This study examined the experiences of Hispanic female undergraduate college students on academic probation or disqualification at California State University, Fresno. A semi-structured interview was used to collect data from three undergraduate Hispanic female participants on academic probation or disqualification. The sampling method was purposive and participants were recruited from the Office of Advising Services at California State University, Fresno. Results indicated that risk factors present in the participants included being an ethnic minority, not being academically ready for college, experiencing financial difficulties, working full-time while in school full-time, being a freshman who did not live on campus, and unsure of what major to select. The researcher recommended the use of intrusive academic advising to help probationary students become comfortable approaching their professors, gain confidence, learn to ask for help, learn how to find their own solutions, identify their goals, and increase their motivation.

Eleazar Ortega
May 2011
APPROVED

For the Department of Counseling, Special Education, and Rehabilitation:

We, the undersigned, certify that the thesis of the following student meets the required standards of scholarship, format, and style of the university and the student's graduate degree program for the awarding of the master's degree.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the many people who supported me in completing my thesis, beginning first with my family for giving me their continued support throughout this process. My father always believed I was capable of success, my mother always made education a priority, and this made a lasting impression. To Susana, who was a good role model for me growing up and always took the time to help me with school whether I asked for it or not. To Marilu, for keeping me grounded during the times I felt overwhelmed.

I would like to thank my chair, Dr. Juan Carlos González, for being a mentor to me and for agreeing, without reservation, to chair my thesis. I greatly appreciate all of the time and work he put in to help me. Special thanks to my committee members, Janell Tatsumura and Dr. Sarah Lam, for all of their time, help, and support. They are both great advisors and wonderful examples for the type of counselor I wish to be. I am also grateful for my friends, classmates, and every other person who supported or cheered me on as I completed my thesis. Lastly, I am thankful for my great advisors at my alma mater, the University of Southern California, for helping me during my undergraduate years. Fight on!
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Undergraduate college students placed on academic probation or disqualification (disenrollment from school) are in danger of not earning their bachelor’s degrees. Students on academic probation are those who earn less than a 2.0 Grade Point Average (GPA) (Lucas, 1991; Tovar & Simon, 2006). These students pose a risk for the retention and graduation rates of their higher educational institution if they do not get to a good academic standing of a 2.0 GPA and earn their degree. Most importantly, these students risk being disenrolled from their college or university and not qualifying for jobs that require an undergraduate degree. To help these students get to a good academic standing, institutions have offered a variety of intervention programs and some institutions structure their interventions after academic advising theoretical models, such as intrusive advising.

This research includes a review of the literature to identify what academic advising theoretical model works best for students on academic probation or disqualification. This research also examined the results of various prevention and intervention programs for students, identified any best practices, and identified what risk factors were present in students on academic probation or disqualification. This chapter began with a background of the issue of academic probation and disqualification, as well as the importance of retention rates. This chapter also described the purpose, rationale, assumptions, and limitations of the study, defined the terminology used in this research, and concluded with a summary. The research questions for this study are: (a) Are risk factors present in students on academic probation or disqualification? (b) Do academic advising intervention programs assist them in raising their GPA and getting to a good
academic standing? (c) Do probationary students at Fresno State find the intervention program sufficient to assist them? (d) What reasons do probationary students identify as the reasons for their current academic standing? (e) What campus services did students utilize before and after they were on a poor academic standing?

Background

The number of undergraduate college students on academic probation or disqualification poses a risk to the retention and graduation rates of institutions of higher education, as approximately 25% of all college students will be placed on academic probation during their time in college (Tovar & Simon, 2006). Retention rates affect the prestige of the university (Arredondo & Knight, 2005) and university and college institutions have been concerned with their student retention rates (Di Pietro & Cutillo, 2008; Humphrey, 2005; Mann, Hunt, & Alford, 2004; Schee, 2007). Research has shown that students are more likely to leave their institution after their first year of college than after any other year (Keup, 2005). Nearly 25% of students drop out after their first year and only about 25% of students earned their bachelor’s degree from the first college they attended (Pan, Guo, Alikonis, & Bai, 2008).

Student success in college is important for retention rates (Pan et al., 2008) as well as for the student. Students who do not earn their bachelor’s degree are more likely to earn a lesser salary than those who have an undergraduate degree (Shultz, Colton, & Colton, 2001). For years, colleges have studied factors leading to academic success (Joo, Durband, & Grable, 2009) to prevent students from being on academic probation or dropping out, but the issue remains a difficult one to solve (Shultz et al., 2001). Many factors influence why students are placed on
academic probation. Thus, it is important to study what leads to poor academic performance in college students that can lead to low retention rates (Hsieh, Sullivan, & Guerra, 2007).

One reason students earn poor grades is that they were not academically ready for college course work (Tovar & Simon, 2006). One study suggested as many as 50% of college students were not academically prepared when they began college (Balduf, 2009), and not being academically ready has been shown to influence degree completion (Lassibille & Gomez, 2008). Students who do not perform well academically are at risk of being placed on academic probation, disqualification, or dropping out. Data has shown that attrition rates can range from 20-70% depending on the type of college (Keup, 2005) and approximately 50% of students do not earn their undergraduate degree after 5 years (Keup, 2005).

Certain factors place some groups of students at risk of being placed on academic probation, disqualification, or from leaving their institution. Research has shown ethnic minority students are less likely to graduate from college (Shultz et al., 2001). After 4 years, approximately 30.5% of Hispanic students and only 19.4% of Black students had earned their bachelor degrees (Shultz et al., 2001). Overall, only 12% of Hispanics aged 25-29 earned a bachelor degree, as of 2007 (Rivas-Drake & Mooney, 2009). At-risk students are Hispanic, Black (Joo et al., 2009), and first generation college students. These students are at greater risk of dropping out of college (Joo et al., 2009) as Hispanic students and other ethnic minorities face more challenges while in school (Rivas-Drake, 2008). These facts continue to bring attention to the need for student assistance, especially because many students performing poorly in school do not seek these services on their own (Schee, 2007). Academic advising prevention and intervention programs seek to provide assistance to these students.
Institutions of higher education have responded to poor academic performance and low retention rates by implementing a variety of intervention strategies. These types of programs include workshops, residence life activities, orientation programs, mentorship’s, and new courses (Keup, 2005). However, institutions of higher education have experienced monetary setbacks in the last few years and have been receiving less funding for their programs (Humphrey, 2005). California has been experiencing budget cuts, therefore preventing programs assisting college students from receiving adequate funding (Hagedorn & Cepeda, 2004); these programs included those aimed to prevent student attrition. Despite this, colleges and universities have still placed importance on their student retention rates (Arredondo & Knight, 2005; Humphrey, 2005). However, even though importance has been placed on retention rates by implementing retention programs, the number of ethnic minority students who earn a bachelor’s degree remains low. This is an indication for institutions to reconsider their current programs aimed to assist students to continue successfully through college (Shultz et al., 2001).

California State University, Fresno (“Fresno State”) is one of the 23 California State University campuses (University Communications, 2010). At Fresno State, students with a campus or cumulative grade point average below a 2.00 are placed on academic probation, academic disqualification, or academic disqualification readmitted status (Office of Advising Services, 2010). Table 1 details how it is determined at a California State University if a student enters academic probation or disqualification.
### Table 1. Student Level Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Level</th>
<th>Units Earned</th>
<th>Good Standing (Campus and Cumulative GPA)</th>
<th>Probation (Campus or Cumulative GPA)</th>
<th>Disqualification (Campus or Cumulative GPA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>1-29</td>
<td>2.00 or above</td>
<td>1.99 to 1.50</td>
<td>1.49 or below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>30-59</td>
<td>2.00 or above</td>
<td>1.99 to 1.70</td>
<td>1.69 or below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>60-89</td>
<td>2.00 or above</td>
<td>1.99 to 1.85</td>
<td>1.84 or below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>90+</td>
<td>2.00 or above</td>
<td>1.99 to 1.95</td>
<td>1.94 or below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post B.A.</td>
<td>0+</td>
<td>2.00 or above</td>
<td>1.99 to 1.95</td>
<td>1.94 or below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>0+</td>
<td>3.00 or above</td>
<td>2.00 to 2.99</td>
<td>1.99 or below</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Depending on the student’s grade point average and total number of units earned, they may either be at probation or disqualification. A committee will review the transcripts of students on academic disqualification to determine if they should be allowed to attend for one more semester. Students allowed to return to Fresno State for one more semesters are on academic disqualification-readmitted status. These students must abide by a contract and no longer be in disqualification after one semester in order to continue at Fresno State. This contract requires students to attend a Maximizing Academic Potential (MAP) workshop, enroll in no more than 13 units each semester, earn a 2.00 GPA with no F’s or withdrawals unauthorized (WU’s), meet regularly with their faculty or academic advisor, and improve their overall GPA. Disqualified-readmitted students who meet the contract are allowed to continue at Fresno State (Office of Advising Services, 2010). Students not allowed to return to Fresno State will be disenrolled from the university and must petition to be readmitted back to the university. However, the current policy states that only students with 60 or more units earned will be allowed to return after being disqualified.
Purpose
The purpose of this study was to identify and understand students on academic probation and disqualification at Fresno State, and (a) risk factors present for them; (b) academic advising or general intervention strategies utilized to assist them; (c) additional academic advising intervention strategies they still needed; (d) their reasons for being in their current academic standing; and (e) services they utilized before and after they were placed on academic probation or disqualification.

Rationale
Probationary students typically do not seek interventions on their own (Schee, 2007), so institutions of higher education can assist them by requiring their participation in an intrusive academic advising intervention program. Current research has shown that a variety of intrusive intervention programs have promising results to assist students in raising their GPAs and getting to good academic standing. Advising centers that refer students to campus resources are related to retention rates (Schee, 2007). Only notifying students of their probationary status without offering any interventions are shown to have mixed results when measuring an increase of GPAs (Schee, 2007). In addition, past research has shown a relationship between the amount of time spent with an academic advisor and the student’s grade point average (Schee, 2007).

This qualitative study sought to provide data in areas that still lack sufficiency; such as how probationary Hispanic students perceive the reasons they were placed on academic probation and the effectiveness of different intervention programs. By interviewing probationary and disqualified Hispanic students at Fresno State, more information will be accessed regarding the effectiveness of the Maximizing Academic Potential workshops is given, the reasons these students
believed they were in poor academic standing, the warning signs they believed they exhibited beforehand, the campus resources they were knowledgeable about and the resources they utilized, and their perceived inadequacy of the intervention. This information will be useful to academic advisors by adding to existing research through the interviews with probationary and disqualified students. Since there is limited data regarding how Hispanics perceive their probationary status (Rivas-Drake, 2008), this study will add to the research by examining student responses to their perceptions of why they are in poor academic standing.

Assumptions
The researcher has three assumptions regarding this study. First, identifying any risk factors present in students on academic probation may help academic advisors refer other students with similar risk factors to appropriate campus resources in an attempt to prevent them from being placed on academic probation or disqualification. Second, understanding what probationary and disqualified students feel is lacking in their interventions can provide academic advisors with information on how to better assist these students to regain a good academic standing. Lastly, the information from this study can provide academic advisors with the knowledge of what theoretical model works best for working with probationary or disqualified students, and what type of prevention and intervention program works best.

Definition of Terms
Terminology specific to academic advising was presented in this report. Academic advising is defined as the process that allows students to evaluate their academic decisions and prepare for their academic future (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008).
At-risk college students are students who have factors that may indicate they will drop out or perform poorly in college, such as those who are disabled (Heisserer & Parrette, 2002), from a low socioeconomic status, ethnic minorities, on academic probation (Heisserer & Parrette, 2002; Swail, Cabrera, & Lee, 2004), or first generation college students (Swail et al., 2004).

The term first generation college student refers to a student whose parents or guardians did not earn a college degree (Seay, 2010).

Academic probation is the state a student is in when they earn less than a 2.00 grade point average (Lucas, 1991; Tovar & Simon, 2006). This restriction can be placed on their cumulative or campus grade point average.

Probationary students are those who have been placed on academic probation (Tovar & Simon, 2006).

Academic disqualification occurs when a student’s grade point average falls below the levels of probationary status (Office of Advising Services, 2010).

Retention rates refer to the percentage of students who return to school the following school year (Hawaii Institutional Research Office, 2003).

Nonadaptive help seeking refers to probationary students who do not seek out interventions on their own (Schee, 2007).

Adaptive help seeking refers to probationary students who seek out interventions on their own (Schee, 2007).

Underachievement refers to the disparity in achievement between how a student is expected to perform academically and how they actually perform (Balduf, 2009).

Intrusive academic advising is one of the theoretical frameworks of academic advising and is also called high involvement advising (Schee, 2007).
This method requires direct contact with the student and having the student take ownership of their academic standing (Schee, 2007).

*High involvement intervention models* refers to a type of intrusive academic advising where the student must sign a contract, meet with an advisor regularly, and attend workshops intended to better their academic behaviors (Kirk-Kuwaye & Nishida, 2001).

*Insight-oriented strategies* (Schee, 2007) involve one-on-one interaction with the student on academic probation. During these meetings, the advisor will have the student sign an agreement to improve their grades, give them information regarding academic probation, refer them to campus resources, monitor the student’s grades, help them create a plan of action where they decide how they plan to improve their grades, and discuss any reasons why the student performed poorly in college (Schee, 2007). These strategies are a type of intrusive academic advising (Schee, 2007).

*Developmental academic advising* is another theoretical framework for advising. This type focuses on the student as a whole and takes into account their personal, educational, and career goals (Schee, 2007). This is seen as a cooperative effort between student and advisor where the advisor and student make decisions together (Heisserer & Parrette, 2002; Schee, 2007).

*Prescriptive academic advising* is a theoretical framework for academic advising where the advisor makes choices for the student (Heisserer & Parrette, 2002; Schee, 2007) and the student heavily relies on the academic advisor (Heisserer & Parrette, 2002).
Summary

Assisting college students on academic probation or disqualification is a step to increase an institution’s retention rate, as they are at risk of being disenrolled. While many institutions of higher education offer academic advising intervention programs, a need exists for prevention programs to identify and assist at risk students before they get to a poor academic standing. There is a list of characteristics that define an at risk student in danger of being placed on academic probation or eventually being disqualified from college, such as being a first generation college student (Joo et al., 2009; Lehmann, 2007; Swail et al., 2004), coming from a low socioeconomic status (Hawley & Harris, 2005; Heisserer & Parrette, 2002; Oseguera, 2005), or not being academically ready (Lassibille & Gomez, 2008). Giving these students academic advising interventions will benefit them, as advising centers have been shown to benefit students positively (Schee, 2007).
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Student retention has been stated as being a priority and a responsibility of institutions of higher education (Arredondo & Knight, 2005), and many have been working to increase their rates (Mann et al., 2004) and studying their ethnic minority rates (Oseguera, 2005). Retention rates are important for institutions of higher education because society benefits from its population being college educated (Swail et al., 2004). Students who earn a bachelor’s degree earn more income on average than those with only a high school diploma (Swail et al., 2004). Research regarding retention rates has shown they are not the same for different groups of students (Hagedorn, Chi, Cepeda, & McLain, 2007). Chapman University attempted to pick out freshmen students who were at greater risk of dropping out using a model from the Higher Education Research Institute (Arredondo & Knight, 2005). This prevention program attempted to reach at risk students before they earned poor grades.

Different types of prevention and intervention programs have been implemented in many universities and colleges. Prior research has shown a student’s choice to stay in college can be heavily influenced by their having contact with a person from that institution (Heisserer & Parrette, 2002) and some institutions have implemented programs intended to promote mentorships (Shultz et al., 2001). Institutions have also implemented programs to promote student contact with professors, as this has been shown to relate to academic achievement (Schee, 2007). Also, it has been shown that the higher the level of involvement on campus the higher the retention rate (Baruch-Runyon, VanZandt, & Elliott, 2009).
Research in the last few decades has claimed academic advising programs can help in retaining students (Heisserer & Parrette, 2002). Academic advisors can assist at risk students who have difficulty adjusting to college, lack motivation, have poor study habits, or earn poor grades. Advisors can follow a theoretical model to assist and understand students, as well as implement prevention and intervention programs to assist probationary students, or students at risk of probation. This chapter will begin with a history of academic advising, as well as the role advisors play when assisting probationary students. Theoretical models in academic advising will be discussed, as well as the characteristics of students at risk for probation, Hispanic underachievement in college, and the reasons some probationary students are in poor academic standing. The chapter will end with a discussion of gaps in research.

**History of Academic Advising**

Being aware of the history of academic advising is necessary in order for advisors to provide the best advising (Gillispie, 2003). Academic advising has been a part of higher education since the beginning of colleges and universities (Gillispie, 2003) in 1636 at Harvard College when the president of universities would provide advisement, but academic advising was not yet defined (Cook, 2009). Advising groups began around the 1800s where faculty members took on the advisor role (Gillispie, 2003). At that time, advisors rarely worked with students through a theoretical model (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008). The large amount of college students in the 1960s to 1970s required a focus on advising and counseling (Gillispie, 2003). Academic advising has only been defined as a field for approximately three decades in the United States (Gillispie, 2003; Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008); a strife remains regarding how to universally define academic
advising (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008). Academic advising has been described as a career that counsels, guides, and mentors (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008). However, this description does not describe the entire role advising encompasses (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008).

**Academic Advisors**

Academic advisors are seen as those who can best assist students to make better academic choices (Heisserer & Parrette, 2002) and advising is meant for every student (Schee, 2007). Academic advisors are an integral part of college student development (Gillispie, 2003), but the appreciation of academic advisors’ work has been receding (Schee, 2007). Nearly half of institutions of higher education in the United States only utilize faculty to advise their students (Schee, 2007) versus full-time professionals as advisors. One survey found that 10% of full-time and 40% of part-time faculty advisors at community colleges never advised students (Ashburn, 2006). Often times, the problem with academic advisement is that the focus is only on selecting courses and informing the student how university policies affect students (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008) rather than going in depth about aspects of their life influencing their academic performance.

Other institutions utilize a combination of faculty members or professional academic advisors who are not faculty (Schee, 2007). Professional advisors are able to dedicate more time to assist at-risk students, be more available for students, and are more knowledgeable about campus resources to make referrals (Schee, 2007). Advising centers that refer student to campus resources have been shown to impact retention rates (Schee, 2007). Past research has shown a relationship
between the amount of time spent with an academic advisor and the student’s grade point average (Schee, 2007).

Academic advising is essential for first generation, under prepared, and students with indecision about their majors (Schee, 2007). Advisors must consider students’ ethnicity, whether they are a first generation college students, have jobs, commute, are academically ready for college, have any personal problems, and have motivation for attending college before they create interventions to assist them (Tovar & Simon, 2006). One method to assist probationary students further is to require the students to meet with academic advisors (Schee, 2007). Advisors are important in helping probationary students because they can identify what nonacademic factors contributed to their academic difficulty and set new goals (Schee, 2007). Advisors can use theoretical models to guide them in helping probationary students but the best manner in which to do so is still unproven (Kirk-Kuwaye & Nishida, 2001).

Theoretical Models for Advising

Different types of advising have been studied, and with mixed results (Schee, 2007). The most common advising models are developmental, prescriptive (Heisserer & Parrette, 2002; Schee, 2007), and intrusive (Schee, 2007). The literature has suggested advisors use a model that integrates the three types, rather than implement just one (Heisserer & Parrette, 2002).

Developmental advising requires the advisor and student to make academic decisions together (Heisserer & Parrette, 2002; Schee, 2007) and for the advisor to direct the student to appropriate referrals (Heisserer & Parrette, 2002). This approach brings attention to the student’s “educational, personal, and career goals” (Schee, 2007, p. 50) and aims to teach students how to independently solve their
problems. Since it is time consuming, many advisors cannot use this approach due to the large number of students they advise (Heisserer & Parrette, 2002).

*Prescriptive advising* involves the advisor solely making choices for the student (Schee, 2007). It is typically seen in a negative manner, because it requires minimal involvement by the student. However, it has been shown to be especially helpful when working with ethnic minority students because they see the advisor as a capable professional (Heisserer & Parrette, 2002).

*Intrusive advising*, also called high involvement advising, involves having the student meet regularly with an advisor, holding themselves accountable for their situation, and helping them find ways to get to good academic standing (Schee, 2007). The strategies are based on developmental and prescriptive advising models (Heisserer & Parrette, 2002). Several studies have shown the effectiveness of both intrusive and developmental advising (Schee, 2007). Intrusive academic advising is commonly used with probationary and at-risk students (Heisserer & Parrette, 2002). The literature has suggested using intrusive strategies when working with probationary students (Heisserer & Parrette, 2002). Another form of intrusive advising is insight-oriented intrusive advising.

Insight-oriented intrusive advising involves one-on-one contact with the student, referring them to student services on campus, creating a contract, giving the student information regarding academic probation, tracking their grades, and identifying what changes need to be made regarding their nonacademic factors (Schee, 2007). Nonacademic factors include their finances, and their familial and social relationships (Schee, 2007). This type of advising also encourages students to have an internal locus of control and see the connection between their choices and their academic performance (Schee, 2007). Students examine how issues in their relationships take time away or distract them from their studies. These
students then create a plan to address those issues and allow themselves enough time to work on raising their grade point average. The advisor will refer them to counseling on campus if they bring up issues that are more appropriate for them to address (Schee, 2007).

**At-Risk Students**

At-risk undergraduate college students can be defined by many characteristics including those who have disabilities (Heisserer & Parrette, 2002), are from a low socioeconomic status (Hawley & Harris, 2005; Heisserer & Parrette, 2002; Oseguera, 2005), on academic probation (Heisserer & Parrette, 2002; Swail et al., 2004), ethnic minorities (Arredondo & Knight, 2005; Hawley & Harris, 2005; Heisserer & Parrette, 2002; Swail et al., 2004), male (Arredondo & Knight, 2005; Astin, 2005; Oseguera, 2005), or first generation college students (Joo et al., 2009; Lehmann, 2007; Swail et al., 2004).

Those with financial difficulties are also at-risk students (Joo et al., 2009; Oseguera, 2005; Zalaquett & Lopez, 2006), as well as ethnic minority students who obtained student loans (Oseguera, 2005). Ethnic minorities are usually students with financial difficulties (Tovar & Simon, 2006). At-risk students are also more likely to have lower high school grade point averages (Arredondo & Knight, 2005; Astin, 2005; Oseguera, 2005; Trombley, 2001) and lower standardized test scores (Arredondo & Knight, 2005; Astin, 2005; Oseguera, 2005). Past studies have stated high school grade point averages can foresee college performance (Trombley, 2001). High school grade point averages and standardized test scores were said to be vital when looking at retention rates (Oseguera, 2005). At Los Angeles Southwest College, probationary students were
found to have lower high school grade point averages compared to students not on probation (Trombley, 2001) suggesting this may be true for other at-risk students.

At-risk students can also be those who are unsure of what major to select or those who are unhappy with their selected majors. One suggestion has been for colleges to provide assistance for undecided or undeclared students in an effort to increase retention rates (Schee, 2007). Other factors include a lack of motivation (Pan et al., 2008; Rhee, 2007), self-efficacy (Pan et al., 2008), and an inability to cope with the demands of college (Pan et al., 2008). Not being academically ready for college is a risk factor (Lassibille & Gomez, 2008), and ethnic minorities are usually underprepared (Tovar & Simon, 2006).

Students experiencing deep personal issues are more likely to earn poor grades and be at greater risk of dropping out (Schee, 2007). The University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa found that freshmen who did not live on campus were at risk of dropping out of college. Prior research has also stated both White and ethnic minority student’s benefit academically by living on campus (Oseguera, 2005). In response, the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa required freshmen students to live on campus their first year (Rampell, 2008). Another risk factor is not just if they live on campus, but whether or not they feel at home in the dormitories (Pan et al., 2008) or on campus (Rhee, 2007) and if they did not engage in campus events (Hawley & Harris, 2005).

Prior studies have also found that involvement in certain types of campus organizations can lead to poor academic performance (Baker, 2008). Hispanic females who participated in recreational sports teams, Hispanic males and Black males and females in Greek letter organizations, and Hispanic females in multicultural organizations were more likely to earn poor grades (Baker, 2008).
Studies have also indicated the significance of the student’s social relationships (Balduf, 2009).

Students who were at school full-time were found to see their academic advisor and meet with their professors more often than students enrolled as part-time students (Ashburn, 2006). Students who worked full-time compared to those who did not work, or only worked part-time, had less time available to study for their courses. Students who worked full-time were shown to be less likely to complete college and earn a degree than those who only worked part-time (Oseguera, 2005). South Texas College found that students who tended to enroll in many courses late were more likely to drop them or fail them, so the school removed the ability to register late for classes (Rampell, 2008). Trombley (2001) stated at-risk students were more likely to have children in their home than other students. At-risk students are of great importance to academic advisors (Heisserer & Parrette, 2002). Intervention programs for at-risk students are important, and have been common (Kingston, 2008).

**Probationary Students**

Nearly one fourth of all college students may be placed on academic probation at some point in their undergraduate years, and one community college found that as many as 35% of their entering freshmen students were placed on academic probation (Tovar & Simon, 2006). This is true for other community colleges as well, as more students may be placed on probation than at four-year universities (Tovar & Simon, 2006). Some students did not do well academically because they did not have adequate study skills (Schee, 2007). They were also likely to have been under prepared for college (Tovar & Simon, 2006), have low motivation (Tovar & Simon, 2006), or have an external locus of control (Tovar &
Simon, 2006). Probationary students are also more likely to work full-time (Hawley & Harris, 2005; Oseguera, 2005; Trombley, 2001).

However, probationary students are not necessarily students who were at risk (Tovar & Simon, 2006), but they may have characteristics in common (Tovar & Simon, 2006). Probationary students may have been gifted students who were underachievers and just performed poorly in college (Balduf, 2009). Studies have implied underachievers earned low grade point averages due to their motivation levels (Balduf, 2009). Probationary students might know the importance of learning academic skills to cope, but they may not take action unless they are placed in an intervention program (Kirk-Kuwaye & Nishida, 2001). They typically do not seek interventions on their own to prevent probation or disqualification or to improve their grade point average (Schee, 2007). These students tend to continue to perform poorly in their courses until someone intervenes on their behalf to offer them assistance (Schee, 2007).

However, some students on probation may get themselves to a good academic standing without any interventions, but a lot of these students may end up leaving or being disqualified and disenrolled from college if they do not receive adequate interventions (Tovar & Simon, 2006). The interventions most probationary students need is not just being given information on how to get back to good academic standing, but interventions from an academic advisor using student development theories (Tovar & Simon, 2006). Students probably did not get placed on academic probation because they were not aware of the policies, but because they may have needed assistance to identify their academic goals and increase their motivation (Tovar & Simon, 2006). One study found probationary students at a community college said they needed help from their college through academic counselors in order to get them back to a good academic standing (Tovar
& Simon, 2006). Another study found that probationary students wanted counseling and information from their academic advisors (Wlazelek & Coulter, 1999). Ultimately, probationary students may prefer different types of interventions based on whether they seek out assistance on their own or not (Schee, 2007).

Reasons for Probation

Simply asking students who leave college is not enough to understand the reasons and variables involved in their situation and decision (Kingston, 2008). Trombley (2001) found that 42% of students at Los Angeles Southwest College on academic probation listed personal issues as their reason for being on probation, 17% due to insufficient time, 11% due to strenuous classes, and 7% due to a lack of motivation. Trombley (2001) did not find any differences between probationary students and students on good academic standing in terms of motivation levels, but measuring motivation levels is still a concern for academic advisors (Henning, 2009). Academic advisors can utilize the Learning and Study Strategies Inventory or the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire motivation levels (Henning, 2009).

Hispanic Underachievement

Hispanics make up the largest population of ethnic minorities (Zalaquett & Lopez, 2006) and have been the largest growing ethnic group in the United States (Hagedorn et al., 2007). The number of Hispanic students entering college has also increased, but their retention rates have not (Hagedorn et al., 2007; Zalaquett & Lopez, 2006), as they do not graduate as often as most students of other ethnicities (Evans, 2009; Hagedorn et al., 2007). A variety of factors can explain this, such as facing financial difficulties. Hispanic students may face financial
struggles to pay for college that can get in the way of their academic performance (Rivas-Drake, 2008). Hispanic students typically do not receive assistance from their parents to pursue a college education because parents may not know about the process to obtain a degree or they do not have a college degree (Zalaquett & Lopez, 2006).

While ethnic minority students typically do not use campus academic resources (Shultz et al., 2001), they can be assisted to perform well in college. For some students, having a sense of connection to other Hispanic students helps to lessen the stress experienced from negative experiences in college (Rivas-Drake, 2008). A study found that Hispanic college students who had a mentor were more likely to be successful in college (Zalaquett & Lopez, 2006).

**Intervention Types**

Different intervention types exist to assist student at risk or on probation. Interventions work best when they are used as a preventative measure when students are first showing signs of struggle (Shultz et al., 2001). Typical advisement involves a student meeting with their advisor every semester to select their courses but this type of interaction can be bland (Schulenberg & Lindhorst, 2008; Shultz et al., 2001). In 1995, Kutztown University in Pennsylvania implemented an advising and mentorship program they called the *Adventor Program* where advising was done once a week to 19 students by 15 faculty members. The faculty advisors in this program held their students accountable by showing up to their residence halls if they missed their weekly meetings (Shultz et al., 2001). By doing so, they were able to monitor the students and identify if any were at risk for poor academic performance; these preventative measures are important in helping students succeed academically (Shultz et al., 2001). Results
of the Adventor Program suggested the one-on-one advisor interaction could positively influence students’ decision to stay for their second year in college, but a larger sample size was needed to note any impact on their grade point averages (Shultz et al., 2001).

Many different types of interventions have been in place to assist probationary or disqualified students return to good academic standing (Tovar & Simon, 2006). The results of a study showed that freshmen who participated in educational activities outside of class time were more likely to increase their grade point averages than students who participated in social activities instead (Balduf, 2009). Students who participate in campus organizations or events were found to be more likely to earn higher grades than those who are not as involved (Baker, 2008). If students interact with their professors and engage in study groups with classmates, they are likely to participate in social aspects of their college and therefore more likely to earn better grades and not drop out of their institution (Pan et al., 2008). The literature keeps affirming the use of intrusive academic advising with probationary students (Heisserer & Parrette, 2002). Programs that are aggressive have been shown to be more successful in increasing the retention of students (Shultz et al., 2001).

Intrusive advising interventions that included one-on-one contact, helped the student see what reasons they had for going into probation, and encouraged the student to take initiative and make choices for themselves the more successful they were compared to prescriptive advising interventions and other types (Abelman & Molina, 2001; Tovar & Simon, 2006). Intrusive advising has been stated as being the most effective to help retention rates when working with students at risk (Schwebel, Walburn, Jacobsen, Jerrolds, & Klyce, 2008). This type requires the advisor to continue monitoring the courses students select, the grades they have
earned (Schee, 2007), and require regular advising sessions (Schwebel et al., 2008). The use of a contract to assist students on academic probation has been shown to correlate with the increase of grade point averages, but results have not been statistically significant (Schee, 2007).

If the intervention is more intrusive, grade point averages increase more (Schee, 2007). Abelman and Molina (2001) stated research has not shown whether intrusive advising interventions persist over time. Simply suggesting probationary students seek the assistance of campus resources or advisement has not been shown to be enough to get them back to good academic standing (Kirk-Kuwaye & Nishida, 2001). The type of intervention programs offered depends on the view of the institution. Colleges and universities will offer hands off interventions if they believe the student can be in charge of seeking their own assistance (Kirk-Kuwaye & Nishida, 2001). If the institution believes students will not seek assistance on their own, they will offer high involvement interventions (Kirk-Kuwaye & Nishida, 2001).

Heisserer and Parrette (2002) suggested academic advisors integrate intrusive advising methods, implement online assistance for probationary students, receive adequate training, and conduct research to monitor the effectiveness of the interventions being used (Heisserer & Parrette, 2002). Heisserer and Parrette (2002) recommended that colleges can improve their interventions by having students sign a contract at the start and during the middle of the semester, creating a website for probationary and at-risk students, offering relevant training and professional development for advisors, and administering longitudinal research. Schee (2007) stated Prescriptive advising might not be effective because it does not have students explore the reasons that they went into probation. Social and academic involvement on campus increases the likelihood of student retention, as
well as a higher grade point average (Pan et al., 2008). The study conducted by Pan et al. (2008) also confirmed this statement. Studies have also shown participation in more than one program is important to earn higher grade point averages in their 1st and 2nd years, and increase student retention (Pan et al., 2008).

**Examples of Interventions**

An intervention program for probationary students at William Rainey Harper College was evaluated to determine whether it was effective (Lucas, 1991). Of the 278 students on probation, 215 participated in the study and they were interviewed after they participated in the intervention program. Results showed that 73% of participants returned the following semester, 35% stated poor study habits and working too much were the main reasons for their earning poor grades, and 85% stated their academic counselor assisted them to outline how to raise their grades (Lucas, 1991).

The Monitored Probation program at Lamar University was aimed to help students on academic probation or suspension (Mann et al., 2004). This intervention program offered academic advising, workshops, tutoring, referrals, and grade tracking. There were three different levels of interventions based on the grade point average of the student: low, medium, or high interventions. Results found participation in the highest intervention level was statistically significant than participation in the other groups. Students who participated in the Monitored Probation program were also shown to be more satisfied with their advising (Mann et al., 2004).

Kirk-Kuwaye and Nishida (2001) found that probationary students given high involvement intervention improved their grade point averages more than those who received a low involvement intervention. They also found that the
more involved the college was, the more effectual the intervention was. Abelman and Molina (2001) conducted a study to measure probationary student’s grade point averages over 3 years after participating in an intrusive advising intervention. They found that the grade point averages of students from intrusive advising interventions continued to increase 3 years after participation, confirming intrusive strategies are more effective than others when working with probationary students. Schee (2007) studied the effects of insight-oriented strategies on intrusive academic advising and found that students who participated in three to eight sessions significantly increased their grade point averages. However, this study only had 47 participants (Schee, 2007).

Some institutions of higher education do not just implement an intervention program, but a prevention program as well. In an effort to increase their retention rate, Purdue University researched what variables correlated with academic success or failure (Rampell, 2008). Next, they attempted to predict which students were at risk of failing courses to implement their prevention program. The variables they took into consideration were standardized test scores, grade point averages, and the number of times students logged in to their course websites. Once students were identified to be at risk, the student saw a red or yellow light on their website as well as received an email notifying them to meet with their professor for assistance. They found that students at a moderate risk level, who received the yellow light warning, earned a higher grade in their course than students who received a red light. Students with the red light warning were less likely to meet with their professor, despite the warning and email. The suggestion from this study was that students with the red light warning were less motivated than students with the yellow light warning (Rampell, 2008). Such preventative
measures will miss students who do not have the characteristics of the typical at-risk student, but this program saw a slight increase in retention (Rampell, 2008).

One university in the Midwest created almost 100 programs based on Tinto’s Student Integration Model and Astin’s Theory of Involvement and encouraged students to collaborate with other students and faculty, to get involved on campus, and seek academic help (Pan et al., 2008). They offered advising programs, orientation, and programs for first-time freshmen. They had 1,305 students participating in any one of their programs. They found that their orientation programs significantly increased student’s grade point averages in their 1st year; and female, White students, and students with higher high school grade point averages earned higher grade point averages than other students. They also found that participation in more than one program increased the likelihood of students earning a higher grade point average and being retained (Pan et al., 2008).

Another study looked at whether differences existed between students of different ethnicities or gender in whether or not they were on academic probation (Tovar & Simon, 2006). This study found that Hispanic and Black students on academic probation were more likely to encounter academic and social hardships compared to White or Asian students. They also found that Hispanic students were more likely to embrace intrusive academic advising (Tovar & Simon, 2006).

Gaps in the Literature

While various studies exist regarding different academic advising intervention programs, there is not sufficient research regarding the effects of these programs (Pan et al., 2008). There has not been substantial literature that describes theories to attempt to understand probationary students (Tovar & Simon, 2006). The literature regarding how Hispanics perceive their own academic
barriers due to their ethnicity and socioeconomic status is limited. This is crucial to understanding if these students feel at a disadvantage compared to other students, or whether they can encourage academic success rather than failure (Rivas-Drake, 2008).

While studies have shown students who are actively involved on campus are more likely to be academically successful, much of the literature does not specify the types of involvement (Baker, 2008). Many studies have shown that Hispanic students do not earn their undergraduate degree as often as other students, but these studies need to have a larger sample size in order to account for the diversity of Hispanics (Evans, 2009). Many studies examine the reasons college students drop out but more research can be done as to whether students drop out after being on academic probation or if disqualified students are likely to return to a good academic standing and earn their degree.

**Summary**

Academic advising has been in existence since the beginning of colleges and universities (Gillispie, 2003). Academic advisors can either be faculty members or professional advisors (Schee, 2007) and they assist students make educational decisions (Heisserer & Parrette, 2002). Academic advisors may use different theoretical models for advising, such as developmental, prescriptive, and intrusive (Schee, 2007). The literature indicates intrusive advising is commonly used with probationary students (Heisserer & Parrette, 2002). Probationary students are considered at-risk, and other factors that place students at risk include being disabled (Heisserer & Parrette, 2002), a first generation college student (Joo et al., 2009), or being an ethnic minority (Arredondo & Knight, 2005). Students on academic probation pose a risk to their institution’s retention rates, and nearly
25% of all college students will be placed on academic probation at some point in college (Tovar & Simon, 2006). Many institutions have implemented their own intervention or prevention programs to assist at-risk students. Their results indicate successful techniques to consider for further use.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Understanding Hispanic underachievement in college can assist in understanding these students if they get to a poor academic standing and placed on academic probation or disqualification. This study seeks to examine the academic advising intervention programs at Fresno State, and what may be lacking in order to help Hispanic probationary students. This chapter begins with the purpose of the study, and is then followed by descriptions of the participants, instrumentation, methods, research site, the researcher’s role, rapport, limitations of the study, and concludes with a summary.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify any risk factors present in the participants, who were all undergraduate college students on academic probation, and identify what academic advising intervention strategies were used to assist the participants to get back to a good academic standing. Also, the researcher reviewed the literature to identify what other academic advising intervention or prevention strategies could have been utilized to assist the participants further. The research questions for this study are: (a) Are risk factors present in students on academic probation or disqualification? (b) Do academic advising prevention or intervention programs assist them in raising their GPA and getting to a good academic standing? (c) Do probationary students at Fresno State find the intervention program sufficient to assist them? (d) What reasons do probationary students identify as the reasons for their current academic standing? (e) What campus services did students utilize before and after they were on poor academic standing?
Participants

Three undergraduate Hispanic female college students from Fresno State participated in this study, two were on probation and one was on academic disqualification. All three of the participants were full-time students and their ages ranged from 18 to 26. One participant was a freshman, one was a sophomore, and the third was a senior, based on the number of units they have completed. A freshman is a student who has completed zero to 30 units, a sophomore has completed 31 to 60 units, a junior has completed 61 to 90 units, and a senior has completed 91 or more units. One of the participants was transfer student from a community college, and the other two participants started at Fresno State as first-time freshmen. Student’s majors included Civil Engineering, History, and the blended Liberal Studies program. Their grade point averages that placed them on either academic probation or disqualification ranged from 1.6 to 1.9. One participant worked full-time while in college, one worked part-time, and one was unemployed. Two of the participants had at least one parent who earned a college degree.

The selection method was purposive sample and participants were recruited from the Office of Advising Services. A purposive sample includes participants that are determined by the intention of the study (Thompson, 1997) and is useful for qualitative studies because it allows for the selection of participants that represent a specific demographic characteristic (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). All participants were given pseudonyms to maintain their confidentiality. The first participant is referred to as “Emily,” the second as “Angela,” and the third as “Jessica.”
Researcher’s Role

The role of the researcher was to recruit and interview participants individually. The researcher is an academic counselor intern at Fresno State in the Office of Advising Services. The Office of Advising Services assists students on academic probation or disqualification, so the researcher recruited Hispanic undergraduate college students with whom she had advising appointments with who were on academic probation or disqualification. Three students on academic probation and two students on academic disqualification were asked if they would participate in this study and they agreed. At that time, the interviewer took down their information and later called them to schedule interview appointments. After reaching three of the five recruits, three interviews were scheduled. Before the interview, the interviewer e-mailed them the letter of introduction (Appendix A). Interviews were conducted by the researcher and held in the Henry Madden Library at Fresno State in a reserved group study room. Interviews were recorded and lasted approximately 30 to 40 minutes.

Instrumentation

The researcher wrote a letter of introduction (Appendix A) describing the purpose of the study and gave this to all participants before the scheduled interview via electronic mail, and a printed copy at the start of the interview. An informed consent form (Appendix B) was given to each participant. Participants read the form, signed it so the interviewer kept a copy, and a second copy was given to participants to keep. A questionnaire (Appendix C) with 15 questions was given to participants to ask about their high school educational background, family educational background, and college units completed. The researcher then conducted semi-structured interviews for further explanations of their experiences. Refer to Appendix D for interview questions. During the interview, participants
were asked about their experiences as a high school student, their experiences at Fresno State, and their reactions and thoughts about being on academic probation or disqualification.

Research Site

All participants were current undergraduate students at California State University, Fresno. As of the Fall 2009 semester, Fresno State had 21,500 students, where 84.7% were undergraduate students, 11.3% were graduate students, and 4.0% were post baccalaureate students. (Institutional Research, Assessment and Planning, 2011). Of the total number of students, 59.1% were female, 40.9% were male, 5.3% were Black, 0.8% American Indian, 14.9% Asian, 33.7% Hispanic, 34.8% White, 8.4% considered Other, and 2.1% were international students. Of all students (undergraduate, graduate, and post baccalaureate), 81.2% were full-time students and 18.8% were part-time students. Of all undergraduate students, 84.6% were full-time students and 15.4% were part-time students. The average number of units undergraduate students take is 13.3, and as of the 2008-2009 school year, 15.8% of students graduate in 4 years, 36.5% graduate in 5 years, and 48.0% graduate in 6 years (Institutional Research, Assessment and Planning, 2011).

The Institutional Research, Assessment and Planning (IRAP) office at Fresno State provides data about the university, such as the number of students placed on academic probation or disqualification. According to IRAP (Institutional Research, Assessment and Planning, n.d.), in the Fall 2009 semester, approximately 8.7%, or 1,587, undergraduate students were placed on academic probation or disqualification. Of the total number of probationary or disqualified students, approximately 45.1% (717 students) were freshmen, 13.1% (208
students) were sophomores, 27.7% (439 students) were juniors, and 14.1% (223 students) were seniors. Of these students, 84 were freshmen from the Lyles College of Engineering, 11 were sophomores from the Kremen School of Education and Human Development, and 31 were seniors from the College of Social Sciences. Meaning, 11.7% of freshmen probationary or disqualified students were from the Lyles College of Engineering, 5.2% of sophomore probationary or disqualified students were from the Kremen School of Education and Human Development, and 13.9% of senior probationary or disqualified students were from the College of Social Sciences (Institutional Research, Assessment and Planning, n.d.). These were the grade levels and colleges that the three participants fell into. Overall, in the Fall 2009 semester 154, or 9.7%, of all probationary or disqualified undergraduate students were from the Lyles College of Engineering, 4.6% (73 students) were from the Kremen School of Education and Human Development, and 11.5% (183 students) were from the College of Social Sciences.

In the Spring 2010 semester a total number of 1,336 undergraduate students were placed on either academic probation or disqualification. As the total number of undergraduate students was not available for the Spring 2010 semester, the researcher used the total number of students from Fall 2009 to approximate that for the Spring 2010 semester 7.3% of undergraduate students were on academic probation or disqualification. During the Spring 2010 semester, 41.4% (554 students) of probationary or disqualified students were freshmen, 17.7% (237 students) were sophomores, 27.3% (365 students) were juniors, and 13.4% (180 students) were seniors (Institutional Research, Assessment and Planning, n.d.). Approximately 12.5% (69 students) of the 554 freshmen were from the Lyles College of Engineering, 5.5% (13 students) of the 237 sophomores were from the
Kremen School of Education and Human Development, and 11.1% (20 students) of the 180 seniors were from the College of Social Sciences (Institutional Research, Assessment and Planning, n.d.).

**Rapport**

As each participant had met the researcher once before in an advising session at the Office of Advising Services, there appeared to be a rapport that allowed participants to speak openly and comfortably. However, during the interviews there were occasions of hesitations. The third participant, “Jessica,” expressed embarrassment being on academic probation but still appeared to answer the questions honestly. The first participant, “Emily,” hesitated answering a question but overall was comfortable to talk about her experiences. None of the participants chose to skip any of the interview questions due to feeling uncomfortable.

**Limitations of Study**

This study was qualitative in design, which means there is in-depth information of a limited number of participants (Komives & Woodard, 2003). The participants were all selected from California State University, Fresno on a voluntary basis through a purposive sample so participants were not selected at random. Also, the data reflected circumstances unique to Fresno State, including the policies, student demographics, and geographic location.

**Summary**

The purpose of this study was to identify any risk factors present in students on academic probation or disqualification, whether the intervention programs at Fresno State were assisting students in raising their GPA, what
students identified as the factors that contributed to their poor academic standing, and what students felt they needed in order to get to a good academic standing. Three undergraduate Hispanic female students were recruited through a purposive sample and data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Two of the participants were on academic probation and one was on academic disqualification. All interviews were conducted at Fresno State.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This chapter will discuss the findings from the analysis of student questionnaires and interviews. Participants were given a questionnaire (Appendix C) before the interview began. The table on the following page (see Table 2) summarizes the responses of all participants from this questionnaire. One of the questions asked what scores the participants earned in the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) but none of the participants remembered so that question was not included in the table.

Table 2 shows all participants had at least one sibling in college, but only one did not have a parent who had earned a college degree. The first participant, “Emily,” said her mother went to college and earned a degree in business and currently worked as a store manager. All participants received financial aid to cover the cost of school, and for only one participant did financial aid not cover the entire cost of school. All three participants stated having a cumulative grade point average between 3.0 and 4.0 in high school, and two participants earned at least one D or F letter grade in high school and they all reported that their high school GPA never fell below a 2.0. Two participants had an expected graduation date but one participant was unsure of when she planned to graduate. Two of the participants changed their major at least once, and one participant had been an Undeclared major at some point in college. The interview included questions regarding high school, their first semester at Fresno State, and their experiences being on academic probation or disqualification.

High School Experiences

Participants were asked how they felt about their homework in high school. Emily stated she felt it was “doable” but needed extra help with math. She
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Participant 1</th>
<th>Participant 2</th>
<th>Participant 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pseudonym:</td>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>Angela</td>
<td>Jessica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent with a college degree:</td>
<td>Yes, her mother</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any siblings in college:</td>
<td>Yes, at least one</td>
<td>Yes, at least one</td>
<td>Yes, a sister in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sibling</td>
<td>sibling</td>
<td>college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtain financial aid:</td>
<td>Yes, grants</td>
<td>Yes, grants and</td>
<td>Yes, scholarships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>loans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does financial aid cover all</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expenses:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school cumulative GPA:</td>
<td>3.0 - 4.0</td>
<td>3.0 - 4.0</td>
<td>3.0 - 4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D or F in high school:</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school semester GPA below</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a 2.0:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected graduation:</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Spring 2011 or</td>
<td>Spring 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fall 2011</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever change major:</td>
<td>Yes, from Animal</td>
<td>Yes from</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Science to Liberal</td>
<td>Undeclared to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Studies</td>
<td>History</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever Undeclared major:</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
said, “Anything with math and science are the biggest challenges for me.” She also stated she began Fresno State as a pre-veterinary major but changed it the Spring 2010 semester. The second participant, “Angela,” said her homework in high school was not hard, but found it tedious. The third participant, “Jessica,” stated the difference between her homework in high school was that teachers made sure students were doing it.

The interviewer asked whether they felt their homework in high school helped prepare them for the course work in college. Emily immediately responded with, “No!” (Interview, January 31, 2011). The difference she noted is that college requires more reading, assignments, and papers than in high school. She also stated that back in high school she did not have to work but she does now that she is in college. If she gets home from work and is too tired, then she will not study nor do her course work. She stated that, “Teachers babysat you in high school and here, it’s like, do it yourself. If you screw up it’s your fault, you pay for school it’s not our problem” (Interview, January 31, 2011). Angela said she did feel her homework in high school helped prepare her for college work. However, “There are just more papers to write, and they’re a little more strict on the format… especially in the history department” (Interview, February 1, 2011). Jessica said her homework did prepare her for college because teachers in high school constantly reminded her to do her homework, so she got into the habit of doing it in college. At her high school, Jessica had a homework contract to follow, which helped put her in the routine of completing her homework. She also said some of the content from her science courses were being taught in her college science course.

The interviewer asked Angela what her reasons were for applying to college and she said it was because she did not get accepted into the Navy. She
stated, “I missed all the college application deadlines because I thought I was a shoe-in, everyone gets in, and I wasn’t accepted in so I just had to do a last resort and go to a community college” (Interview, February 1, 2011). The interviewer then asked her how long she attended a community college before coming to Fresno State and she replied, “Probably 4 years because I went on-and-off and took a year off, and then I went back to finish up everything to get into [Fresno] State” (Interview, February 1, 2011). Angela stated her first semester at Fresno State was in Spring 2004. When asked the same question, Jessica replied, “I knew if I didn’t go to college I would never really do anything” (Interview, February 2, 2011). She continued to say she did not think she could do anything without getting an education.

**Fresno State Experiences**

Interview questions related to the first semester at Fresno State, whether they were required to complete math or English remediation, and if they worked while attending college. Participants were also asked if they had ever met with a professor to discuss their grade in their course, if they had participated in study groups with classmates, and if they knew what type of learner they are. They were also asked about their study habits and how they studied for exams. Other questions included how they chose their major, if they were satisfied with their major, what motivated them to be in school, what campus resources they utilized, and if they felt any courses were difficult for them.

The table on the next page (see Table 3) lists the responses of participants when asked if they have ever utilized the Learning Center, Support Net, or were involved in any campus organization. Participants were also asked if they felt comfortable seeking resources on campus if they feel they need them. Emily
### Table 3. Knowledge of Campus Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus Resource</th>
<th>Participant 1</th>
<th>Participant 2</th>
<th>Participant 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning Center</td>
<td>Has utilized this resource</td>
<td>Never utilized this resource but knows what they offer</td>
<td>Utilized services once for Biology course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Net</td>
<td>Did not know about this resource</td>
<td>Did not know about this resource</td>
<td>Did not know about this resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clubs/Organizations</td>
<td>Pre-Vet club, Build-a-teacher club, Welcome and Guidance Committee</td>
<td>Not involved in any organization and said she did not have an interest</td>
<td>Not involved in any organization but is interested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major advisor</td>
<td>Has met with her Liberal Studies major advisor twice</td>
<td>Has met with advisor once</td>
<td>Has met with advisor once</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Has utilized Financial Aid, Career Services, and the Office of Advising Services</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Writing Center one-unit tutorial course</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
paused, and then answered, “Yes” (Interview, January 31, 2011). When the researcher asked who she turns to for help with school, she said no one. She also mentioned, “I guess I’m still shy about that. I don’t want to seek anybody’s help, I want to be able to figure it out on my own and sometimes I know I can’t do it but I’m so stubborn” (Interview, January 31, 2011). Another statement she made was that, “Seeking help is very intimidating” (Interview, January 31, 2011). Angela said she has utilized resources on campus, such as the Financial Aid office, but said, “It’s kind of a pain sometimes, especially Financial Aid” (Interview, February 1, 2011). When asked why she felt that way Angela said it was because of the long lines and the difficulty she has encountered when calling their office. Jessica replied, “Yes,” to the question as she had sought help from the Office of Advising Services and Writing Center (Interview, February 2, 2011).

**Emily**

The interviewer asked about Emily’s first experiences at Fresno State. During her first semester, Emily did “very well” in her classes and had mostly A’s in her courses (Interview, January 31, 2011). She said it was because she did not have a job and “stayed at the dorms so it was just like a walk [sic] distance” (Interview, January 31, 2011). She also took out a loan to pay for her housing expenses her 1st year and this helped because she did not have to work and “could just do homework the rest of the night and once I was done I could do whatever I wanted” (Interview, January 31, 2011). However, in her second semester she was “struggling with biology,” and said, “It was intense” (Interview, January 31, 2011). When asked about her experience living in the dormitories on campus, Emily replied, “Living on campus was fun, I liked living on campus. I got to meet
new people’s [sic], I made friends at my dorms… it was always fun to be around those people” (Interview, January 31, 2011).

The interviewer asked if she was required to complete English or math remediation her 1st year at Fresno State, and Emily stated she completed English and math remediation her freshman year. Participants were then asked if they worked while in school, and Emily stated she worked 30 hours per week the semesters that placed her in academic probation, and she currently worked 30 hours per week. Participants were asked if they have ever met with a professor to discuss how they are doing in the course. Emily replied with, “No, I was scared to go talk to them” (Interview, January 31, 2011). She specifically said she was scared to approach her animal science professor, and also stated, “I was just like, dumbfounded. I was like, I don’t know what to ask, I don’t know what lymph nodes is [sic]” (Interview, January 31, 2011). However, she did say that she would go to her biology professor’s office hours after exams to review questions she had missed. She also mentioned that with her animal science course, “It would go in one ear and out the other ‘cause [sic] I wouldn’t—I don’t understand it” (Interview, January 31, 2011).

The researcher asked if they had ever participated in study groups with classmates, and Emily said, “With work I couldn’t do any study groups. I would work every single day of the week, if not I would have a day in the middle off, or two” (Interview, January 31, 2011). The next question was regarding how they study for courses. Emily stated, “I read, I re-read to see if I understand it the second time. After the second time I’ll be like, ok I understand it a little bit but I’m still lost and I don’t know what to do” (Interview, January 31, 2011). When asked if she writes notes, Emily said, “I write notes sometimes, but I think I would
just look more at the PowerPoints and the little things I would write on the side… and I would study vocabulary with flash cards” (Interview, January 31, 2011).

Participants were asked if they know how they learn best. Emily stated she is a “hands-on learner, I know that from experience. I can’t just sit there and read a book. If it’s English…I could probably do that, but I am a hands-on learner” (Interview, January 31, 2011). The researcher asked how they chose their major, and Emily stated, “Career Services helped me out… I went to Career Services first and told them I was looking into switching my major, and what I could do to switch it” (Interview, January 31, 2011). Career Services assessed her skills and helped her in her decision to choose Liberal Studies to be an elementary school teacher. Participants were asked if they felt satisfied with their current major and Emily replied by saying she likes her liberal studies major courses a lot better. She also said, “I have, uh, less trouble with them ‘cause there’s not so much of the math and the science… the math course that I am taking is pretty hard though. I still have to pass that class” (Interview, January 31, 2011). Emily had previously taken this math course a past summer and did not earn a passing grade so she is repeating it during the current Spring 2011 semester.

The researcher asked participants what motivated them to stay in school. Emily said her parents are her motivation because, “I don’t want to disappoint them. My mom always calls, ‘When are you gonna [sic] finish? When are you gonna [sic] finish? When are you gonna [sic] finish? Because your cousin is a year younger than you and he’s already gonna [sic] finish’” (Interview, January 31, 2011). She continued with, “It’s also for me a little bit, but mostly my parents” (Interview, January 31, 2011).

Participants were asked if they felt any courses at Fresno State were difficult for them. Emily stated, “It was mostly just the sciences I had trouble
with, and political science” (Interview, January 31, 2011). She continued to talk about the political science class and said, “I don’t know why I didn’t do so well in that class. I had trouble coming to class, I think, I don’t know for what reasons” (Interview, January 31, 2011). Later she stated she did not remember that course and, “I don’t think I woke up. I think it was an early morning class, I tend to have those a lot... because those are the only times available and because I have to work from five until whenever” (Interview, January 31, 2011). She then spoke about the biology class she struggled with and stated, “My biology professor… the way he taught was different than his tests” (Interview, January 31, 2011). She mentioned that in order to do well in that course she had to read the book but, “The book was so boring I would sometimes fall asleep while I was reading the book. But, even if I read … the whole chapter, I would forget what I had read the previous page ‘cause I could not retain it” (Interview, January 31, 2011).

Regarding her animal science course she also said, “The professor also taught a completely different way” (Interview, January 31, 2011). Their exams were essay questions so she stated, “If I don’t understand what a certain thing is I don’t know how to explain it on paper” (Interview, January 31, 2011).

**Angela**

Angela said her first semester at Fresno State felt scrambled because she received her acceptance letter late. Due to this, she was not able to have many options for courses and as she stated, she enrolled in “whatever I could just get into” (Interview, February 1, 2011). Another restriction she had was that she had to be a full-time student in order to have health insurance through her parents. She then stated, “So, it was just a grab bag of classes so when I started I didn’t enjoy any of them” (Interview, February 1, 2011). Regarding her courses, she said she
took an accounting class at night but never had any intention of being a business major. Therefore, this accounting class would just be an elective course for her. She continued by saying, “Because I had no interest I just wouldn’t go and ended up failing and then it became a game of catch up” (Interview, February 1, 2011). The game of catch up refers in attempting to now raise her GPA.

Angela was not required to complete remediation requirements at Fresno State, as she began as a transfer student. Angela worked full-time (at least 40 hours) per week during the semester that placed her on disqualification, and at the time of the interview she worked eight to 12 hours per week. The researcher asked if she had ever participated in study groups with classmates and Angela said she had not participated in any study group. The interviewer then asked how she studied for courses, and Angela responded by saying, “A lot of it is just reading… If you read it you know what’s going on. Half my classes don’t use exams, it’s just all papers… so there isn’t much studying” (Interview, February 1, 2011). The interviewer asked how she learns best, and Angela replied, “I would assume I’m more of a visual person because I’ve noticed when we have a PowerPoint up on the board it’s easier for me to take notes even if it’s a vague PowerPoint (Interview, February 1, 2011).

The next questions asked how she chose her major. Angela said, “I was kind of stuck between biology, math, and history and my dad said, ‘Don’t go with what you think is going to make the most money out of college, go with what you have an interest in’” (Interview, February 1, 2011). She continued with:

Everyone kept asking me, ‘If you go into history are you going to go into teaching?’… I’ve never wanted to be a teacher—ever. So, my dad just told me there are people at work who make $150,000 selling tomato paste with degrees in philosophy.’ So pretty much as long as you have something general, and you don’t
want to be a doctor and go into history you’re fine. Just choose what you want to study and what has your interest, and so I realized all the classes that I did really well in and actually showed up to all the time were my history courses” (Interview, February 1, 2011).

To respond whether she was satisfied with her major, Angela said, “I’m satisfied, yah, it’s a cool, everything’s been, like really fun… but the reading and the paper writing, the work itself is kind of… hard and a bit time consuming” (Interview, February 1, 2011). The next question asked what motivated her to stay in school and Angela replied:

Just the issue of just having something undone hanging over my head, I don’t think I can deal with that much longer, it’s just, I’ve already invested so much time and money into this and just to walk away and to do nothing… What motivated me to even start going back to school was when I had, like, an eight dollar an hour job doing a lot of work, working 40 hours a week (Interview, February 1, 2011).

She continued to speak about this job and said, “This is all I’m going to be able to do if I don’t go back [to college] and so I did” (Interview, February 1, 2011). She continued to discuss about her experience as a readmitted student after she was disqualified and said, “I just kind of took too much at once and that’s how I got dropped from Fresno State and now it’s just a matter of finishing what I started” (Interview, February 1, 2011).

The next question was whether she felt any courses at Fresno State were too difficult. Angela responded by saying, “I don’t think so much difficult as just, either a lack of interest or just a lack of organization on both [my and] the professor’s part. The content hasn’t really been too difficult” (Interview, February 1, 2011). She mentioned a linguistics course she took the previous semester and
how the way the syllabus was organized “everyone was confused and constantly asking, like, ‘What does that mean,’ and ‘When is this even supposed to be due?’ I got a B in the course but it was still frustrating trying to figure it out” (Interview, February 1, 2011). Angela spoke about the main factors that contributed to her academic standing. She said, “A big thing was the work [working full-time] and school together, that alone takes up a lot of time” (Interview, February 1, 2011). She stated another reason was, “The whole, like, social aspect. I had just turned 21, so the little time I had I would just try to, like, go out and have fun, and just kind of experience everything… studying took a back burner” (Interview, February 1, 2011). She then continued by saying, “I went to class, but I didn’t do anything outside of class” (Interview, February 1, 2011).

Jessica

Jessica was currently in her second semester at Fresno State at the time of the interview and responded to the question about her first experiences by saying, “It was really different… I just felt like a little speck, you know. You’re literally responsible for yourself and, like, it was just really different from high school” (Interview, February 2, 2011). She also stated that she felt some professors did not care if she attended class or not but others did and would call out students who miss class. Regarding her experiences, she said, “I liked it, but the only thing that was different was that the pace is so fast… so it makes me, like, really nervous” (Interview, February 2, 2011). Angela does not live in the dorms; she lives near campus with her sister who also attends Fresno State. The interviewer asked Jessica if she felt comfortable on campus, and she replied, “I feel more comfortable knowing the campus… I don’t have, like, a set of friends; it’s more
like different friends” (Interview, February 2, 2011). She added that she has different groups of friends that she has met from different classes.

Jessica completed English remediation her first semester at Fresno State. Jessica stated she was unemployed but was currently looking for work. The interviewer asked Jessica if she had ever met with a professor to discuss how she is doing in the course, and Jessica said she had not. She also said, “I’m, like, nervous and scared. Like, I’m intimidated to go in” (Interview, February 2, 2011). She mentioned that in the previous semester (Fall 2010) her history professor had office hours where she offered help to review for the exams but the participant did not attend and said, “I don’t know why, she was just like really intimidating, so I don’t know” (Interview, February 2, 2011). Regarding not attending her history professor’s office hours, she continued to say, “I really wish I would have went [sic], because I probably would have not been on academic probation” (Interview, February 2, 2011). Jessica felt she could have earned higher than a D grade in that history course if she had gone to her professor’s office hours. She also said, “I knew I should have went [sic] but, just, I don’t know. She made me feel so scared, like, it wasn’t just me, the whole class felt, like, intimidated by her” (Interview, February 2, 2011).

The researcher asked if she had ever participated in study groups with classmates and Jessica said she did last semester, the Fall 2010 semester, for her history course. She also said she wanted to set a study group for the current semester for her math course because she knows she can learn more from other people and she will not feel as incapable. Regarding her math course, she said, “I really feel stupid in that class because everyone gets it. I guess there’s some people in there that feel like me, but they just don’t want to say anything either” (Interview, February 2, 2011). The interviewer asked if study groups helped her,
and Jessica said yes, but regarding organizing them she said, “It’s hard to, like, ‘Oh, you want to have a study group?’ Cause I guess you get, like, embarrassed” (Interview, February 2, 2011).

The interviewer asked Jessica how she studied for courses and she said she uses notes from the textbooks, tries to guess what information will be on exams, makes flash cards, and reads and re-reads. However, she said when it comes to taking exams she gets nervous and does not do well. To respond to the question of how she learns best, Jessica stated she learns best when information is hands-on instead of “just sitting there and watching” because it helps her remember the material that way (Interview, February 2, 2011).

The next questioned asked how she chose her major and Jessica stated she always wanted to work in architecture and chose civil engineering because she thought that was the degree she needed when she learned civil engineering was a different field than architecture. She decided to stay in civil engineering because she believed it might be something she wants to do. In response to whether she was satisfied with her major, Jessica said she could not answer because she has not done anything with it yet, but she was meeting with someone from the Air Force to talk about career opportunities with them to see if she was interested. Ultimately, Jessica said she wants to find a way to utilize her degree for a job she loves. To answer the question of what motivated her to stay in school, Jessica said her motivation stemmed from her opinion that one cannot do much without a degree and school. She said she has noticed that even entry-level positions ask for a bachelor’s degree, and she has just never considered doing anything else.

Jessica responded to the question of whether any courses were too difficult by saying, “Right now I seriously think my math class is crazy hard and everyone makes it seem like it’s so easy so it makes me nervous that I don’t understand it”
The math course she is describing is Math 45 titled, “What is Mathematics?” She continued to say, “It’s mostly different math that I’ve never done before” (Interview, February 2, 2011). She mentioned that for math courses she is used to learning and applying formulas but that Math 45 is not structured in that manner. She also stated, “I had a history class, it wasn’t hard but it was just boring,” and “it was hard to concentrate because it was just super boring” (Interview, February 2, 2011).

Experiences of Being a Probationary or Disqualified Student

The interview included questions about their experiences when they first found out they were placed on academic probation or disqualification. Emily stated she was placed on academic probation after her grades from the Spring 2010 semester. She found out she was on academic probation after receiving an email notifying her of her academic standing. In regards to that email, she said, “I read it and was like, oh my Jesus! I don’t know, I was frustrated, I did not want to get there” (Interview, January 31, 2011). The interviewer asked her to clarify about her frustration and Emily stated, “I was frustrated at myself. Frustrated I let myself get there, like every semester since the… start, that I’ve been here it’s just declining slowly” (Interview, January 31, 2011). The participant was referring to her GPA as declining slowly after each semester. Emily also stated she did not know she would be on academic probation before she was notified. She also stated, “I didn’t know what GPA you had to get to get on probation. It was a shocker… I was a little bit worried that something might happen, I might get expelled and not be able to come back” (Interview, January 31, 2011).

Angela said she was first placed on academic disqualification in 2006 or 2007. When asked how she knew she was on academic disqualification she stated,
“I tried to register and it said there was a hold, and I looked into the hold and it said I was, like, academically disqualified and I thought that was a euphemism for academic probation” (Interview, February 1, 2011). She continued to say, “So I went to meet a counselor and they told me, ‘You have to wait a while and work on your GPA.’ I had no idea that I was on probation or disqualification” (Interview, February 1, 2011). The interviewer asked if at the time she did not understand the differences between academic probation or disqualification, and Angela responded, “I didn’t even know there was a such thing as probation at the state level, I just thought, like, if you were here you got in and if you paid your tuition you were in” (Interview, February 1, 2011). She also said, “I didn’t think that GPA mattered as far as being allowed to stay” (Interview, February 1, 2011).

Jessica learned she was on academic probation through an email. After she read it she was immediately worried about whether she still qualified for financial aid. She stated that she was aware that if her GPA went below a 2.0 she would be placed on academic probation, but she said, “I seriously thought that I was just gonna [sic], like, barely get by… I don’t know, I never thought that I would even be on academic probation because in high school I was never even close to that” (Interview, February 2, 2011). She said she was scared after learning she was on academic probation and worried about “getting kicked out this semester” if she earned a D or an F in a course (Interview, February 2, 2011). The interviewer asked if she knew the difference between academic probation and disqualification, and Jessica did not. She also said, “I was worried about telling my parents… I was really embarrassed” (Interview, February 2, 2011).

In regards to how they felt after being on academic probation, Emily said, “I was pissed off at myself because I don’t know why I let myself get there. I mean, I knew why I let myself get there, since some of my personal problems
When asked if the motivation was in reference to the animal science pre-veterinary major she used to be, Emily stated, “The pre-vet major affected me because of the science courses that I was not passing, it did affect me a lot” (Interview, January 31, 2011). She also said she felt like, “’Why am I doing something, if I don’t understand it,’ and I go into this profession and… I’m going to explain to my customers, ‘Oh yeah, your dog has this or that’” (Interview, January 31, 2011). Emily was referring to feeling she did not comprehend her course material, which made her feel she would not be competent as a veterinarian. She also said, “But I just lost motivation because I was failing these science classes so it’s like ‘What’s the point? I’m failing anyway’” (Interview, January 31, 2011). In regards to failing her science courses, Emily continued to say, “Even if I did do it, it would still be difficult for me to get a decent grade because I would not understand the material” (Interview, January 31, 2011).

When asked the same question, Angela said, “I knew my grades weren’t the best, but I didn’t think they were so bad that I could get kicked out” (Interview, February 1, 2011). “I was blind-sided, I was really surprised, I felt like I needed to kinda [sic] hurry up and get stuff done so I can get back in [to Fresno State]” (Interview, February 1, 2011). She continued to say, “I felt, I don’t know, it felt pretty bad” (Interview, February 1, 2011). Angela then said after she was disenrolled from Fresno State she took courses at Fresno City College for two semesters and then took a year off from school. She then reapplied to Fresno State and was readmitted on contract.

The researcher asked the participants if they had made any changes since being notified of their academic standing. Emily changed her work schedule and said, “I only work Tuesdays, Thursdays, and the weekends. Umm, I usually get
out [of school] Tuesdays, Thursdays at four and then I go in [to work] at five. And then on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays I get out at 12:50” (Interview, January 31, 2011). She spoke about having the entire days on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays to do her homework. She also stated, “I signed up for one of the MAPs [Maximizing Academic Potential workshop]… I’ve taken more notes than I’ve ever taken before, but uh, I’ve been trying” (Interview, January 31, 2011). She also stated that at the time of the interview, she felt she was doing well in her courses. She had a test and a paper for two of her classes coming up and said she had already started preparing for them by studying and taking notes. However, she said, “We’ll see when that first test comes, to see if it paid off” (Interview, January 31, 2011).

Angela no longer works full-time. She mentioned, “When I was disqualified it was hard because I was working full-time and going to school full-time, and I wanted to go to school part-time but I couldn’t because of the insurance from my parents” (Interview, February 1, 2011). Angela also said, “That was really time-consuming and stressful. It was bad” (Interview, February 1, 2011). However, she was laid off from her full-time job at the same time she was reapplying for readmission and she found a part-time job instead. Angela said, “It worked to my benefit… So now, work’s not a problem at all” (Interview, February 1, 2011). She said this change from working a minimum of 40 hours a week to now working a maximum of 12 hours per week has given her “a lot of time” (Interview, February 1, 2011). She also said, “I’m a bit older now so, like, the social aspect isn’t as important, it’s just kind of a back burner to everything else… I try to just read and do my paperwork, and get that all done before anything else” (Interview, February 1, 2011).
Jessica now uses a planner to write down her assignments and she always carries her textbooks with her to school so when she has time throughout the day she can read. She also said she is “really trying not to procrastinate,” and trying to not let her embarrassment get in the way of asking for help (Interview, February 2, 2011). Jessica noted procrastination as an important factor contributing to her academic standing. She said she left herself little time to study or complete assignments in a timely manner. She earned two D grades in her history and biology course, and said for her biology class she “could have studied more” (Interview, February 2, 2011). She said she had bad study habits and did not put much time into learning the material. For her history course, she said it was difficult for her “to study for something so boring” (Interview, February 2, 2011). She also said for the history exams, “They’d have a list… of 50 events, and he’d pick, like, 6 of that 50… so it was kind of discouraging” (Interview, February 2, 2011). She also mentioned there were essays she had to write for her history course but would get discouraged easily by these assignments and exams. Ultimately, she stated she believed she would only earn one D grade, and would “slide by” (Interview, February 2, 2011). Jessica had signed up to attend a Maximizing Academic Potential (MAP) workshop the week after this interview was completed, and said she hoped to learn about university policies that affect her as a student on academic probation because “everyone should know” (Interview, February 2, 2011).

When asked what they needed in order to help them get to a good academic standing and graduate, Emily said she felt she needed one-on-one help from a tutor. Since her classes can be large she felt getting help from one person who knows her would help her best. Emily also mentioned experiencing deep personal issues that involved a relationship with someone else. When the researcher
recommended she seek counseling at the Health Center, Emily agreed she should consider it, but appeared hesitant. She stated that her grades would “stay the way they are” even if she saw a counselor because she missed school for a few months because of these issues (Interview, January 31, 2011). She also had concerns about opening up to someone she does not know, even if they are a counselor.

Angela had attended a MAP workshop a previous semester and said, “Yeah, it was helpful. As far as, like, the study habits and… the tutoring services that they talked about, I kinda [sic] knew about it a little bit. But what raised my interest was the Career Center” (Interview, February 1, 2011). Angela did not know about Career Services, and then she continued to say about herself, “I think that’s a psychological thing with me kind of, like, falling back a little bit in school is the fear of not knowing what to do afterwards” (Interview, February 1, 2011). Angela then said, “I haven’t made an appointment yet, but I need to” (Interview, February 1, 2011). In regards to why she has yet to make an appointment, she stated, “It’s just been one of those things that you forget about and when it gets in your head, you’re like, ‘Oh, I need to do that’” (Interview, February 1, 2011). The interviewer asked her if there is any other information that could be added to the MAP workshop that would make it more useful to her and she replied:

No, I think it was very informative, what more could you say on the topic?… They were helpful; they weren’t there to, like, lecture you on how you failed out and how you’re not up to par with everyone else. They were just like, ‘Everyone has their reasons.’ So, it was fine, it wasn’t bad (Interview, February 1, 2011).

In regards to whether or not there are other resources she could utilize to help her get to a good academic standing, she stated, “I think I’ve used what I could so far, it’s just now, now it’s just a matter of me doing what I need to do on
my part. There’s only so much everyone else can do” (Interview, February 1, 2011). She went on to say, “I need to get it done. My [degree] road map, it’s all been planned out as far as the classes I need to take and everything… And I feel that’s their part in getting me out of DQ status” (Interview, February 1, 2011). Angela then said, “Now it’s just up to me” (Interview, February 1, 2011). The interviewer asked if she felt she is able to do so, and Angela quickly said, “Yeah” (Interview, February 1, 2011).

Jessica was an engineering major, and at Fresno State the engineering department intervenes with their students who are not on a good academic standing with their own intervention plan. Therefore, Jessica was required to meet regularly with her major advisor, attend academic success workshops, monitor her grades, and the department gave her a card with a checklist of all these requirements where she was required to obtain signatures as proof. Jessica stated she hoped these interventions would help her because she saw it as a constant reminder to earn high grades and raise her GPA so she is not on academic probation after the Spring 2011 semester. She mentioned she would be attending an upcoming time management workshop and one to enhance her study skills. Jessica believed the interventions from the engineering department would help her raise her GPA to over a 2.0 because she did not think the purpose of them was to embarrass her. She also stated she felt that she needed constant reminders, and carrying her card reminding her she needed to attend academic workshops and meet with her advisor served as a constant reminder to raise her GPA. Initially, Jessica was enrolled in 15 units for the Spring 2011 semester but dropped a course so she would only have 12 units.
Summary
The three undergraduate Hispanic female students at Fresno State on academic probation or disqualification shared their high school experiences and how they felt prepared for college. Participants spoke about their first experiences at Fresno State, how they found out they were in a poor academic standing, and what changes they have made since learning they were on academic probation or disqualification. Participants also discussed about the factors in their lives that contributed to their academic standing and what they felt they needed in order to get to a good academic standing.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This chapter will discuss the conclusions and author’s recommendations based on the findings. The risk factors present in the three participants are discussed, as well as their stated reasons for being on academic probation or disqualification, what changes they have made since being notified of their academic standing, and what they feel they still need in order to get to a good academic standing and graduate. The researcher’s recommendations are then listed and discussed.

Risk Factors

The data collected from the semi-structured interviews identified certain risk factors that were present in the participants. All participants were ethnic minorities, which is a risk factor to performing poorly in college. Not being academically ready is another risk factor, and while ethnic minorities are more likely to be under prepared for college, only Emily stated feeling her high school coursework did not prepare her for college coursework. Angela and Jessica felt their homework in high school did prepare them for the work in college, however Angela did say the work in college was a lot more than it was in high school and Jessica reported her college coursework was fast-paced. Low standardized tests scores are also an indicator for possible low academic performance, and while the standardized test scores for the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) for all participants were unknown, both Emily and Angela were required to complete remediation requirements at Fresno State. This indicated that their SAT scores, Entry Level Math (ELM), or English Placement Test (EPT) scores were not high enough to waive the remediation requirements for English or math. The ELM and EPT are required for students entering a California State University (CSU) in order to
determine what level of English and math they can take at the CSU. Emily was required to complete English and math remediation, and Jessica was only required to complete English remediation.

Students experiencing financial difficulties, ethnic minorities who accepted student loans, and those who worked full-time while attending school are also considered at-risk. All of these factors applied to Angela, who stated financial aid did not cover the cost of school, she accepted student loans, and worked at least 40 hours per week at the time she was placed on academic disqualification. Although she wanted to attend school part-time she was unable to do so because she would not have qualified to receive health insurance through her parents as a part-time student. Emily was close to full-time as she worked 30 hours per week at the time she was placed on academic probation. Emily reported her work schedule made it difficult for her to complete her coursework because she would get home too tired to do her reading. Jessica was the only participant who was unemployed.

Another risk factor is freshmen students who do not live on campus. Emily lived in the campus dorms her freshman year and reported earning mostly A’s those two semesters. Emily said the convenience of living on campus was that it was just a short walking distance to her classes and she had a lot of time to do her homework. Jessica was a freshman who was not living in the campus dorms, and Angela came in as a transfer student so she did not attend her freshman year at Fresno State. Regarding the social aspect of living on campus, Emily enjoyed it because it gave her the opportunity to meet new people and make friends. This may have allowed her to feel at home in the dorms, which could have contributed to her performing well academically during her freshman year. Not being involved in campus events is another risk factor, and Emily was the only participant involved in any campus organization. Neither Angela nor Jessica were
involved in a campus organization. Angela was not interested in getting involved but Jessica stated she did have an interest but had not yet gotten involved. Since Emily was the only one involved in campus organizations, the interviewer could have asked whether living on campus helped her feel more comfortable with the campus, thus deciding to get involved.

Students who experienced deep personal issues are at risk, but only Emily reported such an issue. Emily stated she was earning mostly A’s in her courses her freshman year but during the Fall 2010 semester she was dealing with a serious issue regarding someone in her life and this contributed to her low academic performance. This was the semester where she reported missing many of her classes and earning poor grades. Emily also reported feeling a loss of motivation during this semester and for an entire year, and low motivation is another risk factor. The interviewer asked participants what motivated them to stay in school and Emily and Jessica reported extrinsic reasons. Emily’s motivation stemmed from not wanting to disappoint her parents and Jessica said she felt she could not get the type of work she wanted without a college education. Emily also reported losing motivation after repeatedly performing poorly in her science courses. Angela said her motivation to stay in school was wanting to finish what she started because she had invested so much time and money into college and she could not just walk away without her degree. Emily also indicated an intrinsic reason, as she said she was in college in part for herself, but mostly for her parents.

Inadequate study skills are another risk factor, and participants were asked how they learn best, how they study for courses, and if they ever participated in study groups with classmates. All of the participants said they were visual or hands-on learners, but the majority of their study techniques did not accommodate
that learning style. Emily, Angela, and Jessica all said the studying techniques they used involved reading the course material. Emily commented that she is unable to just sit and read course material, but this was a study technique she used. Emily and Jessica also reported sometimes having to re-read if they did not understand the material the first time, or write notes to help them study. However, while Emily indicated that while these additional study methods would help her somewhat, she would still be confused about the course content. Jessica also stated she attempts to guess what exam questions may be but she still reported feeling nervous and not doing well in exams, indicating test anxiety. Regarding study groups, Emily and Angela have not participated in any study groups, but Jessica had during her first semester. Jessica said she learned from others through study groups but had difficulty organizing them because she was embarrassed to approach classmates.

Students unhappy with their majors or unsure of what major to choose are also considered at risk. At the time of the interview, Emily and Angela reported feeling satisfied with their major, and Jessica felt she could not answer because she had not yet done anything with her major. However, Emily and Angela had changed their majors at some point in college, and when Angela was deciding what major to select she chose history because it was those courses that she was actually attending. Emily received the assistance of the Career Services office to help her select liberal studies. Jessica originally chose civil engineering because she had been under the impression it was the degree she needed to work as an architect. However, she chose to stay in civil engineering and was looking into career options in the field at the time of the interview. While satisfied with their majors at the time of the interview, Emily reported concern about the math and science courses she was still required to take as a liberal studies major and Angela
reported concerns about the reading and writing for her history coursework because it required a lot of time.

While low high school grade point averages are a risk factor to performing poorly in college, all three participants reported earning between a 3.0 and 4.0 in high school. Jessica reported feeling surprised about being on academic probation because her grades in high school were never that low. Being a first generation college student is another risk factor, but only Jessica was a first generation student as both Emily and Angela had at least one parent with a college degree.

**Reasons for Academic Standing**

Participants spoke about many different factors that led to their poor academic standing. Emily and Angela said their work hours contributed to earning low grades in their courses as they would feel too tired to get home from work and read or study. Emily worked 30 hours per week and Angela worked at least 40 hours per week. Both Emily and Angela reported missing classes for different reasons. Emily took many early morning classes because she worked in the afternoon, but she said she missed many class sessions because she would not wake up in time to attend. Angela missed many class sessions of an accounting course she took because it was not fulfilling a major or general education requirement. This accounting course was the only course with space still available at the time she registered so she had to take it to have at least 12 units and be a full-time student. Angela also said she had no interest in the accounting course and this also contributed to her not attending the classes.

Angela reported not studying or doing her homework as reasons she earned poor grades. For the courses where she did attend class sessions, Angela said she did not do any studying or work outside of class. Emily also reported not studying
much, and she said for her biology class she would fall asleep while reading because the course material was boring to her. Jessica stated she found her history class boring and could not concentrate on that course material to study for the course. Jessica also said she procrastinated a lot and did not leave herself ample time to complete homework assignments or study for exams. Emily also mentioned poor study habits, as she said she was not doing well in her courses because she was not retaining the information after reading.

Angela said she spent her free time going out and socializing, as she had recently turned 21 years old so she was not dedicating much time for school. She also reported feeling an internal reason was feeling scared about what she will do after graduation and falling back in school as a result and feeling some courses were disorganized. Other reasons that Emily mentioned were losing motivation for a year due to not doing well in her courses, not feeling confident she would be a competent veterinarian, and the time her deep personal issue took away from school. At the time of the interview Emily had yet to seek counseling for her personal issue. Another reason Jessica stated was being nervous about how fast-paced her courses were.

Changes Made

The interviewer asked participants what changes they had made to their study routine, work schedule, or in other aspects of their lives to improve their GPA and get to a good academic standing. Emily, Angela, and Jessica all registered to attend a Maximizing Academic Potential (MAP) workshop. Only Angela was required to attend the workshop because she was on academic disqualification. Emily and Jessica were given the option to attend but were not required to do so. Emily and Angela either changed their work schedule or the
amount of hours they work. Emily now only works on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and the weekends and has Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays free to study after 1:00 pm. Angela went from working a minimum of 40 hours per week to between eight to 12 hours per week. Angela now only goes out to socialize after her homework is complete, Jessica now uses a planner to keep track of her assignments and she was only taking 12 units at the time of the interview. Jessica had originally registered for 15 units but dropped a course when she was notified she was on academic probation.

Student Identified Needs

The interviewer asked the participants what they felt they needed in order to get to a good academic standing and each participant gave different responses. Emily felt she needed a personal tutor who could help her study for her courses. A personal tutor would help her best because she wanted someone who knows her, knows how she learns, and because she wanted the one-on-one assistance that she does not get from large classrooms. Angela felt what she needed from others, including academic advisors, was assistance mapping out her college coursework. However, Angela said her advisors had already done this, so now it was just up to her to do the work and pass her courses so her GPA could get her back to a good academic standing. Jessica said she felt she needed constant reminders to do well in her courses, and she was receiving this through the interventions the engineering departments was requiring her to take part of. These interventions were the academic workshops and required meetings with her advisor. The engineering department also gave Jessica a card to carry around and obtain signatures after she fulfills each requirement, which Jessica liked because the card also served as a reminder.
**Recommendations**

Results from this study support the literature in that probationary students typically do not seek interventions on their own, also referred to as nonadaptive help seeking. Emily, Angela, and Jessica did not know they would be placed on academic probation or disqualification before the university notified them. All of the participants mentioned confusion regarding the policies of academic probation and disqualification, as both Emily and Jessica were worried they would be disenrolled from the university. Other areas of nonadaptive help seeking behaviors were Jessica and Emily’s fear of approaching their professors. While Emily did attend her professor’s office hours to review her answers on exams, she still said she was scared to talk to them about her grades in the course. Jessica reported feeling nervous, scared, and intimidated about approaching her professor’s. She also regretted not having gone to her history professor’s office hours because she knew that it would have helped her grade in the course had she gone. Also, while Emily stated having experienced deep personal issues regarding a relationship, she had not utilized the free counseling services at the Health Center nor did she state she would after the interview.

Advisors can help probationary students by encouraging adaptive help seeking behaviors. In addition to referring students to different offices or recommending they speak to their professors, academic advisors can also help students explore their reasons for being afraid to do so. Another tool advisors can use is to have student’s role-play and practice how they would approach their professors. Having this practice may help students feel more comfortable, and more likely, to approach their professors. Also, advisors can follow up with the student after a given amount of time to see if they followed through and spoke to their professors. Assisting probationary students to face their intimidation and fear
may also help them with their leadership skills and confidence, and they can use these skills to approach classmates to create study groups.

Besides helping students face their intimidation and speak with their professors during office hours, advisors may also assist students learn how to ask for help. Emily stated she did not like to ask for help because she wanted to solve her issues by herself, even when she knew she could not. With intrusive and developmental advising, the advisor aims to help the student learn how to solve their problems, rather than finding a solution for them. With the three participants, an advisor could help them find discrepancies between their learning style and their studying techniques. Rather than telling the student how to study, the advisor can help the student identify other techniques that would better suit their learning style. Another way advisors may help probationary students is to learn how to calculate their anticipated grade point average based on the grades they are currently earning. Since Emily, Angela, and Jessica did not know they would be in a poor academic standing before they were notified, they can learn how to calculate their expected grade point average to determine if they are likely to still be on academic probation or disqualification after the current semester.

A challenge that advisors may face is the hesitation of a probationary student to come to their office for advisement. Intrusive advising may address this, as the advisor would maintain contact with the student to ensure the student attends their appointment. However, the challenge may stem from the probationary student feeling ashamed or embarrassed for their academic standing. Both Emily and Jessica reported feeling embarrassed or ashamed for being on academic probation.

The literature states that Hispanic students may do better in college if they have a mentor, and this would agree with Emily’s suggestion that she needed a
personal tutor to help her in her courses. The literature also finds that students need help identifying their goals and increasing their motivation. As Emily and Angela both changed their major at some point, it may have been helpful for an advisor to help them identify their goals at that time. With Emily, an advisor intervening and helping her identify her reasons for losing motivation and what she could do to change that may have been helpful at the time she was experiencing difficulty in her science courses and the deep personal issue. Intrusive advising may have been helpful in helping Emily begin to resolve her issues and prevented her grade point average from declining semester after semester. The literature on assisting probationary students also suggests students need an advisor using a student development theory, such as intrusive advising. As intrusive advising requires regular contact with an advisor, it can also serve as a reminder for the student to create and maintain a routine to increase their academic performance. Such reminders are what Jessica noted as needing in order for her to make raising her grades a priority.

Summary

Risk factors present in the three participants, based on a review of the literature, included being an ethnic minority, not being academically ready for college, experiencing financial difficulties, being an ethnic minority who accepted student loans, working full-time while attending school full-time, being a freshman student who did not live on campus, not being involved in campus events, experiencing deep personal issues, having low motivation, inadequate study skills, having been unhappy with a previous major, and having been unsure of what major to select. However, all participants reported grade point averages
between a 3.0 and 4.0 in high school, which is not a risk factor but Angela and Jessica did report having earned at least one D or F grade in high school.

Participants stated their work schedule, having to work full-time, losing motivation in school, having no interest in specific courses, not attending their class meetings, not completing their homework, not studying, procrastinating on their homework or studying for exams, internal fears, having to take courses not meant for general education or their major, or deep personal issues were factors that contributed to their being placed on academic probation or disqualification. Participants also listed what changes they had made to their routines in order to help themselves raise their GPA, and these included buying a planner, changing their work schedule, no longer working full-time, and not going out to socialize unless all homework is completed. Participants stated they needed a personal tutor or constant reminders in order to improve their GPAs.

The researcher recommended the use of intrusive academic advising to assist probationary students gain confidence, become comfortable approaching their professors, learn how to calculate their grade point averages to anticipate what grades they need in their courses to get to a good academic standing, not let embarrassment or shame get in their way to ask for help, to identify their educational goals, increase motivation, and to learn how to create their own solutions.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION
Academic Probation and Retention Rates: Strategies Academic Advisors can Implement to Assist Undergraduate Hispanic Female College Students

Dear Participant:

My name is Eleazar Ortega and I am a graduate student in the Master of Science in Counseling program, specializing in Higher Education. I am currently conducting a study to analyze the experiences of students on academic probation or disqualification at California State University, Fresno (Fresno State). This study is overseen by my thesis chair, Dr. Juan Carlos González, faculty member at Fresno State in the School of Education, Department of Educational Research and Administration.

This research will be used to complete my thesis, which is in partial fulfillment of a Masters degree. As a result of this research, I hope to gain insight on the needs of students on academic probation or disqualification and what strategies academic advisors can use to help them get to a good academic standing.

I am asking for your participation in this study by volunteering for an interview. You may choose to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. Please note that your name will not be used or printed in the research in any way. We abide by the strict confidentiality guidelines of Fresno State’s Institutional Review Board to protect you as a research participant.

We thank you in advance for your participation in this important research. If you have any questions concerning this research study please email me at ortegaeleazar@mail.fresnostate.edu.

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Eleazar Ortega and Dr. Juan Carlos González
APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT
Informed Consent

Academic Probation and Retention Rates: Strategies Academic Advisors can Implement to Assist Undergraduate Hispanic Female College Students

Dear Participant,

My name is Eleazar Ortega and I am a graduate student in the Master of Science in Counseling program, specializing in Higher Education, at California State University, Fresno. I am conducting a research study to identify risk factors in students on academic probation or disqualification as well as intervention strategies academic advisors can use to assist these students get to a good academic standing.

You are invited to participate in this research study by volunteering for an in-depth interview lasting approximately one-to-two hours. The interview will consist of questions pertaining to your experiences as a probationary or academically disqualified student. This study can provide data on how to better assist students to get to a good academic standing. Your name will never be used to identify you in this research and you are free to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty.

California State University, Fresno appreciates the participation of people who help it carry out its function of developing knowledge through research. If you have any questions about this study please email me at ortegaeleazar@mail.fresnostate.edu.

Sincerely,

Eleazar Ortega

Your signature below indicates that you consent to participate in the above study:

____________________________________  _____________________________    __________
Participant’s Signature                        Printed Name        Date

____________________________________  _____________________________    __________
Co-Investigator                                   Printed Name        Date

Although it is not the University’s policy to compensate or provide medical treatment for persons who participate in studies, if you think you have been injured as a result of participating in this study please call the IRB Chair of Human Subjects Review at (559) 278-4468.
APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRE
Academic Probation and Retention Rates: Strategies Academic Advisors can Implement to Assist Undergraduate Hispanic Female College Students

1) What is your ethnicity? ________________________

2) How old are you? ___________

3) Do your parents or guardians have a college degree?
   □ Yes
   □ No

4) Do you have any siblings who are in, or have attended, college?
   □ Yes
   □ No

5) Do you finance your college education with any financial aid?
   □ Yes
   □ No

   *If Yes, what types of financial aid do you receive (check all that apply):*
   □ Grants
   □ Scholarships
   □ Loans
   □ Other: ____________________________________________

   *If Yes, does financial aid cover the entire cost of student fees/tuition?*
   □ Yes
   □ No

6) What was your high school cumulative gpa?
   a) 0.0-0.9
   b) 1.0-1.9
   c) 2.0-2.9
   d) 3.0-4.0
   e) Greater than a 4.0

7) Did you ever earn a D or an F in high school?
   □ Yes
   □ No

8) Did your high school grade point average ever fall below a 2.0 during any semester?
   □ Yes
   □ No
9) Did you take the SAT or ACT’s?
   □ Yes
   □ No

If so, what were your scores?
SAT: Math _______   Verbal ________  Writing __________
ACT: ___________

10) Did you attend Fresno State immediately after graduating high school?
   □ Yes
   □ No

11) How many college units have you earned so far?
   □ 0-30
   □ 31-60
   □ 61-90
   □ 91 or more

12) What semester do you expect to graduate?
    _______________________________________

13) What is your current major/minor? ________________________________

14) Did you ever change your major?
   □ Yes
   □ No

15) Were you ever an Undeclared major?
   □ Yes
   □ No
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Interview Questions

1) How did you feel about your homework when you were in high school?
2) Do you feel your high school coursework prepared you for college?
3) What were your reasons for applying to college?
4) Did you start college immediately after graduating high school?
5) Were you required to complete English or math remediation at Fresno State?
6) How was your first semester at Fresno State? (experiences with professors, campus life, dorm life, experience with classmates, experience with friends)
7) Did you live on campus your first semester? Do you currently live on campus?
8) Have you had any classes you feel were too hard? (the material, the professor, didn’t make time to study, etc)
9) Have you ever met with a professor to discuss your grade in their class, an assignment, or for other reasons?
10) Did you ever participate in a study group?
11) Have you ever gone to the Learning Center?
    Do you know what services they offer?
    Do you know where the Learning Center is located?
12) Have you ever gone to SupportNet?
    Do you know what services they offer?
    Do you know where SupportNet is located?
13) Are you involved in any clubs/organizations on campus?
    a) If so, which ones?
14) Do you know who your advisor is?
    a) How often have you met with your advisor?
15) Do you feel comfortable finding resources on campus if you need them?
16) How did you feel when you found out you were on academic probation/DQ?
17) How were you notified you were on probation or DQ?

Interview Questions (continued)

18) Did you know you would be on academic probation/DQ before you were notified?

19) Have you ever attended a MAP workshop?

20) What were the reasons that contributed to your current academic standing (probation or disqualification)?

21) What do you feel you need in order to get to a good academic standing (campus resources, mentoring, etc)?

22) Do you work? (or did you work during the semester you were placed on academic probation/disqualification?)
   
   Full-time?
   
   Part-time?

23) Since you were placed on academic probation/disqualification, have you made any changes to your:
   a) Study habits?
   b) Amount of time spent doing homework?
   c) Your educational goals?
   d) Have you met with professors this semester?
   e) Other areas of your life?

24) How did you come to choose your major?

25) Do you feel satisfied with your major now?

26) What would you say motivates you to stay in school?
California State University, Fresno

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