We Are: Committed to Helping ALANA Students Thrive

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Abstract

Pathways to thriving differ significantly between ALANA (African, Latinx, Asian, and Native American) and White students. This study employed structural equation modeling to explore the pathways to thriving for ALANA students; the final structural model explained 73% of the variation in college student thriving. The major contributors to thriving were psychological sense of community, institutional integrity, spirituality, major certainty, and campus involvement. These findings suggest that WE ARE part of the solution to help ALANA students thrive in college.

We Are: Committed to Helping ALANA Students Thrive

Higher education was originally designed for White males from affluent families (Thelin, 2011), yet current college student demographics reflect the significant change that has occurred in higher education: 56% of undergraduates are women and 46% are Students of Color (NCES, 2018). Although access to higher education has increased for underrepresented students who have been historically underserved in higher education, Jayakumar and Museus (2012) note that "a superficial commitment to diversity and multiculturalism on college campuses…falls short of genuine inclusion of students of color" (p. 1). It is critical that higher education institutions fully commit to ensuring African, Latinx, Asian, and Native American (ALANA) students can not only access college, but also thrive throughout their collegiate experiences. Thus, the purpose of this study was to explore the variation in thriving among ALANA students so that significant contributors to thriving could be identified for institutions to ground their programming and services.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of *thriving* that grounds this study is based in the literature on flourishing within the field of positive psychology (Keyes & Haidt, 2003; Seligman, 2011), as well as psychological models of student persistence (Bean & Eaton, 2000). Thriving students are engaged in the learning process, invest effort to attain educational goals, manage their time effectively, connect in healthy ways to others, are optimistic, and are committed to improving their community (Schreiner, 2010). Empirical evidence suggests that these qualities are connected to academic success and persistence to graduation, and also are amenable to intervention (Schreiner, McIntosh, Cuevas, & Kalinkewicz, 2013).

The Thriving Quotient was developed based on this concept of college student thriving and is a valid and reliable measure of students' academic, intrapersonal, and interpersonal

engagement and well-being (α=.89; Schreiner, 2016). Literature on student characteristics and campus experiences associated with college student success formed the basis for the original model which contain five scales of Social Connectedness, Positive Perspective, Academic Determination, Diverse Citizenship, and Engaged Learning (Schreiner, 2016). Studies indicated that students' levels of thriving differed by ethnicity (McIntosh, 2015); therefore, Ash and Schreiner (2016) conducted a path analysis of Students of Color at six faith-based institutions. To further that research, an analysis was conducted of ALANA students in both public and private institutions using structural equation modeling.

Literature Review

The contributors to the variation in thriving differ across race and ethnicity (Schreiner, 2014). Each of the major contributors that differed by race in any previous study were included as a predictor in the structural model created for this study.

One of the major contributors to the variation in student thriving during college is their sense of community on campus. Students with a strong sense of community feel a sense of belonging on campus, believe that their input matters, experience positive relationships with others, and are able to work with others toward mutual goals (Schreiner, 2010). For Students of Color, the primary contributor to the variation in their psychological sense of community is their level of spirituality, primarily because of its role as a coping resource (McIntosh, 2015). Thus, spirituality becomes an important variable in better understanding how to support ALANA students on dominantly White campuses.

In contrast to religiosity that focuses on a set of organized beliefs and engagement in specific practices, spirituality is defined as a sense of meaning and purpose (McIntosh, 2015). Astin, Astin, and Lindholm (2011) have found that spirituality plays a positive role in the lives of college students, leading to significant outcomes indicative of student success. In prior studies,

spirituality was twice as predictive of thriving in Students of Color as in White students (Schreiner, 2014). Thus, we included this variable in our predictive model of thriving in ALANA students.

Along with spirituality, institutional integrity is a significant contributor to the variation in sense of community, particularly among Students of Color. Institutional integrity represents the congruence between a student's perception of the institution and what had been presented during the admissions process (Braxton, Doyle, Hartley III, Hirschy, Jones, & McClendon, 2014). Students of Color whose experience during the admissions process leads to a false representation of the institution's commitment to diversity that is then lacking when they arrive to campus often feel they have been lied to by the institution (Lowe, Byron, Ferry, & Garcia, 2013). It is especially important for Students of Color to have a confirmation of institutional integrity, which is described as "mission congruence" (Ash & Schreiner, 2016, p. 49). Institutions that fail to deliver on their promises negatively affect student satisfaction, which can lead to student attrition (Schreiner & Nelson, 2013).

Although student-faculty interaction has long been a predictor of academic success (Kim & Sax, 2017; Mayhew, Rockenbach, Bowman, Seifert, & Wolniak, 2016), it does not always have the same benefits for Students of Color as it does for White students (Cole, 2007; Fuentes, Ruiz Alvarado, Berdan, & DeAngelo, 2014; Lundberg, 2010). In addition, a prior study on student thriving indicated that faculty are key cultural agents who can have a positive influence on thriving for Students of Color (Schreiner, Martinez, Miller, Keetch, & Drumm, 2018). In particular, faculty who were perceived as being sensitive and welcoming to diverse learners and perspectives within the classroom—and who included multiple perspectives within the curriculum—had a significant influence on the thriving levels reported by Students of Color.

Two additional student experiences contribute to the variation in their thriving in previous studies. For example, many students struggle to choose a major (Gordon, 2007) and a significant number change their major (Foster, 2017). Prior research has indicated that students who are sure of their major are more apt to thrive (Schreiner, Miller, Pullins, & Seppelt, 2012), as well as to experience greater academic success (Schaller, 2010). Thus, determining students' level of certainty in their major is part of the predictive model of student thriving in this study.

Finally, students' involvement in campus life can lead to thriving, yet those experiences also vary across racial and ethnic groups (Schreiner, 2014). Astin's model of student involvement (1984, 1999) has asserted that students who invest more energy in their campus experience are more apt to graduate. However, involvement of ALANA students on dominantly White campuses does not inevitably lead to success. Thus, this study added campus involvement to our predictive model to determine the extent to which it contributed to the variation in thriving among Students of Color in this sample. The research question that guided this study was: *To what extent do campus experiences and psychosocial variables predict thriving in ALANA college students, after controlling for their entering characteristics?*

Methods

Participants

The sample for this study included undergraduate students from 13 public and private four-year institutions who responded to an electronic survey about their levels of thriving and campus experiences. The survey embedded an informed consent, which limited participation to actively enrolled college students 18 years of age or older. The final dataset included 2,724 usable cases, of which 535 were ALANA students. Table 1 displays the ALANA student characteristics.

Table 1

Participant Characteristics (N=535 ALANA Students)

Item	*n*	%
Gender		
Male	143	26.7%
Female	392	73.3%
Institution was first choice at enrollment		
Yes	290	54.2%
No	245	45.8%
Lives on campus		
Yes	351	65.6%
No	184	34.4%
Degree aspirations		
Graduate school	389	72.7%
Bachelor's degree or less	146	27.3%
Race		
Black	100	18.7%
Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander	116	21.7%
Latino/a	228	42.6%
American Indian/Alaska Native	11	2.1%
Other	80	15.0%
Household Income		
Less than $30,000 a year	147	27.5%
$30,000-$59,000	185	34.6%
$60,000-$89,999	104	19.4%
$90,000-$119,000	62	11.6%
$120,000 and over	37	6.9%
Work for Pay during College		
Yes	342	63.9%
No	193	36.1%

Instrumentation

The Thriving Quotient (Schreiner, 2016) is a 24-item instrument that measures academic, psychological, and interpersonal well-being and engagement. Thriving has been established as a higher-order factor consisting of five latent factors: Engaged Learning, Academic Determination, Positive Perspective, Social Connectedness, and Diverse Citizenship. A prior confirmatory factor analysis indicated fit indices of $\chi^2_{(123)} = 651.15$, p = .000; CFI = .954; TLI = .943; RMSEA = .053 with 90% confidence intervals from .049 to .057 (Schreiner et al., 2013). Internal reliability of the instrument was strong, with a coefficient alpha of $\alpha = .89$ and scale reliability estimates ranging between $\alpha = .74$ to $\alpha = .88$ (Schreiner, 2016).

In addition to measuring thriving, the online survey that was disseminated to student participants assessed their psychological sense of community (PSC), institutional integrity,

spirituality, campus involvement, major certainty, and frequency of student-faculty interaction. Structural equation modeling was used to address the research question. Table 2 includes all observed and latent variables in the structural model.

Table 2

Description of Variables and Coding

Variable	Definition and Coding
Female (Female)	Self-reported Gender variable, where 0 = Male, 1 = Female, and 99 = Other. Recoded responses to Gender variable, where 1 = 1 (Female) and 0 or 99 = 0 (Other).
High School Grades (HSGrades)	Response to item: "How would you describe your grades in high school?" Self-reported variable with response options on a 6-point scale, where 1 = mostly A's, 2 = A's and B's, 3 = mostly B's, 4 = B's and C's, 5 = mostly C's, and 6 = below a C average. Reverse scored.
Graduate School Aspirations (GradSchool)	Response to DegreeGoal item: "What is the highest degree you intend to pursue in your lifetime?" Self-reported variable with response options on a 7-point scale, where 1 = none, 2 = bachelor's, 3 = teaching credential, 4 = master's degree, 5 = doctorate, 6 = medical or law degree, 7 = other graduate degree. Dummy coded variable where 4, 5, or 6 = 1 (goal is grad school bound) and 1, 2, or 3 = 0 (goal is BA or less).
(FirstChoice)	Response to item: "When you chose to enroll in this institution, was it your first choice?" Self-reported variable with response options on a 2-point scale, where 1 = yes and 0 = no.
Major Certainty (MajorSure)	Response to item: "How sure are you of your major?" Self-reported variable with response option on a 6-point scale, where 1 = very unsure, 2 = unsure, 3 = somewhat unsure, 4 = somewhat sure, 5 = sure, and 6 = sure.
Residential Status (OnCampus)	Response to item: "Do you live on campus?" Self-reported variable with response option on a 2-point scale, where 0 = No and 1 = Yes.
Works for Pay (WorkForPay)	Response to Work item: "Do you work for pay?" Self-reported variable with response options on a 4-point scale, where 0 = no, 1 = on campus, 2 = off campus, and 3 = both on and off campus. Dummy coded variable where 1, 2, or 3 = 1 (Works) and 0 = 0 (Does Not Work).
Financial Difficulty (FinDiff)	Response to item: "Considering the financial aid that you've received and the money you and your family have, how much difficulty have you had so far in paying for your school expenses?" Self-reported variable with response options on a 5-point scale, where 1 = no difficulty, 2 = a little difficulty, 3 = some difficulty, 4 = a fair amount of difficulty, and 5 = great difficulty.
Campus Involvement (CampusAct)	Response to item: "How often do you participate in events or activities?" Self-reported variable with response option on a 6-point scale, where 1 = never to 6 = frequently.
Faculty Sensitivity to Diverse Learners and	Latent variable comprised of three items: (1) "Instructors include diverse perspectives in class discussions or assignments, (DivDisc)" (2) "Faculty sensitivity to the needs of diverse students, (FacDiv)" (3) "The extent to which faculty encourage students to

Multiple Perspectives (FacDivPer)	contribute different perspectives in class (DivPersp)." Measured with a 6-point scale, where 1 = very dissatisfied to 6 = very satisfied
Student-Faculty Interaction (FacInteraction)	Latent variable comprised of three items: (1) "How often this year have you discussed career or grad school plans with faculty, (CareerFac)" (2) "How often this year have you discussed academic issues with faculty, (AcadFac)" and (3) "How often this year have you met with faculty during office hours (OfcHrs)?" Measured with a 6-point scale, where 1 = never to 6 = frequently.
Institutional Integrity (InstIntegrity)	Latent variable comprised of three items: (1) "My experiences on campus so far have met my expectations, (Integrity1)" (2) "The institution was accurately portrayed during the admissions process, (Integrity2)" (3) "Overall, the actions of faculty, staff, and administrators on this campus are consistent with the mission of the institution (Integrity3)." Measured with a 6-point scale, where 1=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree.
Spirituality (Spirituality)	Latent variable comprised of three items: (1) "My spiritual or religious beliefs provide me with a sense of strength when life is difficult, (SPIR1)" (2) "My spiritual or religious beliefs give meaning and purpose to my life, (SPIR2N)" and (3) "My spiritual or religious beliefs are the foundation of my approach to life. (SPIR3)" Measured with a 6-point scale, where 1=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree.
Psychological Sense of Community (PSC)	Latent variable comprised of four items: (1) "I feel like I belong here, (PSC1)" (2) "Being a student here fills an important need in my life, (PSC2)" (3) "I feel proud of the college or university I have chosen to attend, (PSC4)" and (4) "There is a strong sense of community on this campus (PSC5)." Measured with a 6-point scale, where 1=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree.
Thriving (Thriving)	First-order construct composed of the mean scores for the following subscales of thriving: Engaged Learning (ELI), Academic Determination (AD), Diverse Citizenship, Positive Perspective (POS), and Social Connectedness (SC).
Engaged Learning (ELI)	Mean score of four items: (1) "I feel as though I am learning things in my classes that are worthwhile to me as a person, (ELI1)" (2) "I can usually find ways of applying what I'm learning in class to something else in my life, (ELI2)" (3) "I find myself thinking about what I'm learning in class even when I'm not in class, (ELI3)" and (4) "I feel energized by the ideas I am learning in most of my classes" (ELI4) Each item is measured on a 6-point scale: 1=strongly disagree, 6=strongly agree.
Academic Determination (AD)	Mean score of six items: (1) "I am confident I will reach my educational goals, (AD1)" (2) "Even if assignments are not interesting to me, I find a way to keep working at them until they are done well, (AD4)" (3) "I know how to apply my strengths to achieve academic success, (AD5)" (4) "I am good at juggling all the demands of college life (AD6)," (5) "Other people would say I'm a hard worker (AD7)," and (6) "When I'm faced with a problem in my life, I can usually think of several ways to solve it (AD8)." Each item is measured on a 6-point scale, where 1=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree.
Diverse Citizenship (DC)	Mean score of six items: (1) "I spend time making a difference in other people's lives, (DC1)" (2) I know I can make a difference in my community (DC2)," (3) "I value interacting with people whose viewpoints are different from my own, (DC3N), (4) "It's important for me to make a contribution to my community, (DC4)" (5) "It is important to become aware of the perspectives of individuals from different backgrounds, (DC5N)," and (6) "My knowledge or opinions have been influenced or changed by becoming more aware of the perspectives of individuals from different

	backgrounds" (DC6N). Each item is measured on a 6-point scale, where 1=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree.
Positive Perspective (POS)	Mean score of two items: (1) "My perspective on life is that I tend to see the glass as 'half full,' (POS1)" and (2) "I always look on the bright side of things" (POS3N). Each item is measured on a 6-point scale, where 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree.
Social Connectedness (SC)	Mean score of six items: (1) "Other people seem to make friends more easily than I do, (SC1_R)" (2) "I feel like my friends really care about me, (SC2N)" (3) "I don't have as many close friends as I wish I had, (SC3_R)" (4) "I feel content with the kinds of friendships I currently have, (SC4N)" (5) "I often feel lonely because I have few close friends with whom to share my concerns, (SC5N_R)" (6) "It's hard to make friends on this campus" (SC6_R). Each item is measured on a 6-point scale, where 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree. Items 1, 3, 5 are reverse-scored.

Procedures

Data were collected electronically from 13 public and private institutions who participated in the Thriving Project (www.ThrivingInCollege.org), which was administered by Azusa Pacific University during the Fall 2017 term. The survey administration period and data collection method differed at each institution, yet data were typically collected during October and November of the fall semester and utilized a total sampling or stratified random sampling process. The average response rate was 18% across all institutions.

Results

Structural equation modeling consists of a two-step process of confirming a valid measurement model and then creating a structural model that best fits the sample data (Byrne, 2016). Measurement models were established through confirmatory factor analysis for each latent variable in the structural model. An omnibus structural model was established for the aggregate sample, including ALANA and White students, after evaluating modification indices and trimming the hypothesized model that was based on the literature and prior studies of college student thriving. We assessed the fit of the omnibus model by examining the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), which is acceptable if less than .06, and the comparative fit index (CFI), in which a result of .90 or greater represents an acceptable fit to the data (Hu &

Bentler, 1999). After trimming the model and evaluating modification indices, the final fit indices reflected a strong fit to the aggregate sample ($\chi^2_{(373)} = 2506.419$, $p < .001$; CFI = .936, RMSEA = .046, with 90% confidence intervals from .044 to .048).

Multiple-group analysis (MGA) was used to compare the pathways to thriving between ALANA students ($n = 535$) and their White counterparts ($n = 2{,}104$), utilizing this omnibus model. Each model path was sequentially constrained, and chi-square and CFI difference tests were used to compare the differential effects of each model path. The MGA indicated that the structural model for college student thriving varied significantly between the two student groups. Specifically, six paths were found to differ significantly between the groups. This study focuses on the paths between major certainty, spirituality, campus involvement, institutional integrity, and psychological sense of community.

Students' spirituality contributed more to their psychological sense of community on campus for ALANA students as compared to their White peers and had a greater total effect on thriving for ALANA students. Major certainty, campus involvement, and institutional integrity each contributed less to thriving for ALANA students than their White peers. There was a small difference in the direct effect of psychological sense of community on thriving for ALANA students as well.

A final structural model was created for ALANA students (n = 535) after identifying that the omnibus model demonstrated variance among the student samples. The final fit, after evaluating modification indices and appropriately trimming the model, reflected an excellent fit to the sample of ALANA students ($\chi^2_{(345)} = 728.359$, p < .001; CFI = .944, RMSEA = .046, with 90% confidence intervals from .041 to .050). The final model explained 73% of the variation in thriving in this sample (figure 1). Table 3 displays the total, direct, and indirect effects for the ALANA students.

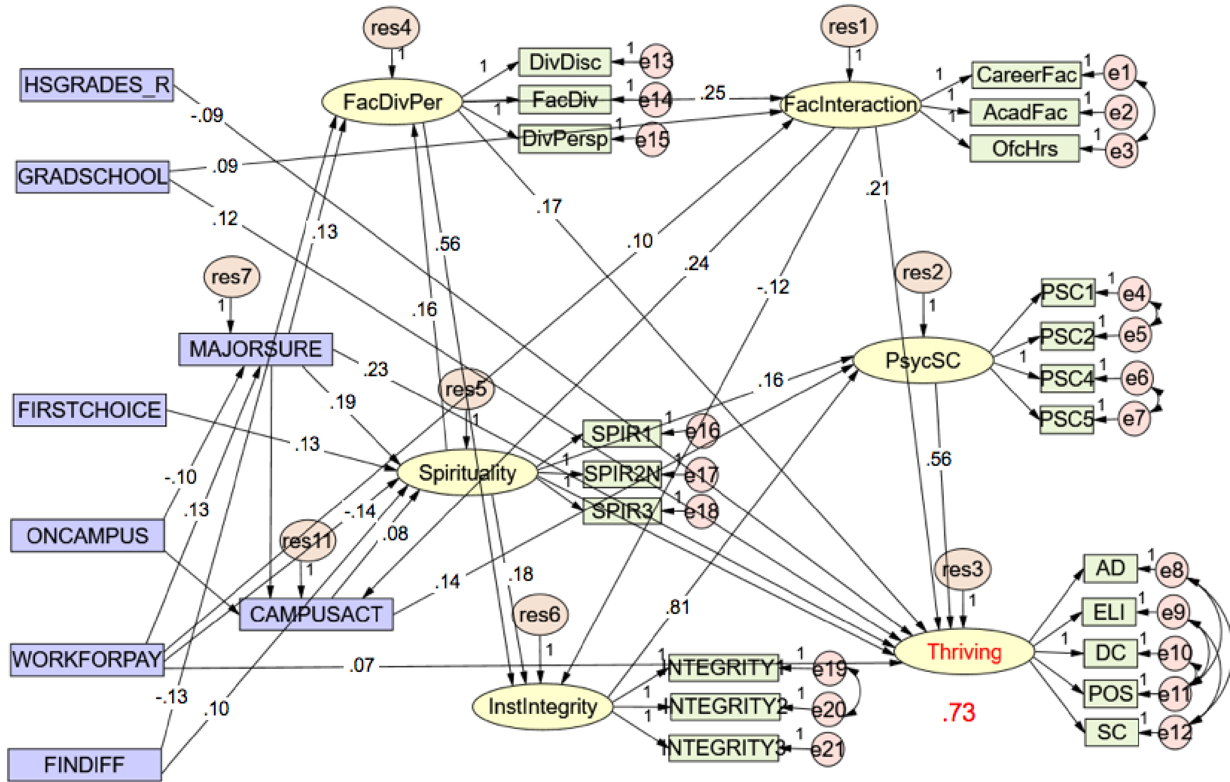

Figure 2. Final structural model for ALANA students.

Table 3

Standardized Indirect, Direct, and Total Effects on College Student Thriving for ALANA students

Item	Direct	Indirect	Total
Observed Variables			
High School Grades	-0.091		-0.091
Graduate School Aspirations	0.117	0.017	0.134
Institutional First Choice		0.046	0.046
Financial Difficulty		-0.025	-0.025
Employment in College	0.068	0.016	0.084
Residential Status		0.011	0.011
Major Certainty	0.231	0.138	0.369
Campus Involvement		0.107	0.107
Latent Variables			
Spirituality	0.116	0.246	0.362
Faculty Sensitivity to Diverse Students & Multiple Perspectives	0.165	0.299	0.463
Student-Faculty Interaction	0.211	-0.030	0.180
Institutional Integrity		0.455	0.455
Psychological Sense of Community (PSC)	0.562		0.562

The major contributors to the variation in thriving among ALANA students were their sense of community on campus (β =.56), perceptions of faculty sensitivity to diverse students and multiple perspectives in the classroom (β =.46), perceptions of institutional integrity (β =.46), major certainty (β =.37), level of spirituality (β =.36), frequency of student-faculty interactions (β =.18), and campus involvement (β =.11). Other input and environmental variables contributed to the variation in thriving either directly or indirectly through mediating variables. The faculty-specific results from this study (Schreiner et al., 2018) documented the importance of faculty in the lives of ALANA students, and this paper focuses on the effects of sense of community, institutional integrity, major certainty, spirituality, and campus involvement on thriving for ALANA students.

The final structural model indicated that psychological sense of community contributed directly and significantly to thriving. ALANA students who reported a stronger psychological sense of community on campus also reported higher levels of thriving. Three variables contributed to the variation in students' psychological sense of community on campus: institutional integrity (β =.81), spirituality (β =.16), and campus involvement (β =.14). ALANA students who believed the institution delivered on its promises, lived on campus, or had strong meaning and purpose in their lives were more likely to report a psychological sense of community on campus.

Major certainty contributed both directly (β =.23) and indirectly (β =.14) to thriving. The indirect effect was mediated by campus involvement (β =.09) and their subsequent psychological sense of community on campus (β =.14). ALANA students who were certain about their major were more likely to be involved on campus and report a greater psychological sense of community on campus, which then contributed to greater thriving levels. The indirect effect of major certainty was also mediated by perceptions of faculty sensitivity to diverse learners and

multiple perspectives in the classroom (β =.13). ALANA students who were more certain of their major were more likely to believe their faculty were more sensitive to diverse learners and welcoming of diverse perspectives in the classroom. The indirect effect of major certainty was also mediated by spirituality (β =.19) and subsequently their psychological sense of community on campus (β =.16). ALANA students who were more certain of their major had greater meaning and purpose in their lives and a greater psychological sense of community on campus. Two variables contributed to the variation in students' certainty of their major: living on campus (β =-.10) and working while in college (β =.13). ALANA students who lived on campus were less likely to be certain of their major; however, ALANA students who worked in college were more likely to be certain of their major.

Spirituality, or a student's sense of meaning and purpose in life, contributed directly (β =.12) and indirectly (β =.25) to thriving. The indirect effect was mediated by their psychological sense of community on campus (β =.16) and perceptions of institutional integrity (β =.18). ALANA students who had a stronger sense of meaning and purpose were more likely to experience a greater psychological sense of community on campus and were more likely to thrive. The indirect effect of spirituality was also mediated by students' perceptions of faculty sensitivity to diverse learners and multiple perspectives in the classroom (β =.16). ALANA students who had more meaning and purpose in their lives were more likely to believe their faculty were sensitive to diverse learners and multiple perspectives in the classroom and were more likely to thrive. ALANA students who were more spiritual and more likely to believe their faculty were sensitive to diverse learners and multiple perspectives in the classroom were also more likely to interact with their faculty outside of the class and thrive. Five variables contributed to the variation in ALANA students' spirituality: major certainty (β =.19), institutional first choice (β =.13), financial difficulty (β =.10), campus involvement (β =.08), and

working for pay (β =-.14). ALANA students who were more certain of their major, were at their first-choice college, were experiencing financial difficulty, or were involved on campus had greater levels of meaning and purpose, yet ALANA students who worked for pay were less likely to have meaning and purpose in their lives.

Institutional integrity contributed indirectly (β =.46) to thriving and was mediated by a psychological sense of community on campus (β =.81). ALANA students who had a positive perception of the integrity of the institution reported a stronger psychological sense of community on campus, which then contributed to greater thriving. Three variables contributed to the variation in ALANA students' institutional integrity: faculty sensitivity to diverse learners and multiple perspectives in the classroom (β =.56), spirituality (β =.18), and interaction with faculty (β =-.12). ALANA students who perceived that faculty were sensitive to diverse learners and inclusive of multiple perspectives in the classroom believed that the institution had delivered on its promises. ALANA students with greater levels of meaning and purpose were also more likely to perceive institutional integrity, yet those who interacted more with their faculty outside of class were less likely to believe that the institution delivered on its promises.

Campus involvement contributed indirectly (β =.11) to ALANA student thriving. The indirect effect was mediated by their psychological sense of community on campus (β =.14). ALANA students who were more involved on campus were more likely to have a greater psychological sense of community on campus and were more likely to be thriving. Three variables contributed to a students' involvement on campus: living on campus (β =.47), interacting with faculty outside of class (β =.24), and certainty of major (β =.09). If ALANA students either lived on campus, interacted with faculty outside of classes, or were certain of their major, they were more likely to be involved on campus.

Discussion

Consistent with the literature, this study indicated that ALANA students were more likely to thrive when they perceived that they belonged at their institution and believed that they were an integral part of their campus community (Braxton et al., 2014; Ash & Schreiner, 2016). Contributing factors to ALANA students' psychological sense of community included institutional integrity, spirituality, and campus involvement. Consistent with prior studies on institutional integrity and its relationship to psychological sense of community (Braxton, et al., 2014; Ash & Schreiner, 2016), if ALANA students perceived that the institution delivered on its promises, they were more likely to feel that they belonged on campus. In addition, this study suggests that when ALANA students approach their scholastic experiences from a spiritual foundation of meaning and purpose, it reinforces their connectedness to the campus community (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2011), and thus contributes to their thriving (McIntosh, 2015).

As previously indicated, students' involvement in campus life can contribute to thriving; however, those experiences may vary according to race and ethnicity (Schreiner, 2014). The results of this study underscore the impact that campus involvement can have for ALANA students: When ALANA students were more involved on their campus, they were also more likely to experience a sense of belonging, and were thus more likely to thrive.

Major certainty in ALANA students set off a cascade of positive interactions and experiences that influenced thriving (Schreiner, 2014). In particular, ALANA students who were confident in their major were more likely to view faculty as being sensitive to diverse learners and multiple perspectives within the classroom (Schreiner et al., 2018), and in turn, interact with them more outside of class. ALANA students who were sure of their major or field of study also experienced a stronger sense of meaning and purpose and had more positive perceptions of the institution.

Because psychological sense of community, institutional integrity, spirituality, major certainty, and campus involvement had a significant influence on ALANA student thriving, it would be wise for campus administrators and faculty to support student initiatives that facilitate major exploration, develop a sense of purpose, and encourage campus involvement. In addition, it would be wise to critically analyze the written, verbal, and visual messages that admissions personnel are sending during the recruitment process to ensure that the institution is accurately portrayed (Ash & Schreiner, 2016).

Limitations

The main limitation of this study was the homogeneous sample. The majority of the respondents were female, and all were attending four-year institutions. Although the findings accurately reflect pathways to thriving for ALANA students attending four-year institutions, the findings are not as generalizable to other types of institutions.

Implications for Practice

There are three foundational implications for higher education administrators who are committed to helping ALANA students thrive: We Are: The Institution, We Are: The Conversationalist, and We Are: The Community.

We Are: The Institution. Institutional integrity may begin during the admissions process (Ash & Schreiner, 2016), yet it flows to and is tested on every aspect of campus, especially during the first two years of college. If students feel they have been lied to during the admissions process, especially regarding an institution's commitment to diversity, they may be dissatisfied and leave (Braxton et al., 2014; Schreiner & Nelson, 2013). Every institution has a mission, vision, and values, yet there may be significant variation in how those are embodied on campus. Do professors, especially adjunct professors, "walk the talk" and embody the mission of the institution while in a general education classroom? Do peer mentors and resident

assistants encourage community building in and out of the classrooms and residence halls, as is promised in the glossy brochures and campus tours? The answers to these questions may be difficult to find, yet are critically important.

Institutional integrity was the largest predictor of psychological sense of community, which was the most significant predictor of thriving for ALANA students. The finding in this study confirms what had been found previously when researching thriving in Students of Color in Christian colleges and universities (Ash & Schreiner, 2016): institutional integrity is a key component to thriving for ALANA students. From being aware of the compositional diversity on marketing materials to understanding and living out the institutional mission, all higher education professionals assist with the integrity of the institution.

We Are: The Conversationalist. Engaging students in conversations about meaning and purpose is a critical aspect of thriving for all students, especially ALANA students. Spirituality has been found to be an important component of student success in college (Astin et al., 2011) and is a significant predictor of thriving in ALANA students (McIntosh, 2015; Schreiner, 2014). Higher education professionals must engage in potentially difficult conversations with today's college students about their lives and the decisions they are facing to encourage student growth and development. ALANA students in particular may feel isolated when facing significant decisions early in their college career, and higher education professionals can support them in the search for meaning and purpose. Some students may have had a strong understanding of their meaning and purpose from their families, yet in college they may be questioning the same as adults.

Engaging ALANA students in conversations about their major and career is also incredibly important. Most students will change their major in college (Foster, 2017), yet do students feel limited to discuss their major only with their advisor? Are students comfortable

engaging in questions regarding their major to faculty, staff, and students? Are staff comfortable asking students questions about their major? Is the myth of sticking with one major debunked on your campus, or is it still the hidden and unrealistic expectation that students must not change their mind? These questions are worthy of exploration. Students who are confident with their academic major are more likely to thrive (Schreiner et al., 2012) and have increased academic success (Schaller, 2010), and every interaction with a student matters. Being willing to engage in the difficult major, career, and life conversations can help students consider ideas, thoughts, and concerns pertaining to their future, within a positive and supportive campus community.

We Are: The Community. Higher education professionals embody the mission of the institution through institutional integrity (Ash & Schreiner, 2016) and engaging students through asking questions, yet they make the campus a true community through understanding the influence of a psychological sense of community and campus involvement for students. Sense of community includes a sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012) and feelings of ownership, emotional connections with others, and codependent partnerships. Each component not only varies by ethnicity but is also more challenging for ALANA students to experience on dominantly White campuses (McIntosh, 2015; Paredes-Collins, 2012).

Once faculty and staff have engaged ALANA students in meaningful questions, they can connect students to the broader campus community. Higher education professionals can personally invite ALANA students to join campus organizations or attend events once they know about the student as an individual person. This invitation can lead to relationships with other students and partnerships, and may have a goal of ownership or leadership in the organization or event.

Ensuring ALANA students are involved and have a psychological sense of community on campus are essential aspects for students to thrive (McIntosh, 2015; Schreiner, 2014). Although

these may be assumed to be a responsibility of student leaders or peers on campus, faculty and staff need to be aware of the potential barriers to involvement ALANA students may face. Professionals need to explore various day and time options for commuter and working students and be cognizant of catering to residential students (Schreiner, 2014). Additionally, campus leaders can consider the compositional diversity of the organizations and student groups on campus to determine if they are representative of the student body's needs.

Conclusion

Rather than taking a deficit approach to understanding the experiences of ALANA students, this study focused on a variety of student experiences that contributed both directly and indirectly to thriving in ALANA students. Overall, ALANA students are more likely to thrive when they experience a welcoming, inclusive, and engaging campus environment that was accurately reflected during the recruiting process. Such campus experiences can help ALANA students feel a sense of belonging, develop a sense of purpose, and be involved in campus activities, which ultimately lead to greater levels of thriving.

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