experiences and verbal persuading provided by students whose parents went to college.

Researchers have also linked self-efficacy levels with a student's academic performance (Schunk, 1996). Those students with a high self-efficacy levels persist when learning becomes difficult, are open to asking for help, and use multiple strategies to solve a problem (Bandara, 1997; Pajares, 2002; Schunk, 1996; Zimmerman, 2002). In comparison, students with low self-efficacy levels give up quickly, avoid challenging tasks, and does not ask for help (Bandara, 1997; Pajares, 2002; Schunk, 1996; Zimmerman, 2002). Schunk (1996) declared self-efficacy for learning leads students to use effective self-regulatory strategies. Researchers have shown that self-efficacy beliefs dictate academic behaviors which ultimately leads to the students' academic outcomes (Bandara, 1997; Pajares, 2002; Schunk, 1996; Zimmerman, 2002).

The prominent researchers on dual enrollment claim all students benefit from the early, college-level coursework (An, 2013b; Kanny, 2015; Ozmun, 2013). The early, college-level coursework provides mastery experiences for students that help build their self-efficacy levels (Ozmun, 2013). The improved self-efficacy levels in students allow them to believe they can be successful and to persist when the process gets challenging. In addition to the heightened levels of self-efficacy, multiple research studies have supported additional benefits of dual enrollment for high school students taking

concurrent courses (An, 2013b; Ozmun, 2013). The students enrolled in dual enrollment require less remediation, have higher retention rates, and higher GPAs than the traditional age, first-year college going freshman (An, 2013b).

There are increasingly more benefits for first-generation students in dual enrollment (An, 2013b; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Gibbons, 2005; Ozmun, 2013). First-generation students benefit from learning the college culture, expectations, and admission processes. It is reported their self-efficacy ratings increase throughout the programs and they learn self-regulatory skills to effectively manage their coursework (Ozmun, 2013). Multiple researchers reported students who have higher self-efficacy use more metacognitive strategies, work harder, and persist through content when faced with difficulty (Bandara, 1997; Pajares, 2002; Schunk, 1996; Zimmerman, 2002).

The details outlined above depict a positive learning experience for dual enrollment for first-generation, low-income students. However, Fink, Jenkins, and Yanagiura (2017) still report lower numbers of first-generation, low-income students participating in dual enrollment programs. Furthermore, the researchers found first-generation, low-income students are less likely to persist into a second semester of dual enrollment programs, even less likely to persist after two semesters, and less likely to enroll in college after high school graduation. Engle and Tinto (2008) reported first-generation, low-income students are four times less likely to reenroll in a second semester of dual enrollment, while Fink, Jenkins, and Yanagiura (2017) reported FGLI students were between 34-51% less likely to take another dual enrollment course.

Further inquiry into the experiences and perceptions of first-generation, low-income students in dual enrollment is important due to increasingly more first-generation

students enrolling in college-level courses while they are in high school. Many of these students already report poor academic and college readiness skills necessary to be successful in those courses and demonstrate lower academic self-efficacy (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014; Majer, 2009). If educators are asking this population to take the same rigorous and challenging courses at a younger age, what is enabling them to succeed? What is motivating them to enroll in the first place and persist through the courses? It is important to investigate how first-generation students experience dual enrollment and how they perceive it will prepare them for future courses.

The purpose of this literature review is to demonstrate a need for more research into how first-generation, lower-income students experience and perceive their first semester of dual enrollment coursework in the two-year colleges. The review will begin with the history of the program, nationally and closer to the study's population of a county in southeastern United States. Past and current statistical data will indicate a large increase in participation, particularly with regards to first-generation, low-income students and two-year colleges. The review of the literature will continue to explore college readiness perceptions of students and describe the connection between self-efficacy levels and academic achievement. A description of the characteristics of first-generation students will help to explain the self-efficacy experiences many first-generation students lack. Finally, there will be a review of the benefits of dual enrollment for first-generation students. I will demonstrate there is a need to understand the experiences of first-generation, low-income students in dual enrollment courses to help close the gaps between them and continuing-generation, higher-income students.

History of Dual Enrollment

Records from the 1970's report high-achieving students enrolled in college-level classes in Illinois as early as the 1970's (Makela, 2005). Mokher and McLendon (2009) reported similar programs began in California in the late 1970's and Catron (2001) indicated programs began in Virginia in the late 1980's. As cited in Young, Slate, Moore, and Barnes (2014), the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) reported programs began in 1999, noting perhaps some students enrolled earlier. Due to the dual credit course option only being made available to select, high-achieving students, there were no actual dual enrollment programs designed at that time. Each student enrolled in the college-level course on a case-by-case basis.

The growth of dual enrollment began slowly in the 1990's. Once state legislatures recognized the benefits of the programs, enrollment in college-level courses increased more rapidly once funding was provided. Early studies conducted by the NCES in 1996, and again in 1999, reported a national increase of over 25,000 enrolled students between the 1993 and 1995 school years (Snyder, Hoffman, & Geddes, 1996, 1999). Makela (2005) indicated a high growth rate in dual enrollment programs since 2001, when federal and local legislature began to support the dual credit strategy through grants and other funding. There was a 100% increase in enrollment within one single year- between the 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 school years (Makela, 2005). Andrews and Barnett (2002) reported the enrollment numbers in the 2000-2001 school year to be 73% higher than a previous study conducted in 1999-2000. Across the country, multiple states reported individual growth rates that mirrored the national surveys (Andrews, 2000;

Andrews & Barnett, 2002; Andrews & Davis, 2003; Cowan & Goldhaber, 2015; Smith, 2014).

In a national study conducted by NCES, Kleiner, Lewis, and Greene (2005) cited the number of students enrolled in dual enrollment was comprised of approximately 5% of all high school students. During the 2002-2003 school year, 57% of qualified Title IV institutions had high school aged students enrolled in a college-level course. Of the postsecondary institutions having high school students enrolled, 98% of two-year colleges had students enrolled in college-level courses, compared to 77% of public 4-year institutions. In a later report conducted by the NCES, Thomas et al. (2013) indicated 10% of all high school students enrolled in at least one college-level course during the 2010-2011 school year. During the approximately 8 years between both studies, the percentage of high school students enrolled in a dual credit course increased by 5%, nationally. In 2010-2011, approximately 82% of all public high schools had students enrolled in dual enrollment.

Dual Enrollment and Georgia

High school students in Georgia have participated in dual credit courses for over twenty years. This section will review how the dual enrollment programs have evolved in Georgia to help provide opportunities for student success. The Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts Performance Audit Division conducted a recent audit of the dual enrollment programs in Georgia (Griffin & McGuire, 2018). Griffin and McGuire (2018) determined dual enrollment programs in Georgia date back to 1992. During that time, the Georgia Department of Education (GADOE) referred to this early program as Postsecondary Options Program and it was the first program in Georgia to receive

funding. Local school systems, and not the state, were funding these programs through their Quality Basic Education (QBE) funds. The local systems found they were losing money when students enrolled in college courses. As predicted, students were not encouraged to enroll as much as they are currently with the programs being state funded now.

By 2004, Georgia's State Assembly replaced the Postsecondary Options Program with two new, separate programs, Accel and the Hope Grant for Dual Enrollment (Griffin & McGuire, 2018). The lottery funded these programs and the Georgia Student Finance Committee (GSFC) administered them. Both programs allowed students to enroll in postsecondary institutions part-time. A third program created in 2009, the original version of Move on When Ready (MOWR), allowed students to enroll in postsecondary institutions full-time. Local systems still funded this program through QSE funds.

In 2015, GADOE streamlined the ACCEL, HOPE Grant for Dual Enrollment, and the original MOWR programs into one single program, known as the "Move on When Ready Act." Under the new MOWR requirements set forth in SB-132, any high school student in the state of Georgia who attends a public school, a private school, or a qualified home-study program can participate in college-level classes, provided they apply to the institution. Senate Bill-132 revised Code 20-2-161.3 to refer to the program as the Dual Enrollment Program. All three previous programs streamlined into this one, state funded and GFSC administered, program. The introduction of Senate Bill-132 reduced the financial barrier local systems faced due to loss of funds when a student participated in a dual enrollment program. A later addition through Senate Bill 2 went as far as to provide students an alternative route to earn a high school diploma. The Bill

outlined alternative courses for a student to take through the dual enrollment program instead of the traditional, mandated high school courses.

The types of postsecondary institutions that are currently participating in MOWR vary by two-year and four-year institutions. In terms of public institutions, the University System of Georgia (USG) provides courses at 30 four-year colleges or universities and the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) provides courses through 22 2-year colleges or universities. There are also 21 eligible private universities, but only 17 had students enrolled in their dual enrollment programs in the 2016-17 school year (Mealer, 2016). In the 2016-17 school year, enrollment at TCSG institutions surpassed the others, with 55% of participating high school students enrolled in the technical college programs (Mealer, 2016).

The GFSC reported an increase of dual enrollment participation of 212% between the 2013 and 2017 school years (Griffin & McGuire, 2018). In one year following the passing of Senate Bill-132, the percentage of participants increased 40%. Counties were no longer financially responsible for the cost and recommendations for dual enrollment began soaring.

In only two years of the new Dual Enrollment Program, the number of participating programs increased (Griffin & McGuire, 2018). In 2016-17, public high school students comprised 86% (23,747) of all students participating in dual enrollment programs. Current data from the 2017-18 school year, again, indicated 86% of students participating in dual enrollment came from public schools (Griffin & McGuire, 2018). Additionally, the number of courses attempted by each student through the new Dual Enrollment Program increased between the school years 2013 and 2017 (Griffin &

McGuire, 2018). The number of total credit hours attempted by each student increased by 258%, with the largest increase made after Senate Bill-132 passed in 2015 (49%).

Dual Enrollment and Two-Year Colleges

The percentage of dual enrollment students enrolling in two-year colleges surpasses the students enrolling in four-year colleges (Fink, Jenkins, & Yanagiura, 2017). In the fall of 2010, nearly two-thirds of dual enrollment students enrolled in community colleges (Fink, Jenkins, & Yanagiura, 2017). However, approximately 30% of students who had participated in dual enrollment courses in the fall of 2010 did not enroll in the following semester, while the remainder 42% did not enroll after attempting two semesters (Fink, Jenkins, & Yanagiura, 2017). Wyatt, Patterson, DiGiacomo (2015) discovered dual enrollment students enrolled at two-year community colleges reported lower persistence rates and grades when compared to similar students at four-year institutions. As research indicates increasingly more students are enrolling in two-year colleges for dual enrollment, it is even more important to understand why they are not being as successful nor persisting through.

Dual Enrollment and Rural High Schools

The National Center for Education Statistics reported 86% of rural high schools have dual enrollment programs (McFarland et al., 2017, 2018). Also, 86% of schools in the Southeast United States participate in dual enrollment programs. The county studied is a rural high school in the Southeast region of the United States. According to an Annual Report, 148 students in the county participated in dual enrollment courses (GADOE, 2017). Participating students attempted a total of 753 credit hours in the 2016 school year (GADOE, 2017).

Dual Enrollment and Technical College System of Georgia

The Technical College System of Georgia's Dual Enrollment Program increased in enrollment throughout the past years (Griffin and McGuire, 2018; Lynch & Hill, 2008; Mealer, 2016). In the most recent survey, Griffin and McGuire (2018) reported 48% of students participating in Georgia's DEP were enrolled in the TCSG. The remaining 52% was comprised of both USG and private schools. Unduplicated dual enrollment students, students new to the DEP, enrolled more often at TCSG institutions as compared to USG institutions. These recent statistics indicate enrollment in TCSG dual enrollment is currently growing faster than the program at USG institutions.

A leading technical college in north Georgia combined three independent colleges in 2009 (Chattahoochee Technical College, 2018). The conglomerate now services six counties in north Georgia (Bartow, Cherokee, Cobb, Gilmer, Paulding, and Pickens). Between the eight campuses and online course offerings, the technical college has an approximate enrollment of 20,000 students. M. Andrews (2016) cited participation in the MOWR program increased 60% for the fall 2016 when compared to the previous year's enrollment. The report specified 624 students enrolled in the dual enrollment program through CTC in fall 2015, whereas 1005 students enrolled for the fall 2016. Dual enrollment students comprise 10% of the total enrollment (Griffin & McGuire, 2018). Dual enrollment students represent a significant part of the college population.

In the fall of 2016, the technical college's headcount of 1005 students participating in the Dual Enrollment Program consisted of the six counties served by the college. Cobb County (444 students) leads the participation rate, with Cherokee County (256 students) and Paulding (163 students) next (Andrews, 2016). M. Andrews (2016)

cited the county studied has a lower enrollment number of 92 students, making up only 9% of the total students participating in the dual enrollment programs. The remaining counties made up the balance of the enrollment. The more rural the county surrounding the technical college, the less participation in dual enrollment courses. This data contradicts the research where technical colleges in the Southeast United States were found to have higher dual enrollment participation in rural communities (Thomas, et al., 2013).

Dual Enrollment and Type of Courses

Mealer (2016) and Griffin and McGuire (2018) reviewed data from the past two school years (2016 and 2017), the type of courses dual enrollment students attempted remained consistent. Griffin and McGuire (2018) categorized the courses into three categories and reported the percentage of students attempting credits in each: general education or core classes (78%), career technical and agricultural education (CTAE) (25%), and other (electives) (2%).

The location of dual enrollment courses can vary. In the 2017 school year, Griffin and McGuire (2018) reported classes administered at the college's campus, the student's high school, or online. Most dual enrollment courses recorded delivery of courses on college campus (78%), with 17% on the high school campus, and 9% online. TCSG institutions were more likely to have courses delivered on the high school campus. Funding provided is the same regardless of location of the course. University professors and high school teachers delivered courses on high school campuses; high school teachers had to qualify to teach a college-level course as per the postsecondary institution's requirements.

Burns and Lewis (2000) surveyed dual enrollment students across the country. Students found more satisfaction and responsibility for success when their dual enrollment courses were conducted on campus (Burns & Lewis, 2000). Students believed there to be a more mature setting in courses on campus due to the majority of courses held on campus being a mix of dual enrollment students and regular education students, (Burns & Lewis, 2000). Dual enrollment students enrolled in courses on campus reported higher education and career aspirations than those students enrolled in dual enrollment courses at other locations (Smith, 2007). Heath (2008) surveyed high school graduates that had participated in a dual enrollment cohort program. The students indicated they had a more positive relationship with dual enrollment than with high school or college courses alone. The students missed some extra-curricular activities at their high schools; however, they felt the dual enrollment experience made up for it (Health, 2008). The students in the 2008 study were part of a cohort that might have made an impact of the students' positive perceptions (Heath, 2008). None of these studies focused on first-generation, low-income students. Each researcher indicated further research is necessary to understand how a FGLI student experiences and perceives their dual enrollment program (Burns & Lewis, 2000; Health, 2008; Smith, 2007).

Advanced Placement Courses

The College Board developed the Advanced Placement (AP) program in the mid-1950's to provide a rigorous curriculum and help prepare students for college (Godfrey, Matos-Elefonte, Ewing, & Patel, 2014; Klopfenstein & Thomas, 2009). In the beginning years of the program, the College Board offered only eleven courses to elite and high-achieving students (Godfrey, Matos-Elefonte, Ewing, & Patel, 2014). Klopfenstein and

Thomas (2009) indicated only 890 schools participated in AP courses in 1960. Within 50 years, that number increased to 15,122 with the majority (12,037) offered at public high schools. There are now over thirty-four courses offered in six subject areas (Godfrey, Matos-Elefonte, Ewing, & Patel, 2014; Norris, 2014).

Advanced Placement (AP) courses must follow the College Board's set of strict guidelines. Through AP courses, students attempt a college-level curriculum, taught by trained high school teachers, typically at their high school. At the end of the course, students may elect to take a College Board exam in the subject. If a student scores a qualifying score on the exam, they may be able to earn college credit. In 2013, the College Board (2013b) reported 2.2 million students took AP tests. Students neither have to be enrolled in an AP course to take the exam, nor do they have to take the exam if they are enrolled in the course. However, students must take the exam and achieve a qualifying score if they wish to earn college credit in the course.

Researchers have evaluated the impact of Advanced Placement courses on students. A relationship exists between AP and college academic performance and persistence through to a college degree (Burney, 2010; Chajewski, Mattern, & Shaw, 2011; Mattern et al, 2009; Scott et al., 2010). Students who attempted AP courses reported many positive benefits when compared to their counterparts who did not attempt the courses. Overall, students that attempted AP courses were more successful in high school and college (Nord et al., 2011). Advanced Placement students had better college readiness skills, were more likely to enroll in a four-year university after high school, were more likely to have a higher GPA in college and were more likely to finish college in fewer years than their nonparticipating peers (Burney, 2010; Chajewski, Mattern, &

Shaw, 2011; Mattern et al, 2009; Scott et al., 2010). In addition to these benefits, AP students have the opportunity to earn the prestigious award of being named an AP Scholar if they score a high enough qualifying score on the exam.

Dual Enrollment vs. Advanced Placement Courses

Both Dual enrollment and Advanced Placement programs increase the rigor of the curriculum for high school students. Understanding the difference in the two programs will help explain why some students are more successful in one program over the other. Perrone, Wright, Ksiazak, Crane, and Vannatter (2010) indicated the majority of students participating in advanced classes experienced positive opportunities. The research conducted for advanced classes supports positive benefits but does little to settle the debate about which type of advanced class is better.

In a study commissioned by College Board, Wyatt, Patterson, and Di Giacomo (2015) found AP students experienced more positive benefits than dual enrollment participants. These students were more likely than peers enrolled in dual enrollment to have higher first year and subject-specific GPAs, fewer credits attempted to degree, fewer semester terms to degree. However, Wyatt, Patterson, and Di Giacomo (2015) also stated high-achieving students were more likely to attempt AP courses than dual enrollment courses. Researchers indicated less participation from first-generation, low-income students in AP courses when compared to dual enrollment. While advanced courses, in general, lack in the representation of first-generation and low-income students, dual enrollment reports a higher enrollment rate for this population.

Low-achieving students enrolled in dual enrollment programs were found to maintain their overall levels of self-efficacy and increase the relevance of high school

achievement (Dutkowsky et al., 2009; Kleiner, Lewis, & Greene, 2005). Students with special needs have also demonstrated positive academic gains as a result of the dual enrollment program (Grigal, Dwyre, Emmert, & Emmert, 2012). Dual enrollment participants were found to be more prepared than their peers, including AP students, academically and socially (Allen, 2010; Klopfenstein & Lively, 2012; Mokher & McLendon, 2009). Norris (2014) concluded more dual enrollment students agreed that dual enrollment courses prepared them more for college. College preparedness was suggested to be the result of taking college-level courses on the college campus and experiencing the higher-level material around college-aged students (Allen, 2010; Klopfenstein & Lively, 2012; Mokher & McLendon, 2009; Norris, 2014).

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) released demographic statistics comparing dual enrollment at public high schools to AP courses (Thomas, et al., 2013). NCES compared various types of communities, as well as enrollment numbers, regions of the U.S., and percentage of minorities. According to NCES findings, a greater number of public schools in the United States had dual enrollment programs in 2010-2011 when compared to public schools participating in Advanced Placement programs (Thomas, et al., 2013). An even smaller percentage of schools participated in both dual enrollment and AP programs. In rural, Southeast communities, the comparison of DE to AP had a greater difference. In 2010-2011 school year, a larger percentage of rural and Southeastern schools participated in dual enrollment programs than AP programs (Thomas, et al., 2013).

DE programs are more popular in rural communities versus inner-city communities (Thomas, et al., 2013). The number of students who participated in dual

enrollment in the rural communities was greater than the number of dual enrollment students participating in dual enrollment in the inner-city schools. The data outlined by the NCES supports dual enrollment being a more popular option for high school students in the Southeast, rural schools (McFarland et al., 2017, 2018). Due to the increasing number of students enrolling in the dual enrollment programs in rural communities in the Southeast region, further research would help to understand how students experience and perceive the programs. The rural county being studied has experienced the similar increase in popularity of dual enrollment programs across the county even though the numbers participating are still less than metro areas surrounding the technical college. For this reason, a rural, public high school in the Southeast, can benefit from further research.

College Preparedness

A student's grade-point average (GPA) and a challenging high school curriculum are the two strongest predictors of college success (Conley, 2014; Holles, 2016; Pretlow & Wathington, 2014; Wyatt, Patterson, & Di Giacomo, 2015). A challenging high school curriculum is described as one with more rigorous content, has a faster pace, or both (Conley, 2014). Conley (2014) asserts one of the main reasons for the predicting ability is a GPA is not only an indicator of a student's metacognitive abilities but also their self-regulation strategies they used to be successful. Self-regulation strategies can be personal, behavioral, or environmental in nature and are necessary to be successful. More specifically, a student with developed self-regulator skills is effective at managing their time, the ability to know how and when to get help, determination and persistence when they fail or make mistakes, and the ability to focus on goals. Holles (2016)

reported the GPA scores alone cannot indicate the nonacademic skills students must possess to be successful in college.

The ACT (2013) reported 89% of teachers considered their students to be well-prepared for college. This demonstrates a misunderstanding and lack of collaboration since the same research reported only 28-42% of college professors regard their students as well-prepared (ACT, 2013). ACT and SAT scores found only 26% and 43% of test-takers to be college ready (ACT, 2013; College Board, 2013). The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reported similar findings in reading (38%) and math (40%) (Wyatt, Patterson, and Di Giacomo, 2015). Many researchers have worked to assemble a working definition of college readiness to ensure all students are equipped properly with skills to achieve.

Many students are enrolling in college courses lacking more than the academic skills many consider important to be successful. Conley (2014) defined a college and career ready student as one who has the "content knowledge, strategies, skills, and techniques" required in a range of post-secondary options (p. 15). Hooker and Brand (2010) stressed students must possess what they refer to as "college knowledge" (p. 75). In the researchers' definition, students can migrate through the college admission process, apply for financial aid, and understand the academic expectations of college-level work and the cultural differences between high school and college. Hooker and Brand (2010) recognize academic abilities are not the only indicators in a student's persistence in and completion of their post-secondary goals. Maturity, both social and emotional, are components of college knowledge (McCord & Roberts, 2014). Students must be able to handle the sensitive topics discussed in courses, as well as handle the

stress that comes with a more rigorous program in which they might experience their first failures.

Collier and Morgan (2008) proposed students must learn the role of a college student to be successful. Mastering the college student role includes more than academic knowledge. One can learn the role of a successful college student through creating situations for experience and practice of higher rigor, challenging thinking skills, and culture of a college campus. Karp (2012) proposed anticipatory socialization and role rehearsal to help students get acclimated to the college culture and learn the characteristics necessary to be successful.

Self-Efficacy & Social Cognitive Theory

Self-efficacy is a person's belief in their abilities to complete a given task. Self-efficacy is grounded in the framework of social cognitive theory. Bandura (1997) described self-efficacy as a domain specific concept of self. Self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to meet the demands of a given task. Self-efficacy is a context-specific, stable construct that does not fluctuate. A person with high self-efficacy demonstrates a high level of belief that they will be successful. These students use more effective learning strategies and self-monitoring strategies (Zimmerman, 1989). Zimmerman (1989) reported the students with high levels of self-efficacy have higher rates of task completion and achievement. A person with low self-efficacy does not demonstrate the use of effective learning strategies nor task persistence (Zimmerman, 1989).

A person forms self-efficacy beliefs based on four domains: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasions, and physiological experiences (Schunk & Meece, 2006). These four factors can have either positive or negative impacts on the

self-efficacy of a student (Alderman, 1990). Students' levels of self-efficacy can increase or decrease when they experience assorted influences and factors (Schunk, 1996). If a student is successful in meeting their own goals, performing to their perceived cognitive ability, or if a student receives rewards or positive feedback, their self-efficacy will be enhanced (Schunk, 1996). However, Schunk (1996) proposed the opposite experiences can have adverse effects on their levels of self-efficacy.

The first of type of experience, the mastery experience, has the largest influence on a student (Bandura, 1997). Mastery, or learned, experience occurs when a student performs the task successfully. If students are successful with tasks, their heightened self-efficacy could continue into and throughout their postsecondary education. Bandura (1997) suggested a failure at a certain task could decrease a student's self-efficacy, especially if that student does not hold a high value to that task to begin with. The second domain occurs when a student watches a peer complete a task, or observes how others behave, they are influenced vicariously. Bandura (1997) regarded vicarious, or referential, comparisons as weaker influences than mastery. However, he further explained positive vicarious experiences can override the negative mastery experiences. If a student was not successful with a task, but they watched their peers be successful, the positive vicarious experience could build their self-efficacy belief that they could also be successful. Verbal persuasion is another common influence experienced by students related to their education. Bandura (1997) stressed verbal persuasion is at its strongest when it is realistic and tied to attainable goals. The positive affirmations help improve skills a student can attribute to their ability or effort, in contrast to false affirmatives that might only result in disappointment. Finally, the student will experience a vast array of

emotions and other physiological experiences (Schunk & Meece, 2006). Schunk and Meece (2006) reported research on anxiety disorders among adolescents is on the rise. Schunk and Meece (2006) state students can experience the adverse effects of anxiety when they fear a lack of skills. The researchers noted, at the same time, students who complete a task successfully, especially a task they view as challenging, it can provide a sense of pride (Schunk & Meece, 2006). If the student experiences positive experiences in these four domains, there would be a positive influence on their self-efficacy and help them become more successful.

Many research studies have found a positive relationship between one's self-efficacy and academic achievement (Garza, Bain, & Kupczynski, 2014; Gore, 2006; Majer, 2009; Schunk & Meece, 2006). Vuong et al. (2010) reported self-efficacy is relevant to postsecondary academic success since it can predict one's perseverance with a difficult task. Academic self-efficacy can predict GPAs and retention rates for college going students (Gore, 2006; Vuong et al., 2010). In this way, GPA and retention rates can be positively related to one's academic self-efficacy (Vuong et al., 2010). A student with a high level of self-efficacy is more likely to be more successful than a student with low self-efficacy. A person with a high self-efficacy is more likely to be successful due to practicing effective self-regulatory strategies. These students have good time management, use effective learning strategies, and constantly self-assess throughout their learning process (Zimmerman, 2002). Zimmerman and Bandura (1994) reported if students believed they employed more effective self-regulatory skills, in other words they had a higher self-regulatory efficacy, it would predict their level of academic success. The level of self-efficacy can also indicate coping skills. The coping skills referred to by

the researchers were ones related to dealing with a stressful event, whether it be academic, work, or family related. The students with the lowest ability to cope with the stressors were the same ones who reported low self-efficacy ratings. In this way, self-efficacy impacts the student's academic achievements in multiple facets (Majer, 2009).

First-generation students & self-efficacy. First-generation students are students characterized as having parents who do not have a college degree or education. First-generation students experience distinct issues that set them apart from continued generation students (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014; Majer, 2009; Vuong et al., 2010). Many of these characteristics increase the difficulty for the first-generation students to remain enrolled and complete their degree program (Vuong et al., 2010). The self-efficacy component of vicarious experiences is not present if the student does not have another adult to learn from. Verbal persuasions might also be less if the parent does not understand enough about college.

First-generation students report having lower GPAs, SAT scores, and higher drop-out rates (Majer, 2009; Mehta et al., 2011; Vuong et al., 2010). First-generation students are more likely to come from low-income families, be part-time students, and are typically commuter students. Majer (2009) found first-generation students have fewer credit hours, work more nonacademic hours, and study less than their continuing-generation peers. A study by Mehta et al. (2011) found first-generation students to be less involved in school activities, have less social and financial support from friends and family, engage in fewer coping strategies, and report less academic and social satisfaction (Mehta et al, 2011). First-generation students from low socioeconomic status felt

inadequately prepared, lacked proper information on admissions and enrollment, and did

not have peer counseling availability (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014).

These characteristics have been found to explain why FGS report lower self-

efficacy values than continuing-generation students (Mehta et al, 2011). FGS are lacking

mastery experiences in high school if they do not receive a rigorous college preparatory

education. These students do not have role models to watch and are therefore lacking

vicarious experiences. And while these students might have positive encouragement or

support from their family members or friends, if those same people are not informed or

knowledgeable about the tasks, the opinions and persuasions of the uninformed holds

little weight. Anxiety that could be forming from a stressful and challenging experience

creates a negative physiological experience. If the student had not learned effective

coping skills, they might not persist through the challenge.

Mehta et al. (2011) related the connections between first-generation students'

feelings of inadequate preparation and support to the students' levels of self-efficacy.

First-generation students did not have parents to help provide the vicarious experiences

and verbal persuasion support necessary to help a student be successful, thus the verbal

persuasion carries little weight in elevating their self-efficacy. First-generation students

reported not having the family and social support systems of those who understand the

amount of time and effort it takes to be successful in more rigorous college courses. Due

to financial demands from the family, first-generation students might have to work at a

nonacademic job to still support the family. These hours take away from not only

necessary studying, but also from becoming involved on campus. First-generation

students reported less peer and social involvement. This in turn showed increased stress

and dissatisfaction in school. The increased stress provides a negative physiological response that lowers self-efficacy. Already lacking coping skills, first-generation students have a lower graduation rate.

Majer (2009) stressed the importance of researching the connections between academic self-efficacy and the first-generation students. Self-efficacy was found to be the strongest predictor of academic success for the first-generation students (Majer, 2009). Majer (2009) found first-generation students generally have lower academic and educational aspirations than continuing-generation students. These characteristics directly influenced the first-generation student's self-efficacy, or belief in one's ability to be successful (Majer, 2009). Majer (2009) reported a greater academic self-efficacy is important for FGS to be more successful in college. Majer's (2009) research, found only academic self-efficacy to be a predictor for a student's GPA in college.

Aspelmeier et al. (2012) conducted a study with first- and continuing-generation college students in which they found generational status to act as a sensitizing factor and a risk factor for first-generation students. Generational status increased the effects of locus of control, as well as the negative effects of low esteem. Other findings included differences in GPA of students who had a rigorous high school course load versus those with a less rigorous course load were more significant among first-generation students than continuing generation. Also, when faced with adversity, first-generation students reported negative impacts in academic outcomes. However, without adversity, there was no significant difference in academic outcomes than continuing generation peers.

Pajares (2002) connected the student's level of self-efficacy to their level of perseverance when faced with adversity. The researcher stated the student was more

likely to put forth a greater effort and persist longer when they had a higher self-efficacy (Pajares, 2002). The students' self-efficacy levels can help determine how they will react when faced with adverse situations (Pajares, 2002). How students handle stress and adverse situations is another important consideration to remember when dealing with college readiness factors, since that definition of what it means to be college ready does not simply imply being academically ready. Adversity and setbacks might impact an already difficult undertaking of college courses. People with low self-efficacy do perform poorly when faced with adversity as they do not believe in themselves enough to persist (Pajares, 2002). If they do not have the emotional ability to handle that and continue their coursework, it could indicate higher drop-out rates.

In a phenomenological study conducted by Olive (2008), first-generation Hispanic students reported their motivation for higher education. Olive (2008) analyzed interviews with FG Hispanic students which addressed the roles of self-efficacy and successful high school experiences in the participants' motivation. The meaning of the Hispanic first-generation students' experiences was reported through the analysis of several interwoven factors. Olive (2008) identified the role self-efficacy and having positive experiences in high school plays on the students' desire for a higher education. Olive (2008) expressed continued research and study is still necessary to understand the desire and motivation behind first-generation Hispanic student enrollment in higher education.

In contrast to many of the studies already described here, Garza et al. (2014) conducted a mixed methods study to review the relationship between resiliency, self-efficacy, and persistence of college seniors. First-generation and continued-generation

Hispanic students in their senior year of college were compared. No significant

difference in resiliency, self-efficacy, or persistence between the first-generation students

and CGS. The important issue brought up here is knowing the research of first-

generation students' self-efficacy ratings entering college, what is happening throughout

college to change that? College could be providing mastery experiences verbal

persuasion to encourage students in order to help them develop a high sense of high self-

efficacy, resilience, and persistence.

      Dual enrollment & self-efficacy of first-generation students. Dual enrollment

benefits students of all levels and populations. Many research studies have shown results

of dual enrollment programs have higher GPAs, higher persistence and degree

attainment, and were less likely to require a math remediation course than the students

who had not participated (An, 2013a; An, 2013b; Kanny, 2015; Karp, 2007; Kim &

Bragg, 2008; Ozmun, 2013). Dual enrollment was a method of increasing rigor for high-

achieving students, combating senioritis, or simply an opportunity to see the expectations

of the college professors.

      An (2013b) reported dual enrollment participation in dual enrollment programs

increased academic preparation for a wider range of students than the researcher had

initially thought. Due to increased numbers of FGS and low socioeconomic status (SES)

participating in DE, the researcher attempted to evaluate if the level of parental education

or family income had any greater significance on the student's success. In 2013, An

identified the term SES as having three contributing factors: level of parental education,

occupation of parents, and family income. Among these three factors, An (2013a &

2013b) determined the level of parental education was the largest influencer for dual

enrollment participation and persistence through to degree. The level of parental education influenced participation in the dual enrollment programs more than family income (An, 2013b). An (2013b) concluded FGS who participated in dual enrollment courses scored, on average, a slightly higher first-year GPA in college than nonparticipants. In another report by An (2013a), differences in the first-year GPAs of all participants were discovered across parental education levels, however there was no evidence to support higher GPAs were due to level of parental education among dual enrollment participants. An (2013b) stressed it was important to note he did find FGS performed better than nonparticipants. Noting fewer FGS participated in DE programs, An (2013b) recommended further research to understand what influences FGS to enroll and persist in DE programs.

More recently in 2017, the United States Department of Education (USDOE) released a summary of studies on a multitude of topics connected to dual enrollment. The USDOE examined research conducted on dual enrollment and college preparedness and found only a limited amount of evidence on the effectiveness of dual enrollment and how it connects to college preparedness (Edmunds et al., 2015). Edmunds et al. (2015) conducted a survey of high school students in North Carolina on track after experiencing college-level classes through the dual enrollment program. Edmunds et al. (2015) reported a statistically significant positive effect of dual enrollment on college readiness of students. This study included students from diverse populations, in both rural and urban communities. First-generation students comprised 41% of the study, while students eligible for FRL comprised 51%, therefore supporting dual enrollment and positive impacts on college readiness. In a report produced by Edmunds et al. (2015),

researchers conducted interviews with college professors. Analysis of the interviews stated professors observed various levels of readiness, from some students who were top of the class to some that were not ready for their level of coursework. The most noted students who demonstrated readiness reported to have an excitement for learning than nonparticipants, whereas those students not prepared reported to have lower levels of maturity. However, there are limited studies similar to this study by Edmunds et al. to help support this evidence. More research is necessary to understand how students, especially FGS, perceive the program in relation to preparing them for college work. The research needs to be conducted from the student's point of view, as we need to understand how they experience and perceive participation in the programs.

Kanny (2015) uncovered three benefits from interviews with dual enrollment participants when studying the student perspective. Exposure to more rigorous coursework that included more higher level and critical thinking, experiencing the *hidden curriculum* found on the college campus, and experiencing the independence and freedom that went along with college were all benefits viewed positively by the students in the interviews. Kanny (2015) explains *hidden curriculum* as the implicit skills that college students should practice that lead to increased achievement. Assumed skills or practices include getting acquainted with their professors so it is more comfortable when seeking help (Kanny, 2015). Another example would be determining their own learning style so they can be successful in a variety of classes (Kanny, 2015). The students interviewed related drawbacks such as issues with grades and credits, negative interactions with peers and professors, and limited social systems (Kanny, 2015). Kanny (2015) reported every student in the study noted a sense of pride for having completed a

college level course before high school graduation, even though they identified many drawbacks to the dual enrollment process. The increased sense of pride provided a positive physiological response and therefore increased students' self- efficacy beliefs. The researcher suggested further research needs to be done to determine how much these factors intermingle and influence a student's motivation to continue enrolling in dual credit courses. The little research available is varied and inconclusive.

These early college experiences also allow students build their college student identify (Karp, 2007). Karp (2007) believed these early college experiences are what help begin the process for students in building social and coping skills, critical thinking, seeking help and feedback from professors. Karp (2007) stated college readiness is more than academic skill. Early college experiences provide the mastery and vicarious experiences for FGS that they would not normally have experienced. The limitation of this research is it does not discuss the motivation of the students to enroll in the programs and persist through the program. It also did not differentiate the demographics of the students in the interviews.

In a study prepared by Ozmun (2013), students that enrolled in dual credit courses were academically motivated to attempt the more challenging courses. However, these students also demonstrated low levels of self-efficacy and self-confidence before they enrolled in the programs (Ozmun, 2013). While self-efficacy is the belief one has about their ability to accomplish a specific task at a given level of success, self-confidence refers to the strength of that belief (Bandura, 1997). Students did not report high levels of self-efficacy prior to enrolling in the dual credit courses (Ozmun, 2013). College and academic self-efficacy were not found to be precursors for the decision to enroll in dual

enrollment programs. Ozmun (2013) implied the dual enrollment programs themselves have an important role in building the self-efficacy and helping student transition to college readiness and success. Since research has already shown high college and academic self-efficacy relates to high grades and high motivation, there must be other components to consider, such as parent education level and the college going culture and expectations of the community (Ozmun, 2013). This research represents an area required to provide a fuller understanding of how the dual enrollment programs are helping to prepare the students, especially first-generation students that lack the self-efficacy experiences of their CGS.

Gibbons (2005) conducted a survey of the self-efficacy ratings of seventh graders who were on a college preparatory path. The researcher differentiated the first-generation students from other students and compared the results. The first-generation students reported lower self-efficacy ratings than their peers. They first-generation students perceived more barriers to their education, whether it be lack of role models, financial issues, or inclusion in the application process. Gibbons sample was a convenience sample. Even though there was a distinction of first-generation versus continued-generation, there was no further distinction. Not all first-generation students are alike; further research requires review of specific ethnicities and genders, along with locations differences. More longitudinal data would determine how their self-efficacy ratings and beliefs change over the years until college and then throughout college.

Underrepresented Populations in Dual Enrollment

Dual Enrollment and Low Socioeconomic Students

The United States considered families with a reported annual income of less than approximately $36,000 as low-income families and such families comprised the lower 20% of families in the U.S. (Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016). Over the course of two years, the percentage of low-income students represented in higher education decreased from 53.5% to 45.5%. This is worrisome for the students' financial security. McFarland et al. (2018) announced in The Condition of Education 2018 report 42% of 20- to 24-year-olds with less than a high school diploma was neither working or in school during 2016. The number of 20- to 24-year-olds with a high school diploma not working or enrolled in school was found to be 26%. The percentage of nonworking or in-school students was a much higher percentage compared to middle- and high-income families for each age group. The enrollment rate of students from high-income families into college immediately after high school was significantly higher (83%) than middle- and low-income families (63% each) (McFarland et al., 2017).

In U.S. public schools, students from lower-income families receive federal aid for meals through the Free or Reduced Lunch Program (FRL). The percentage of students qualified for FRL at low-poverty schools in the U.S. was 19.7%, whereas the percentage at high-poverty schools was 24.4% (McFarland et al., 2018). GADOE (2017) reported the percentage of students qualified for FRL in the county studied as 57.81% for the 2016-17 school year. This is above the national average. There is a high percentage of students in this county living in low-income families.

Dual enrollment is one of the programs shown to help increase low-income student enrollment in college and persistence to college degree. Fink, Jenkins, and Yanagiura (2017) indicated nearly two-thirds of the students enrolled at community colleges were low- to mid-income students. Low-income students who had participated in dual enrollment had higher GPAs in college, higher degree completion rates, and shorter time to degree completion than their nonparticipating counterparts (Heath, 2008; Karp, et al., 2008; Taylor, 2013). Taylor (2013) found, through propensity score matching, low-income students who had participated in dual enrollment were more likely to enroll in college after high school and complete college. Qualitative research was recommended to understand how this subpopulation experienced and perceived their dual enrollment programs (Heath, 2008; Short, 2018; Taylor, 2013).

Access to dual enrollment programs for low-income students is still a challenge (Fink, Jenkins, & Yanagiura, 2017; Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016). A 2017 report from the Governor's Office of Student Affairs (GOSA), depicted students who qualify for FRL were underrepresented in dual enrollment (Rauschenberg & Chalasani, 2017). Gaps still exist between high- and low- income students that need investigation to fully understand and address the inequities in education by socioeconomic class (An, 2013a; An, 2013b; Anderson, 2014; Fink, Jenkins, & Yanagiura, 2017; Short, 2018; Tobolowsky & Allen, 2016). Anderson (2014) reported barriers and obstacles dual enrollment students encountered while participating in college courses at a southwestern community college. Students who qualified for FRL were less likely to participate in the dual enrollment program. Anderson (2014) noted the correlation continued past her study and throughout several high schools in the area served by the same community college. Georgia,

specifically, was listed to be one of only a few states in which the rate of former dual enrollment students not enrolling in college after high school to be greater than 25% (Fink, Jenkins, & Yanagiura, 2017). Further research in determining the obstacles of low- income students is needed to create strategies to increase enrollment. In order to understand what obstacles students from low-income families face, educators need to investigate the process of how students enroll and what they experience as they attempt their first college-level courses. Even while research reveals low-income and FGS are among those benefitting the most from dual enrollment, they are also the populations who fail to enroll in the programs. Anderson (2014) supported and strengthened the argument that more qualitative research needs to be completed to understand why.

Short (2018) examined low-income students' experiences in dual enrollment. While the quantitative study was confined to one county in Arizona, the findings demonstrated a need for further studies in Georgia. Short (2018) found the dual enrollment programs studied to provide a significant increase in college enrollment and persistence for low-income students. However, the study did not shed light to the students' perceptions of their dual credit experience. Short (2018) made the recommendation for further qualitative research to understand how students from low-income families experience and perceive the dual enrollment programs.

Dual Enrollment and Gender

Females were more likely to enroll in dual enrollment courses than males (Anderson, 2014; Ganzert, 2012; Gatlin, 2009; Rauschenberg & Chalasani, 2017). While the general enrollment percentages in Georgia's public schools was split roughly 50:50, female enrollment in dual enrollment courses was around 60% (Rauschenberg &

Chalasani, 2017). Gatlin (2009) reported 59% of dual enrollment students in the Tennessee colleges studied were female students.

Ganzert (2012) studied the effects of dual enrollment on the gender and race of students at a community college. Ganzert's study (2012) focused on North Carolina high school students enrolled at local community colleges through dual enrollment programs. The study indicated male and female students both benefit from dual enrollment equally. Females were found to have a higher GPA than males that participated and didn't participate in dual enrollment programs. However, the difference in gain was not significant. Both genders demonstrated an increase in GPA, the difference between which had a higher gain was insignificant. The graduation rate increase for females in the study did indicate a significant difference over the male graduation rate.

Dual Enrollment and Ethnicity and Race

White students were overrepresented in dual enrollment when compared to general, public-school enrollment, while the minority populations (i.e., African American, Hispanic, and Asian) were underrepresented (Anderson, 2014; Ganzert, 2012; Gatlin, 2009; Rauschenberg & Chalasani, 2017; Taylor, 2013). In a recent survey conducted by GOSA, the overall population of white students enrolled in public high schools was reported to be about 43%, but the population in dual enrollment was reported to be 58% (Rauschenberg & Chalasani, 2017). The survey reported the overall population of Hispanic and African American students in public schools was 51%, but the dual enrollment percentage was reported to be only 35%. Over the course of the eight-year study, the White-Hispanic gap narrowed, but the White-African American gap widened (Rauschenberg & Chalasani, 2017).

As these same disparities were seen in multiple studies, Gatlin (2009) urged further research to better understand the perceptions of the various underrepresented populations in dual enrollment. Gatlin (2009) discovered ethnic and gender disparities across dual enrollment participants. In the Tennessee counties surveyed, Gatlin reported 92.5% of the students enrolled in the dual enrollment programs were white students. There was an overpopulation of white students participating in the dual enrollment programs in that county and demonstrated the disparity and inequities among ethnicities in the programs.

Ganzert (2012) further concluded nonwhite students benefitted from dual enrollment more significantly than White students. Non-White students demonstrated a significant difference in their GPA and graduation rates. The Non-White students in Ganzert's study reported an increase feeling of college readiness. Ganzert (2012) did not report reasons why Non-White students felt a higher level of preparedness after participating in dual enrollment programs but did report the Non-White students were still underrepresented in the dual enrollment population. Two concerns prompt further research from this study: why are the Non-White students reporting significantly more benefits from dual enrollment courses and why are the same population of students still reported as underrepresented in the programs?

In conclusion, there has been multiple research studies demonstrating the lack of preparedness of college-going students (Collier & Morgan, 2008; Hooker & Brand, 2010) and how academic self-efficacy levels can help predict success of these students (Gore, 2006; Vuong et al., 2010). First-generation students are feeling even more unprepared and have lower self-efficacy levels as they begin to plan for college (Blackwell & Pinder,

2014; Mehta et al., 2011). Connections are being made between the benefits of dual enrollment for first-generation students and how that would affect the self-efficacy ratings over time (Gibbons, 2005; Ozmun, 2013). However, researchers require more longitudinal data (Gibbons, 2005). Focus on first-generation students, comparing various ethnicities and gender populations also requires more research (Gibbons, 2005).

Another facet left unanswered by researchers is knowing what motivates the first-generation students to enroll in dual enrollment programs, despite their feelings of inadequacy. Garza et al. (2014) demonstrated the self-efficacy ratings increase each semester a normal aged student is in college. There is a need to understand if this is the same phenomenon occurring for high school aged students. Knowing the experiences that are helping to increase those ratings and beliefs will help educators create programs to ensure students begin the college or dual enrollment process on a higher level to ensure increased success. This research will fill a gap in the available research needed to first understand what this subpopulation experiences and how they perceive those experiences initially to persist into a second semester of dual enrollment courses.

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Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Methods

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Rationale for Qualitative Design

The proposed study followed a basic approach to qualitative research. Basic research is acquiring knowledge for the sake of knowledge (Patton, 2002). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) added basic research is motivated by intellectual interest, with a goal of extending the knowledge base. Through basic qualitative research, the researcher strives to understand "(1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 24). Patton (2002) stated basic research helps to provide more information and understanding to the body of literature so professionals can answer fundamental questions. While basic research might eventually inform practice, its primary goal is to know more and understand more about a phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Using basic research, researchers can formulate explanations. Basic research usually requires lengthy fieldwork and is subject to peer- review (Patton, 2002).

The focus of this study is on the experiences and perceptions of first-generation, low-income (FGLI) students who recently participated in their first semester of dual enrollment at a two-year institution. There is a need for research regarding FGLI students, particularly those participating in dual enrollment programs in rural north Georgia (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Fink, Jenkins, & Yanagiura, 2017; Holles, 2016; Kanny,

2015; Olive, 2008). The percentage of FGLI students participating in dual enrollment has increased significantly (Griffin & McGuire, 2018; O'Meara, 2018; Thomas, Marken, Gray, & Lewis, 2013). There is a need to study the dual enrollment experience to better understand why FGLI students, in general, are not returning for their second semester of dual enrollment, despite researchers reporting a multitude of benefits (Fink, Jenkins, & Yanagiura, 2017).

Due to the goals of the study, I utilized qualitative research methods to construct meaning from data collected through a series of three interviews with participants involved in their first semester of dual enrollment. Students in this demographic share a unique experience, and each one has a story to tell about how they perceived that experience. Qualitative research involves interviewing participants in a naturalistic setting (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The interviews allowed me to discover meaning behind the participants' experiences and the phenomenon of dual enrollment. Through the participants' interviews, I found themes and patterns in the stories they tell. These themes and patterns allowed me to develop an understanding of their experiences and perceptions of dual enrollment.

The questions that guided this study are the following:

- RQ 1: What were the experiences of first-generation, low-income students throughout their first semester in a dual enrollment course at a two-year postsecondary institution in the rural south?

- RQ 2: What are the perceptions of first-generation, low-income students pertaining to their college preparedness throughout their first semester in a dual enrollment course at a two-year postsecondary institution in the rural south?

Site & Sample Selections

First, as determined by the need for research, the study addressed the lack of research examining the experiences and perceptions of FGLI students after their first exposure to dual enrollment. In order to meet the needs of the study, the site must meet the following criteria: the college must be a public, community college in the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG), it must participate in the Dual Enrollment Program (DEP), and it must have FGLI students enrolled in the DEP. Three sites meet the above criteria with one college being under consideration due to close proximity to the researcher.

The population of the study is public high school students admitted to the DEP at a rural, two-year college in north Georgia. The students in this population have completed their first course in the DEP at the college within a year from the start of the study. Students qualified for Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL) and were the first in the family to attend college, otherwise known as first-generation students (FGS).

After using the criteria set above, I purposefully selected a sample that meets the criterion set forth in the paragraph above. Maxwell (2013) explained purposeful selection ensures the sample has information that is relevant to the research questions and goals of the study. Maxwell (2013) outlined five goals of purposeful sampling: 1) representativeness or typicality of the participants, 2) capture the heterogeneity of the sample, 3) deliberate selection of individuals critical to the theory, 4) establish comparisons to illuminate the differences of the participants, and 5) establish relationships with the participants. Keeping all these goals in mind, the previously stated

set of criteria helped me determine the participants who have the most information to share regarding the study's purpose.

An email requesting the participation of dual enrollment students in my study was distributed to students who completed their first dual enrollment course in the 2018-2019 school year. (See Appendix A for a copy of the email.) Students answered questions outlined in Appendix B through a Qualtrics survey. The responses were reviewed to select students meeting the criteria of FGLI students set forth in the previous paragraph. From the list of qualified responses, I created a matrix to study the demographics of the FGLI student population. (See Appendix C for a sample matrix.) Maxwell (2013) suggested "defining the dimensions of variation in the population that are most relevant to your study" (p. 98) and then purposefully select the participants that demonstrate that variation. Patton (2002) also suggested a researcher should identify the variation of characteristics in the population. I examined the matrix for variety of students within that sample that meet the criterion set forth below. For example, I examined the population in terms of, but not limited to, gender, race, and grade point average (GPA). The composition of the sample enabled me to focus on selecting information-rich participants- an equal ratio of male and female students, from each variation in the population. The variations of the sample I studied have been decided based on the review of the literature (Fink, Jenkins, & Yanagiura, 2017; Ganzert, 2012; Gatlin, 2009; Heath, 2008; Short, 2018; Taylor, 2013). As I outlined in Chapter 2, the variations across each of the three subgroups allowed me to uncover the common themes they all share (Patton, 2002). Once I selected students to fulfill the selection criteria as stated above, I contacted each selected student to request participation.

Purposeful sampling allows qualitative researchers to have smaller sample sizes (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) explained having fewer participants to investigate in the study will allow the researcher to gain a more in-depth understanding. A smaller sample size allowed me to focus on more in-depth information and the main purpose of the study (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) defended purposeful sampling stating, "the logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth" (p. 230). Using the matrix, as seen in Appendix C, two participants from each of the three subgroups were chosen, for a minimum of eight participants. The race of the student was defined as by the U.S. Census Bureau. The U.S. Census Bureau (2017) defined race as a "person's self-identification with one or more social groups" (p. 1). The Census Bureau (2017) included White, Black or African American, Asian, American Indian and Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, etc. in the racial categories. In this study, the categories for race would include White and Non-White (Black or African American, Asian, American Indian and Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, or multi-racial). As detailed in Chapter 2, White and Non-White students are participating in DE in unequal proportions (Anderson, 2014; Ganzert, 2012; Gatlin, 2009; Rauschenberg & Chalasani, 2017; Taylor, 2013). It is important to understand the reasons why the populations are not enrolling in equal numbers. The categories for GPA will be Lower (below 3.0) and Upper (at or above a 3.0). DE is an option available for students with a GPA of 2.0 and higher. However, as I explained in Chapter 2, the enrollment numbers for Lower GPA and Upper GPA are not equal (Conley, 2014; Holles, 2016; Pretlow & Wathington, 2014; Wyatt, Patterson, & Di Giacomo, 2015). The selection of the two participants across these variations was

purposefully intended to study the experience of dual enrollment across these three subgroups of FGLI students.

The counties being considered are rural communities, outside a major metropolitan area in Southeast region of the United States. There is a high population of low-income students within each of the communities (NCES, 2020). The population of the counties is representative of other rural counties in north Georgia (NCES, 2020). The county selected was able to provide information-rich sources for interviews.

The students were the same age I am familiar working with for the last twenty years of my teaching career. Maxwell (2013) suggested selecting participants with whom the researcher can establish a productive relationship to be more a characteristic of purposeful selection rather than convenience. Patton (2002) indicated having a rapport with the interviewee will convey I respect what they have to say, and it is important to me. Having a neutral rapport means I will not pass judgement on what the participants are telling me through the interview process. None of the participants were students in my class, and I did not have any control over their grades. Over the past twenty years of my career, I have been successful at building relationships with teenaged students. This experience helped me build a trusting relationship with participants.

Data Collection Techniques

Interviews. The goal of the interview process was to understand the experiences and perceptions of the participants (Kvale, 1996; Maxwell, 2013; Merriam, 2016; Patton, 2002; Seidman, 2013; Weiss, 1994). There were at least three interviews with each participant (Seidman, 2013). The three-interview approach is appropriate because it allows a designated interview session for specific topics and experiences to be covered.

Each interview was structured around specific topics and provide time for the interview and interviewee to reflect on them. Throughout the interview process, I had time to gain familiarity and allow the participants to become comfortable with me and the interview process. Interviews were held in a library room at their high school, free from distractions. As low-income, high school students, there is very little likelihood the students fitting the criteria for the study will be able to drive or have transportation readily available. The decision to interview students at the high school they normally attend helped make the interviews more convenient for the students. A list of proposed questions for each interview is included in Appendix D. All interviews were conducted within a year of the student completing their first course of dual enrollment. This limited time frame ensured the students are not forgetting any important experiences or perceptions throughout the first semester of dual enrollment courses.

The first interview put the participants' experiences into context of their lives (Seidman, 2013). Information was gathered concerning the background information regarding the participant's family, education background, and high school experiences up to this point. The interviews provided a view of how the participants ended up in the dual enrollment program and how prepared they perceived themselves to be for the experience.

The second interview was held no later than one month after the first interview (Seidman, 2013). It is expected that the students began to remember experiences and perceptions they had and did not recall immediately in the first interview Seidman, 2013). Less than a month time frame allowed the students to recall the information but not forget it by the time of the subsequent interview. The time frame also allowed me enough time

to transcribe and begin analysis on the first interview. The analysis helped guide me if any follow-up questions, clarification, or member checking details were needed.

I began to gather data about the dual enrollment experience in the second interview. In the second interview, I had the students detail a typical day of going to class and studying, from when they wake up to the time they go to sleep. I asked how their daily schedule while in the DEP was any different from when they were a regular high school student. I gathered data about how the participants managed high school classes, college classes, how they perceived their teachers or professors might have helped them, and what their perceptions of the difficulty and relevance of their classes were. It was during this interview that participants brought any copies of their syllabi, curriculum information, or a sample of graded work.

Finally, the third interview was conducted no later than one month after the second interview, for reasons already stated. During this final interview, I inquired about the participants' experiences with their final exams and final course grades. Students were asked for their perceptions and understandings of the experience regarding the overall courses and different experiences. It was in the third interview the participants were asked to reflect on the meaning of those experiences described in earlier interviews and how those experiences influenced them to where they are presently in their lives. The participants were asked how their past experiences and history has influenced their present state by describing and reflecting on concrete details of the present state.

The three interviews utilized a semi-structured format to help the interviewer and participant maintain a sense of focus. Each interview of the process had a purpose, both on its own and together with the others. The data collected throughout the interviews

guided me to connecting the meaning of the events in context with the participant's life. I had an outline of topic questions I asked each participant in each interview to enable me to maintain my focus throughout the interview. The outline also served as a checklist for topics to be covered.

Each interview was approximately 90 minutes in length (Seidman, 2013). Seidman (2013) recommends 90 minutes for interview lengths, since an hour is too much of a time-restraint and 2 hours is too long to sit and answer questions (Seidman, 2013). Additional interviews might have been arranged if I determined throughout the ongoing, data analysis process there is still more information to be collected. Continual data analysis helped inform me about areas that require further clarification, examples, or thoughts.

Documents. In the initial contact with the student, I requested they bring a copy of their syllabus from a dual enrollment course and a piece of graded work from that same course with feedback from the teacher. The participant was asked to either bring the collected documents to the second interview or email the documents to me before the second interview. The documents served as sources for further data credibility checks and not a data collection source.

Fieldwork journal. Throughout the study, detailed field notes were maintained. Patton (2002) insisted taking field notes is not optional. A fieldwork journal included field notes written during interviews, jottings about thoughts and reminders to follow up on, and memos pertaining to my own feelings, reactions, and reflections regarding the data (Patton, 2002). The fieldwork journal also included the data accounting log, contact summary sheets, and the codebook. The fieldwork journal and its components as

described were used for data credibility later in the study and provided an audit trail (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Maxwell, 2013; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014; Patton, 2002).

Short field notes were written throughout the interviews and kept in the fieldwork journal. These short notes throughout the interview allowed me to focus on what the participant is saying or mark a comment or thought for follow up after the participant has fully responded (Weiss, 1994). I was able to use the notes as index markers to aid in recalling my reactions and thoughts after the interview. After each of the interviews, I took a few minutes to write my initial thoughts on the experiences and comments made by the participant. Jotting down these initial reactions immediately after the interviews allowed me to record my reactions to the interview and address my own reactivity immediately afterward (Maxwell, 2013; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). It also allowed me to address any areas that might need further investigating or revisiting (Maxwell, 2013; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). These notes became a component of ensuring data credibility. It allowed me to insert myself back into the interview to remain true to the data and helped address bias that might begin to show in the analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014; Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

The field notes included descriptions that allowed me to recall interview data during analysis. They provided a starting point for my interpretations and analysis (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Patton, 2002).

The fieldwork journal included a daily schedule and logistics concerning the study (Patton, 2002). A contact summary form, as seen in Appendix E, was included in the fieldwork journal to summarize the main points of each interview. The contact form

was created after reviewing field notes and become the first reflection of the data (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). The contact form also included major questions or points to note and recall from each interview. I included a data accounting log, as seen in Appendix F, in the fieldwork journal (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). The data accounting log provided a record of interview dates and documents collected. A list of the codes I used throughout analysis and their definitions was included in the fieldwork journal.

Managing & Recording Data

As stated in the previous section, I maintained a contact summary form. On the form, the dates and times of each interview were recorded, along with details pertaining to the recording and transcription of recordings. This contact form provided transparency to the collection and transcription of the data, as well as provided documentation for an auditor (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The contact form included a detailed summary of the main points of the interview session and provided a quick reference for reorienting myself with the interview and participant (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). The contact form was kept in the fieldwork journal throughout the process.

Interview audio was recorded for transcription purposes so I was able to focus primarily on the participant and what they were saying and how they were reacting throughout the interview. The audio recordings helped me learn how the participant experienced and perceived the dual enrollment process (Weiss, 1994). The audio helped me hear the inflections in their voice that I might have missed if I was busy jotting notes or might not capture fully if only taking notes. The audio recordings allowed for

flexibility and ease in the transcription process after each interview to conduct continual data analysis throughout the data collection process. Having the recorded interviews stored in an audio file allowed me to check for credibility and consistency in data collection and analysis (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). I was able to verify quotations and phrasings later in the analysis and conclusion portions of the study by having an audio recording to return to for checking (Weiss, 1994). I was able to check for consistency of participant responses from one interview to the next (Weiss, 1994).

As I complete each cycle of interviews, I transcribed the recordings. During the transcription process, I analyzed the depth and variety of the answers received to adjust the subsequent interview questions accordingly (Kvale, 1996; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Weiss, 1994). This helped me determine the direction of remaining interviews.

I recorded all the above methods of managing and recording data on a single data accounting log that was included in the fieldwork journal. The data accounting sheet provided dates and times of when each of the three interviews were held, when any follow-up interviews were conducted, and when any documents were collected (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

Data Analysis Procedures

Coding is the process of representing data with a word or short phrase. Saldana (2016) stated "coding is analysis" (pp. 9). I used four different coding methods to analyze and explained the data collected throughout the interviews with the participants. The codes I assigned will assist me in identifying patterns. The patterns provided evidence of repetitive habits or concepts that are important in the lives of the participants.

The patterns confirmed the five R's: rituals, routines, roles, rules, and relationships (Saldana, 2016).

I incorporated the four separate coding methods outlined below. The first three coding methods are what Saldana (2016) refers to as first-cycle coding methods. With each of these first-cycle coding methods, I used a clean copy of the transcript to code the data based on each method as specified below. I wrote analytical memos throughout the coding process and after each coding technique applied. The memos helped me throughout the process of finding new codes, organizing the codes, and finding patterns (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014; Saldana, 2016). The codes created throughout the first three methods were recorded in a codebook and defined (Saldana, 2016). The codebook was included in the fieldwork journal and regarded throughout the analysis process (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Each of the four coding methods was repeated within a few days of the first time that coding method was applied. This process helped ensure similar codes were created within an 85% to 90% range (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

After the first interviews with the participants, I transcribed the audio recordings myself. This enabled me to hear the interview and begin reflecting upon the data (Saldana, 2016). The first reading of the transcribed interviews was a straight-forward reading (Saldana, 2016). In subsequent readings, I followed a layering procedure as outlined by Saldana (2016) and detailed below.

First-cycle coding methods. The first-cycle coding methods detailed below were each completed two times, with a few days in between each cycle to memo and reflect on the first set of codes generated (Saldana, 2016). The first-cycle coding methods were

completed on a clean copy of the transcription of each interview. From each of the three first-cycle coding methods, a set of codes were generated to help lump the data from the interviews into more distinct words or phrases to analyze and eventually uncover patterns and themes.

In vivo coding. I used In Vivo Coding first. In Vivo Coding uses words or quotes directly from the participants. In Vivo Coding is an appropriate method for finding meaning when the participant's thoughts are a priority (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Since the purpose of this study was to understand the FGLI student's experiences and perceptions throughout dual enrollment, it was important to use the student's words to capture their views, experiences, and actions. I was able to tune into what is significant to the participant. In Vivo Coding "prioritized and honor the participant's voice" (Saldana, 2016, pp. 106). This coding method was a good start for coding due to the fact quotes and phrases will often point to patterns (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

Process coding. Second, I used *Process Coding. Process Coding* has also been labeled as "action coding" (Saldana, 2016, pp. 111). *Process Coding* uses gerunds, or words that end in "-ing", to identify actions the participants describe throughout their experiences (Saldana, 2016). These codes helped draw out the actions of the participants as they are reported over the time frame of a semester-long course (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). The purpose of the study was to understand the experiences the students have, and *Process Coding* enabled me to identify patterns in the students' experiences, interactions, and problem-solving methods.

Emotion coding. Lastly, I conducted *Emotion Coding*, pertaining to the participants' feelings. This method pulled together what the participant was saying regarding their actions and emotions throughout the experiences (Saldana, 2016). I explored the participants' interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships as they pertained to the "social relationships, reasoning, decision-making, judgement, and risk-taking" (Saldana, 2016, pp. 125). This coding method is especially important for the study as the purpose of the study was understanding the participants' experiences and perceptions.

Transition between first-cycle methods and second-cycle methods. Before beginning the second-cycle coding, I organized the codes gathered from the first-cycle methods (Saldana, 2016). This helped ensure a smooth transition into the second cycle, where I looked for themes and patterns in the data (Saldana, 2016). I transitioned into the second coding cycle by creating a code map. Code mapping is a method used to recall and analyze the codes used in the first cycle (Saldana, 2016). Code mapping helped me reorganize the codes created in the three first-cycle coding methods into categories to helped me identify themes and discover patterns (Saldana, 2016). The code mapping also provided further transparency in the study by demonstrating how the list of codes were categorized into themes (Saldana, 2016).

Second-cycle coding methods. Second-cycle coding methods are employed to reanalyze the codes generated from the first-cycle coding methods (Saldana, 2016). The purpose of second-cycle coding is to reorganize the codes from the first-cycle methods into a smaller and more select list of broader categories and themes (Saldana, 2016). Through the second-cycle method described below, I condensed the vast array of codes from the first cycle into fewer themes and concepts.

Pattern coding. After the transition period, I analyzed the categories created from the code mapping technique to identify themes and patterns. Each category was comprised of a collection of codes that have an underlying connection. By analyzing the codes within each category, I determined the connecting concept, or pattern, for the codes and provided an overall label for the category (Saldana, 2016). I used *Pattern Coding* to take the large amounts of data from the first cycle of coding and categorized it into more meaningful units. These patterns were compared and analyzed to uncover any emerging themes, configurations, or explanations (Saldana, 2016).

From the second cycle of coding, I created a top 10 list of themes to begin my writing of the results (Saldana, 2016). Each participant had a narrative describing their experiences and perceptions, and, finally, the group was portrayed together to highlight the comparisons and differences amongst them (Saldana, 2016).

Data Credibility

The validity of qualitative research is best described using other words to differentiate the concept from quantitative research. Rather than using the term *internal validity*, the qualitative researchers refer to the *credibility* of the study, *consistency* instead of *reliability*, *transferability* instead of *external validity,* and *neutrality* rather than *objectivity* (Denzin, 1978; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; & Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

I was upfront from the beginning about the data collection and data analysis procedures I used to allow the reader to be the judge of the credibility of the study. The fieldwork journal contained documents needed to provide transparency of the study to the reader (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). I addressed areas of the study that might create

threats to the credibility of the study up front. Descriptions were provided of how the threat was reduced or eliminated throughout the data collection and analysis process (Maxwell, 2013). Rubin and Rubin (1995) explained by allowing the readers to see the entire process of data collection and analysis, they can be the judge of the strengths and the weaknesses of the study. Thus, the entire process of data collection and analysis was transparent to the reader creating an audit trail for review (Maxwell, 2013).

There are methods I employed to build the credibility, or trustworthiness, of the study. The credibility of the study is a measure of how accurately my account represents the participants' reality of what it was like to participate in dual enrollment as a first generation, low-income student (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) stated credibility is about the inferences drawn from the data and not the data collected, by itself. The term credibility refers to the correctness of the conclusions, descriptions, explanations, interpretations, or other accounts of the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The consistency, or dependability, describes the extent to which the study's findings and conclusions are consistent with the data collected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Lincoln and Guba (1985) further explained the level of consistency, or dependability, of a study is determined by the accuracy of the conclusions and whether the findings make sense, given the data collected. They stated it was not necessarily about replicating the study with the same findings each time but rather that the results are consistent with the data that is collected, at the time. The transferability of the study demonstrates the applicability of the results to other dual enrollment participants and sites, as described in the transferability section. However, in qualitative research, the purpose was to study a small population to understand a particular phenomenon in more

detail. The purpose was not to generalize the results to other populations. Lincoln and Guba (1985) believed the original investigator needs to provide "sufficient descriptive data" to make transferability of the findings possible for future researchers (p. 298). Therefore, the original researcher does not actually make the generalizations or transfer the findings to other situations but rather provides enough details to help others determine how the findings might fit their situations. Lastly, I addressed the neutrality, or reflexivity, of the study. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the researcher must establish the degree to which the findings "are determined by the subjects (respondents) and conditions of the inquiry and not by the biases, motivations, interests, or perspectives of the inquirer" (p. 290). I addressed my biases and personal motivation for completing the study using strategies described in the following paragraphs.

Credibility. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) asserted "seeing or hearing multiple instances of [the data] from different sources" was a way to get to the finding (p. 300). By collecting data from multiple interviews, common themes and categories can be uncovered. The multiple sources as described below helped demonstrate credibility of the major and minor themes discussed by displaying corroborating evidence between sources (Maxwell, 2013). The final narrative was more credible by providing multiple forms of evidence (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2002). The credibility of my study was strengthened when I compared data collected through interviews with the students, course documentation from the students, the notes and summaries in the fieldwork journal, and the analytical memos I maintained throughout the study and analysis process. The collection of multiple sources of data helped me become more confident in the inferences drawn from the data. The different sources

provided a check on one another to determine if the data supports the final conclusions I make (Maxwell, 2013). Patton (2002) declared the "consistency in overall patterns of data from different sources or reasonable explanations for differences in data from divergent sources can contribute significantly to the overall credibility of findings" (p. 560). The multiple sources corroborated the participants' statements and helped strengthen their accounts. If the multiple sources did not lead to a consistent picture, I worked to provide explanations for the differences in patterns (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). This was displayed by the transparency of the study, and I was better equipped to provide a more visual perspective of the experience (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). The conclusions I made at the end the study were connected to the data collected, providing an explanation of any outliers found throughout the study (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

Another method that was employed to ensure the credibility of the study was frequent member checks. Lincoln and Guba (1985) believed member checks to be the "most crucial" method of demonstrating the trustworthiness of the analysis (p. 314). Maxwell (2013) referred to this as "respondent validation" and stated it was the "single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on" (p. 126). Maxwell (2013) continued to explain it was also a valuable method of identifying any biases or misunderstandings I might have along the process. Only the participants themselves will be able to verify the analysis and interpretation make sense, are realistic, and are accurately portrayed (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014; Patton, 2002). By the design of the interviews, I completed an interview then performed the data analysis

procedures. I then brought my findings back to the participants during the next interview session to confirm my analysis and my interpretations were accurate and sought clarification if needed.

> **Reflexivity and reactivity.** Reflexivity of the researcher refers to the fact the researcher will be a part of the world studied (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) believed interviews will always be influenced by the researcher. It is important for researchers to understand how they influenced the data analysis and to use it productively (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). As the researcher interviews and interprets data, the researcher will need to acknowledge the biases and assumptions being made. Reflexivity is also referred to as researcher bias (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Maxwell, 2013). The goal will not to be to eliminate the researcher's effects on the study but to understand how the researcher's values and expectations, or preconceived beliefs, influenced the study (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Maxwell, 2013; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The field notes and analytical memos I maintained throughout the study allowed for transparency of my beliefs and biases. A list of the topics and questions I reflected on are included in the contact form in Appendix E. I reduced the amount of bias I inflected into my conclusions and analysis of the students' statements by maintaining an open and honest interview process (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Reactivity is how the researcher influences the individuals studied (Maxwell, 2013). Similar to reflexivity, it is impossible to eliminate the influence of the researcher on the study, rather the goal is the reduce and understand (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) suggested three ways to reduce the effects

of the researcher on the case. At the beginning of the study, I made my intentions of the research clear to the participants. Second, the three interviews of ninety minutes each allowed me to embed myself into the participant's life and not become a novelty. Finally, none of the participants were students currently in my classes, and I explained the information they provided had no bearing on their course grades. I ensured them what the students told me in the interviews or through the documents they provided was confidential and not shared with their current teachers or professors. I created an interview guide with questions for each interview to help me avoid asking leading questions, therefore allowing the students the opportunity to formulate their own answers (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). I shared my Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval with the participants to exhibit my determination to follow ethical protocol. (See Appendix G for a copy of IRB approval.)

Consistency and dependability. I took time to reflect on my beliefs, biases, and assumptions regarding the dual enrollment experience throughout my data collection and analysis. Through self-disclosure and self-monitoring with the reflective questions and topics included in Appendix E, I provided an explanation for the interpretations and conclusions I made (Creswell & Miller, 2000; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Due to the nature of qualitative research, the influence of the researcher will always be present, it is impossible to eliminate all of the researcher's influence. The part of the researcher's influence that remains must be identified and explained (Maxwell, 2013). The reader was informed of my own values that may have influenced my conclusions in the end.

Finally, the prolonged time I spent conducting interviews and confirming the findings with the participants helped ensure the credibility of the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Repeated interviews that were at least 90 minutes in length helped build the trust of the participants, and, as a result, were more likely to disclose important information or provide more truthful and honest replies to the interview questions. Adequate time spent with the participants during the interviews also ensured I am saturated in the data collected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The three, 90-minute interviews ensured I began to hear similar responses instead of uncovering new material with each interview (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

As previously described, member checking will not only build the credibility of the study's findings but also ensure dependability of the study. The credibility of the study is the correctness of the conclusions made, whereas the dependability is the reliability or consistency of the conclusions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I transcribed and coded the interviews after each cycle allowing me to take that analysis back to the participants. By having the participants hear my analysis and interpretations, I ensured I was understanding them correctly and fixed any misunderstandings as they occured throughout the analysis process (Maxwell, 2013; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2004; Patton, 2004; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) stated, "the more emic the study, the more useful early feedback is likely to be" (p. 309). Therefore, gathering participant feedback reflected the tone of the participants and allowed me to display their experiences more vividly (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Once final analysis was completed, I created a matrix of

the results to take back to the participants. The matrix helped the participants access and understand the results (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

 Transferability. I enhanced the possibility of my study's findings being easier to transfer to other situations by employing the following methods. First, a "rich, thick description" of the data and findings was provided (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Maxwell (2013) described this as a highly descriptive, detailed presentation of the setting, the collection of data, and the findings of a study to include evidence in the form of quotes from participants. By creating a detailed description of the process, including methods and procedures, I allowed the reader to decide for themselves how the findings can be applied to their situation (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). The transcribed interviews and codebook with a list of the codes used and definitions of each, made the data and analysis transparent to the readers (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

 At the end of the data analysis, I created a persuasive account of the participants' dual enrollment experiences and their perceptions of the experience. By creating a detailed and meaningful description of the participants' accounts, I made the written conclusion authentic and credible (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). The account was a true account, made sense to the reader, and allowed the reader to have a vicarious presence (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Confirmations were made through data comparisons, uncertainty of cases was explained, and descriptions were detailed enough to allow readers to determine how well the study can be transferred to their population and site (Maxwell, 2013; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

Chapter IV

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND PARTICIPANTS

Introduction

Eight participants met the criteria outlined in Chapter 3 for this study. Each participant was the first person in the family to enroll in college level coursework, qualified for Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL), and enrolled in the dual enrollment program at the local two-year community college for the first time during the 2019-2020 school year.

Participants were selected based on responses to a questionnaire emailed through the college. Initially, the sample of participants were divided into White and Non-White students before being separated by sex. Furthermore, those categories were divided by range in grade point average (GPA). From those eight categories, one participant was chosen. Additionally, participants were chosen who share similar coursework. All individuals were enrolled in English 1101 but had a choice of an introductory-level course for their second course. Participants enrolled in either a Psychology, Sociology, or History course. One participant, however, was also enrolled in Calculus. A matrix of the selection process can be found in Appendix C.

Three interviews, each approximately 90 minutes long, were conducted in the media center at the participant's home school. For this study, the student's home school

is defined as the high school they were regularly enrolled in at the time of the interviews, which were recorded for transcription and reliability purposes as explained in Chapter 3.

The remaining chapters focus on the results and analysis of the study. Chapter 4 provides a comprehensive, detailed profile of each participant, including a description of the participant's family and background. The descriptive profiles help the transferability of the results to other populations. Chapter 5 provides relevant data from all three interviews with the participants. Chapter 6 provides the data analysis procedure and reveals findings based on that data. Finally, Chapter 7 connects the current research back to previous research, discussing limitations, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

Site Description

The study was conducted in a rural county in the southeast region of the United States. The county is located about fifty miles outside of a major metropolitan city in the southeast and had a population, in 2019, as recorded by the Census Bureau to be between 100,000 and 150,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). The county consisted of approximately 51% females with less than 25% of the population under the age of 18 in 2019. Persons reported as only White made up approximately 85% of the population, while Black was approximately 10%, and Mixed was less than 5%. Hispanic only ethnicities were reported as less than 10% of the population. The median household income was reported as less than $60,000, with approximately $26,000 reported per capita. The percentage of persons living in poverty was between 10-15%. Persons with a high school diploma or higher was reported as approximately 85% of the population.

There are three high schools in the county. I will refer to the high schools as A, B, or C, respectively. Each participant was zoned for one of the three high schools in the county. Student demographics are similar at each of the high schools. Each high school has a media center, with a private study room or conference room where the interviews were conducted. Table 1 lists the demographics at each school.

Descriptions of Participants

Within the eight selected individuals, there were the following participants: one White male with a high GPA, one White male with a low GPA, one White female with a high GPA, one White female with a low GPA, one Non-White male with a high GPA, one Non-White male with a low GPA, one Non-White female with a high GPA, and one Non-White female with a low GPA. Demographic information is displayed in Table 2.

Participant Profiles

A profile is provided for each participant. Profiles have been developed by using interview data. The profiles will provide a description of the participant, their family, and their academic background. The profiles will also provide a summary of the participant's experience with dual enrollment.

Disclaimer on Participant Identities

The participants' identities will remain confidential. Participant names have been changed to reserve their privacy and confidentiality of responses. If names reflect any actual participants, it is by coincidence only.

Table 1

High School Demographics

High School	Free Reduced Lunch	Enrollment		
		Total	White	Non-White
High School A	50-55%	<1500	70-80%	20-30%
High School B	40-45%	<1500	80-90%	10-20%
High School C	40-45%	<1000	80-90%	10-20%

Note: Data according to 2019 FTE reporting (GADOE; 2019)

Table 2

Demographics of Participants

	Age	Gender	GPA	Race	High School
Participant 1: Abigail	17	Female	2.5-2.75	White	C
Participant 2: Bella	17	Female	3.75-4.0	White	B
Participant 3: Piper	16	Female	2.75-3.0	Non-White	A
Participant 4: Eva	16	Female	3.75-4.0	Non-White	C
Participant 5: Bailey	16	Male	2.5-2.75	White	B
Participant 6: Rango	17	Male	3.5-3.75	White	A
Participant 7: Bo	17	Male	2.75-3.0	Non-White	A
Participant 8: Bolt	16	Male	3.75-4.0	Non-White	A

Note: Ages are reported at time of enrollment in dual enrollment and GPAs are unweighted (honors & A.P. points not factored in)

Participant Profile: Abigail

Abigail was a 17-year-old White female. Abigail lived in the Southeast United States with both parents, an older sister, younger brother, and her three dogs. She was born and raised in the area. Abigail described her mother as her best friend. "We are very much alike, and I tell her everything." Her mother was her best supporter. Her father was also supportive, but he was the funny one of the family. She claimed he was the funniest person she knew, adding, "His dad jokes are top notch."

Both parents worked at one of the local carpet factories. Her mother worked in the customer service department on the phones and her father is in the transportation department. Her parents struggled financially throughout their lives. Neither attended college. They were young when they got married and began their family. Her mother stayed home for the first few years, while her siblings were younger. By the time Abigail and her siblings were older, her mom believed she was too old to begin a career.

Abigail claimed there was never any question she would attend college. The dual enrollment program allowed her to help make the financial component more realistic. Abigail attempted dual enrollment because it was an opportunity to get a free education. She also felt dual enrollment classes would allow her to get ahead of her peers in high school and "knew it would better prepare me for college." This participant believed she was going to need to attend college to be successful in her future. "Education is one of the most important things for my family." Throughout high school, her parents constantly stressed the importance of enrolling in classes that would prepare her for the future. She saw dual enrollment as one of those methods. "My parents both struggled so much because of the lack of education they obtained and so they have always pushed it

on us." This participant did not want to have the same struggle. Abigail stated "[going to college] was more of a requirement from my parents. They want the best for me, and my siblings and they hold high standards for us because they want to see us succeed."

Her two siblings were described as "the best people" she knew. Her brother was fourteen years old. She described him as a "persistent, go-getter," believing, "he will have an amazing future." Her sister was a few years older than herself and a huge role model, acting as a best friend and mentor. She believed she owes so much personal growth to her sister's guidance. She claimed her sister has never given up her goals "no matter how hard she might be getting hit while she's down. She's taught me so much."

Abigail explained her sister moved away from home a few years ago. Before her sister left, she wrote Abigail a series of letters that could help her get through assorted life experiences. For example, when Abigail's first boyfriend broke up with her, there was a letter for that. Abigail was comforted by the letters, knowing even though her sister was not there physically, she was thinking of her. However, her sister recently has moved back home. She spoke about her sister's experiences with depression and the assorted feelings that go along with moving back home. She said it was hard watching her role model go through the feeling of being a failure for moving home when life did not go her way. Through it all, her sister has taught her so much about not giving up. This experience also taught Abigail what it meant to be a family unit. She learned her family was always going to be there to support each other.

Abigail loved to hang out with her friends. She had been friends with the same group since kindergarten. They have gone to the same schools, been in the same classes, and even live in the same neighborhood. She described each friend as being unique and

special. They all have different interests and personalities, but she claimed, "that's what makes them so fun. We all appreciate each other for those differences and encourage each other to be ourselves." She built a support system of her friends, parents, and siblings around her that have helped her reach her goals this far and she does not doubt they will always be there for her in the future.

Abigail shared she had been playing volleyball since her freshman year. She told me how most of her friends cheered on the school competition team, but she never saw herself as a cheerleader. She joined the volleyball team mainly because her gym coach urged her to try it since she was a tall, athletic girl. She admitted she was not exactly a natural, but she was good enough to make the team and she had fun out there. This was her fourth year playing and she improved a lot and was now playing on the varsity team. She confided how she wished she had joined the youth leagues available when she was younger so that could be a little better and have a chance to play in college. She wanted to continue playing volleyball throughout her last year in high school, even though she was enrolled in more dual enrollment classes. "I'll make it work because it is worth it. I have fun out there and it relieves some stress."

Abigail shared she has very strong support system consisting of her friends and family. She believed her support system was "a group of people who encourage you to do your best and support you no matter what." She believed her support system was there for her throughout the entire process:

> My support system is one of the most valuable things in my life. They are the
> reason I haven't given up or let myself get too frustrated with my education. They
> are the reason I accomplished everything that I did.

Abigail described herself as hard-working, focused, and motivated. She explained that she strived for excellence in everything she did and did not quit until she got the right answers. Abigail enrolled in dual enrollment for the first time in the Fall 2019. She shared that when she decided to enroll in dual enrollment, her friends questioned that decision. They were mostly all in Advanced Placement (A.P.) courses. She said there was a stigma with dual enrollment. She believed other students look at it as the easier option to A.P. classes. Abigail defended her choice with the main reason being free college. She had watched both parents struggle because of a lack of education, and they always pushed it on her and her siblings. She knew her family needed that assistance, whereas many of her friends did not. She also worried about passing the A.P. exams and getting credit after completing all the work for the course.

Her first classes were English 1101 and Psychology. She wanted to take courses that qualified for high school credit and would not be too difficult. She ended the first semester with a B in English and an A in Psychology. She was happy with these grades. She worked hard. She was proud to know she had earned her first college credits. She informed me she had immediately registered for two more courses the following Spring of 2020 and was currently enrolled in four courses at the time of the interview in the Fall of 2020. She believed enrolling in the dual enrollment program "was one of the smartest decisions I ever made."

Participant Profile: Bella

Bella was a 17-year-old White female. She was born and raised in the south and currently lives with the two people she refers to as her parents. Since she was two years old, Bella has lived with her grandparents. She had bounced around in foster care for

those first years, but her grandparents officially gained custody of her at the age of three. Bella's grandparents realized she needed a more stable home environment. After moving around the state twice when she was younger, Bella and her grandparents settled in this county in the Southeastern United States. Bella believed her grandparents have provided a stable, nurturing environment for her. She recognized the sacrifice they made when welcoming her; she hopes to make them proud through her achievements. Her grandmother could have retired, by this time, but was still working her clerical job to support Bella. She had been told since an early age, her grandparents would do what is necessary to make sure Bella goes to college and does not follow in her mother's footsteps.

Bella's birth mother had drug dependency issues and was constantly in and out of rehabilitation facilities when Bella was younger. Bella shared she has recently become reacquainted with her birth mother, however had always in touch with her birth dad. She has a stepbrother through her dad. Her stepbrother serves in the military and lives overseas currently.

Bella joined band in middle school and played the clarinet throughout high school. She was also tested for the gifted program around the beginning of 6th grade. She started being placed in honors classes and making the friends she was still hanging out with in high school. Her friends were focused on academics. They were respectful of the teachers, did their schoolwork, and did not get in trouble. Bella excelled in her classes, especially her science classes. She started believing she might have a chance to become a psychiatrist.

Bella told me she always felt more mature than her friends and considered the reason was due to her past experiences with her family situation. As she got older and began high school, she started to hang out with less people, keeping her friend group to a small circle of five. Her sophomore year, she heard about the dual enrollment program from a teacher. When she talked about it with her friends, she described them as "not even remotely interested". Her friends were all planning to take the Advanced Placement (A.P.) courses offered at school. They already had one A.P. course together and were expected to take at least two more the following year. Bella knew the A.P. courses were good for college, but she also knew she was not guaranteed college credit just for passing the class, unlike the option of dual enrollment. Also, "The A.P. tests were expensive," she added. Bella needed to take advantage of the free courses. When she told her friends about the dual enrollment program, she expressed that they began looking down on her. She felt her friends thought they were more superior than her because they were going to do the A.P. classes while she was going to dual enroll.

At this point, her friend group of five became three. She informed me she currently only spoke to one on a regular basis. She believed she was doing something good for her future. Her friends thought the dual enrollment program would lessen her chances of gaining acceptance to a four-year university, like the big state school her friend group wanted to attend together. Bella no longer thought going to the large state school was important. She was beginning to wonder if she would even be able to afford college. For Bella, she decided to take advantage of a free college education. At the time of the interview, Bella was hoping to pursue psychology, acknowledging she might not be able to become a psychiatrist but could become a psychologist.

Bella first enrolled in the dual enrollment program during the Fall 2019 semester and took two classes, English 1101 and Psychology. She "mustered" through English with the essay writing but enjoyed the Psychology course and the professor. During the semester, she remained certain that she would continue into the field of psychology. She ended the first semester with two A's. She registered immediately for the the Spring semester in hopes to continue learning from her same psychology professor. She was amazed with how interesting school could be when one is interested in the subject.

During our last interview in Fall of 2020, Bella informed me she had changed her major. A degree in psychiatry would demand a significant amount of time and money in college, something she may not be able to afford. she no longer had high hopes for that. She added she was not that interested in science after all, and she would have to attend medical school for the psychiatrist degree. She decided she wanted a career in education and to help other children who might be in the same position she was when she was in elementary school. She wanted to become an elementary school teacher, one who could identify with the problems she faced. She wanted to be the reason another little girl did not give up hope.

She was planning on finishing as many dual-enrollment courses possible before graduation and attend a college nearby to concentrate on education. For this reason, Bella confided she was no longer enrolled in band at the high school meaning she could dual-enroll full time both semesters of her senior year. She said it would be ideal if she could take all her classes at the college and not have to come back to the high school. Her decision to "quit" band was not taken lightly by her band director, who was upset with her decision, further distancing her from her former friend group.

Participant Profile: Piper

Piper was a 16-year-old, Non-White female. Piper was born in the Southeastern area of the United States; however, she complained her peers did not believe her as a result of her Hispanic heritage. Her parents came to the United States before she was born when they were young. After moving around, they settled in this area prior to having Piper and her two siblings. Piper was the oldest of the three children. She expressed how much she loved her sisters and was hoping to be a good role model. She wanted to make sure they looked up to her and had a path to follow, so they could also be successful.

She explained her parents never finished high school. Both worked at the local carpet factory, making just enough to get by, but they worked entry-level jobs and received little while working there. She knew they were victims of disrespect due to both their entry-level jobs and their Hispanic heritage. However embarrassing, Piper felt proud of her parents who worked hard, struggling to make sure the family had what was needed. If she and her sisters wanted something extra, her parents would save and make sure they got it. Most of her best friends lived near her and, as typical teenage girls do, shared a lot of their clothes. She was also working now and helping finances. She was happy to be able to help by buying her own clothes. She also was looking forward to the approaching holiday season because she would be able to help buy for her sisters and her parents would not feel so overwhelmed.

Education was very important to her family. Both parents did not finish high school and work in the carpet factory. They stressed education is the main ingredient to getting ahead in life. "My parents have always told me that if I had an education, I

wouldn't end up working for people who disrespect me and don't appreciate my hard work." Piper described her support system as being "the people you can fall back on when you are struggling."

Piper was not sure what she wanted to do for a career. Her parents and teachers have always stressed she needed to go to college, but nobody ever told her what to go to college for. She had been thinking about becoming a high school counselor or an elementary school teacher. She always enjoyed helping her sisters with their schoolwork and wanted to help others. Teachers always told her she had a lot of patience and compassion. She proudly told me her teachers were proud of her for helping her friends who struggled with their work. She was not sure why they wanted her help; she did not believe she was very smart. She would help if she could, and they always came to her asking for more. When asked for three words that describe her, she answered "respectful, hard-working, and dedicated."

Piper played soccer since she was a young girl and worked hard to be on the team her freshman year. She did play during her first two years in high school and started her junior year before dual enrolling. However, the season had been cut short when the pandemic hit. She made the decision not to play her senior year due to the coursework being very time-consuming. College was very important to her, and she wanted to "do it right", believing it was vital to her future. She expressed her regret that her last season was cut short, and she had not been able to fully enjoy it. She already missed the team, especially since most of them were her best friends.

Piper first enrolled in the dual enrollment program during the Spring of 2020. She registered for two classes, English 1101 and Psychology and earned two B's.

Despite encountering technology challenges during the Spring 2020 due to the Covid-19 global pandemic, Piper persisted into the Fall 2020. During the time of the interviews in the Fall of 2020, she was taking two new courses. She registered for two more courses the following Spring semester by our third interview. Piper would "recommend students to take dual enrollment because it's really beneficial and it's not hard."

Participant Profile: Eva

Eva was a 16-year-old, Non-White female. Eva lived in this Southeastern United States county all her life. She explained she was young for her grade, so she was always trying to round the age up to fit in. Eva was of mixed race and has a café mocha complexion. She explained her mother was White and her father was African American.

She told me she did competition cheer her entire life, up until the past year. Once her new baby brother was born, and she began looking at dual enrollment, she no longer had time for the competitions and practice. She admitted, she knew money was a little tighter in the house and she also did not want to put that strain on the family just for something she enjoyed but did not need. She explained her practices were in another town, 30 minutes away. It was hard for her mother to take her to those while caring for the new baby. After inquiring about her transportation, she said her mother did not like her driving a long distance. Also, the practices ended late, so it was too much for her to drive herself. She reassured me, though, that missing out was not a big deal because she was getting bored of the drama and all that went along with cheer. She did not appear to be upset.

Eva lived with her parents and four of her six siblings. The four siblings still living in the house were all boys, younger than she. The older two siblings, a brother and

sister, have moved out but live in the same town. Her favorite thing to do with her spare

time was spend time with her family. As large and loud as it may be, she explained she

enjoyed her family. They are the people in her life who motivate her to be the best

version of herself. She helped her mother with the younger brothers but did add that her

mother tried not to ask much of her during school semesters.

Eva believed education was the best way to be successful in life and her parents,

who did not attend college, always pushed the children to learn as much as they possibly

could. This student had a strong support system encouraging her to participate in the dual

enrollment program. "My family believes education is the best way to be successful in

life, and they push us to get as much education as we possibly can." She reported the

family also supported her along the way, motivating her to continue the diligent work and

that she was capable.

For this participant, a support system was someone or a group of people that push

you to success and help you on the journey to achieve one's goals. "My support system

encouraged me to study and get my work done to the best of my ability." She reported

her family was always offering a helping hand, "which was really nice and took a lot of

pressure off of me." She believed her support system remained consistent throughout the

whole process and was instrumental to her accomplishments. "I do not know if I could

have done everything without them consistently pushing me."

Eva stated her parents were "definitely a huge help" regarding classes but her

former teachers at the high school truly aided her throughout most of the coursework. "I

believe my high school teachers were my biggest supporters." Her former teachers

taught her learn new strategies to study gave her a "heads up" on what to expect in college.

Eva had grasp of what she expects and wants in a career. She had a plan entirely developed that includes what dual enrollment courses she needs to gain admittance to a career specific program at another nearby technical school. Eva planned to become a sonogram technician. When asked why, she was quick to explain that she has always been interested in ultrasounds, after seeing her mom have one. The process of watching the baby grow was fascinating. It was the "best part of being in the medical field but with the least amount of blood". She was "not a fan of blood", she emphasized.

During the interview, Eva did not use single words to describe herself. She believed her friends and family would describe her as hard-working, valuing success from knowledge gained, and striving to be the best. Eva has always earned high A's in school and taken honors classes after being classified as a gifted student. She shared that, one time, a counselor had placed her in a regular level science course, and before the class was over, she had returned to the counseling office, insisting there had been a mistake. She requested the honors class instead. The counselor had been tentative about her taking the higher-level class, but Eva insisted. Her schedule changed, and Eva made sure the counselor never placed her in a regular level class again. Her decision to dual-enroll was primarily based on financial need. She knew the financial strain her education would place on her large family. She also shared she was bored with high school, noting classes were too easy for her, even her honors and the few Advanced Placement courses. Her goal was earning college credit for free while still in high school. Upon hearing about the opportunity, Eva said she ran to the counselor's office to get the information.

87

She looked at me square in the eyes and said, "Literally. I asked for a pass right then and ran down to get the information packet."

Eva enrolled in the dual enrollment program her junior year, Fall of 2019. She told me she had heard about it from teachers and as she put it, "I always listen to my teachers because they know what is best." She enjoyed being out of the high school as it provided more freedom and responsibility. Her first semester, she only attended the college part-time, taking English and Psychology, before returning to the high school for Physics and Pre-Calculus. She wished she could have enrolled earlier as she was successful, finishing her first semester with two A's.

Eva persisted into the Spring 2020, enrolling as a full-time college student. She proudly added she currently had a 4.0 in college and had completed 12 credits as of the Fall of 2020. When asked if she would recommend the program, Eva reported she would "without a doubt recommend anyone interested in dual enrollment to do it. It was a great experience and it's a great opportunity to earn college credits and get a feel for college." Eva recommended more check-ins for students throughout the first semester. Counselors should "follow up with students before midterms and before finals to discuss their grades and make sure they're on track to be successful." She believed it would have been easy to slip through the cracks if nobody was watching out for her, like her parents had been.

Participant Profile: Bailey

Bailey was a 16-year-old, White male. Bailey's immediate family moved to this county when he was in 5th grade. He explained his disappointment when he moved away from the rest of his family. The family had lived in a small neighborhood near his

grandparents and the beach. The other side of his family remained close to each other, and he did not see his grandparents and cousins often.

Throughout each interview, he would mention how his mother helped him or how he wants to make her proud. He rarely spoke about his father. I asked about football, bringing up the Florida t-shirt he wore on our first visit. He explained, that just represents Florida and not football necessarily. It was a gift from a grandmother. "I'll watch a Florida game, but I don't go out of my way to watch football in general." He shared that his father did not have much to do with him. His parents were married and lived together, but he believed his father favored his younger brothers believing his father saw him as a "mama's boy" since he was not interested in "manly things like hunting or football." Bailey preferred watching T.V. or listening to music while playing video games, something his father did not attempt to understand.

Bailey, the oldest of four boys, has always been the one to help his mother care for the family. He helped cook dinner, clean the house, and watch the siblings throughout his life. Once they moved away from the extended family, the responsibility placed on him only got heavier. His mother no longer had his aunts or grandmother around to help her. Consequently, she relied more on Bailey, and he thought it made him grow up a little faster than other kids his age.

Bailey had three younger brothers with an age difference of five years between him and the oldest of the three. Each of the three younger brothers played football and baseball through the youth and middle school teams. He was very proud of his brothers because they were good and enjoyed playing. They fit in with other kids and had friends. He admitted, he was also selfishly glad they were so involved because they were not

89

home a lot. He confided this meant he did not have to watch them all the time like he did when they were younger. It allowed him to work more hours, take the dual enrollment classes, and not feel guilty.

His parents both worked at the local carpet factory. Bailey was always told he needed to attend college to have a decent future. However, he never had been interested in school so the thought of even more did not appeal to him. When he heard it was free, he wanted to know more. He thought this could be a way to get two things done at once and save money. He wanted his mom to be proud of him and he wanted to be able to help the family financially. He told me he already worked an afterschool job and saved that money. I asked what he did in his spare time. He laughed, "what time?" Besides playing video games and watching T.V., he said he just was not really into much.

Bailey decided to enroll in the dual enrollment program because he was worried about being able to afford college in the future. "I am really worried I might not be able to afford it later." He stated he was not sure if he really wanted college, but he knew he needed education after high school. After speaking to a counselor, he realized he could take classes at the college and get high school credit for them towards graduation. He honestly thought, "why anyone wouldn't do that is nuts." He described himself as organized, smart, and kind-of-lazy. He stressed he was a fast learner and could simply pay attention in class and pass the test.

Bailey claimed his support system was made up of his mom, someone who motivated him to keep working persistently. He claimed she was "pretty cool" about dual enrollment classes, understanding he needed more time at home to work on them. He explained that he usually helps his mother take care of his siblings in the evenings

after school. Normally, he would help get dinner started and cleaned up. However, she did not require as much throughout the semester. He reported he felt bad, but he also knew she was "really proud" of him for doing this. At the end of the semester, she took him out to dinner to celebrate his success. His parents did not want him working a minimum wage job the rest of his life and knew this was a small sacrifice for his future.

Bailey enrolled in the dual enrollment program for the first time during the Fall 2019 semester. He took the English 1101 class and a Speech class. He earned a B in the English class and a C in the Speech class. He was content with the grades and had enrolled in English 1102 that spring. He admitted he did not do as well that semester due to the Covid-19 pandemic cutting the face-to-face classes down. He was not as great a student when someone was not standing over him and his usual laziness seeped in. However, at the time of the interviews, Bailey was still enrolled in the program. He was currently taking English 1102 again, as well as a math class. He was proud to say he was passing both.

He believed students should try dual enrollment. "You might not think you are able to do it, but it was so worth it. It wasn't as bad as I thought. And I am ready to move into more classes and keep going." Bailey recommended counselors look for good time management and organization skills when recommending students for dual enrollment. He did not believe grades should be the only thing counselors use to decided who will be successful. "My teachers always told me I could do it even if I wasn't a nerd. I didn't really believe them until I actually did it." He believed his teachers and found he was successful.

Bailey hoped taking the dual enrollment classes would help him find some interests or introduce him to some new interests. He did not have a career or goal in mind. So far, it has not opened any options for him. He realized he had only taken freshman-level classes, but he appreciated the opportunity to try a few new things. He thinks he will try a business or a management class next semester to see if those interest him.

Participant Profile: Rango

Rango was a 17-year-old, White male. He was born and raised in this county. He had been a part of a blended family since he was in 8th grade. His mother, a stay-at-home mom, divorced his biological father when he was in 5th grade. He explained the time before the divorce was a blur, as he was just a kid. But he believed life had been a lot happier and easier compared to what he experienced right after the divorce. He had been confused when it first happened. His dad suddenly was not around for months at a time. It made him depressed at first and he ate his feelings. This caused him to put on a lot of weight and the weight gain caused him to be bullied at school. "Kids can be cruel." He shared he did not have a lot of friends due to being obese and that only compounded the sadness he felt. But in 8th grade, he joined the wrestling team. He was a tall boy and he believed that gave him an advantage. He began to lose the weight between his 8th grade and 10th grade years.

He acknowledged now, had his parents never divorced, his life would be a lot different. He would not have experienced the bullying and teasing growing up. But he was glad for the experiences because they shaped him to be the person he was then. He was always shocked but proud when a teacher described him as mature, respectful, and

caring. He would not want to be described as anything else. He was also glad because he had a wonderful stepfather who was always there for him, as well as a large-blended family of siblings he had "grown to appreciate".

Rango's new stepfather was a contractor in town. He had three blood siblings, all are older except for one, a female who is currently a sophomore at the same high school. He claimed they had all gotten along better as they had all gotten older. He believed that to be due to them moving away and not being around so much anymore. His older sister was married with two kids of her own. His older brother was currently living overseas and working as a middle school teacher. The younger sister was the only one at home and she could be a handful at this time but was mostly sweet and helpful around the house. He also had four stepsiblings, but they did not live at the house. His biological father was "living in Mississippi and doing his own thing." I could tell that was still something he was working on accepting.

Besides wrestling, Rango did not enjoy participating in a lot of sports. "Remember, I was a fat kid," he laughed. But he did sign up for football, soccer, and track and field to try to make friends. He acknowledged those helped him lose weight and get in shape, he also noted they just were not his "thing". He enjoyed exercising and once he began losing weight and accepting himself for who he was, he did not continue with the teams. He did not watch a lot of sports either. He did enjoy playing video games and hanging out with his friends. He laughed and assured me he did have some friends now and "even a girlfriend."

He described himself as a straight-A student, goofy, fun. He believed learning is fun if you have the right teacher. High school was always easy to him, even though he

was in honors and Advanced Placement classes. He was the type of student who got the work done in 20 minutes and would be bored the rest of class.

Rango believed a support system is the people around you that support you when you are struggling in a certain area. He listed his old high school teachers and some very smart, close friends as his support system. He did not list his parents, even though he acknowledged they would help him if he needed it. He explained he did not think education was that important to his parents. He never got the sense that he was expected to graduate high school and enroll immediately into college.

Rango's career aspirations had something to do with computer science, or "at least that is the latest plan", he stated. He was still not exactly sure of what he wants to do. But he admitted, he had a knack for technology. With the field expanding rapidly, it was full of opportunity for him. He will be the first in his family to go to college. His mother had a high school diploma, and his father only had some trade school experience. He knew he did not want a blue-collar job and recognized he will need college. Rango wanted to get on with his life. Dual enrollment offered free college and an opportunity to physically get out of high school for the day. "Free college appeals to everyone, I would like to think." This inspired him to enroll in the dual enrollment program on his own. He felt college was right for him.

Rango enrolled in the dual enrollment program for the first time in the Fall of 2019. His first classes were English 1101 and a history class. He proudly told me he earned A's in both of those classes. Rango persisted into the Spring 2020, as a full-time student. He registered for the second English class for the following spring, as well as geology, speech, and sociology. At the time of the interviews, Rango was still

participating full-time in the dual enrollment program. He informed me he had a 4.0 for his college G.P.A.

He recommended students looking at dual enrollment should "pay attention, do your work, show up to class, email your teacher if you're confused, make at least one friend, and take morning classes." He also added colleges might not give so many freedoms to their professors. He was upset when school breaks did not line up. He had a mission trip scheduled with his church, which was lined up with the high school calendar, and was going to have to miss a week of college classes. There was nothing anyone could do about the missing grades, and he had to accept the absences in the class and a zero on a quiz.

Participant Profile: Bo

Bo was a 17-year-old, African American male. Bo was another participant born and raised in the local town. Both of his parents were from different small towns but were still from within the county. His parents worked at the local carpet factory. His mother is a floor manager, and his father drives a forklift. Bo shared they both felt education was important for future success. The problem was money. It was never stated, but Bo knew there was not money for college. When his teachers starting about dual enrollment, he understood this was an opportunity for him to get those college classes for free.

Bo had three siblings, including one twin sister. He was the youngest of the twinset by two minutes. When they were younger, the two twins fought endlessly, but he claimed there was always a connection there. In the 3rd grade, the school separated them into different classes. He indicated this broke his heart and he cried every day at school

that year. He had always been told he was the loud, less intelligent twin. His sister was

the quiet, smart one. He had never really let that stop him though. He earned good

grades ("a few C's, but mostly B's with a couple A's mixed in"). His sister was

consistently earning A's in her honors and Advanced Placement (AP) classes. He never

really put in the same effort as her though. She worked hard for her excellent grades,

while he coasted by with decent ones, he shared.

Any differences aside, Bo and his twin sister had always had a telepathic link of

sorts, as he described. He will laugh at something online, like a funny meme, and think,

"Oh! Grace would love this". In the time it takes to open his messages to forward it to

her, she has shared it with him! Sometimes, he will think of calling her, pick up the

phone and it begins ringing with a call from her. It was weird for Bo to be away from his

sister and attend a different school. Bo indicated his sister continued with AP courses

while he enrolled in the dual enrollment program. Bo described his support system as

being any person who could help someone in need. His support system was composed of

his family.

Bo believed education to be very important to his family. In fact, it was so

important, "I used to get whoopings for getting a C." Both he and his twin sister have

always been expected to do well in school and attend college. His parents both work at

the local carpet factory and wanted more for their children. He believes since "humans

can't have superpowers; knowledge is the closest thing to it." Both his parents work at

the local carpet factory. He knows how hard life is for them, both physically and

financially, due to not having a college education. They stressed to Bo how important it

is for him to have some college courses and training.

Bo reported he was "never really good" at sports. He did try baseball when he was younger, but by the time he was in 9th grade, he no longer was interested. Bo spends most of his spare time now, reading comic books, working, and going to school. When I asked about friends, he claimed he does not go out much because he isn't really "into the same things most teenagers are into". He would much rather stay home with a couple friends and play video games than go out and drink or, "you know, party".

Bo shared he had always dreamed of being an astronaut. But then he acknowledged that was not a logical dream, he will just aspire to be an electrical engineer instead. He wanted to teach it someday, though. He wanted to be able to inspire future students to do something useful with their future. He was strongly considering entering the Air Force so he can get trained and earn more free college credits. He half-joked that maybe with the new Space Force, he might try getting into that.

Bo enrolled in the dual enrollment program for the first time in the Fall of 2019. He enrolled in English 1101 and a history class first. He earned a B in the English class but was excited to share he earned an A in the history class. He enjoyed the history class a lot more than his high school history classes. He felt the college course had more mature discussions and relevant assignments.

Bo persisted into the Spring semester of 2020. He claimed "dual enrollment courses is [sic] one of the biggest opportunities you can take as a high schooler. It comes with so many rewards- college credits, certifications, skills, and a huge foot in the door for your future, no matter what you decide to do after high school." His one recommendation for counselors trying to encourage students into the dual enrollment program was to "try to go for groups of friends. Even though dual enrollment courses

were beneficial in so many ways, most students only care if their friends are with them." He believed there would be more participation in the program if students knew they would know others in the classes.

Participant Profile: Bolt

Bolt was a 16-year-old, Indian American male. Bolt was born in India. He came to the United States when he was 2 years old with his mother and father. He had lived in the Southeastern United States his entire life, although not in this specific county. Due to constant moving, Bolt was not able to make many friends in elementary school. Once his family moved to this area in middle-school, he began making friends. He stated, this is when he believed his life began moving forward.

His mother and father took a job at a local motel. In addition to a small salary, they also moved into the motel. His father took care of the laundry, and his mother became the front desk clerk. He had one sibling, a 6-year-old brother. He described his parents as typical Indian parents. He explained he meant they were very strict. Of course, over the years, they have relaxed a bit. He does not have much family in the United States. He does have an aunt and a couple of cousins.

He liked to lift weights, play basketball and soccer, and play the piano. At the time of the interviews, he was teaching himself how to box by watching online videos. He was also interested in learning how to protect himself. He reasoned, "man can do anything these days and better to be safe than sorry." I tentatively questioned if his family has experienced any racial or ethnic issues living in this town. Bolt assured me they had not, and most people have been very kind and helpful to his family. However,

he stated he was aware the country was in a state of "unrest" and living in the motel, along a major highway gave him some anxiety of what could happen.

He was also trying to learn how to make money and be financially free. He does not want to work a 9-5 job his entire life. He would like to travel and be able to financially do so. Up until the last interview, he shared his goal to be an engineer. However, as he joked, "calculus happened". He was not interested in sitting around all day and solving math problems, he explained in our last interview. He changed his goals to business management. He thought better to know and change it now than waste money. He wanted to learn how to trade a particular stock and make full-time income investing in stocks.

Bolt was interested in the dual enrollment program for a few reasons. He first expressed he wanted to accumulate college credits. Second, he claimed he wanted to learn about more things than were offered in his high school. "I could expand my high school experience." Finally, he admitted the free courses were very attractive to him.

Bolt shared he had a strong support system. "A support system is something you fall back on to make forget about the struggles you have in life, because if they aren't to support you, you will fall." He said his family was always there for him, no matter what. He also claimed he believed his friends from high school and the gym where he plays basketball also helped support him through his semester of dual enrollment. He would go to the gym and workout or play basketball to get his mind off things. Sometimes the work would "get stressful and he would need to let off some steam." He believed if it were not for those days at the gym, playing basketball with his friends, he "would not be doing good." There were times he felt he was under a lot of pressure from his courses,

and because he was able to get help from his teachers and had a good support system, he was successful.

During Bolt's first semester in dual enrollment, the Fall of 2019, he enrolled in two classes. He took English 1101 and Pre-Calculus. He earned a B in the English class, which he informed me he worked very hard for and was happy with the B. Bolt earned a D in the Pre-Calculus class, and that was a low grade for him. However, he explained he had come to terms with it. Between the issues with the professors and the class being, as he described it, "outside his comfort zone", he knew he had learned from the class and the experience both. Bolt did persist at the college for the spring of 2020 and was currently enrolled full-time at the college during the time of the interviews, Fall 2020. He believed the Spring semester was more challenging. While he acknowledged the drastic impact of the Covid-19 global pandemic had on his experiences, he connected many of those impacts to not having his support system around him to help keep him motivated. He "110%" recommended students try dual enrollment. He warned students would have to work hard and try their best, but they could be successful if they did.

Chapter V

RESULTS

Introduction

Dual enrollment has increased in popularity over the past ten years (Thomas, Marken, Gray, & Lewis, 2013). Researchers reported positive benefits for dual enrollment. High school students enroll in college courses and receive credit for coursework completed. The programs are free to students in most states across the United States (Makela, 2005). Students can save money, receive credit for high school courses at the same time, and get ahead of their peers in their education (An, 2013a; An, 2013b; Gnazert,2012; Kim, 2014). Students who participated in dual enrollment demonstrated higher grade point averages (GPAs) than their peers who did not participate in the program (An, 2013a; An, 2013b; Gnazert,2012; Kim, 2014). Also, the dual enrollment students required less remediation for math or English classes later in college (An, 2013a; An, 2013b; Gnazert,2012; Kim, 2014).

First-generation, low-income (FGLI) students are reported to benefit even more than their continuing-generation peers. First-generation students lack experiences that help build their self-efficacy, or their belief in the ability to be successful at a certain task. Researchers have theorized dual enrollment provides high school students with experiences that help build their self-efficacy levels (Barnett & Stamm, 2010; Fink, Jenkins, & Yanguira, 2017; Karp, et al, 2008). Researchers have shown students with higher the academic self-efficacy levels, generally use more advanced self-regulatory

learning strategies (Zimmerman, 1989). These students tended to be more successful in their coursework. These students demonstrated better coping strategies when faced with stress, adversity, and persistence with challenging content (Zimmerman, 1989).

However, research show that first-generation students are also more likely to only enroll in one semester of dual enrollment (Engle & Tinto, 2008). These students are less likely enroll into a second semester of the dual enrollment program. The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the perceptions and experiences of the first-generation, low-income students in a dual enrollment program in the rural southeast region of the United States.

The two research questions that guided the research were:

- RQ 1: What were the experiences of first-generation, low-income students throughout their first semester in a dual enrollment course at a two-year postsecondary institution in the rural south?

- RQ 2: What are the perceptions of first-generation, low-income students pertaining to their college preparedness throughout their first semester in a dual enrollment course at a two-year postsecondary institution in the rural south?

Participant Results

The results from the three interviews with each participant are described in this chapter. For each participant, results related to each research question are provided. Quotes from the participants were used as supporting evidence.

Participant Results: Abigail

Results related to participant's experiences in dual enrollment. Abigail believed the application process was "pretty easy," adding that she constantly thought she

was forgetting to do something. However, the counselor was welcoming and did not seem to mind Abigail checking in repeatedly. The meeting took place at her "home high school" among her mother, the high school guidance counselor, and herself. They discussed the type of classes she should take and planned out her next two years of school. Her schedule for that first semester was designed to make sure she finished the necessary high school courses with little to no anxiety concerning the college work.

Abigail found the results of her placement tests surprising, noting, "they were very simple and easy." Abigail indicated she studied for the placement test, even though she did not believe she even had to do that. The test was "simple and easy". She "could've done fine without studying for them."

Abigail was "super scared and anxious" about her first day of college. She remembered being particularly worried about finding the classroom the first day. "I can remember getting there almost an entire hour before my class even started because I was afraid that I wouldn't even find the classroom." It only took her 5 minutes to find the classroom.

Abigail did not report any problems with the course materials, whether it was the textbooks she reported were online or the online learning management system. "The fact textbooks were free was a relief," she informed me. On the first day of class, both of her professors informed the students they did not plan to use the textbooks she had recently downloaded. She said the other students who had paid for their books were not as pleased.

She was also worried what other students would think. She felt "scared that other students would know I was a dual enrollment student, and they would think that I think

I'm smarter or too good for them." She believed the other students would "kind of bully me" for being a smart, dual enrollment student. She also thought her professors would be quite scary, as well. "I thought it was going to be very strict and that professors were going to be like 'I'm only here to teach you- not be friends with you or to have conversations with you'… so basically just a bunch of old men."

Even though Abigail was expecting the professors to be strict, she found them to be warm and inviting. "The professors were very nice and welcoming and made me feel at ease after what I was expecting them to be like." The professors made sure to chat and get to know each student in the classroom. They did not yell or give out rules. During class discussions, the professors were very welcoming to different opinions and made sure students felt free to speak and share. Abigail also discovered she was mistaken about her classmates in the college. She "expected to be bullied but no one really cared that much." The other classmates were not looking for drama. "Everyone was just trying to get in and get out of class, so everyone acted the same." There was a new sense of maturity and responsibility with the college classes.

During her first semester in the program, she had two classes at the college; one of them was English 1101. "If I struggled with anything, my professors were willing to bend over backwards to help me." She proceeded to tell me about her experience in that English class:

> "It was with a professor whom I grew to love so much. In the beginning of his course, I was so lost during every lecture and assignment. I was so unfamiliar with all of these things pertaining to English that I had no clue what was going on. I hadn't learned any of these things in high school and I felt totally unprepared for

this class. I reached out to my professor and told him I was having trouble

understanding a lot about the course and he explained everything that I was

unsure about to me and made sure I was back on track with the course schedule.

Without his help I wouldn't have ever passed that class."

Abigail reported the professors were willing to work with the students having

trouble. The amount of feedback Abigail received for her coursework was "great". She

said her professors were very focused, providing feedback and allowing students to revise

assignments, especially English essays. Abigail only had one professor that she did not

feel graded assignments fairly. She defended her belief by sharing "all the classmates

talked about it."

Abigail discovered the amount of coursework was a lot more compared to high

school. The time she spent studying and preparing for class was double what she had

done previously in her high school courses. "It took some getting used to and everything

is such a different pace." She described the college coursework to be more than what she

had experienced in her honors level courses in high school. "We would cover two to

three chapters in one day of lecture sometimes and be moving onto the next unit

altogether before we even tested on the previous material."

She was also shocked and overwhelmed by the exams, describing them as being

"not tests, these things were monstrous, they were exams". She described the exams as

covering multiple chapters and even units. They covered so much more material than she

was used to. She had to stay organized and stay on top of the work every night. She

described a time when she had taken an exam that day, was tired from studying all week,

and decided to take the night off afterwards. She regretted that immediately the next day

because she had needed to read a hundred pages of a story for English class the next day and was not prepared for a short quiz in that class. She felt she was already behind due to taking one night off.

The cognitive level for the coursework ended up not being as hard as she had anticipated. "It was easier than I had anticipated". She explained that, while there was a lot of work and it was very fast paced, it was not any harder than her high school classes in terms of the level of rigor. "I rarely had trouble with the coursework…" This was verified by the A and B she received for her first two college courses.

Abigail acknowledged she had a college advisor but had never physically met with her. Instead, she had emailed the advisor whenever she had questions about registration for the following semester. "I thought that my advisor would be just like the advisors in high school, but they're actually not as visited by the students." She described the student center as having tutoring stations available, places one could go for help in a variety of subjects, like math or writing. However, the main tool she found most helpful was her professors. She had realized they were not just old men, but very helpful sources of information which was "one tool I utilized A LOT."

Abigail worked and remained on the volleyball team throughout her first semester in the dual enrollment program. She reported that her dual enrollment schedule allowed her more availability to work. She told me her bosses were very supportive and worked with her needs regarding her schedule. She said remaining on the volleyball team was more of a challenge. Practice time was very close to one of her college classes and she did miss a match due to having class. However, even with that, her coach worked with

her. She reported her coach believed academics came first and was willing to work with her new schedule if she kept working hard for him on the court.

Results related to participant's perceptions of college preparedness. Abigail believed she would be prepared for her college-level courses, crediting strategic study habits her teachers taught her. She was organized and well-prepared for more rigorous classes. Abigail believed she would do well in her college courses. In the beginning of the experience, she believed she could "just study hard and do my work or homework then I'd be okay." Abigail informed me she had even taken a couple of honors level courses, and this helped increase her confidence in her ability to do well.

However, Abigail still expressed she had anxiety about starting her college courses. She was "super scared and anxious," thinking she might be "bombarded with coursework" and worried she would not pass. She was also concerned that her teachers might not have been fully honest about her abilities in high school, or maybe they "took it easy" on her due to her being a girl. That constant question of "what if I'm not as smart as I think I am" was in the back of her mind when she began the dual enrollment program.

Once she had begun the college courses, Abigail declared high school had not prepared her for college. "I believe that dual-enrollment has made me very prepared for college courses (not high school courses). I wasn't prepared at all." Abigail clarified it was the amount of work required for the college courses that she was not prepared for. She did not believe the rigor was much different than some of her high school courses.

Participant Results: Bella

  Results related to participant's experiences in dual enrollment. Bella explained her parents did not have a lot of money and she was worried about how she would finance college. She was adamant about not taking out loans; just the thought of taking out student loans gave her anxiety. She did not want to start life being in debt. "I was motivated to join the program to get some of my college degree for free." When she and her mom met with the high school counselor, she was almost turned off, adding how hard the program would be as described by her counselor. Eventually, after talking it over with her mom and her teachers, she decided to still enroll in the program. "I became a little annoyed with how long and sort of confusing the process it was, but I knew it would pay off."

  Bella had been told by the counselor the placement test would be easy. For this reason, she did not study for it. She ended up retaking the math portion after receiving some review help from her math teacher at the high school. Bella was glad she continued to proceed with the application process. "I loved it and was glad I did it." After the annoying application process, she expressed she was happy she followed through. She also recognized "the counselor was making sure I was dedicated enough to do this." She believed the counselor had set up the application process to be strict and a little frustrating to make sure the students would have the will to persist through the program.

  Bella explained going to class with the college-aged students was more concerning than the academic challenges of the courses. "I was younger than everyone else in the classes" and she thought the college-aged students would be "more mature because everyone will be older." She was excited but felt out of place because she was

so much younger than everyone else. "I felt more intimidated than anything else." She also believed her professors were going to be more intimating than they turned out to be. "I thought they were going to be strict" and she was nervous for the first day. "I knew I needed to sit up front to show I was a good student, but I also didn't want to get teased for doing it." After the first day, she began to change her tune regarding her professors. "I liked my all my professors and believed that I would enjoy myself in the classes." She also found her classmates to be nice, even though most of them kept to themselves. The only times she spoke with her classmates in the first semester was when they were assigned group projects. "Most were nice but kept to themselves." Most of the time, she would go into class and pay attention, then learn. "I was there to learn, not socialize. If I wanted to socialize, I could've stayed in high school with all that drama."

Bella enjoyed the freedom of being on a college campus. She was able to take breaks between classes due to her schedule. "I loved the environment and had an easy time keeping up with the courses." The professors gave the students the freedom to leave class when they finished their work, which was quite often for her since she was always overprepared for class and finishing work quickly. She stayed organized and motivated throughout the semester, with only a few lapses. "I felt like I did my best. However, something I could've tried a little harder on, but every student goes through spells of motivation and then they'd lose motivation and it's an ongoing cycle."

She also stated she was more interested in her classes at the college than her high school. "Psychology classes are the most interesting and are easy for students to apply to their own life." She expressed how happy she was to have taken this at the college and

not in high school. "I couldn't imagine being able to talk about some of those topics with immature high school students around."

Bella explained she was not worried about the expected higher level of academic rigor and believed the classes and content, however challenging, would not be a concern. She knew going into the program the courses would be more challenging in terms of the content. "I expected tougher classes." High school had always been "a breeze." Even those classes that were "supposed to be hard". She tried to say she was worried a little bit but did not really display much concern. "I was not worried about my academic ability because I was a straight A student." Her high school teachers and counselors always told her the classes would be harder, so it was "on [her] radar" still.

Bella felt the coursework was not as challenging as her teachers and counselors had made it out to be. She stated even the writing assignments were not as bad as her friends were saying. She thought the assignments were not hard, just tedious. "The difficulty was equivalent to a high school class, if not lower than an AP class." She only had a few instances where her writing needed edits. She found the materials from her other classes to be easy "as long as you studied." She barely had any textbooks and found the online system "easy to work."

She described only one negative experience with a professor. "All teachers were fair except for one. One of my teachers graded off political views and if yours didn't align with him you're getting a bad grade." Besides this experience, she did recognize the other professors (including those from later semesters) were "really great." Bella also never met with her advisor throughout the first semester of dual enrollment. She had emailed her regarding registration deadlines and to report a negative experience at the

tutoring center but expressed she "wished the experience could have been a little more personal."

This participant described an experience at the tutoring center after going to get help with a class. She felt the tutors were talking down to her because she was just a high school student. She had the feeling they did not think she should be at the college because she wasn't smart enough. After that experience, she vowed to never go back to the tutoring center. "Teachers that I have had in the past are who I turned to for help." She began going to her high school teachers to get help instead of the tutoring center. She explained the high school teachers were easier to understand and "didn't belittle her." My former teachers "put up with me… because I was there once a week asking for help."

Bella continued dual enrollment the following Spring 2020 and into the Fall 2020. When asked if she recommended dual enrollment, she replied, "DO IT!!!! I loved it and have half of my degree done for FREE. Removing yourself from the high school pulls you away from unnecessary drama and allows you to get a head start." Bella recommended not trying to talk students out of attempting dual enrollment courses. "If a student wants to do dual enrollment do not talk down on it allow them to take part in the great opportunity if it's what they want to do [sic]." Bella also was upset about having to decide between band and dual enrollment. "Do not make them feel excluded from extra curriculars that they have already been a part of." She believed there might have been more encouragement for the program and opportunity for the dual enrollment students to still participate in high school activities.

Results related to participant's perceptions of college preparedness. Bella believed she would be ready for the college level coursework since she had always done

well in high school. "I felt prepared because I was a straight A student and more mature than some of my other classmates." She expanded on what she believed the meaning was for college preparedness versus academic readiness. She explained she thought of college preparedness as being able to stay organized, study when you needed to, and attend your classes. She believed the advice of a former teacher. "Always go to class and you'll be ok." She continued to describe her study skills were always pretty good. She said in high school, she would always go home and rewrite her notes, color-coding topics, and make flash cards. She added, "I always completed the homework for most of my classes in school. That freed up time at night to do a little more practice and redo my notes."

Participant Results: Piper

Results related to participant's experiences in dual enrollment. Piper wanted to enroll in the dual enrollment program after hearing her teachers in high school talk about how difficult college was and how dual enrollment could help better prepare her for the challenges while still having the help and guidance of her high school teachers. She believed it meant she would be more advanced once she "got into college and knew it would benefit me a lot."

She and her mother met with the counselor over the computer to complete the application process. She believed the counselor did "a very good job by guiding the students throughout the process, especially since it was over the computer." She did recall getting the sense the counselor was not very sure if she would be able to be successful in the college-level courses. However, in the end, she was determined to try it. She reported her teachers kept telling her it was the experience that was going to help her

112

the most and she was very determined to see what they meant. She remembered a conversation she had with her mother. Her mother was "ashamed she wasn't able to help her get ready for college because she, herself, didn't know what it meant to go to college." This made a large impact on Piper, and she wanted to use the experience to earn as much as she could.

Even though Piper met with the counselor over the computer, she described the process as going very smoothly. "The counselor explained well to my parents what dual enrollment was all about." This was helpful since her parents had never attended college, let alone finished high school. "The application process was really easy; the lady in charge was really helpful and she did most of the work." She said she remembered looking at her mother during the meeting and realizing how proud her mother looked. She was looking forward to "making my mother proud of me."

Piper did not show any real issues with the placement test either. She stated they were like any other test but noted she did struggle with the math section. This was shown with the math scores. "However, it wasn't extremely hard, and the test was shorter than I expected."

Piper was wary about beginning the semester because she was "a little afraid of the professors." She believed her professors would be "strict, serious, and even a little mean." However, after the semester began, she found her teachers to be "very relaxed and they provided a comfortable environment in class." She did not care for the course lectures when they only went over PowerPoints, but she did appreciate their organization of the materials and stressed they were all very good at teaching the materials. However,

even with that, she enjoyed her classes. Her schedule had an easy and a challenging class.

Piper did not seem as worried about taking classes with regular-aged college students. "I thought I was going to have classes with my friends because a lot of them signed up." After meeting her classmates, she believed "everyone seems really smart, but no one talks to each other unless they are already friends with them." This participant did not socialize with many of the traditional college students in her classes. She said most of the students were quiet and "kept to themselves." She was upset she never had classes with her friends from high school but hoped that would change next semester.

Piper decided the assignments were not as bad as she had originally thought. "My assignments have been easy so far." She reported her teachers were "really fast" to grade her work and provided a lot of feedback. The workshops for the English classes were especially beneficial to her. She was able to improve her writing techniques and was grateful for the help. She enjoyed the online discussion boards they participated in for a course grade.

Piper thought her classes would be completely different compared to her "normal classes" in high school. She had expected to learn new stuff in English and to learn a lot in her psychology class. "I had a lot of essays to write and, surprisingly, it wasn't as bad as I thought it would." She also expressed the same for the tests she took. While there were quite a few tests, Piper felt she had "taken more tests this semester than in my whole life," reporting, they were not as difficult as she had originally thought each would be. She said she learned something new in her English and psychology classes every day and she was very happy to have been able to have that experience.

Piper believed all her teachers were very helpful. "The way my teachers act and teach, changed my thoughts of classes in college. It made me feel less nervous about going to college after high school." One of her favorite new experiences was class being cancelled. She was surprised they could do that and expressed how much she enjoyed having that extra little time between other classes to relax and study.

One of the main experiences this participant had when she required help was due to the online learning system. She reported there was a week when she was not able to log in at all. This meant she was not able to retrieve her email, see assignments or PowerPoints, or post to any of her discussion boards. She reported her professors and the dual enrollment advisor worked with her to get everything fixed. "My professors were really understanding." She was pleased her professors allowed her to turn in assignments she missed that week with no penalty.

Results related to participant's perceptions of college preparedness. Piper was very concerned about how prepared she was for the college level courses. She expressed a lot of anxiety about her own study skills. She worried she would leave everything for the last minute. "I was very concerned about my study habits because I procrastinate a lot." She was "really nervous even a little scared but overall." However, she was also excited that she was going to be able to start college early. Since her family viewed college as a very large step, this was a "big deal to my family." And while she did not believe she was properly prepared and ready for this large step, she kept thinking "if I use past experiences, I will be able to pass my courses and do well in them." She also spoke about her determination, recognizing she would most likely need assistance from her instructors sometime throughout the semester.

Piper grew worried about the level of her academic ability to be successful with the coursework. Throughout the entire interview process, she expressed what little confidence she had in her ability to get high grades. "I worried that I would have struggled a lot in my classes, because even though I have good grades, I don't consider myself smart."

As the semester progressed, her worries subsided. She began to gain confidence and felt reassured. "I feel like I am prepared, however I feel like I work harder to keep my grades up." She expressed how much she appreciated and enjoyed the freedoms the college courses provided. "I feel like it was relaxed, however I had a lot of responsibility when it came to turning in all my work on time." In the end, Piper reported how much she liked dual enrollment. "Well, I really like dual enrollment I think it fits me. I have a lot of freedom, and my classes weren't terrible hard. It feels like in a high school, and the teachers help you a lot."

Participant Results: Eva

Results related to participant's experiences in dual enrollment. Eva applied to dual enrollment program because she though it would be a "great way to kickstart my college education and work towards my degree." The application process was "a bit intimidating considering I was only 16," but she found the process was very straightforward and easy to complete. Initially, Eva did not believe she would have to study for the placement test. She believed her math level was high enough to do a "simple placement test". However, she found she needed to review her math skills after not passing the math portion. "I did not think I would need to study beforehand. After looking over some old math stuff, I retook it and did a lot better."

116

Having the syllabus was "very nice to have everything set up in front of me and helped me prepare for the courses nightly." This participant was very organized and liked to be prepared. She commented only a few high school teachers ever did that, but she had really appreciated it when they did. She shared how, after the first day of classes, she went home and mapped out the entire semester of assignments and tests into a wall calendar in her bedroom.

Eva found the courses relatively easy, after all. "I felt like it was standard work and I completed it all to the best of my ability." As an honors student who has taken Advanced Placement classes, she felt the courses were "comparable to high school classes in terms of difficulty." However, while the academic rigor was comparative to higher-level high school courses, she noted there was more "personal responsibility" placed on the student in dual enrollment.

Eva believed the other students in her class would be "more individualized and keep to themselves." She thought they would be friendly to her and maybe even offer advice about how to be successful in class. However, she did not perceive her professors would be the same. "I don't expect my professors to be as helpful and understanding as my high school teachers." But while she did not expect the professors to be congenial, she did believe she would learn a lot from them. She believed her professors would help her "be more prepared for the real world."

Eva found that students "kept to themselves a lot and just paid attention to the professors' lectures and getting their work done." She formed few friendships and was not going out of her way to do so. She reported she was there to get her work done and learn. She wanted to make sure she used her time wisely and focused on her classes, not

socializing. She also stated "[the professors] were not really any different from high school teachers," articulating "some were strict, some were more laid-back. They all had their own personalities."

This participant did not report having to get extra support or help from her professors. As shared, she did visit her former high school teachers when in need. The only time this participant went to her professor for help was after missing a class lecture. She said she made up the class by going to the professor's office hours.

She reported speaking to her college advisor at the beginning of the semester. She thought they would help her register and make sure she was taking the appropriate courses. She also believed her advisor would be checking on her progress throughout the semester to ensure she was "on the right track."

At the end of her first semester, Eva concluded professors all had their own way of managing their classroom and work. "It's all about being flexible and able to conform to your teachers' expectations." Being able to conform to a variety of teachers' expectations has allowed her to be successful in more than just one class.

Results related to participant's perceptions of college preparedness. Eva believed she was prepared for the college level coursework. "I felt very prepared for my classes with my academic ability." Even still, Eva believed she would be challenged more than she had been in high school, but she was "prepared to take that on." She believed she would be successful even while still being nervous about the coursework. "I wasn't sure how the teachers were going to relay the information to me."

Eva was nervous about beginning dual enrollment courses. However, she also registered for courses that would allow her to ease into them. "I wanted to ease into the

program so I chose classes that wouldn't be too challenging for me." This allowed her to believe she would be successful in the courses. "I was confident with the classes I had chosen to take of my ability to succeed in them."

Eva explained, in the end, while the rigor of the courses was not more challenging, there was a lot more "personal responsibility" placed on students. She told me she found the professors expected students to already have strong study habits and good time management skills. She believed she had those as she was successful in her courses, however felt other students in her classes were not adequately prepared. She constantly heard other students complain about the amount of coursework and forgetting smaller assignments.

Participant Results: Bailey

Results related to participant's experiences in dual enrollment. Bailey met with the counselor at the high school. His mother went with him for the meeting. He said scheduling the meeting was a hassle. His mother had to take time out of work to come and complete this process. However, he was glad they made it a mandatory meeting. He stated he originally thought the process would be long and confusing. Instead, he found the counselor made the process very easy. The counselor went through the process with his mom quickly, therefore ensuring everyone was on the same page. The counselor walked them through the courses he was registering for. For example, she explained the English class would have a lot of writing and he would most likely need to schedule time at the writing center. Students had reported to her they were constantly revising essays and research papers for that class. The counselor was his high school counselor, so she also took the time to stress he would need to work a little harder than

119

what he was used to "skating by" doing at the high school. When it came time to take the placement test, Bailey did not pass the math portion. He claimed it was an "easy enough test" but had not seen some of that math for a couple years and needed to review it.

From the first day of school, Bailey realized the amount of work would be more than he was used to in high school. The professor only reviewed the syllabus and then allowed students to leave. He thought it was "a little overwhelming." He realized it would be a lot of work. However, he also saw the organization of the syllabus and course as a positive experience. He claimed he appreciated the organization.

As the course proceeded, Bailey decided the work was not as bad as he originally thought. "The work was easy, like academically, but it was kind of a lot." He thought the work was no different than what his friends at the high school were going through with their English teacher, minus all the "annoying haggling and drama from high school girls." He also acknowledged he was taking freshman-level courses and maybe the work would increase in difficulty.

People warned Bailey that his professors would be strict. They warned him the teachers would not be giving him breaks, like he had in high school. He reported an example of a teacher in high school allowing him to make up work on the last day of school to pass and another who dropped his homework grades simply because he had passed the unit test. He felt he was given a lot of passes in high school and worried he might not get those chances in college. Throughout the semester, his opinions of his professors changed. On the first day, he recalls thinking this professor is a "complete control freak". He did not realize all his professors would have a similar syllabus prepared that covered the entire course assignments. However, after a while, he grew to

appreciate that organization. He was able to see what he had to do for the assignments.

As he joked, "it helped me see just what I needed to do in order to get a decent grade."

After the course, he reflected on how helpful his professors were.

The other students in the class were originally thought to be nerdy and quiet.

Bailey did not associate very much with them. He did not think it was because he was

younger. The other students just kept to themselves. On a Speech project, he did have to

work with a couple students, and he claimed they were nice enough. However, after the

presentation, he did not continue associating with them or sitting with them.

Since his professors did not have physical textbooks, he was provided online

versions. However, most professors made PowerPoints and had recorded lectures posted

online. He was able to use those to take notes and study from. He shared that one

professor only used those PowerPoints though. He said that "was the boringest class"

and he "could've done without actually going to those classes."

Bailey claimed to do okay in his classes. His English class was the more time-

consuming class, in which he needed to rewrite essays and research papers frequently.

He claimed he felt like he was writing a paper almost every week, while still revising the

last paper. But he was able to redo them until he was happy with his grade. He found

once he reached the point of turning in the final version, he was proud of the work he had

put into it.

The tests for the other class were easy. He was a self-proclaimed test-taker, so

they did not bother him too much. His only frustration was the number of tests. He did

not like only having a few tests grades and nothing else to really help pull up his average.

"You really had to do well on the few tests to pass the class." Even the smaller

assignments, which still took a lot of time, were not much help when it came to raising his grades.

The only class Bailey claimed he needed assistance with was the English class, like his counselor had predicted. He went to the writing center a lot. He reported the students there were very helpful and worked with him to rewrite an essay and research paper. He added, there was one student tutor particularly that he liked to try to get for help. "She was definitely going to be a future teacher."

He felt the grading from his professors was fair, but it was hard. He got a lot of feedback from professors and improved most of those assignments. He shared his English essays. He believed the comments from the initial to the final essay helped guide him to creating a decent paper. He did not recall ever receiving that amount of feedback or time to work an assignment over and over in high school.

By the end of the semester, Bailey enjoyed his professors, except one. He claimed there was one professor who never taught, only read the PowerPoints in class. There was no discussion for the class either. When he emailed the professor one time about an assignment, he never heard back. He did not follow up to make sure the email just got lost, but he was adamant "that's how [the professor] was." He did share how his English professor had sent him a message at the end of the semester. The professor "noticed I came a long way from the beginning of the semester- both with my writing and talking more in class." That made him proud. He was glad he kept working hard in that class and was not lazy, like he normally was in classes.

He was also working a part-time job on weekends. However, his boss did allow him to take time off. He tried to give advance notice, but there were times he could not

do that. He felt bad, but he said he also knew he would not lose his job and that was a comfort. "She's pretty cool about it. I don't think I'll lose my job or anything."

His adviser had only emailed him to check on his registration and class schedule. He never saw her in person, only emailed a few times. She was the person who registered him for classes the following Spring 2020. That was the entirety of their conversations.

Bailey claimed he wished he had friends in class. He was "bummed" to find his friends had not been scheduled with him. He was hoping for next semester, he might have one class in common with a friend. However, he considered it was probably for the best. Without anyone to talk to in class, he was able to pay attention better, he admitted.

Results related to participant's perceptions of college preparedness. Bailey was worried about the amount of work the college level courses would entail. He worried that maybe the work would also be a lot harder than he was used to. "If I failed, I was going to be disappointed in myself." He expressed a lot of anxiety going into the courses initially.

Bailey had always been told he was smart. His teachers would tell him he needed to take harder classes. However, he never saw the point of working harder for the same grade and credit. "If I could take a regular level course, instead of an honors course, I took the lower level one. I never really pushed myself and I was worried that would backfire on me." He worried the classes might end up being too hard and that he had not prepared himself enough for them.

Bailey acknowledged he was a lazy student. Bailey did believe he was a good student otherwise. He claimed he was organized and smart though and those two things

are what helped him be successful in the classes.   He said he was the type of student who

could listen in class and learn the material right away. "I caught on quick to stuff." He

claimed what helped him pass his classes was he paid attention in class and did his work

on time. He agreed it was not always the best work, but he got the work done on time

and did not procrastinate. He also claimed he was a good test taker. "In some classes, I

would just have to show up to class, listen to the professor, and I could pass his tests."

That class was very boring, though, he confided.

After the courses were finished, Bailey was very happy with the decision to take

dual enrollment. "The work wasn't as bad as I originally thought it would be." He did

credit a lot of that to his professors. And he stated overall, the courses were no different

than if he had taken them in high school, except that he believed he enjoyed them more

than he would have in high school. "Maybe because it was freshman-level stuff, but I

thought it was pretty easy now, looking back. I appreciated the professors working with

us and allowing us to do edits. That was really helpful."

Participant Results: Rango

Results related to participant's experiences in dual enrollment. Rango did not

describe the application process in a positive manner. He believed the application

process was confusing. He told me he was constantly missing deadlines and turning stuff

in late. There were times he did not know what needed to be turned in, and when it

needed to be in by. "I thought that maybe I should've been more informed." He

acknowledged the deadlines were posted online, but he "never looked at [the school's

online learning system] so they "should've done a better job of announcing them."

Rango also reported being upset about not being informed there were study materials for

the placement test. He failed the math portion of the placement test. He was informed about the available study materials, after failing the math portion, by someone other than his counselor. While he admitted he might not have used them, he believed that piece of information should have been disclosed beforehand. Once he reviewed the study materials, Rango retested on the math section and passed. He said once his college classes were picked for the first semester, he did not go back to his high school counselor.

While Rango was "slightly nervous" about his first day of class, his nervousness quickly subsided. On his first day of class, each of his professors only reviewed the syllabus. We released within 20 minutes for both classes. He said, he was not as worried about the courses after seeing the broad picture of what the coursework for each would amount to. He thought the syllabus was a great tool. It was a direct copy of the course and he referred to it constantly for directions and deadlines.

Rango claimed the classes were not that hard. "The courses honestly aren't as hard." He enjoyed they were not "busy work" like he was used to in high school. "I rather enjoyed the level of the work and the amount of free time I was being given." The grading in his classes was fair. He appreciated feedback provided by his professors. The feedback from his English professor "was superb. She would let me know exactly what I did wrong and tell me the easiest way to fix it."

Rango had a vision the college students would be more immature and like to fool around a lot. "I figured they'd be more rowdy and a little more zoned out since it was a normal level course."   He also believed his professors would be "unforgiving and rude." Rango commented that most of the people he met were fun and kind. He said he was "somewhat right about the students being rowdy and zoned out." But he added there

were some students who "actually cared about learning." He also admitted most his professors were nice and he would like to take their course again.

Rango acknowledged how much his high school teachers supported him throughout the semester. He constantly went back to his high school to talk to his former teachers through his first semester. One of the courses he was taking was said to be "near impossible" and he wanted to stay on top of the work. He knew if got behind and did not understand something, it would only make it worse. He was very appreciative he former high school teachers would take their time to help him still.

He also noted he needed a history paper revised. "I got my girlfriend to help me." His support system of former teachers and close friends were there throughout the entire semester to help him when he needed it. "It was nice know they would always be there if I needed them." Although, he liked to add, "I didn't need help that often."

Results related to participant's perceptions of college preparedness. Rango was "slightly nervous" about beginning the college-level classes. He admitted he was not the best student. "My study habits kinda sucked." However, this participant did not perceive the classes would be any more difficult than what he had endured in high school honors and AP level courses. Rango had always been an A student, even throughout those courses, so he felt he was prepared. The high grades in the AP classes gave him the most confidence he was prepared for college. He was not taking any "challenging" courses the first semester and believed his first classes would be "cake".

One of the best tricks Rango used to be successful was to take good, organized notes and look over those notes every class period. He would always take a few minutes at the beginning of each class and review the material from the previous class.

126

"Organization is key." He said it helped eliminate a lot of studying but also reminded him of where he was at in the previous class and what he needed to ask for more help on.

That was the second trick Rango shared about his success in classes. He was not afraid to speak up and ask for help. Since he was constantly reviewing his notes frequently, he made reminders to ask about a certain topic or comment for clarification in class. He said he was able to avoid spending a lot of time studying or going to office hours because he asked those questions in class.

Participant Results: Bo

Results related to participant's experiences in dual enrollment. Bo reported his teachers kept telling him he needed to get ahead and try dual enrollment classes. He was not sure what all it entailed but knew it would look good on his college transcripts. "I had really put no thought into it. I was told what to do and I did it." He did not realize at the time they were courses that would be going on those transcripts.

This participant did not have a parent meeting with the counselors. He did remember picking up papers from the counselors to take home. His parents signed some forms and that was it. The college advisor signed him up for the placement test, helped him get his college ID card, and finally, registered him for the classes. "It wasn't that bad it was actually quite simple." He claimed to have taken every placement test at the same time, but the one for the college he enrolled at for dual enrollment, was "by far the easiest" test he had taken.

Once in the college courses, Bo described things that would normally be frowned upon in high school, were no issue in the college class. "It was weird, since it was a

127

college course the rules were different." He described things like slight cursing, wearing hats to class, and asking for permission to come and go.

The amount of content Bo had to learn for the various courses was overwhelming at times. However, he reported some of his professors would use small quizzes to break up the amount. He claimed the tests were a lot longer than what he was used to in high school. He had tests in his college level courses that were over 100 questions. The shorter quizzes helped break up that content, but they would still be tested over the entire portion and that was hard. It was something he had to adapt to.

The professors for this participant's courses made the classes more fun and enjoyable. At first, he was worried the professors would be too strict for him. He commented that he would always worry about teachers who tried to be too hard at first. "I expected him to be a stern guy, but he turned out to be a really nice guy who really loved what he was doing." He did not like that. And he had been told college professors were strict, so he was pessimistic about going to class the first day. As the semester proceeded, the participant began to describe the professor as a "cool instructor" and finally, as "a good man and I still look to him as one of my mentors."

He noted the other students in his classes were just like him. Most of the students did not have any experience taking college level classes. They were all "in it together", he claimed. He enjoyed how the students worked together on assignments and projects in class. His classmates worked well together on the projects, "helping each other out for the most part. Which is a rare sight amongst teenagers." Class discussions were enjoyable and, before he knew it, he was "actually enjoying learning."

As far as grading went, Bo claimed it was like any other grading system. He said his grade always depended on how much information you learned, how much you retained, and the effort you show during the course. He received a lot of feedback in through his classes, as well. Whether the feedback was positive or negative, "it was honest and that's the difference between college and high school. Since it's a college course they look at you as more of a grown up instead of still a teenager." He appreciated the "sometimes brutal feedback" he received on his papers. He knew it was only designed to help him improve and he took every opportunity to do just that. He described one incident with a professor in which a comment had been made in jest. "He pulled me aside one day to check him if he ever said anything that offended me and that showed me that he cared about my well-being as well as with the rest of the class."

Bo was happy he had the support he did through the entire semester. He overheard a few of his classmates that were having a hard time in their classes. He knew a few of them worked full-time jobs and had had families to take care of. He felt bad they were having to carry so much on their shoulders. But it made him realize how lucky he was to always have someone standing behind him in case he needed help. "There was always someone there to help me in case I got behind from instructors, to advisors, and even classmates." He had spoken to the college advisor, and she helped him personally though the enrollment process. She also ensured he had registered for the following semester classes, as well.

Results related to participant's perceptions of college preparedness. This participant did not seem to have much confidence in his study skills at the beginning of the dual enrollment experience. He claimed he learned a lot about himself through the

process, academically, mentally, and physically. "I was kind of the class clown, but I always tried to get all A's." He realized he was prepared for the classes, just did not recognize how so in the beginning. He also would do all his work, pay attention in class, and try hard to make sure he was successful with his work.

This experience "surprised" him. When he signed up, he admitted he did not know "what he was getting into". He did not realize he would be taking actual college courses. When he did, he got nervous and scared. Bo expected the courses to be more difficult. "I was a little nervous because I've never taken a college course." He expected the work to be more academically rigorous than he was used to high school. He even stated, he expected to learn new content.

But those nerves did not last long. Once he realized it was no different from taking a more challenging course in school, he set about doing what he normally did- which was "pay attention, do my homework, and study." He also knew he was a good student and had the ability to work hard. "I knew it was gone be different, so I mentally prepared myself." He recognized the rewards of trying challenging courses and saw the benefits in the long run.

Reflecting on the coursework, he claimed it was not as difficult as he had thought. "I was never the studying type but the more I went through the class I realized I needed to start." He worked hard, studied, and did well in the courses. The further along he got in the class, the more familiar he became with the subjects and people in the class. "Every day seemed to get easier and easier." He acknowledged taking the college level courses were well worth the time and effort. "I am so proud of my younger self for taking that step."

Participant Results: Bolt

Results related to participant's experiences in dual enrollment. Bolt thought the application process was "pretty straight forward and simple." He had heard the counselor was very strict about who she was letting enroll in the dual enrollment program and was worried at first that he would not be allowed to participate. However, he claimed he felt very welcomed and encouraged to enroll. When he registered for classes with the counselor, he believed she honestly thought he was going to do well in the program.

Bolt described a positive experience with the application process. The counselor explained the dual enrollment program and answered all his questions. He believed the process to be confusing, at first. He constantly checked in with the counselor, making sure the paperwork was completed. Bolt reported he "qualified" for the dual enrollment program after taking the placement test. He did not report any difficulties with the test.

The course was as he expected it. He was prepared to work harder from always working hard through high school. "It was pretty interesting, I thought to myself, 'you are sitting in a college class for real this time'." He claimed he had taken enough AP courses "to know the rigor of a college-level course was going to require more time and effort."

Bolt had professors who were understanding. At the same time, some assignments were very difficult for him. As he had stated previously, he had to accept the fact that he would not do good on something even though he tried very hard. "I just tried to adapt and learn from it," he explained, "and some professors graded work very harshly and some were lenient; it all depends on the professor." He claimed he did not take the

feedback he received to heart. "I know some are just trying to push me for the better and I appreciated that. Whatever they said about me whether it was positive or negative, I didn't let it affect me." He spoke about one professor who had a terrible grading system. They would always give a lot of work, and this participant did not believe the professor "understood the students had lives and or other classes." He "stuck through the class" and received a D.

The grading was based off what the professors wanted in certain assignments, and how well students did on tests, finals, homework, and quizzes. Some professors gave feedback, but others did not. The professors that provided feedback "were obviously more helpful than those who did not."

Bolt believed the professors were going to be "super hard." He reported he believed they were not going to care as much as his high school teachers. He thought the professors would come to class, teach, and leave. After a few weeks into the semester, he realized there were some professors who did that. However, most of his professors were nice and wanted students to ask questions. They would stay after class until the students were comfortable with the material. These courses were nice because of the "effort put into them."

This participant believed the other students in the class "might not even talk." However, as the semester proceeded, he was able to make "a lot of connections". He believes these classmates, and now friends, have made him into "a better version of [him]self" because he has learned something new from each one. His friendships with his classmates have helped him be better in all aspects. By the end of the semester, this

participant just tried to talk up in class and ask necessary questions so his other classmates would not be afraid to talk.

Bolt was very happy with his experience when it came to his professors and classmates. While he did report a few students, who were negative along the way, he also stated he just stayed away from them. "I have had pretty great relationships with my professors and peers; they have always pushed me to do better and have helped me every step of the way." However, overall, he made new friends and connections that have changed his "mindset and perspective for the better."

Unfortunately, Bolt did not feel the same about all his professors. He "learned that the hard way." However, most were amazing at helping. "I also had my high school teachers who were willing to help me, even if I wasn't in their class, or even if it wasn't "their job" so I am definitely grateful for them." Bolt acknowledged the college had a tutorial center. He even commented some of his friends worked there and helped him with assignments that were difficult. "My peers also did not mind helping me, so I appreciate all of them."

Additionally, while taking college-level classes, the participant had a part-time job. However, due to Covid-19, he was able to get a break from it. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, though, he felt his boss supported the extra time he would request off to study. His boss understood the workload would be more challenging and time-consuming, so he was flexible when making the schedule.

This participant has not had much contact with his college advisor. He had believed they would help him select courses that best fit his needs. The only contact he has had concerned what his plan was for the next semester and to register.

Due to COVID-19, Bolt reported his "support system was gone." He believes he earned a terrible grade in one of his classes because he did not have the same support, he experienced prior. He still would email his professors for help on homework, and they were still supportive and helpful, but he was not able to relax as easily about the stressful work. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, he had begun attending writing workshops held in the writing center. "I attended most of those and they really helped. I learned a lot of tips and became a better writer due to those." However, those also ended abruptly when the pandemic hit that spring.

Results related to participant's perceptions of college preparedness. Bolt was "pretty confident" in his ability to handle the coursework. He knew he might have to work harder than he had in his high school courses. "I honestly didn't know how it was going to be at first; all of it was very new to me, but I set pretty expectations on myself for everything, that's how I was able to get to this stage of my life." However, he recognized the hard work would pay off. He believed he was adequately prepared to handle the more rigorous college courses. He also added:

> "I mean there really was not much preparing to do. All the information was given
> by the professor, so I just tried to pay attention and take notes. I tried my best to
> be on top of things so I could do good in each class."

Bolt believed the amount of information was sometimes overwhelming. Through the first semester, he claimed there were times he felt he was under a lot of pressure. But by the end of the semester, he realized he was prepared. His high school classes were pretty easy compared to the college classes, but the coursework in college was not impossible. He claimed he had to put in more effort than he had in high school. "A lot of people call

me a good student or really smart, but it's just that I work really hard to be where I am at, so I would describe myself as hardworking."

Bolt enjoyed the opportunity to learn and work hard. "Yes, I love learning; true learning, not forced memorizations just to pass a test, but actually learning a concept thoroughly, and in a fun and interactive way to help reinforce it, so it can be applied in real life application." This is how he viewed his college courses. He believed he would be more engaged in the learning process than in high school and, by the end of the semester, was correct.

Bolt claimed his courses the first semester varied in rigor. His English course was "average in difficulty." even the second semester English course gave him difficulty. But the Pre-calculus course was his hardest course. He said "there was so much to know, so I tried very hard in it, but you know we all can't do everything. I got a D in it, and I am usually an A-student. It made me realize that I can't expect A's all the time and it just changed my mindset." I was glad I was able to experience the college rigor. The classes "were pretty tough but I pushed though. I just had to put in a lot of effort."

Chapter VI

ANALYSIS

The data were analyzed as outlined in Chapter III. The first coding process utilized *In Vivo coding*. A clean copy of the interview transcription was used as quotes were highlighted. Second and third coding techniques, *Process coding* and *Emotion coding*, were derived from a second and third clean copy of the transcription. Jottings were made in the margins throughout each reading. A codebook was used to keep track of the codes and their meaning. Each of the codes created throughout this cycle was attached to short pieces of data from the participants.

At the end of the first cycle of coding, I developed a code map to sort the codes into categories followed by pattern coding in the second coding cycle. The patterns evolving from the data were compared and analyzed to uncover emerging themes and explanations. Five themes were developed as a result of the coding process throughout each of the interview transcripts. In this chapter, the five themes I discovered while analyzing the interview data are presented. Two tables at the end of the chapter demonstrate the connectedness of the themes among all participants. Data from Participants #1-4 will be displayed in Table 3 with Participants #5-8 exhibited in Table 4.

Themes

The following is a list of the themes identified from the interview data:

- Students experienced anxiety:

    Students were nervous college courses would be difficult;

Students were overwhelmed by the amount of work in college courses; and

Students were intimidated by other students in the classes.

- Students stated college readiness skills were not adequate:

  It was a lot of work, but not hard work;

  Note-taking, time management, and study skills were not adequate;

  Sought out help when needed;

  Too many tests carrying weight of grade;

  Enjoyed the free time created by college schedule; and

  Syllabus was a beneficial for organizing.

- Students had support systems:

  Family and friends provided support;

  Help was sought out from professors, former teachers, tutoring centers, and peers when needed; and

  Advisors only helped register for the proper classes.

- Students interacted with others:

  Believed professors would be strict;

  Females were intimidated by other students in the beginning; and

  Females did not socialize with peers outside of group projects.

- Students persisted:

  All participants persisted into a second semester; and

  100% recommend it.

Discussion of Themes

      Anxiety. According to the participant responses, each student experienced anxiety at the beginning and throughout the first semester of dual enrollment. All participants described at least one form of anxiety. Students reported they were nervous about beginning college courses. They worried the courses would be too difficult or too much work. They were scared they would not be successful. Students were overwhelmed by the application process. All students expressed how overwhelmed they were with the amount of coursework they had to complete. Students reported being frustrated by the lack of grades contributing towards their course grade. Female students were intimidated by their regular-aged college peers and worried they would be picked on or bullied for being much younger. All participants shared their fears of professors being strict and uncaring.

      All participants expressed nervousness at the beginning of college courses. Each student was worried the courses would be a lot of work and too difficult. Bailey admitted "I was worried it would be a lot of work. I worried the work would be a lot harder than I was used to." He was afraid of disappointing himself. "I won't lie. I was a little scared," he confided. Piper shared "I do not consider myself to be a smart student and worried I was going to struggle a lot in my classes." The participants believed they were not prepared properly in their high school courses causing each of the participants to be nervous. Bella was "more intimidated due to not being able to do the work than anything else." She was nervous her college readiness skills were not good enough and the level of academic rigor would be too much for her. Abigail worried she would "have so much work that I was afraid I wasn't going to pass." Eva was nervous because she "wasn't

138

sure how the teachers were going to relay the information to me." The participants were

nervous their professors would be strict and uncaring. "Strict, uncaring, and maybe even

a little mean" was how Piper described her initial beliefs of her professors. Rango

thought his professors would be "unforgiving and rude" while Eva did not expect them to

be "as helpful and understanding" as her high school teachers. Bolt believed his

professors would "not care and teach the materials and leave."

Each participant reported being overwhelmed by the amount of coursework

involved in the college courses. Bo expressed the "amount of content for each class was

overwhelming." Piper "had a lot of essays to write and was constantly working on my

writing." Bailey claimed the syllabus "was a lot to be responsible for. Like, all of that

stuff on there was our course." Bolt complained the amount of work "was as if

professors didn't understand students have lives and other classes." Abigail was

overwhelmed after seeing the syllabus on the first day of class. "It was unlike anything

in high school, and it was a lot of work outlined ahead of us."

Participants indicated they felt intimidated throughout the experience. The

females reported being unnerved by the college-aged students in their classes. Abigail

expressed she was scared her peers would judge her for being a dual enrollment student.

"I was scared that the other students would know that I was a dual enrollment student,

and they would think that I'm smarter or too good for them." Abigail believed she might

even be "kind of bullied" for being younger. Bella was frightened by the older

classmates because she believed "they were going to be more mature" than her. Eva was

nervous going into the first day of classes due to always being "in classes with people

who were the same age and had the same knowledge as me and I knew that wouldn't be

the same in a college class." Eva was always used to being the top student in her classes at the high school and the thought that the other students might know more than her was daunting. Eva reported feeling discouraged by the application process. "It was a bit intimidating considering I was only 16 and was practically applying for college." Eva expressed she was alarmed by the grading systems of professors. She only had quiz, test, and attendance grades. Eva was intimated since her grade heavily relied on test grades and she had always experienced test anxiety.

College Readiness Skills. Each participant confided their college readiness skills were not adequate in the beginning of the experience. College readiness skills include being prepared for the higher level of rigor, time management skills needed for the increased amount of schoolwork, notetaking and organization skills required to be successful, and the ability to know when to get help. Most participants shared their nervousness about not being adequately prepared before they began their first semester courses. However, each participant confirmed they were not prepared for the amount of coursework and the other college readiness skills needed to be successful in their classes.

Each participant admitted the coursework was not difficult. Bolt confided the "coursework was definitely not easy but not impossible." He said his solution was to "just put in a little extra effort." Bo reflected on the experience that the work "wasn't as hard as I thought it to be." He added, "every day seemed to get mad easier," indicating he was able to get used to the amount of work as he progressed. Rango thought "most of the coursework was rather easy" and Bailey agreed by adding, "I thought it was pretty easy now, looking back." Bailey said, "the work was easy, like academically, but it was a lot." Piper concluded the essay writing "wasn't as bad as I thought it would be."

The participants claimed their notetaking, study, and time management skills going into the college courses were not adequate for success. Each student had to quickly adapt to how each professor taught differently from high school teachers. They had to learn how to study and complete the amount of work required for the courses. Abigail thought she would have been prepared from high school but admitted she "was very wrong. It took some getting used to and everything is at a different pace. I wasn't prepared at all." She indicated she was "completely starting over because high school taught me nothing" about notetaking to even getting to class. Abigail stated, "dual enrollment is what prepared me for college- not high school." Each student commented on the PowerPoints the professors used for teaching and the amount of notes they had to take in class. Eva thought the lectures were very different from high school. The lectures "were almost never interactive with the students and it can be hard to stay focused without that interaction." Rango added "organization is key" and made the recommendation for future dual enrollment participants to be screened for this characteristic. The participants reported the professors did not send out reminders about assignments or keep checking on students to see if they were completing recommended practice or studying. "The syllabus was our reminder," added Rango.

Each student reported finding help from someone when they needed it. Some students went to the office to meet with their professors. During a professor's office hours, Abigail finally admitted to a professor she was completely lost. "Without his help, I would have never passed the course," Abigail confided. Piper claimed her professors were very helpful when her online learning system was not working. Bolt emailed professors frequently "about homework questions." Other participants visited former

141

teachers to get tutoring. Bella "turned to teachers I had in the past" when she needed help in a course. It was her former teachers who "helped me when I needed it." A few students found the student writing centers to be beneficial. Bailey frequently visited the writing center for help with his essay writing. He reported a peer student helped him rewrite numerous essays and he "liked getting her help." Students had friends to help, with one participant even having his girlfriend edit his essays. Rango believed he would not have been as successful as he was if not for his friends in the student center. While the friends would hang out in the student center, they would also "proofread each other's essays and quiz each other."

Participants expressed dismay about the weight of tests in their course grades. They were not prepared to do the amount of practice necessary to be completely successful and not have that practice count into their grades. Eva confided how she experienced test anxiety and she did not "always perform at [her] highest capability during tests and quizzes." She was intimidated by how few other grades she had acquired to help "pad her grade" if she did not do well on a test. Bailey was frustrated by the lack of grades. "It was kinda annoying that we only had a few tests and no other grades to help them." He concluded, "you really had to do well on the few tests to do pass the class."

Each participant enjoyed the amount of free time the college course schedule created. Both Abigail and Bella were happy with how much more available it made them to work. Abigail stated it "allowed her to work more hours" while Bella said she was now able to "work five days and go to school for two." Piper believed dual enrollment

gave her "a lot of freedom" which suited her. Rango stated he "rather enjoyed … the amount of free time I was given."

Every student commented how the syllabus helped them become organized for the week. Bolt thought the syllabus was a "clear and concise" guide for the course, Rango added it was usually "a direct copy of the course and it was a nice reference tool." Bailey admitted he initially thought his professor was "a control freak" for having such a detailed syllabus but appreciated how "well planned out" the course was. He added he was able to find details about assignments easily on the syllabus. Eva commented on how different the syllabus was from high school. She stated it helped her "plan everything out and prepare for the courses nightly." And while Abigail was overwhelmed by the amount of information in the syllabus, she admitted "it was nice to have it all out in front of me." Bella admitted to going home, grabbing her colorful markers, and planning her semester out on her calendar after the first day in class.

Support Systems. Each participant had a support system of family, friends, and former teachers surrounding them to help them be successful. Participants defined support systems as those who would always be there for you when needed. Bolt explained his support was something "to fall back on to make you forget about the struggles you may have in life," whereas Rango expressed it was something supporting you "whenever you're struggling in a certain area." Abigail further explained, her support system was "the reason she hadn't given up or let myself get too frustrated." Each participant expressed they felt fully supported by their self-defined support systems consisting of family, friends, and bosses at work, if applicable. Each participant sought

143

out help for a class at some point in the first semester. Finally, college advisors were utilized by each participant to primarily help register for classes.

The support systems all looked a little different for each participant, but each participant had someone or something they understood was always there to help them throughout the first semester of dual enrollment. All participants indicated their parents and family members were parts of their support system. Bailey initially only listed his mother, while Bolt reported his family "is there for him no matter what." Eva added her "high school teachers were my biggest supporters" and Bella and Bolt continued that theme. Bolt remarked his former teachers were there to help "even if I wasn't in their class, or even if it wasn't their job." Piper and Bolt listed their professors as part of their support systems. Rango stated "even some very smart friends" were a part of his support system and he "went back to [high] school to talk to teachers often."

Each participant sought help during the first semester although it varied from where they sought assistance. Rango reported friends he made from class would help edit assignments or quiz each other in the student center. "Without classmates like those, I don't think I would've done as well as I did," Rango reported. Bolt and Abigail both preferred to email and visit their professors during scheduled office hours. Abigail believed without her professor's help she "wouldn't have ever passed the class." Bailey reported he "had to go to the writing center a lot." The students there helped him "rewrite a bunch of my essays."

The college advisors were used primarily to register classes and make suggestions for what courses should be next. Abigail and Bella only emailed their advisor about the classes for which they should register. Bella added, "I wish it had been more personal."

Bolt indicated his advisor helped choose classes and "guided him in the direction [the advisor] felt was the best fit" for his needs.

Interactions. Every participant reported interactions with the regular college-aged students and their professors. The participants expressed fear their professors would be strict and uncaring. After attending class on the first day, each participant commented the professors were all welcoming and kind. Female students were initially intimidated by the older students in their classes, only to find their fears unbased. Females did not socialize with their regular-aged college peers except when necessary for class. The male participants were not concerned with how their regular-aged classmates would act. Each male participant made friends and socialized with other classmates outside of class.

Each participant believed their professors would be "strict and uncaring." With the exception of one professor, each professor was described as "helpful." Abigail stated her professors were "really easy to talk to and were very nice." She further explained the professors would "make sure their students knew they could come to them for anything they needed." Bella believed her professors would be "strict," but instead found them "more laid back than high school teachers." Bella had one professor who "went over the top to make sure everyone felt like they were loved." Bella and Abigail reported they both signed up for a class previously taught by one professor to have the same teacher again. Rango, who initially believed his professors would be "unforgiving and rude," added "both of the professors [the first semester] were some of the best people I'd ever met." And while Bolt had a negative experience with one of his professors, he explained the professor "was just trying to push me for better."

145

Abigail shared the belief she would be bullied because she was younger and possibly viewed as "smarter or too good for them." She later admitted she was wrong, and "nobody really cared that much." Abigail said it created a lot of anxiety for her before the first day of class. Piper was worried she would be looked at differently due to her ethnicity and accent. She expressed her relief in finding other students and professors similar to her in that regard. Piper commented "I felt more relaxed as the semester went on and felt more comfortable speaking out in class as my classmates encouraged me." The male students did not share any worries about their classmates. Bolt confided he believed he would "have important things to learn from each of his classmates" and he enjoyed "blowing off stress" with his classmates after class in the gym. Rango enjoyed hanging out with his classmates in the student center and declared his original assumption of the classmates "being rowdy and goofy" was pretty accurate.

Each of the female participants explained they believed the regular college-aged students were focused. Eva recalled other students "paid full attention to the professors' lectures getting their work done." While Abigail noted the other regular-aged college students wanted to "get in and out of the classes." Abigail indicated she did not interact with her classmates unless she needed for a group project. "I'm very shy and I don't like talking to people I don't know," Abigail explained. Bella kept to herself and only "talked to about two students" the first semester because they were tablemates. Piper agreed "no one talks to each other unless they are already friends with them." Eva explained she wanted to focus on her schoolwork. "I didn't socialize as much as I would have in high school. … I would have small chit chats with my table neighbors…but I never went out of my way to build relationships." In contrast, Rango commented how he "made some

great friendships in those classes" and Bolt added his newfound friendships helped "change his mind-set and perspective for the better."

Persistence. Each participant persisted into a second semester of dual enrollment immediately after their first. Despite the struggles each student experienced and described, each student reenrolled into the following semester. Abigail explained it "took some getting used to and everything was at a different pace." Abigail described being lost in her English class to the point she "had no clue what was going on." She persisted by reaching out to her professor to receive help and eventually passing the class. Abigail expressed being overwhelmed with one teacher who would post five to six assignments in one day with the expectation for all to be submitted the next day. She would get frustrated with the amount of work since she had already planned out her study schedule and it meant she would have to stay up all night. She would often feel "lost, stressed, and worried." Abigail explained her support system was always there to help her and keep her from giving up. Bella described a couple times within the first semester where she lost her motivation. She excused her behavior as "every student goes through spells of motivation and then they've lost motivation." Bella explained she kept doing her best and persisted through the times when she didn't feel like doing schoolwork. Piper experienced her first semester during the Spring of 2022. During her first semester in dual enrollment, Piper had trouble logging into her online learning management system (LMS). She described the frustration of not being able to complete any coursework for over a week and falling behind in her classes. Her professors were able to help, and she persisted through the first semester during a global pandemic, reenrolling the Fall of 2020. Through the overwhelming amount of work and frustrating experiences in class

147

with professors and lectures, Bailey persisted and commented he knew if would get easier. Eva and Bo explained they needed to adjust for professors with different expectations and grading systems. Each continued in those classes and acknowledged professors would be different so there would be an adjustment period in each of their college courses. Bolt was one of the only participants to describe a bad experience with a professor. Bolt persisted throughout the first semester:

> "I honestly don't take what the professors say to heart. I know some are just trying to push me for the better and I appreciate that. But whatever they said about me, whether it was positive or negative, I didn't let it affect me."

Bolt explained he just had to work harder and understand his grades might not be as high as those he earned in high school.

Each participant expressed joining the dual enrollment program was the best decision they had made concerning academics and their futures. Piper encouraged her peers to take dual enrollment because "[dual enrollment is] really beneficial and it's not hard." Abigail declared it was "one of the smartest decisions I ever made." Bella added "DO IT!! [emphasis intended]…It pulls you away from unnecessary drama and allows you to get a head start." Bo explained it as one of the "best opportunities you can take as a high schooler." He added dual enrollment comes with "so many rewards: college credits, certifications, skills, and a huge foot in the door for your future, no matter what you decide to do after high school."

Table 3

Participants #1-4

Themes	Abigail	Bella	Piper	Eva
Anxiety	I feared I would have so much work that I was afraid I wasn't going to pass.	I was more intimidated due to not being able to do the work than anything else.	I do not consider myself to be a smart student and worried I was going to struggle a lot in my classes.	It was a bit intimidating considering I was only 16 and was practically applying for college.
College Readiness Skills	I wasn't prepared at all… I was completely starting over because high school taught me nothing.	I turned to teachers I had in the past when I needed help. My former teachers helped me when I needed it.	I had a lot of responsibility when it came to turning in all my work on time.	The lectures were almost never interactive with the students, and it can be hard to stay focused without that interaction.
Support Systems	Without his [the professor's] help, I wouldn't have ever passed that class.	I had a support system that helped me get an A in the class.	I think my support system is really good. I always had someone to go to when I needed help.	My high school teachers were my biggest supporters.
Interactions	[The professors] make sure their students knew they could come to them for anything they needed.	There was one [professor] who went over the top to make sure everyone felt like they were loved.	I felt more relaxed as the semester went on and felt more comfortable speaking out in class as my classmates encouraged me.	I didn't really interact with my professors for the most part.

Persistence	There were times I was so frustrated, like when a professor posts five or six assignments in a day and they are all due the next day. I would stay up all night to complete them and then they didn't even collect them the next day.	Dual enrollment helps by removing yourself from unnecessary drama and allows you to get a head start.	While we were home in lockdown, there was a week when I was completely logged out of Blackboard. It took me a few days to get in touch with anyone, and I fell behind in all my work.	I would without a doubt recommend anyone interested in dual enrollment to do it.

Note: Themes derived from data analysis of participants

Table 4

Participants #5-8

Themes	Bailey	Rango	Bo	Bolt
Anxiety	I was worried it would be a lot of work. I worried the work would be a lot harder than I was used to.	I worried [the professors] would be unforgiving and rude.	The amount of content for each class was overwhelming.	It was as if professors didn't understand students have lives and other classes.
College Readiness Skills	The work was easy, like academically, but it was a lot.	Most of the coursework was rather easy.	The work wasn't as hard as I thought it to be. Every day seemed to get mad easier.	The coursework was definitely not easy but not impossible. I just put in a little extra effort.

150

Support Systems	I had to go to the writing center a lot. The students there helped me rewrite a bunch of my essays.	Without classmates like those, I don't think I would've done as well as I did.	There was always someone there to help me in case I got behind, from instructors to advisors, to even classmates.	I had my high school teachers who were willing to help me, even if I wasn't in their class, or even if it wasn't their job.
Interactions	I had to work with a few other students on a project, but otherwise, I didn't really talk to anyone.	Both of the professors… were some of the best people I'd ever met.	We all just hit it off and helped each other out for the most part. Which is a rare sight amongst teenagers.	I have had pretty good relationships with my professors and peers, they have pushed me to do better and have helped me every step of the way.
Persistence	I am ready to move into more classes and keep going.	It definitely saved me a couple thousand dollars already.	I am so proud of my younger self for taking that step.	Some professors had different grading styles which kind of messed up my grades, but I just tried to adapt and learn from it.

Note: Themes derived from data analysis of participants.

Chapter VII

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This study was guided by two conceptual frameworks, college preparedness and socialization. Both frameworks are comprised of various theories. The college preparedness theory included discussions regarding the self-regulatory strategies and the academic rigor of the courses. This framework included a discussion of the self-efficacy levels of first-generation students (FGS) and how those levels impacted the students' use of effective learning strategies and their persistence when coursework became challenging. The socialization framework included a discussion of the hidden curriculum and college-going experiences FGS's were missing. The framework suggested dual enrollment could provide these experiences for this population. These experiences were such that they would help the students in all other aspects of what it means to go to college, apart from the academic element.

In Chapter I, I explained the problem and purpose for the study. Despite the benefits of dual enrollment reported by researchers, first-generation, low-income (FGLI) students have lower persistence rates in dual enrollment programs (Tinto & Engle, 2008). There was a need to research what FGLI students were experiencing to help understand the connection between benefits and persistence levels. The goal of this study was to understand the experiences and perceptions of first-generation, low-income students after their first semester in completing a dual enrollment course in rural, Southeastern United States. The two conceptual frameworks for this study were explained. Dual enrollment

equips students with college and career readiness skills (Conley, 2010) and provides socialization for college going students (Attinasi, 1989; Hooker & Brand, 2010; Karp, 2012). Chapter II provided a review of the literature as it pertained to dual enrollment, first-generation students, and self-efficacy levels. Chapter III described the methodology, procedures, data credibility, and validity checks performed in the study. Chapter IV provided a detailed description of each participant. The findings from the interviews with each participant are reported in Chapter V and organized by research question. The analysis of the data is provided in Chapter VI with a description of the themes linked with evidence from the findings (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014; Saldana, 2016).

In this chapter, a summary is provided of the problem and the theories that frame this study. The themes uncovered in the findings are connected to the frameworks and previous research from Chapter I and II. Finally, limitations of the study, two implications for practice, and four recommendations for future research are outlined.

Methods and Procedures

This study utilized a basic approach to qualitative design as described by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) and Patton (2002). Eight participants were selected through responses to an email and questionnaire sent by the technical college on my behalf. I performed a series of three interviews with each participant in the study. Each interview was at least 90 minutes in length and followed a semi-structured format (Seidman, 2013). Students provided a copy of a course syllabus and an example of graded work. These documents served as sources for data credibility checks. I maintained a fieldwork journal throughout the research process which included field notes from the interviews, a data accounting log, contact summary sheets, and a codebook (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Maxwell,

2013; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014; Patton, 2002). Interview data were recorded and transcribed. Four coding methods were employed on the interview data to generate codes and patterns (Saldana, 2016). From the codes and patterns generated, five themes were uncovered (Saldana, 2016).

Research Questions

The goal of this research study was to gain an understanding of the experiences and perceptions of first-generation, low-income students after their first semester in completing a dual enrollment course in rural, Southeastern United States. The two research questions that guided the study were:

Research Question #1: What were the experiences of first-generation, low-income students throughout their first semester in a dual enrollment course at a two-year postsecondary institution in the rural south?

Research Question #2: What are the perceptions of first-generation, low-income students pertaining to their college preparedness throughout their first semester in a dual enrollment course at a two-year postsecondary institution in the rural south?

Interpretations of Findings

In this section, connections are made between my research and the frameworks of the study. Research questions are answered based on the findings from the interviews. The following section is organized by research questions, followed by an explanation of how the themes link back to the frameworks and literature reviewed in Chapter I and II.

Research Question #1:

What were the experiences of first-generation, low-income students throughout their first semester in a dual enrollment course at a two-year postsecondary institution in the rural south?

Anxiety. The results of this study revealed each student experienced at least one form of anxiety while beginning their first semester of dual enrollment. Students were nervous about their courses being too difficult, overwhelmed by the amount of work in the college courses, and intimidated by other students in their classes.

The results of this study revealed a difference in academic self-efficacies and confidence levels of the students by GPA levels and gender. The participants with higher GPAs expressed higher levels of academic self-efficacy prior to beginning their first course in the dual enrollment program. Although these students were nervous about beginning a college course, they still expressed a high level of confidence in being prepared and having a successful outcome. These students expressed the belief that if they used effective learning strategies, even the more rigorous courses would be manageable. The participants with higher GPAs had taken honors and Advanced Placement courses in high school and believed such courses taught them the self-regulatory strategies necessary for college level work. Three out of the four participants with lower GPAs did not have the same level of confidence. These students did believe they would be successful in the courses, but they did not express the same level of confidence. The participants' facial expressions and body language indicated they were more worried about the classes than the other participants with higher GPAs. The fourth participant in the lower GPA category did not seem worried at all. He exhibited more

confidence than the participants with the higher GPAs. When comparing participants by gender, the female participants expressed more anxiety and worries about beginning the college courses. The male participants described higher confidence levels than their female counterparts.

Researchers reported first-generation students to have lower self-efficacy values than continuing-generation students (Mehta, et al, 2011). Mehta, et al. (2011) believed anxieties formed from stressful and challenging experiences create negative physiological responses and thus, negatively impact the students' self-efficacy values. The lower self-efficacy values in FGS commonly result in poor coping strategies to stress (Mehta, et al, 2011). Poor coping strategies provide an explanation into why FGS do not persist into a second year of college at the same rate as CGS. This observation was not found in the current study. The participants experienced anxiety throughout the first semester, but they continued to persist. This result demonstrated the participants had effective coping strategies and support systems, unlike what is characteristic of FGS. This observation supported my conclusion that the students had average to high levels of self-efficacy. The students needed to build their self-confidence levels by experiencing positive successes in the dual enrollment program. Karp (2007) and Ozmun (2013) believed academic success is not solely based on academic ability. The researchers determined the early college experiences resulting from dual enrollment helped FGS build their self-efficacy. Social and coping skills necessary to be successful were developed during the college courses through the dual enrollment program. Having the positive experiences throughout the first semester helped build the participants' self-efficacy levels and strengthen their confidence in their abilities.

Support Systems. Each participant in the study expressed their support system had a positive impact on their experience. Researchers reported FGS generally do not have the same level of support systems as continuing-generation students to help motivate and provide authentic verbal persuasion to persist (Mehta, et al, 2011). The results of the study revealed each of the eight participants had a strong support system. Support systems remained consistent and understanding. The support system members not only encouraged the students to continue trying hard but made allowances in other aspects of their lives to provide for more study time, acknowledging the college work would be more time-consuming and challenging. The participants' support systems were composed of their family members, former teachers, counselors, a few good friends enrolled in the dual enrollment program themselves, as well as their bosses at their jobs. Each of the eight participants declared it was because of their support systems encouragement, they were motivated to persist through frustrations and challenges in the first semester.

This finding contradicted the research on first-generation students. Mehta, et al. (2011) characterized FGS as having less social and financial support from friends and family. However, each participant expressed their belief of being fully supported by their family, friends, bosses, and former teachers. They all had people they could turn to for advice and assistance when they encountered difficulties. Mehta, et al. (2011) continued to report FGS from low-income families lacked proper information on admission and enrollment and did not have peer counseling available. Participants in my study did not find the admission process overly confusing, and they all acknowledged they had advisors and counseling centers available, if needed.

Interactions. Each participant reached out to their professors, former teachers from their high school, or the college academic tutoring center for help at some time during the semester. Zimmerman (2002) believed students with higher self-efficacy levels practiced more effective self-regulatory strategies. In this case, the ability to effectively self-monitor and know when to seek assistance demonstrated each student in the study had high self-regulatory skill levels. The students were also being socialized in the role of a successful college student by learning how to communicate with academic-minded peers and professors (Attinasi, 1989).

The male participants, and those participants fitting in the higher GPA criteria, expressed more reluctance to email a professor for help or go to the tutoring center. Schunk (1991) stated students with higher academic self-efficacy demonstrated more effective self-regulatory learning strategies, of which knowing when to get help is a characteristic of good use of learning strategies. These students were more determined to figure it out on their own before getting help. They believed they had the ability to work through the problem on their own before seeking help. When these participants did eventually seek assistance, they all expressed how helpful and welcoming their professors were, and they would plan to seek assistance during scheduled office hours or the tutoring center more often. Only one participant described a negative experience when attempting to get tutoring from the college academic center. That participant vowed to not go back to the center but did end up seeking help from a former high school teacher. The experience provided a negative physiological response to influence this participant's decision, yet she was still able to find an alternative solution to receive help when needed, demonstrating the ability to persist.

Every participant went into the dual enrollment experience with a negative image of the professors and other college students. Each student expressed concern for possible bullying from the older, traditional aged college students, but each participant found this to be untrue. The other classmates either kept to themselves and focused only on the class and left afterwards, or they were helpful and proved to be good group partners. None of the participants shared any stories of bullying or teasing due to the dual enrollment students being younger or "nerdier," as many had perceived might happen. It is important to note one participant, though, believed other students were judging him in class. The male participants formed friendships with the other classmates, and two of the participants mentioned they still speak to these classmates. The female participants only spoke with classmates, when necessary, for projects. The female participants did not form friendships with other classmates. Each female student explained they wanted to remain focused and were in the college courses to learn and not socialize. Seven out of eight participants shared positive experiences with their professors. Only one participant shared a negative experience, and it was with only a single professor. Most participants enjoyed the college classes but complained the lectures in most courses consisted of robotic PowerPoint presentations with copious amounts of notes and minimal discussion.

These students began the dual enrollment program with a negative view of college professors and college-aged students. They grew up believing college was hard and unforgiving. Each participant's views were changed throughout the first semester. The students created more positive views of their professors and peers through the actual practice of attending class and forming relationships. The parents of FGS might not have a positive outlook on the college-going experience due to their own lack of experiences

and thus have relayed that negative image to their children. The socialization framework provided these students with opportunities to experience more positive aspects of the college-going experience than their parents had taught them.

Research Question #2:

What are the perceptions of first-generation, low-income students pertaining to their college preparedness throughout their first semester in a dual enrollment course at a two-year postsecondary institution in the rural south?

College Readiness Skills. Once the college courses began and students experienced the more rigorous coursework, all participants revealed they did not feel properly prepared for the college-level courses by their high school experiences. Each participant enrolled in the college English course, discussed how difficult the writing assignments were due to very little instructions being provided. They expressed concern about the grading policies for the essay writing experience. Students reported not learning the material in high school they were expected to know in the college courses. This finding matched Conley's research on college and career readiness (2014). Conley (2014) defined a college and career ready student as one who has the "content knowledge, strategies, skills, and techniques" required for post-secondary situations (p.15). The level of expectations and grading was higher than what students had experienced in high school, coinciding with Hooker and Brand's concept of "college knowledge" (2010, pg. 75). Students who had "college knowledge" understood the academic expectations of college-level work (Hooker & Brand, 2010). Hooker and Brand (2010) explained academic ability was not the only predictor for academic success and persistence. Having the appropriate "college knowledge" would help a student

persist through the more challenging college-level work (Hooker & Brand, 2010). Each student persisted and improved their writing to finish with a B or higher in the course, demonstrating they each began learning the essential "college knowledge" required to be successful.

One of the participants enrolled in a pre-calculus math course shared his frustrations with the course. Not only was the course more academically challenging than he had encountered in high school, but the amount of work coinciding with the course was more than he had expected. This participant persisted through the course and accepted the challenge as a learning opportunity. Through the socialization framework, this student demonstrated the "college knowledge" he had obtained by meeting the new higher expectations of the college-level rigor (Hooker & Brand, 2010).

Each of the remaining participants enrolled in general education courses, such as Psychology, Speech, or History, for their second course during the first semester. These students expressed pleasure in each respective course. They described the courses as being laid-back and easy. The participants respected the content and nature of the courses, stating they were easier to relate to real life. Participants reported the discussions in the class were more mature and engaging. The participants did not describe any problems or concerns about the rigor of coursework or the grading system for those courses. The only negative comments concerning those classes stemmed from their displeasure over the delivery methods of the content.

Persistence. At the time of the interviews, each participant had already registered for dual enrollment courses at the same two-year college for the following semester. Each participant expressed the sense of pride for accomplishing something viewed as

challenging and difficult. The positive physiological response from successfully completing their first semester of college coursework provided a positive increase in their self-efficacy levels. Each participant indicated they were more relaxed going into their second semester. Zimmerman (1989) declared students with high levels of self-efficacy have higher levels of task persistence and task completion. The experience of attending college courses on a college campus provided a socialization experience for the participants. The participants were able to learn what it means to be a college student by practicing the role themselves (Collier & Morgan, 2008; Karp, 2012). The positive mastery experiences in the dual enrollment courses increased their self-efficacy levels and encouraged them to persist in the dual enrollment program (Bandura, 1997).

They all highly recommended trying dual enrollment courses for the following reasons: an opportunity to advance ahead of others in your class, remove yourself from high school drama, take advantage of free college credits, and enroll in more meaningful courses. The participants did warn students need to be dedicated and organized to be successful. They all agreed a student could not procrastinate with any of the work, and one must know when to get help in a course before it is too late.

Limitations

There were a few limitations of the research study. First, only students were interviewed. Teachers, professors, parents, and guidance counselor perspectives were not taken into account with this study. These individuals could provide important insight into the dual enrollment program. The second limitation of the study was due to the current Covid-19 pandemic. The criteria for the sample included students who had completed their first dual enrollment course during the 2019-2020 school year. There was one

162

participant who experienced their first semester of dual enrollment courses during the spring semester of 2020 when all college courses were moved online. This switch to online classes might have altered the participant's perspectives and experiences. Participants were purposefully selected to have their first course in the dual enrollment program to have taken place during the Fall of 2019, if possible. This effort was done to limit the unique experience of attending college during a global pandemic. To ensure a criterion-based sample, one participant was chosen having participated in their first dual enrollment courses during the spring in 2020. Their experiences and findings have been labeled as such for transparency. The final limitation of the study was relying on student memory to acquire their perspectives and experiences from the fall 2019 semester. The experiences might have changed over time.

Implications for Practice

There are four implications for practice that address the main findings from the study. The students in this research study were successful in their first semester of dual enrollment. The participants all had support systems, higher levels of self-efficacy, and employed effective self-regulatory strategies. The implications for practice will address what school systems can implement to ensure other FGLI students experience the same success in a dual enrollment program.

Support Systems

The first implication for practice to help FGLI students in a dual enrollment program would be to have an understanding support system. The participants in this study each reported a support system aiding to motivate them and made allowances for the increased coursework. In creating such a support structure, school systems could

provide training for the parents of the dual enrollment students. The session would

provide information about enrollment, including registering for classes and the due dates

for paperwork. Guidance would be offered to inform parents what to expect out of the

more demanding college-level work and strategies to help their students be successful.

Second, steps should be taken to match a mentor with the dual enrollment students. This

mentor should be someone with whom the student is familiar. Many students in the study

reported going back to their former high school teachers, not just for academic help, but

to seek advice. The assigned mentor can provide the student positive support, help, or

advice when needed. A mentor program could furnish students, once identified by

teachers and counselors, with structure and support from the beginning of the application

process through to the end of their first semester. The mentor program may well offer

personal experiences to the students interested in the dual enrollment program to build

confidence levels. The program and experiences could help reduce the anxiety all

participants expressed at the beginning of their first semester. Third, creating a cohort of

dual enrollment students might create an environment in helping shy students establish

friendships as well as ensuring the students have peers their own age to turn to when

needed. This could especially help the female students in the program who reported not

forming friendships with the regular-aged college classmates. Lastly, the teachers

selected for the mentor program should receive training on the benefits of dual

enrollment and how, as a mentor, they can help motivate the students throughout the first

semester. From the higher education perspective, professors teaching dual enrollment

courses should be offered training. Such training would prepare professors to create

classroom activities encouraging the students to socialize and participate in classroom

discussions. Such guidance would assist professors in recognizing when the dual enrollment student might benefit from extra support throughout the semester. All these elements would certainly contribute to an overarching support system for the dual enrollment student.

Dual Enrollment Orientation

The second implication for practice would be to begin a dual enrollment orientation for the actual students. This training would be proactive in addressing the anxiety and fears students reported at the beginning of the semester. Each of the participants in the study reported feeling nervous, scared, or overwhelmed at the beginning of the semester. Creating a dual enrollment "bootcamp" would enable students to witness a day in the life of a college student. The bootcamp would provide an opportunity for students to attend college courses for an entire day, observe freshman-level classes, speak with professors and advisors, view course syllabi and sample assignments, tour the campus, and converse with former dual enrollment students. The day would allow students to acquire the knowledge necessary to be successful at the college level without the stress and anxiety. Each participant of the study believed their professors would be mean and unforgiving in the beginning, therefore causing additional anxiety before beginning the program. The prospect of meeting and speaking to the professors they would have for their freshman level courses might aid in alleviating any anxiety or stress the students might experience.

Teach College Readiness Skills

The third implication for practice is the need to increase college readiness skills. Each participant reported feeling unprepared for college-level work and studying. High

school teachers need to provide more opportunities to learn and practice effective self-regulatory strategies in their classes. Each participant in this study enrolled in an introductory college English class and expressed frustration with the writing assignments. To prepare the dual enrollment student for such classes, high school teachers need to create more opportunities for college-level writing accompanied by effective feedback and the ability for students to revise papers. Extra support can be offered through an increase in the amount of writing required from dual enrollment students while enrolled in college courses. Many of the students were reluctant to seek assistance from the college writing center. In conjunction with the other applied implications, the students will have mentors encouraging them to utilize the resources of the writing center as well as having the support from their cohort of students as they all attend the writing center.

Dual Enrollment Recruiting

The last implication for practice is in generating program interest and program recruitment. Students enrolled in the dual enrollment program were required to have a qualifying grade point average (GPA). The four participants with lower GPAs, though, did not report any differences in their actual level of preparation or success in the college level courses. High GPAs were not the sole indicator of college success. Levels of self-efficacy, use of self-regulatory strategies, and persistence through challenging tasks can be more useful in predicting student success. Instead of the dual enrollment program only having a minimum grade requirement, guidance counselors might consider different methods for participant qualification.

Teacher recommendations may serve as a suitable predictor of students who would be successful in the dual enrollment programs. Teacher recommendations could

help identify students who are reluctant to apply on their own. Teacher recommendations could bring some insight into the student's college readiness skills after the students apply. If teachers and counselors identify interested students reluctant to attempt the college level courses, the counselors could work with the students' teachers, or match the student with a mentor in the dual enrollment program, to incorporate activities and assignments to build the students' self-efficacy levels. Self-efficacy surveys can assist in determining how strong the students' beliefs are regarding their ability and determination to succeed. Ratings derived from such surveys may serve as an indication of the student's level of confidence. The ratings could predict the student's level of perseverance and help identify who might need more support throughout the program.

Each of these implications for practice will help ensure FGLI students have a trustworthy support system. A support system can be made up of their family and friends, professors, advisors, mentors, former teachers, or their peers in the program. Providing learning opportunities to practice the college readiness skills and self-regulatory strategies will equip the students with the skills necessary to be successful. The orientation programs for both students and family members will ease the anxiety caused from not knowing what to expect from the college-level courses.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are five recommendations for future research. First, this study focused on first-generation, low-income students enrolled in academic classes through a two-year, technical college. Future researchers should study any difference in perceptions, experiences, and persistence for first-generation, low-income students at a two-year, technical college versus a four-year college. This research would help answer the

question why do the two-year colleges have lower persistence rates than the four-year colleges?

Another recommendation for future research would be to determine if there is a difference in persistence rates for first-generation, low-income students in academic versus technical courses at a two-year, technical college. Students in English and math courses might have a different experience as compared to students in technical courses like automotive or heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning (HVAC) courses. School counselors could use this research to determine if different qualifications should be used for application purposes.

The research indicated a difference in anxiety levels and interaction with peers based on gender. While all students expressed high levels of self-efficacy, the female students shared higher levels of anxiety and fear than the male students. Future research may aid in determining why female students do not have the same levels of confidence when it comes to attempting more rigorous courses. School personnel could also use the research to encourage more females to participate in dual enrollment. Teachers and school counselors could use this research to create learning experiences for females in the high school and in the college settings.

A fourth recommendation for future research would include interviewing the support systems and professors involved in the dual enrollment programs. Future research could investigate effective strategies being used in the classroom with the dual enrollment student population. The support system members could provide further insights into what the FGLI students experienced. This research could help create

training programs to ensure support systems and mentors are encouraging and motivating these students to be successful.

Finally, the students who enrolled in their first dual enrollment courses during the global Covid-19 pandemic experienced a unique situation. It is recommended these students be given the opportunity to tell their stories. Only one student experienced their first semester of dual enrollment during the Spring of 2020. However, two participants reported their support systems disappeared when their college courses switched from in-person to online. They admitted it made a difference in their work and grades. It would benefit counselors and college professors to understand how they can best support students through online learning.

Conclusion

The focus of this research was first-generation, low-income students in a dual enrollment program. Previous research on first-generation students in dual enrollment reported this subpopulation was more likely not to persist in the college level courses. The study reflects each student participant persisted through the challenges presented them and reenrolled in for a second semester. All participants experienced anxiety throughout the first semester in the dual enrollment course, but each was able to find the necessary help and support when needed. While the participants all agreed the level of academic rigor was not a factor, each student reported they had not been adequately prepared for the college-level courses. The dual enrollment courses taught them time management and organizational skills to handle the total amount of coursework and studying required. Self-regulatory strategies for studying and knowing when to seek out help were developed. The participants not only persisted into a second semester of dual

enrollment but recommended the program for other students who might be tentative about applying.

Subsequently, the experiences and perceptions of first-generation, low-income students reflected the dual enrollment program provided experiences to equip the students with the college readiness skills necessary to be successful. Each student began the program unsure of themselves and nervous, but they all believed they would be successful if they applied themselves and worked hard, as they had in high school. The dual enrollment program served as the experiences needed to allow the students to build the self-regulatory skills required to be successful in a college-level program. By the end of the first semester, the participants had the confidence levels to remain in the program and register for another semester of classes. The dual enrollment program prepared the first-generation, low-income students with the necessary college readiness skills.

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APPENDIX A:

Email Request for Participation

Dear Dual Enrollment Student;

I appreciate your time and consideration reviewing this request. I am a doctoral student at Valdosta State University. My dissertation researches the experiences and perceptions of first-generation, low-income students through their first course of dual enrollment at Chattahoochee Technical College. I am looking for participants for my study. It is important for educators and policymakers to gain an understanding of how this subgroup of students understands the process to make changes for equity in access for all students.

Qualifying participants are students enrolled in Bartow County public schools, have recently completed their first course of dual enrollment (successfully or not), are the first of their family to attend college, and qualify for Free or Reduced Lunch through their public high school.

The research study will consist of three interviews, approximately 90 minutes each. The interviews will be conducted at the student's normal high school unless a different place is arranged for your convenience. Proper CDC Guidelines will be followed to ensure the safety of all participants. If you do not feel comfortable meeting in person due to Covid-19, online interviews can be conducted.

If you are interested in participating, please complete this short Qualtrics Survey. After review of your responses, I will be in contact with selected participants to arrange a time to meet.

Thank you for your attention and congratulations on selecting dual enrollment in effort to work towards your future educational goals.

Megan Higgins

APPENDIX B:

Questions for Qualtrics Survey

Data collected via Qualtrics.

1. Are you a student in Bartow County Public School System?

2. If yes, what high school do you attend?

3. Did you participate in the Dual Enrollment Program at Chattahoochee Technical College during the 2018-2019 school year?

4. Was the 2018-2019 school year your first time participating in a dual enrollment course?

5. Did you participate in an academic course at Chattahoochee Technical College during that first semester enrolled? (Examples: English, Math, Science, History, etc.)

6. Did your parents attend college? (Note: they did not have to earn a certificate or degree, just attend college courses.)

7. Do you receive assistance through the federally funded Free or Reduced Lunch Program?

8. What ethnicity do you identify closest to?

9. What gender do you identify as?

10. What is your current high school GPA?

11. What is your current college GPA?

APPENDIX C:

Matrix for Participant Selection
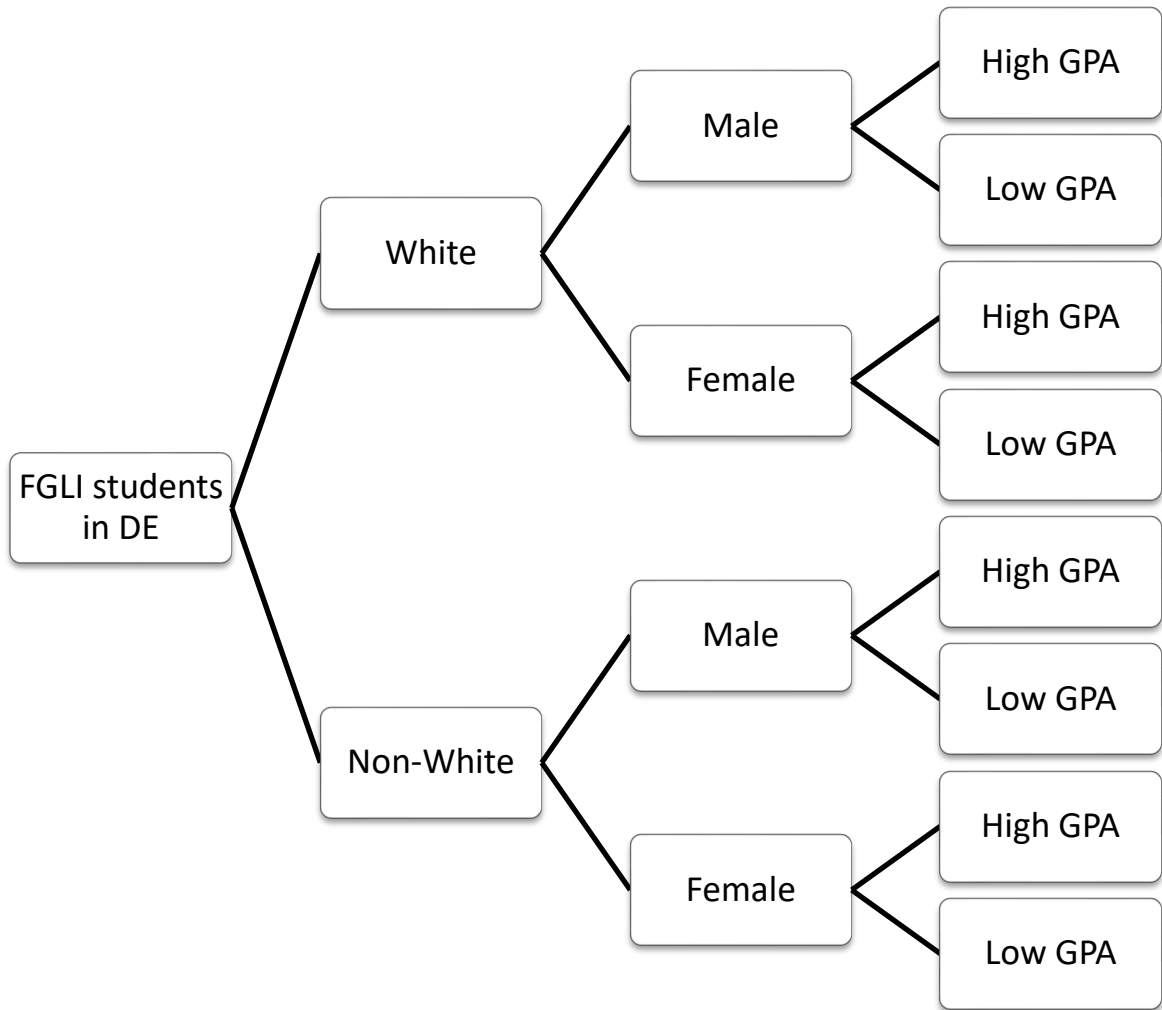
Figure 1. Matrix to be used for selecting participants. Participants will be selected

beginning with breaking the population into the categories of white and non-white

students. Then, those two categories will each be divided into two more categories of

male and female. Finally, a high and a low GPA category will determine the participants.

APPENDIX D:

Interview Guide

The series of interviews will be conducted in three parts. The first interview will take place no later than one year after the student completed the dual enrollment course, the second interview will take place no longer than one month after the first interview, and the third interview will take place no longer than one month after the second interview. Further interviews and questions will be determined by need throughout the analysis period. Each interview will last around 90 minutes.

The questions outlined pertain to the two research questions for my study:

- RQ 1: What were the experiences of first-generation, low-income students throughout their first semester in a dual enrollment course at a two-year postsecondary institution in the rural south?

- RQ 2: What are the perceptions of first-generation, low-income students pertaining to their college preparedness throughout their first semester in a dual enrollment course at a two-year postsecondary institution in the rural south?

In the first interview, I will gather information about the following topics: background information regarding the participant's family, their experiences and perceptions towards the dual enrollment application process, coursework expectations, their perception about how prepared they were initially for the coursework, what type of support system they perceived to have, and their purpose for enrolling in dual enrollment courses.

In the second interview, I will gather information about the following topics: Their experiences and perceptions about the first day of class, the online educational systems, their textbooks and course materials, the lectures in class or online, their relationships and experiences with other students and professor, their coursework in

regards to rigor, grading, and feedback, how prepared they felt throughout the course, and what kind of support they felt they were getting from their support systems.

In the third interview, I will gather information about many of the previous topics to gauge changes in their experiences and perceptions once the students had finished the course. Some additional topics will include: recommendations for the program, reflections on how the experience has helped them meet their goals and purpose for taking dual enrollment courses.

The above stated topics will be covered through the following questions, split by interview number.

Interview #1:

The purpose of my research is to discover the experiences and perceptions of FGLI students in DE program for the first course. I will be asking questions over the next couple of months pertaining to your experiences and perceptions related to the course.

I would like to go back to the application process and understand how you gained knowledge about the program and come to enroll in your course.

I: *Would you please describe to me how you first became aware of the dual enrollment program?*

I: *Why did you become interested in enrolling?*

I: *What is the belief in your ability to do well in a dual enrollment program? (SE)*

I: *Would you describe the initial parent meeting between you, your parents, and guidance?*

I: *Would you describe your experience with the application process?*

I: *What did your think about the application process? [Perceptions]*

I: *How were the entrance or placement tests you had to take? [Experiences]*

I: *What were your expectations about the courses you selected?*

I: *What is your level of confidence to perform well in the courses you selected? (SE)*

I: *What is the belief in your ability to schedule times to study after school? (SE) [Perceptions]*

I: *How prepared did you feel in terms of your academic ability?*

I: *How did you feel about beginning your first college course? [Perceptions]*

I: *Can you give me some examples of how you feel prepared for the course?*

195

I: *Can you give me some examples of how you do not feel prepared for the course?*

I'd like to know what kind of support system you have or are aware of to help you throughout this semester?

I: *Can you explain to me what you believe a support system is?*

I: *Who are the people in your life you believe you can turn to for help with your courses?*

I: *How confident are you that you will have a support system to help you throughout the semester? (SE)*

I: *Do you have a job?*

I: *Have you spoken to your boss about any special needs you might have concerning this experience?*

I: *How confident are you that your boss will accommodate any special needs concerning this experience? (SE)*

I: *Describe how your boss has responded to your decision and needs?*

I: *Had you spoken to a college advisor at the beginning of the course?*

I: *What help did you think the advisor would be able to provide? [Perceptions]*

I: *Can you identify any programs at the college that might be available for help throughout the semester?*

Finally, tell me a little about your family and background as a student.

I: *Describe the level of education of your mother and father.*

I: *What do your parents each do for a living?*

I: *Describe how important you believe education is to your family? [Perceptions]*

I: *Describe yourself as a student.*

I: *Do you enjoy learning?*

I: *Describe your experiences in the academic courses you have taken in high school.*

I: *What kind of grades do you typically earn in your high school academic classes?*

Now I would like to know what your expectations are for the course and people in the course.

I: *What do you think your college professors and college courses will be like? [Perceptions]*

I: *How confident are you that you will be able to perform well in a course taught by college professors? (SE)*

I: *What did you think your classmates would be like? [Perceptions]*

Interview #2:

The purpose of this interview is to gather more information about your experiences in the dual enrollment course. I would also like to hear about what your perceptions, or thoughts and feelings, were regarding those experiences.

I: *What were your thoughts of the dual enrollment course, as the course proceeded?*

I: *What is your current belief of your level of preparation for being successful in the course?*

I: *Can you describe your experiences from the first day of class?*

I: *What was your thoughts and feelings about the professor and syllabus for the course?*

I: *What type of experiences have you had with the course materials, such as the textbooks, online course system(s), and lectures?*

I: *What experiences have you had building relationships with the professor and other students in the class?*

I: *What were your thoughts about the other students in the course?*

I: *Can you describe your experiences with assignments and graded work?*

I: *I had requested you bring some examples of your graded work and assignments. Do you have some examples of these with you today?*

I: *Can you explain why you chose to share these examples today?*

I: *What were your feelings toward the grading conducted?*

I: *What were your thoughts about the feedback you received?*

I: *In the first interview, you told me about your support system. What were your thoughts about your support system throughout the course?*

I: *Did you had any interactions with the professor you feel have impacted your feelings?*

Interview #3:

At the time of this third interview, I would like to note you are finished with your first dual enrollment course. I wish to try to gather more information regarding your experiences throughout the semester and your thoughts of those experiences.

I: *What are your thoughts of the dual enrollment course that you just finished?*

I: *During the second interview, you related your feelings about your professor at the time. What were your thoughts on your professor now that the course is over?*

I: *Describe more of your experiences with the assignments and grading?*

I: *What were your thoughts concerning the coursework you completed?*

I: *Have there been any new experiences with the professor that you would like to share?*

I: *Have there been any new experiences with the other students in the course that have made an impact on you?*

I: *Would you describe a situation, if any, that you required help during the semester?*

I: *What are your thoughts concerning your support system?*

I: *What are your final thoughts of the course materials?*

I: *Based on your experiences, what recommendations do you have for other students looking to do dual enrollment?*

I: What are some recommendations for school professionals based on your experiences?

APPENDIX E:

Contact Summary Form

Contact Summary Form: Interviews

Contact Type: Location: _____

Visit: _____   Contact Date: _____

Phone: _____   Today's Date: _____

Email: _____   Written By: _____

       With whom: _____

1. What were the main issues or themes that struck you in this contact?

2. Summarize the information you got (or failed to get) on each of the target questions you had

for this contact.

Question   Information

3. Anything else that struck you as salient, interesting, illuminating, or important in this contact?

4. What new (or remaining) target questions do you have in considering the next contact with

this participant?

Other questions to reflect and write about:

How did you personally relate to the participant or phenomenon?	
What were some code choices & their operational definitions?	
What were some of the participant's routines, roles, rules, rituals, and relationships?	
What are some of the emergent patterns, categories, themes, concepts, and assertions?	
Are there any possible networks among the codes, et al.?	
Are there any problems or concerns with the project?	
Are there any personal or ethical dilemmas with the study?	
What are some future direction for the study?	
Tentative answers for the study's research questions?	

Adapted from Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, 2014.

APPENDIX F:

Data Accounting Form

Data Accounting Log

	WFH (HT)	WFL	WMH	WML	NWFH	NWFL	NWMH (OM)	NWML
INTERVIEW #1								
INTERVIEW #2								
INTERVIEW #3								
FOLLOW-UP #1								
FOLLOW-UP #2								
FOLLOW-UP #3								
SYLLABUS								
GRADED WORK								
FINAL GRADES								

Key:

W=white   NW=non-white

F=female   M=male

H=high GPA   L=low GPA

Adapted from Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, 2014.

APPENDIX G:

IRB Approval Form

Institutional Review Board (IRB)
for the Protection of Human Research Participants

EXPEDITED PROTOCOL APPROVAL

Protocol Number: IRB-04072-2020   **Responsible Researcher:** Megan Higgins

                                            Supervising Faculty: Dr. Michael Bochenko

Project Title: *Experiences and Perceptions of First-Generation, Low-Income Students' First Semester of Dual Enrollment in Georgia..*

Level of Risk: ☒ Minimal   ☐ More than Minimal

Type of Review: ☒ Expedited   ☐ Convened (Full Board)

Approval Categories: 6 & 7

Approval Date: 10.14.2020

Expiration Date: 10.14.2023

Consent Requirements:
- ☒ Adult Participants – Written informed consent with documentation (signature)
- ☐ Adult Participants – Written informed consent with waiver of documentation (signature)
- ☐ Adult Participants – Verbal informed consent (Research Statement)
- ☐ Adult Participants – Waiver of informed consent
- ☒ Minor Participants – Written parent/guardian permission with documentation (signature)
- ☐ Minor Participants – Written parent/guardian permission with waiver of documentation (signature)
- ☐ Minor Participants – Verbal parent/guardian permission
- ☐ Minor Participants – Waiver of parent/guardian permission
- ☐ Minor Participants – Written assent with documentation (signature)
- ☒ Minor Participants – Written assent with waiver of documentation (signature)
- ☐ Minor Participants – Verbal assent
- ☐ Minor Participants – Waiver of assent
- ☐ Waiver of some elements of consent/permission/assent

Approval: This research protocol is **approved.** Your approved consent form(s), with IRB approval stamp are attached. If you prefer the original stamped consent, please email tmwright@valdosta.edu and the form will be sent via inter-office mail, or you may come by the OSPRA office to obtain the original. Please see page 2 for additional important information for researchers.

Comments:

Elizabeth Ann Olphie   **10.14.2020**   *Thank you for submitting an IRB application.*

Elizabeth Ann Olphie, IRB Administrator   Date   *Please direct questions to irb@valdosta.edu or 229-253-2947.*

Form Revised: 06.02.16