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Investigating the Role of Social Capital and Everyday Communication in Campus Community Resilience During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Resilience During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

This thesis investigated the role of social capital and everyday communication in campus community resilience capacities during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study conceptualized the university community as a micro-community that experienced sharp disruption as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the same way that traditionally conceptualized communities harness communication to build resilience, this study provides evidence that micro-communities, such as the university campus, have the same potential. Focus groups with students, faculty, and staff, as well as one-one-one semi-structured interviews with students, resulted in 557 pages of single-spaced transcripts that provided rich data to understand this community resilience context. Elements of grounded theory analysis uncovered findings across five research questions that demonstrated how the university community simultaneously affirmed and contradicted existing resilience frameworks as they worked toward bouncing forward into a new normal for their community. This study questioned and expanded existing resilience frameworks as it underlined the foundational nature of communication in the resilience process. Theoretical and practical implications developed from this research and provide opportunities for future research about what exactly constitutes a community and just how expansive is the nature of communication in resilience.

Keywords: Community resilience, social capital, everyday communication, place attachment, sense of belonging, citizen participation, community disruption

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Chapter 1: Introduction

On December 31, 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) reported clusters of an unknown strain of pneumonia in Wuhan, China (WHO, 2020b). By the end of January 2020, 18 countries reported cases of the virus, which the WHO named COVID-19 (WHO, 2020b). When the WHO characterized the virus outbreak as a pandemic on March 11, 2020, more than 118,000 cases were reported in 114 countries with 4,291 recorded deaths globally (WHO, 2020a). President Donald Trump consequently issued a national emergency in the United States, with 1,645 Americans in 47 states infected by March 13, 2020 (Trump, 2020). As the pandemic worsened, a pre-COVID normalcy was upended, especially in the U.S. where, by April 2021, one year following the pandemic's widespread U.S. outbreak, more than 30 million cases and 556,000 deaths were reported (Center for Disease Control, 2020a). The temporary and permanent closure of businesses in the U.S. created an estimated loss of 27 million jobs in the U.S. and approximately 8 million people leaving the workforce (Congressional Budget Office, 2020). A "sharp contraction" of the U.S. economy (Congressional Budget Office, 2020, para. 2) was a result of a downturn in virtually all industries: agriculture (Bhosale, 2020), gas and oil (Domonoske & Schneider, 2020), manufacturing (British Plastics Federation, 2020), finance (Bachman, 2020), healthcare (Tanne et al., 2020), hospitality and tourism (Schaal, 2020), aviation (Shepardson & Holland, 2020), housing (Kaufman, 2020), sports (*Sport-by-sport*, 2020), and food (Corkery et al., 2020).

Education also experienced profound impacts, with more than one billion students in 132 countries displaced by school closures (UNESCO, 2020). In particular, U.S. colleges and universities experienced severe consequences, shuttering international campuses, moving instruction online, and vacating domestic campuses. In the immediate wake of the pandemic

declaration, students were evicted from their campuses, leaving some without shelter, meals, and other essential services (Fisher, 2020). Professors facilitated an immediate switch to remote instruction while students faced concerns about access to technology to finish their semester online (McMurtrie, 2020). International students wondered whether or not they could return to their home country (Fischer, 2020) and if they would be allowed on campus for the fall 2020 semester after a Trump administration ruling threatened student visas (Thomason, 2020). Spring campus traditions, such as Greek life events and spring commencement, were postponed, canceled, or moved online (Kafka, 2020). In-person research was suspended (Tirrell, 2020), and collegiate athletics were halted (Gleeson, 2020).

In the fall 2020 semester, U.S. universities faced continuing concerns. University presidents cited declines in fall enrollment, questions of long-term financial viability, and the ability to sustain an online learning environment as the most pressing issues facing their campuses (Turk et al., 2020). One in four incoming freshmen reported that the pandemic impacted their college choice (SimpsonScarborough, 2020). Some small, private institutions risked ceasing operations permanently as revenue losses from the pandemic mounted (Bauman, 2020). Returning students worried about access to campus services, such as quarantine space for and protection from ill students (Diep, 2020). After a spike in on-campus cases after one week of fall classes, students at the University of North Carolina moved classes online and their belongings home once again, repeating a scene from months prior (UNC, 2020). Traditional freshman orientations and welcome weeks, focused wholeheartedly on students being together and building relationships, moved online (Shearer, 2020). Campus spaces that previously saw students close together (e.g., residence halls and dining halls) were marked with signs asking them to be at least six feet apart (CDC, 2020b). Fall gatherings, such as football tailgating and

Greek life events, which previously contributed to significant community building among students, were punishable by fines and disciplinary action (Cherney, 2020). Given disruptions to their college normalcies, questions emerged about how students build community on the college campus when the staples of college community-building were upended.

In general, displacement from disasters, such as a global pandemic, can result in challenging mental health reactions (Forbes et al., 2015; Kessler et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2009). Inevitably, therefore, students suffered from the disruption of their campus community. Eighty percent of students said the pandemic worsened their mental health (Active Minds, 2020). Moreover, from March to May 2020, a higher proportion of students reported that mental health negatively impacted their academic performance, and students reported lower levels of psychological well-being when compared to their reported well-being the previous semester (American College Health Association, 2020). This disruption of the student's campus community is cause for concern, especially considering how the campus community creates immense physical, social, and academic anchorage during college (Tinto, 1993). Students who experience this anchorage in their campus community "are more likely to be fully connected, or more integrated, into the broader campus social system" (Berger, 1997, p. 441). Put another way, by simply eating, sleeping, and spending their waking hours together, students are more likely to thrive in college (Astin, 1985).

Disasters also threaten community resilience, which refers to the "the collective ability of a neighborhood or geographically defined area to deal with stressors and efficiently resume the rhythms of daily life through cooperation following shocks" (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015, p. 255). In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, campus closures, remote learning, and the absence of traditional ways to acclimate incoming students to campus culture threatened campus community

resilience. Community resilience consists of a series of adaptive capacities (Norris et al., 2008), attributes (Pfefferbaum et al., 2013), community relationships and strategic communication processes (Houston et al., 2015). In addition, social capital is consistently cited throughout the literature as a communicative process necessary to foster resilience (Aldrich, 2012; Aldrich & Meyer, 2015; Houston et al., 2015.; Norris et al., 2008). Social capital can be broadly defined as the "features of social organizations, such as networks, norms and trust that facilitate action and cooperation for mutual benefit" (Putnam, 1993, p. 35). Moreover, social capital is an important contributor to the holistic college-student experience (Bottrell, 2008; Budgen et al., 2014; Harper, 2008; Jensen & Jetten, 2015; Mishra, 2020). Thus, social capital and everyday communication exist in a dialectical relationship with community resilience when developing campus community resilience.

In this model of community resilience, communication is a key assumption because resilience relies upon information networks, interpersonal relationships, and social support (Buikstra et al., 2010; Lin, 2001). Furthermore, when understood from a communication perspective, "resilience operates as a process embedded or situated in everyday life at ordinary moments of loss as well as at extraordinary and profound disruptions" (Buzzanell & Houston, 2018, p. 2). Therefore, the focus of this study is to understand how campus community resilience is constituted through social capital and everyday communication — to understand the everyday "stories, memories, routines, and rituals about how people not only endured despite loss and suffering but also actively shaped and framed these experiences" (Buzzanell, 2018, p. 15). The following sections introduce and define key concepts of this thesis and provide a foundation for understanding the context in which this study operates.

Campus Community

   Scholars theoretically approach the campus community from a number of perspectives. Astin (1985) called the campus community a subgroup of students with a centralized purpose that builds group identity, cohesiveness, and uniqueness. Schroeder and Mable (1994) argued that the campus community operates in a four-part framework: involvement, investment, influence, and identity. Spitzberg and Thorndike (1992) identified a central function of the campus community: it "connects the learner to ideas, to other learners, and, ultimately, to society" (p. 3).

   Practically, the campus community fosters students' resilience in their college experience. In the transition from their home and high school communities to the campus community, students use a number of strategies to navigate the unknown community, including scaling down different campus geographies and social systems (Tinto, 1993). Students also find a "small, likeminded and/or familiar community on campus that shares similar views or attributes," such as ethnic groups, religious groups, political groups, areas of study, academic programs, and residence halls (Tinto, 1993, p. 125). In studying how students utilize communicative community resilience during a global pandemic, university culture scholars are better able to understand how the campus community functions (Tinto, 1993).

Community Resilience

   Nearly all models of community resilience hold communication as a central component (Houston et al., 2015). In this study, I am specifically interested in the role that social capital and everyday communication play in fostering campus community resilience. Social capital is a communication construct evidenced in numerous community resilience models (Norris et al., 2008; Aldrich & Meyer, 2015; Houston et al., 2015). Social capital in community resilience

employs a number of components: place attachment (Anguelovski, 2013; Manzo & Perkins, 2006), sense of community (Buikstra et al., 2010; Hughey & Speer, 2002), social and civic engagement (Sherrieb, Norris, & Galea, 2010), and interpersonal networks (Sherrieb, Norris, & Galea, 2010; Sommerfeldt, 2013). In other words, social capital in community resilience concerns the relationships to and communication with place, people, organizations, and support services that develop resilience. Therefore, the significance of social capital in community resilience means "efforts to establish, increase, and strengthen these relationships before, during, and following a disaster are needed" (Houston et al., 2015, p. 275).

Everyday communication refers to the casual, informal, and daily conversations that take place in social networks. Buzzanell (2010) holds that this everyday communication plays an inherent, transformative role in resilience. In particular, Buzzanell (2010) argues that individuals and collectives can quite literally talk resilience into being by way of everyday communication in their social networks. This process occurs in five meaningful ways: (a) crafting normalcy, (b) affirming identity anchors, (c) maintaining and using communication networks, (d) putting alternative logics to work, and (e) legitimizing negative feelings while foregrounding productive action (Buzzanell, 2010). In these ways of literally talking resilience into being, communities forgo their pre-trauma realities and bounce forward from disaster to establish new, post-trauma realities.

This study is focused on the significance of social capital and everyday communication in community resilience. More specifically, this study leans on the communication theory of resilience, which holds that "resilience is constituted through storytelling, messages, routines, rituals, slogans, [and] networks" (Buzzanell, 2018, p. 16). Consequently, this study is informed by existing frameworks for social capital and everyday communication in resilience, such as

Norris and colleagues' (2008) networked adaptive capacities and Buzzanell's (2010) five-part framework for resilience.

Study Goals and Justification

The purpose of this study is to build an understanding of the ways in which social capital and everyday communication constitutes resilience for the campus community. In doing so, there are a number of theoretical and practical implications impacting scholars and practitioners across a number of academic and professional disciplines: communication, education, sociology, community organizing, and more.

Theoretically, this study mends literature gaps that exist in and between community resilience, communication, and higher education research. Since the late 20th and early 21st centuries, university administrators exponentially increased their strategic focus toward building a sense of campus community. Researchers have contributed to the focus, studying a number of intersections with the campus community: ethnic minority student groups (Johnson et al., 2007), transfer students (York & Fernandez, 2018), students with disabilities (Vaccaro & Newman, 2015), academic support and advising (Curtin, Stewart, & Ostrove, 2013), and, interestingly enough, hip-hop culture (Sule, 2015). Moreover, creating a positive campus community where students belong is "one of the most enduring, yet elusive goals to animate higher education in recent years" (Wiley, 2002, p. 1256). Likewise, researchers have studied community resilience in a variety of contexts, including rural communities (Wilson, 2010), climate change and urbanization (Chirisa & Mabeza, 2019), minority and refugee communities (Mason & Pulvirenti, 2013), agriculture (Fielke & Srinivasan, 2018), terrorist attacks (Ferrer & Conley, 2015), and natural disasters (Houston et al., 2017). Despite these numerous contexts of study, campus community and community resilience research have failed to consider the context in which both

intersect; however, this study mends that gap. At the same time, more work is needed to understand the communicative nature of resilience. As Houston (2018) argued, while community conversations and social capital in general have been significantly linked to community resilience, "little is known about what individuals in a resilient community talk about" (p. 20). In examining the social networks and everyday communication that constitute resilience in the campus community during a pandemic, this study contributes to the literature of what resilient communities talk about.

Practically, this study has important implications for higher education and community development. For university administrators, this study provides insight into their long-held strategic focuses toward community while outlining the ways in which their campuses may respond to future moments of community disruption. For student affairs professionals with direct access to students, this study offers perspectives on the networks that students leverage, the talk they send/receive, and their perceptions of messages emanating from faculty, staff, and administration during community disruption. Ultimately, this study has the greatest implications for students. In other words, when universities are provided with data to bolster their community, students benefit overwhelmingly.

In providing an overview of the research problem and rationale for study, this introduction serves as Chapter 1 of this thesis project. Chapter 2 offers a review of pertinent literature on the role of social capital and everyday communication in community resilience; in particular, the communicative constitution of resilience is discussed. Chapter 3 outlines sampling, data collection, and data analysis designed to capture the communication processes in campus community resilience. Chapter 4 presents the results of the data collection. Finally, Chapter 5 outlines theoretical and practical implications of the research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter reviews extant literature about the role that social capital and everyday communication plays in resilience. First, I review the psychological, sociological, and communicative perspectives of community resilience. In doing so, I describe the central assumptions of community resilience with focus on resilience as a micro-level process that is specific to a community in context rather than a static, one-size-fits-all outcome.

Then, I examine scholars' theoretical frameworks of how community resilience functions. In particular, I explain Norris and colleagues' (2008) networked adaptive capacities for community resilience and Buzzanell's (2010) five-part framework for everyday communication. Buzzanell's (2010) communication theory of resilience anchors these frameworks and provides theoretical grounding for this study. Existing studies of community resilience are also examined to illustrate the need for extending the concept to additional community contexts and with different methodological approaches.

Finally, I provide a rationale for the communicative resilience of the campus community in the COVID-19 pandemic. The section begins with a review of COVID-19 impacts on universities and a definition of the campus community. I provide a rationale for the expansion of community resilience research to the campus community in the communication theory of resilience (Buzzanell, 2010). This chapter ends with research questions about the social capital and everyday communication that builds community resilience for the campus community amid COVID-19.

Resilience

Resilience, as a theoretical perspective, has primary roots in sociology and psychology with an understanding of individual-level resilience (Bonanno, 2004; Oken, 2015; Scaer, 2005).

Shifts to group-level understandings of resilience took the concept into disciplines such as community psychology, public health, and disaster planning and recovery (Ernston et al., 2010; Keim, 2008; Paton & Johnson, 2017). As the scope of resilience expanded, contemporary scholars developed resilience's application in additional disciplines. Namely, communication has become central to the study of resilience, especially in the context of resilience in collectives, such as communities. Resilience is a multi-faceted concept that has grown meaningful, contemporary roots in communication (e.g., organizational, interpersonal, mediated) as scholars seek to understand the ways in which meaning construction, information, and interpersonal networks play an inherent role in community resilience.

Early conceptions of resilience largely center on resilience as the ability to "bounce back." Framed as a metaphor for resilience, bouncing back "implies the ability of people to act, to intervene in their own lives" to recover from trauma (Brown & Kulig, 1996, p. 41). Moreover, bouncing back is not focused just on the ability to cope but on how people engage with social action to build resilience (Brown & Kulig, 1996). More recently, however, scholars have proposed that resilience is more accurately described as the process of "bouncing forward." Whereas bouncing back implies that people return to a baseline trajectory — a pre-disaster reality of operating and living — bouncing forward captures a more accurate reality in which individuals adapt to a new reality as a result of the traumatic event (Houston, 2015). Bouncing forward means that communities see a disaster as a chance for livelihood enhancement — to return from a disaster stronger than before — rather than a return to the pre-disaster status quo (Manyena et al., 2011). Put differently, resilience is the capacity to alter the course of a traumatic situation in a meaningful way that moves a community into a new, better reality.

It is important to note that conceptualizing resilience as a "capacity" is an intentional choice for studying and fostering resilience. Scholars agree that resilience is concerned with the active cultivation and process of bouncing forward — the *capacity* to bounce forward — rather than the outcome of an individual or collective to be resilient. Resilience is not an achievement; rather, resilience is interactively engaged to meaningfully transform the present and future (Buzzanell, 2018). Similarly, Norris and colleagues (2008) do not equate resilience with an outcome but with the process that links resources to resilience. Therefore, resilience is constantly managed and negotiated. Resilience is "always becoming as humans encounter disruptions and opportunities for reintegration and transformation" (Buzzanell, 2018, p. 104).

In shifting beyond an individual-level concept rooted in psychology and sociology, resilience is conceptualized as a group-level concept that has grown in popularity of study; in particular, the study of "community resilience" has gained significant focus across and between disciplines: psychology, sociology, public health, political science and government, and communication, to name just a few. The adoption of community resilience by multiple academic disciplines has left the concept with a wide array of definitions, frameworks, and theoretical applications.

Community Resilience

First, a community is "a defined geographical locality or [...] a group of people who share a sense of identity or have common concerns" (Baum & Ziersch, 2003, p. 321). For example, the individuals who reside within the boundaries of a city's geographical perimeter constitute a community. In addition, the individuals who live within the geographic boundaries of the University of Arkansas campus constitute a community. At the same time, first-year graduate students, with common concerns for academic performance, social life, and teaching, also

constitute a community, and first-generation college students with shared concerns about assimilating to college constitute a community. Understood another way, members in a community, whether geographical or not, "have sense of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitments to be together" (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 9).

Next, in defining community resilience, scholars use similar language, such as "processes," "adapting/adaption," and "capacities" to frame the community-level context. Brown and Kulig (1996) define community resilience as "the capacity of community members to engage in projects of coordinated action within the context of their community despite events and structures that constrain such projects," with emphasis on people interacting as a defined social group (p. 43). Houston (2018) explained that community resilience "is not simply a grouping of resilient individuals or organizations, but is a collection of people and groups who are able to interact successfully to facilitate adaption of the whole" (p. 19). Finally, Norris and colleagues (2008) defined community resilience as "a process linking a network of adaptive capacities (resources with dynamic attributes) to adaptation after a disturbance or adversity" (p. 127).

Additionally, it is important to understand the micro-level nature of community. Because of the geographical and social components that define a particular community, communities are inherently hyperlocal, focused, and narrowed in their scope. In relation to resilience, this means that communities have "their own local needs, experiences, resources, and ideas about prevention of, protection against, response to, and recovery from different types of disasters" (Longstaff et al., 2010, p. 4). One community might have access to certain material, economic, and social resources that another community does not; thus, the capacity for resilience between

these two communities is vastly different. For example, a community with a strong local government infrastructure (e.g., paramedics, fire and rescue services, and aid) and responsive community organizations (e.g., nonprofits and religious groups) is likely to be more resilient from a disaster than an adjacent affected community that has a disorganized local government and dormant community organizations.

Finally, the same focus on resilience as a process that is manifested in individual-level resilience also applies to community-level resilience. The focus is not in deciding definitively if a community is resilient or not but in examining how a community works toward or away from resilience (Brown & Kulig, 1996). Community-level resilience is instead indicated by evidence of community well-being and a community's ability to adaptively cope following a disruption (Houston et al., 2015). This adaptive process of community resilience does not always mean, however, that the community will return to its pre-disaster reality; instead, it is more likely that the community will have adapted to new conditions in their environment — that they will bounce forward (Longstaff et al., 2010). A community's ability to bounce forward, however, is not always positive. While the "resilient" descriptor seems inherently good, Buzzanell and Houston (2018) argue that "such descriptors do not necessarily mean that everyone can mobilize discursive, interactive, and (network) structural and material resources for resilience in a given moment" (p. 4). Thus, if a community lacks the necessary resources to adapt, their ability to bounce forward is compromised and possibly destructive.

In summary, resilience is the capacity to bounce forward from disruption. In bouncing forward, resilience is a process rather than an outcome. With early roots in psychology and sociology, resilience has grown into a multi-disciplinary theoretical perspective with important implications for a number of academic and professional fields. As disciplines and professions

studied and theorized resilience, the concept has taken on applications in new contexts (e.g., group-level contexts) and throughout meaningful disciplines (e.g., communication), which has resulted in the study of community resilience. Community resilience, while varied in definitions, has become an important area of study and demands further examination.

Community Resilience Frameworks

In this study, two community resilience frameworks are particularly salient: Norris and colleagues' (2008) networked adaptive capacities and Buzzanell's (2010) five-part framework for everyday communication in resilience. These two frameworks are particularly salient because they are inherently communicative, consider the everyday communication that communities create and exchange, and involve the formal and informal interpersonal networks that lead to resilient communities. The following sections explain the main assumptions of these frameworks.

Networked Adaptive Capacities Framework

In their framework, Norris and colleagues (2008) argue that community resilience emerges from a set of adaptive capacities, which include economic development, social capital, information and communication, and community competence. Economic development concerns the tangible resources (e.g., land and raw materials, physical capital, accessible housing, health services, schools, and employment opportunities) that create a resource base for a resilient community as well as the diversity, equity, and distribution of these resources. Social capital describes how individuals invest in, access, and use resources from their social networks to facilitate resilience, in particular through social support and community bonds. Information is the primary resource used by technical and organizational systems for resilience, and communication is the co-creation of meaning and understanding about resilience. Community competence is the

decision-making that stems from collective action and efficacy that leads communities toward resilience. Of the four adaptive capacities, social capital and information and communication are most relevant to this study.

Social Capital. First, social capital is a crucial factor in fostering resilient communities (Aldrich, 2010; Aldrich & Meyer, 2014; Buzzanell, 2010; Dynes, 2006; Norris et al., 2008). In line with the variance of community resilience definitions, social capital also varies in its definitions but is grounded in the work of Putnam (1993), Bourdieu (2002), and Coleman (1988). For this study, Putnam's (1993) definition of social capital provides a firm foundation: "features of social organizations, such as networks, norms and trust that facilitate action and cooperation for mutual benefit" (Putnam, 1993, p. 35). At the core of social capital theory is the idea that social networks hold meaningful, transformative value (Putnam, 2001). In the same way that physical capital and human capital increase individual and collective production, so too does social capital, through its social networks and reciprocity among individuals and groups (Putnam, 2001). In his seminal work on social capital, *Bowling Alone*, Putnam (2001) argued that America was experiencing steep declines in social capital. To establish meaningful, community-based social capital, Putnam (2001) implored emphases on civic engagement, community- and family-oriented workspaces, socializing with neighbors, pluralistic spiritual communities, and participation in cultural activities.

Scholars have leaned heavily on classifying social capital in three domains: bonding, bridging, and linking social capital (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Aldrich & Meyer, 2015). Bonding social capital is predicated upon people seeking out those with similar attitudes, information, resources, and demographics (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015). For example, following a school shooting, bonding social capital would characterize the process by which students find social

support in one another because of their shared experiences of the event and similar stage of life (Hurlbert et al., 2000). Bridging social capital describes the loose connections that join social groups, which primarily operate with new resources and information that advance society (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015). For example, parents in a parent-teacher association that work together to fundraise for new school uniforms rely on the loose connection of their civic organization in bridging social capital (Small, 2010). Unlike bonding social capital, which is characterized by connections among relatively homogenous individuals, bridging social capital includes relationships across different demographic characteristics. Finally, linking social capital connects the average individual with those in power (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015) via the respect and norms of a trusting relationship (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004). For example, a citizen who regularly runs into their state senator at the grocery store and continually advocates for public education support is exercising linking social capital.

The resources that make up social capital exist in a web of loving, caring, and readily available social relationships that contribute actual assistance, or capital, that can be cashed in during times of need (Norris et al., 2008). In particular, place attachment, sense of community, and citizen participation build social capital in Norris and colleagues' (2008) community resilience model and are apparent across additional models of social capital (Aldrich, 2010; Anguelovski, 2013; Baum & Ziersch, 2003; Buikstra et al., 2010; Elliott et al., 2010; Houston et al., 2015; Putnam, 2001). These components are especially relevant in the application of social capital to community resilience because they involve group-level utilization of social resources to bounce forward from disruption. The following paragraphs describe place attachment, sense of community, and citizen participation.

Place attachment is a natural fit in a community resilience model of social capital because of the proximity of community members to each other (McPherson et al., 2001). Place attachment is formed through interactions that create value, meanings, and an intimate connection to memory of a physical space — through individuals' affective connection to a physical community (Anguelovski, 2013). Therefore, individuals are embedded and invested in that geographic proximity and its people and have a higher stake in their neighborhood's recovery (Aldrich, 2008). For example, community members may spend time volunteering to rebuild a local coffee shop that was destroyed during a hurricane because they are attached to the experiences and memories they had in that business. Moreover, when a community experiences high levels of social capital, the probability that members will leave the community decreases, which increases the probability of their investment toward community resilience and rebuilding (Aldrich, 2008). These spatial bonds in communities also help build individual and collective identity that stabilize turbulent situations (Perkins & Long, 2002). In other words, when residents feel connected spatially, they become active participants in improving that space (Anguelovski, 2013).

Sense of community, defined as "high concern for community issues, respect for and service to others, sense of connection, and needs fulfillment," is also key to community resilience (Norris et al., 2008, p. 139). When community members feel they belong, feel they matter to each other and to the group, feel emotionally connected to one another through shared experiences, and feel that fellow members will work together to fulfill community needs, they experience a strong sense of community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). For example, community members who successfully organize to stop the building of a casino in their town because they feel it violates the community values and norms would likely report a high sense of community.

Because disasters disrupt a sense of community (Kaniasty & Norris, 2004), it is important that strategies facilitate rebuilding a sense of community in the resilience process (Pfefferbaum et al., 2005).

Citizen participation is a broad concept, sometimes referred to as civic engagement or civil society, that refers to the ways in which citizens engage with different civic and political organizations and the media (Houston et al., 2018). Through a social capital lens, citizen participation involves "incorporating spaces or activities that encourage community members to participate in their maintenance" (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015, p. 263). The extent to which community members participate in social and civil activities, in formal and informal contexts, impacts the levels of social capital available to the community members and corresponds to the capacity for the community's resilience (Baum & Ziersch, 2003). For example, communities with strong citizen participation are likely to have high voter turnouts and above-average participation in local elections, strong support and readership for the community newspaper, and an active religious population that provides outreach services to the community. Moreover, civic participation requires communication, which Jeffres and colleagues (2013) suggest is captured in "communication capital," described as the "persistent communication patterns that facilitate social problem solving in the community" (p. 545).

Information and Communication. The second community resilience capacity of interest in this study is information and communication. Norris and colleagues (2008) define information by how resilience is created through trust, accuracy, and system dissemination of resourceful information, and the researchers define communication as the shared meaning and values created by community members. In this study, communication is the most pertinent concept of this adaptive capacity. In particular, Norris and colleagues (2008) call communication

the "creation of common meanings and understandings and the provision of opportunities for members to articulate needs, views, and attitudes" that lead to community resilience (p. 140). Through communication, community members engage in several resilient strategies: assurance of individual and collective identity, affective connection to place in the community, and community empowerment by co-creating agency over the story of their traumatic event (Norris et al., 2008). Alternatively, communication in Norris and colleagues' (2008) model also concerns how media frame disasters and disaster response in ways that can be supportive toward or detracting from a community's resilience.

What is most important from the information and communication capacity is that community members' co-creation of meanings and understandings about the traumatic event play a crucial role in the resilience process by fostering a sense of belonging, a sense of community, an attachment to places within their community, an affirmation of their important community identities, and an empowerment over their disaster stories to bounce forward into their new realities (Norris et al., 2008). Put another way, the strategies, grounded in empirical data, that contribute to resilience are predicated on the co-creation of meaning and understanding by the community. Moreover, these resilience strategies that Norris and colleagues' (2008) argue are fostered in shared understandings are also fostered in the aforementioned social capital capacity. At the same time, Buzzanell (2018) similarly argues that resilience "incorporates stories, memories, routines, and rituals about how people not only endured despite loss and suffering but also actively shaped and framed these experiences" (p. 15). This emphasis on co-creation links Norris and colleagues' (2008) and Buzzanell's (2018) theories on community resilience by underlining the co-creation of shared meanings and understandings in which communities literally talk resilience into being.

Communicative Resilience Framework

At the core of the communication theory of resilience is human interaction that draws upon discursive and material resources (Buzzanell, 2018). As with alternative theories for resilience, the discursive nature of the communication theory of resilience emphasizes resilience as a process rather than an outcome. "Because resilience is cultivated in human communication and network structures over the course of individuals', organizations', and communities' lifespans," community members continuously engage and negotiate resilience as opposed to focusing on it as a one-time achievement (Buzzanell, 2018, p. 15). In addition, the communication theory of resilience emphasizes the micro-level nature of community. Communities co-construct stories, rituals, logics, identities, emotions, and framings to build new, resilient realities (Buzzanell, 2010), and these new realities "are socially constructed in holistic and intertwined systems, with specific strategies for resilience processes dependent upon the participants and their cultures" (Buzzanell, 2018, p. 103). Put differently, because communication is inherently contextual, the resilience created by communities is bound to their specific circumstances — their disaster, their places, their people, and their ways of life.

The communication theory of resilience encapsulates a simple yet powerful idea: individuals and communities can literally talk, and thus enact, resilience into being (Buzzanell, 2009). Communities *talk* about the meaningful places within it, about the integral feelings of belonging, and about the ways to become an engaged citizenry; in this, disrupted communities *act* to restore their places, belonging, and participation. Communities *talk* — in stories, with rituals, and through emotions — about how to create a new normal; in this, disrupted communities *act* to create new realities that move them forward. Remarkably, the power of

communication in community resilience harnesses the capacity "to lend dignity and hope to human existence" (Buzzanell et al., 2009, p. 310).

In line with the theory of communicative resilience, Buzzanell's (2010) research established five ways that individuals in social networks talk resilience into being: (a) crafting normalcy, (b) affirming identity anchors, (c) maintaining and using communication networks, (d) putting alternative logics to work, and (e) legitimizing negative feelings while foregrounding productive action (Buzzanell, 2010).

First, communities build a new normalcy, generated by talk and maintenance of routines and rituals, to rationalize their new reality. Despite what outside observers assume, people bouncing forward from traumatic events claim that things are getting back to normal, a process that occurs in talking normalcy into being. Moreover, Buzzanell (2010) claims that the performance of normalcy after a traumatic event is a profound accomplishment given the circumstances. Second, identity discourses in resilient communities allow individuals to explain "who they are for themselves and in relation to each other" (p. 4). The identity discourses create affirming identity anchors that build an individual and shared identity that reinforces that individual and community during disruption. Third, communication networks employ resources embedded in social relations — through individual-level and group-level ties — to aid communities in resilience (p. 6). Buzzanell (2010) also describes this third process as building and using social capital, which can be built up over time and cashed in during times of trouble to foster resilience. Fourth, communities utilize sensemaking and alternative discursive logics as a means by which they shape their post-disaster realities. In other words, individuals create their own conditions of organizing, managing, and operating with their pressing circumstances in a way that, even if contradictory, allows them to reintegrate and work through their disruption to

bounce forward. Finally, individuals use talk to background negative feelings that arise from the traumatic event. In doing so, the negative emotions do not dominate the space for fostering resilience; Buzzanell (2010) acknowledges that negative feelings have a place in resilience but argues that the feelings can be counterproductive to resilience goals. Together, these five discursive practices create new, resilient realities for communities facing disruption.

Norris and colleagues' (2008) adaptive capacities — social capital and information and communication, in particular — and Buzzanell's five-part framework for community resilience, along with the additional supporting frameworks for social capital and everyday communication, adhere to the core assumption of Buzzanell's (2010) communication theory of resilience: "Because language and communication constitute our relationships, values, structures, and policies, our actions operate at the nexus of discursive and material tensions on multiple levels and communication contexts" (Buzzanell, 2018, p. 103). A community's resilience — its ability to bounce forward from an event that disrupts the fabric of normal community life — is built on the communication that constitutes the social capital and everyday communication in the resilience process. Thus, the communication theory of resilience serves as the theoretical foundation for this study in understanding how the campus community is resilient amid disruption.

Studying Communicative Community Resilience

Scholars have studied communication's role in community resilience across numerous contexts. Natural disasters and environmental trauma have been a primary area of study (Aguelovski, 2013; Houston et al., 2015 Pfefferbaum et al., 2013a; Pfefferbaum et al., 2013b; Rød et al., 2011; Spialek & Houston, 2019). Researchers have also studied the relationship between communication and community resilience across rural (Buikstra et al., 2010) and urban

communities (Ernstson, 2010), families (Gurwitch, 2007), and minority populations (Kim et al., 2011; Spialek et al. 2020). Researchers have thoroughly studied community resilience with public health (Chandra et al., 2011; Houston, 2012; Pfefferbaum & Klomp, 2013) and with local, state, and federal governments (Ledingham, 2001; Liu & Horsley, 2007). Mediated applications, such as social media, digital media, and news media (Briones et al., 2011; Freberg et al., 2013; Houston et al., 2012), and communication ecology and infrastructure applications (Broad et al., 2013; Cancel et al., 1997; Cohen et al., 2003; Kim & Ball-Rokeach, 2006; Spialek & Houston, 2019) have all contributed to the expansion of community resilience literature.

Across these studies, researchers have used numerous methods to capture the role of communication in community resilience. Primarily, a quantitative focus has accompanied the majority of community resilience research. For example, Sherrieb et al., (2010) developed and tested quantitative measures for Norris and colleagues' (2008) networked adaptive capacities of community resilience. In addition, Pfefferbaum and colleagues (2013) developed the Communities Advancing Resilience Toolkit (CART) assessment survey as a quantitative measure of five community resilience domains: Connection and Caring, Resources, Transformative Potential, and Disaster Management, and Information and Communication. For example, Houston and colleagues' (2017) study of the 2011 Joplin, Missouri, tornado utilized CART, along with other quantitative measures of media use and interpersonal talk, to study individual perceptions of resilience following the tornado. Moreover, studies about social capital in community resilience have also been largely quantitative, focusing on scales that measure level of interpersonal trust and belonging and per capita membership in community groups (Baum & Ziersch, 2003). For example, Wickes and colleagues (2015) quantitatively measured

social cohesion, social trust, and bonding and bridging social capital in the community response to the 2011 Brisbane, Australia, flood.

While qualitative approaches to community resilience research exist, they represent a significantly smaller portion of the literature. Atallah et al. (2018) employed semi-structured interviews and ethnographic observations to identify community resilience themes in indigenous Chilean populations. Somasundaram and Sivayokan (2013) employed interviews and focus groups to build grounded theory about community war trauma in Sri Lanka. More pertinent to this study, Buzzanell and Turner (2012) employed interviews with families to determine how they use everyday communication to "construct and retain what was important about their family and maintain family itself" (p. 301). Similarly, Lucas and Buzzanell (2012) employed in-depth, semi-structured interviews with families and archival data analysis to the everyday communication that families used to talk about financial hardship and how this communication built short- and long-term resiliencies. Buzzanell and Turner's (2012) and Lucas and Buzzanell's (2012) qualitative methods on community resilience captures how resilience operates "not in singular or linear attempts to bounce back after disasters, but discursively, in networks of communicative processes" (Rice & Jahn, 2020, p. 18). In addition, because talk and interaction are inherently contextual, qualitative methods are beneficial in examining the talk and interaction that exists in particular community resilience contexts (Buzzanell, 2018). Moreover, qualitative measures of social capital are meaningful because they capture the numerous contexts in which social capital operates and the multidimensionality of the theory (Baum & Ziersch, 2003).

Despite the significant extant research on community resilience, communication, and social capital, the study of additional contexts and methods is needed to advance scholarship. This necessity stems from the "complex and varied" nature of resilience that makes it "difficult

to conceptualize and operationalize" (Afifi, 2018, p. 5). Therefore, research is needed across contexts to narrow the complex and varied nature of community resilience; this is not to say that community resilience needs to be chiseled down to a singular, rigid definition but rather needs to be better defined and attuned to the various contexts in which it operates. Moreover, the community-level approach to resilience forgoes a top-down approach and instead requires "local participation, ownership, and flexibility in building resilience" (p. 4). By introducing communicative community resilience to a new context and with a more malleable, environmental method, this study negates the top-down approach and instead focuses on the important hyper-local nature of resilience and the ways in which a community's own post-trauma agency fosters a ground-up approach to resilience.

In particular, the communication discipline "lags behind other disciplines in terms of the study of resilience in social relationships" (Afifi, 2018, p. 5). Communication researchers agree that the field needs expansion (Acosta, 2017; Aldrich, 2010; Buzzanell & Houston, 2018; Houston, 2018), and Houston (2018) argued that a specific focus is needed in considering the role of interpersonal disaster talk and social support in community resilience. This needed focus is not just concerned with theoretical models but also on practical understandings of how people literally talk about and how systems enact resilience (Houston & Buzzanell, 2018). Moreover, while the role of social relationships is not lost in the common knowledge about what matters to communities, "recovery policies often overlook and at times upset these resources in their efforts to deliver necessary physical and material aid to victims" (Aldrich, 2010, p. 2). In summary, this study seeks to address the need for theoretical, methodological, and practical expansion of communicative community resilience.

Toward A Communicative Study Of Campus Community Resilience

This study extends the communication theory of resilience — studied through social capital and everyday communication — to the campus community. This community, in particular, has experienced drastic disruption since early 2020, when in-person classes were suspended, campus activities and operations were altered, and students were forced to alter their everyday academic social realities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As universities entered the fall 2020 semester's new virus-altered reality, student enrollment dropped (Williams June, 2020), positive virus cases on campus soared (Mangan, 2020a), residence life buckled with strikes, quarantines, and isolations (Mangan, 2020b), and research and academics faced strained resources (Zahneis & Williams June, 2020). The historic impacts from COVID-19 on the campus community make this extension of community resilience research imperative.

The campus community can be understood geographically and socially, alongside Baum and Ziersch's (2003) definition that a community is marked by a defined geographic locality and/or shared identity and common concerns. Geographically, the campus community is the defined plot of land and the buildings within its perimeter. Academic buildings, common areas, green spaces, residence halls, dining halls, and recreational facilities, along with the sidewalks and roads that connect them, comprise the important spatial components of the geographic campus community. Socially, the campus community is the shared identities of first-generation college students, minority (e.g. racial, sexual, and gender) students, graduate students, first-year faculty members, and administrators. Moreover, the campus community is the common concern of first-year students finding their way, of seniors graduating and leaving meaningful relationships, of faculty producing research while managing the needs of their students, and of all — students, faculty, and staff — navigating their new campus realities amid a pandemic.

The depth and breadth of the campus community, geographic and social, marks its significance for the university and, in particular, the student experience. Higher education scholars agree that the campus community, in its varying parts, is one of the most significant — if not the most significant — contributor to a student's years in college (Astin, 1973; Berger, 1997; Blimling, 2015; Bronkema & Bowman, 2017; Brown et al., 2019; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991; Samura, 2016; Schreiner et al., 2012). For example, the socialization and engagement that first-year college students experience geographically (e.g., living in the same residence hall) and socially (e.g., common concerns about building friendships) in the campus community is incredibly important to buffer the transition between home and college (Brown et al., 2019). In addition, the spatial and social components of residence halls — the concerns about traditional versus suite-style dorms and about who else on the hall is practicing for tomorrow's speech in public speaking — "contribute significantly to what they learn, the friends they meet, their identities, their likelihood of graduating, and their overall satisfaction with college" (Blimling, 2015, p. 179). Even parties and drinking culture associated with the campus community informally build new relationships and social networks that enhance the college student experience (Buettner & Debies-Carl, 2012).

Social capital plays an important role in defining the critical elements of the campus community that are so significant to the university experience. In the transition from home and high school communities to the university community, social capital is notable to forming meaningful pathways and transitions for students (Bottrell, 2008). In particular, the social capital networks that stem from friends, families, and communities help students negotiate their way through college social scenes and establish a sense of belonging (Bottrell, 2008). These social capital networks provide practical support in sharing community resources, such as academic

support services, health services, and campus programming (Bottrell, 2008). In the same way that resilience is an ongoing process and negotiation, social capital in college is solidified and, thus, new social capital is actively developed (Jensen & Jetten, 2015). The ongoing nature of social capital among students means that social capital plays a significant role in identity formation across the various campus communities (Jensen & Jetten, 2015). In sum, the social networks, supports, and resources that lead to collective action make social capital "the most important resource for students to gain social support" (Peng, 2019, p. 230).

Extensive research has proven the centrality of social capital to the student's experience with the campus community. For first-year students, especially those who are first-generation or students of color, social capital is central to the success of their transition to college and their long-term success in college (Budgen et al., 2014; Maramba & Palmer, 2015). College parties build important bonding and bridging social capital that contributes positively to a student's sense of community (Buettner & Debies-Carl, 2012). Among minority student populations, social capital is meaningfully built in exclusive social networks (Harper, 2008) and ethnic student organizations that facilitate mentorship programs (Maramba & Palmer, 2015). Strong social capital also leads to positive academic outcomes for students (Peng, 2019), and social capital developed in relationships with faculty and staff contributes positively to post-graduate employability (Pike et al., 2012). Social capital even plays an important role in fostering a positive virtual learning environment for students (Razzaque, 2020).

Given the significance of social capital in both community resilience conceptualizations and within the campus community, research needs to intersect the two domains as colleges and universities grapple with their resilience amid a pandemic. Social capital is, at best, peripherally considered in proactive disaster plans, if at all; thus, future research is needed to inform plans

that lead to better community recoveries (Aldrich, 2010). Moreover, communication researchers have yet to fully capitalize on the "rich insights that the concept of social capital can offer for studying communication processes and effects" (Lee & Sohn , 2015, p. 741). In higher education studies, Dika and Singh (2002) argue that social capital is narrow and restricted to variables already established in data sets, and its prevalence in policy and programming among educational institutions demands expanded study. Intersecting social capital in community resilience with the campus community expands research and knowledge in both fields and advances important theoretical and practical developments. Therefore, the following research question is posed:

RQ1: How do students experience social capital during the disruption of their campus community?

As universities navigate the community disruption that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic, research is also needed to understand how this community of students, faculty, and staff intersubjectively constructed resilience; that is, how did these people, both individually and collectively, "literally talk and enact resiliency into being" (Buzzanell et al., 2009, p. 309)? In examining the role of messages in community resilience for the campus community, this study expands community resilience scholarship to a new community context, advancing theory and research, while also providing practical contributions toward understanding the role of resilience on college campuses. This is important because expansion of this line of scholarship to "different levels and in multiple communication contexts assists scholars in not losing sight of the locale-specific resources and people who require particular processes and strategies" (Buzzanell & Houston, 2018, p. 4). Whereas Acosta and colleagues (2017) identified confusion in the scope and intent of community resilience research and in translating the theoretical frameworks into

productive action, this study narrows the scope and intent in a new context and examines how

campus communities have constituted productive action in their communication. Therefore, the

following research questions are posed:

RQ2: What messages do students send and receive among each other when experiencing

campus community disruption?

RQ3a: What messages do faculty, staff, and administration send to students when

experiencing campus community disruption?

RQ3b: How did students perceive messages about campus community disruption

emanating from faculty, staff, and administration?

Finally, the communicative construction of resilience for the campus community, as with

the adaption of resilience for any community, is a process, actively negotiated and constructed as

communities bounce forward from disaster and establish new, hopefully better, realities. This

active engagement is embedded in "everyday life at ordinary moments of loss as well as at

extraordinary and profound disruptions" to face the shifting realities (Buzzanell & Houston,

2018, p. 2). Put differently, the campus community constantly searches for and gives meaning to

their new realities in the resilience process (Buzzanell et al., 2009). The social capital

development in the campus community is also "not fixed or set in stone" and "is an ongoing

process" (Jensen & Jetten, 2015, pp. 1-8). Therefore, the following research question is posed:

RQ4: In what ways has campus resilience communicatively evolved over the lifespan of

the COVID-19 pandemic?

Chapter 3: Methods

This study examined the social capital and everyday communication that shaped campus community resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. To adequately understand the inherently discursive and interpersonal nature of this research, I employed qualitative methods, which I outline in the following chapter. First, I identify the focal community and participants for the study and outline participant recruitment strategies. Second, I describe the primary qualitative tools for data collection: focus groups and one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Third, I outline data analysis procedures.

Focal Community

The University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, Arkansas, was the focal community for this study on community resilience. The University of Arkansas is the state's flagship university campus and serves more than 27,000 undergraduate and graduate students from all 50 states and more than 120 countries. In the fall 2020 semester, the university enrolled 27,549 undergraduate and graduate students for in-person and remote instruction (*About the University of Arkansas,* n.d.).

The university began experiencing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. On March 1, the university suspended its study abroad programs and began the process of returning students to the United States (Adame, 2020). On March 5, the university board of trustees announced contingency plans for remote learning in the event that campus operations had to cease to limit virus spread (Stromquist, 2020). On March 11, the same day as the first presumptive positive case in Arkansas, the university suspended all university-sponsored out-of-state travel (*Chancellor*, 2020). On March 19, following the first presumptive positive case in the university's geographic region of northwest Arkansas, the university shifted operations and

learning online, telling students to move out of their residence halls by April 3 (*University*, 2020). On March 23, the first positive University of Arkansas student case was confirmed (Gill, 2020).

University operations remained remote through the end of the spring and summer 2020 semesters. Students moved back onto campus for the fall 2020 semester, but many operations and activities remained online (*Latest Information,* n.d.). Many classes, especially large lectures and classes, remained online or adopted a hybrid, in-person and online approach to learning. New-student orientation and Greek life recruitment functioned largely online in contrast to the large social gatherings and events that were staples of previous semesters. Fall study abroad programs were also canceled, reflecting domestic and international travel restrictions and persistent global concern about the pandemic. On campus, mask-wearing and social distancing was required in virtually all situations and campus locations. Positive COVID-19 cases spiked in August and September when students returned to campus, with a spike of 764 active cases from August 31 – September 6, 2020 (*COVID-19 Dashboard,* 2020). Exactly one year after the first positive University of Arkansas student case, the university announced their intention for full face-to-face classes and university operations by fall 2021 (*University Staff*, 2021).

Participants

For this study, I recruited undergraduate students to participate in semi-structured focus groups and interviews. Participants included 26 students and seven faculty and staff members for a total of 33 participants. The student sample included 17 freshmen, three sophomores, three juniors, and three seniors who lived on- and off-campus, represented 23 different majors, and various student organizations and campus programs (e.g., Freshman Leadership Forum, Honors College, Math Club, Greek life, Razorback Athletics, Razorback Marching Band, and Dungeons

and Dragons Club). Faculty and staff participants included professors, student programming and development staff members, and one administrator.

I employed several strategies to recruit student participants. I utilized a student research pool from basic communication courses at the University of Arkansas. To maximize student recruitment strategies, I also sent recruitment emails to organizations such as Lead Hogs, a leadership development program for students who live on the University of Arkansas campus, and Freshman Leadership Forum, a freshman-exclusive student government leadership program. Moreover, it was important that this study's participants also reflect student populations from various social contexts so as to best represent the array of challenges facing students during the pandemic; for example, recruiting first-generation college students represents a student population who might experience a diminished social capital capacity. To accomplish this goal, I sent recruitment emails to the Honors College First-Generation Mentorship Program, Office for Diversity and Inclusion, and first-generation living-learning communities. From these recruitment opportunities, I also relied on snowball sampling, which was particularly effective because it relied on students' interpersonal networks, which was a primary focus of this study. Participants represented an extreme instance sampling, in which Tracy (2019) argues that participants are bound by a common exposure to an extreme instance — in this case, a pandemic disrupting their campus community.

In addition, I recruited faculty and staff members with the primary purpose of triangulating student responses. To recruit these participants, I sent recruitment emails to various university offices (e.g., Honors College, University Housing, Student Success Center, Office of Diversity and Inclusion, and Student Affairs) who sent the recruitment message to their faculty and staff listservs.

Procedures

To best answer the research questions, two primary qualitative methods were employed. First, I used focus groups in which students co-constructed ideas on social capital and everyday communication experienced on campus during the pandemic. Second, I used semi-structured interviews with individual respondents as follow-ups to confirm, counteract, or amend the ideas co-created in the focus groups. An in-depth explanation of the processes and rationale for the research procedures follows.

Step 1: Focus Groups

Focus groups were the foremost qualitative tool for this study because of their focus on idea co-creation (Tracy, 2019). Focus groups functioned as micro-communities within the larger campus community in which students talked about their responses to campus disruption. The assumption that students have the shared experience of campus community disruption was a key consideration to the validity of the focus-group approach. In recalling their shared experiences of disruption, students generated "a wealth of vernacular speech *in vivo*" that was specific to the context of this study (Tracy, 2019, p. 190). Moreover, because focus groups facilitate the creation of ideas through talk, focus groups are particularly valuable in communication research (Tracy, 2019).

I conducted seven student focus groups from February 3, 2021, to February 27, 2021, each no longer than 60 minutes, with 3-6 students in each group, per Tracy's (2019) recommendations. Freshmen and upperclassmen made up each focus group, but questions specific to freshmen and upperclassmen experiences were asked directly in each group, as were questions that were not specific to student classification. For example, upperclassmen reflected on adapting from spring 2020 to fall 2020 in the campus community (e.g., "Describe returning to

campus for activities and learning this fall."), whereas freshmen reflected on acclimating to the campus community without traditional in-person community building events (e.g., "Talk about your first few weeks on campus this school year."). Questions and prompts for the focus groups aimed at facilitating co-creation of ideas about the ways in which students have relied on different components of social capital (e.g., interpersonal networks, place attachment, and civic engagement) and everyday communication to build resilience during the pandemic. For example, focus group student participants were prompted with the following statement: "Talk about the ways that you and your friends/peers have talked about managing college this school year." See Appendix A for a complete list of student focus group questions.

Moreover, I conducted two focus groups with faculty and staff, each no longer than 60 minutes, with 3-4 participants in each, per Tracy's (2019) recommendations. These focus groups were not focused on ascertaining the resilience experiences of these staff members but rather in understanding how they worked to enact resilience for the students that they serve. For example, faculty and staff participants were prompted with the following statement: "Share a conversation you have had with colleagues about strategies for engaging students and fostering their belonging and sense of community on campus this year." See Appendix A for a complete list of faculty and staff focus group questions.

Focus groups and one-on-one interviews were conducted via video conferencing on Zoom to protect the health and safety of research participants. In addition, video conferencing via Zoom for the focus groups and interviews proved to be logistically efficient in that it automatically recorded and transcribed the meetings and removed cumbersome planning details, such as reserving multiple meeting rooms, setting up audio and video recording tools, and making sure rooms were suited for social distancing. In addition, the focus groups were

strategically placed before one-on-one, semi-structured interviews to build an understanding of community resilience that were expanded upon in the individual interviews (Tracy, 2019).

Step 2: Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were an appropriate secondary qualitative tool for this study because the method allowed respondents to "provide their opinion, motivation, and experiences" and thus "rationales, explanations, and justifications for their actions and opinions" about the campus community disruption (Tracy, 2019, pp. 78-79). In other words, one-on-one semi-structured interviews provided the research participants with the space to unpack the co-created ideas built in the focus groups. In particular, of the ideas discussed in the focus groups, one-on-one semi-structured interviews allowed respondents to highlight what was the most interesting and meaningful to their personal experiences (Tracy, 2019).

I conducted five one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with student participants, each no longer than 45 minutes. I chose respondents based on an assessment of (a) their willingness for further participation in the study and (b) the quality of ideas contributed to the focus groups. I developed semi-structured interview questions from early patterns in focus groups responses and asked respondents to expand on the ideas with their personal experiences about social capital and everyday communication during the COVID-19 campus community disruption. For example, interview participants were asked: "The focus groups identified that students often felt trapped in their dorms and needed to get out and about to deal with learning and socializing during a pandemic. Can you attest to this experience and, if so, can you talk about a time in which you might have experienced this?" Because the semi-structured interview "is meant to stimulate discussion rather than dictate it," space was also given for students to share off-script

experiences and stories that contradicted or were not identified in the focus groups (Tracy, 2019, p. 158). See Appendix B for a complete list of semi-structured interview questions.

Analysis

To achieve the goal of understanding the communicative co-creation of social capital and everyday communication among college students during the COVID-19 pandemic, this study utilized a number of qualitative tools: grounded theory, first-level coding, second-level coding, analytical memos, and thematic analysis.

Grounded Theory

I employed elements of grounded-theory approach to generate theory that explained the campus community disruption phenomenon (Tracy, 2019). I engaged in a line-by-line analysis of the focus group and semi-structured interview transcripts to extrapolate larger themes about campus community resilience. Moreover, because a grounded-theory approach is characterized by simultaneous data collection and analysis, patterns and themes emerged during the collection and analysis processes that informed the subsequent collection and analysis processes (Tracy, 2019). Because of the communicative focus on social capital and everyday communication in this study, grounded theory's contextual, emergent approach to analyzing data best captured the discursive nature of the data.

First- and Second-level Coding

As a precursor to the initial coding processes, I first reviewed and revised the Zoom meeting transcriptions of the focus groups and semi-structured interviews for analysis purposes, in which I also provided pseudonyms for the participants to protect their identities. Then, I began the initial coding processes, in which I relied on first-level coding to orient myself to the early, surface-level patterns apparent in the data. In other words, I relied on the descriptive focus of

first-level coding to identify "'what is present in the data' and to show the "basic activities and processes in the data" (Tracy, 2019, p. 220); for example, first-level codes identified trends of how students engaged with their physical campus community. The first-level coding process also identified *in vivo* codes, or "the language and terms of the participants themselves," that were specific to the campus community disruption and resilience context (Tracy, 2019, p. 220); for example, first-level codes identified common words like "routines" that revealed students' coping-strategy language. In the first-level coding process, I focused on the who, what, where, and when that grounded the later analyses (Tracy, 2019). Subsequently, the second-level coding process provided an extension and analysis of why and how community resilience operated through social capital and everyday communication in the disruption of the campus community. Second-level coding focused on moving from a descriptive coding process to an analytical and interpretive coding process by organizing, synthesizing, and categorizing the first-level codes into interpretive concepts (Tracy, 2019). Because second-level coding draws from disciplinary concepts, the second-level coding phase is where I began to synthesize and theorize the communication that built campus community resilience in the COVID-19 pandemic (Tracy, 2019); for example, second-level coding identified how early trends about the physical campus community gave way to contradictory strategies that students reported using to connect to their community.

In addition, first- and second-level coding engaged analyses with a focus on themes that emerged consistently from the data about the role of talk and social capital in campus community resilience. To analyze participants' responses for community resilience themes, I relied on Owen's (1984) criteria for identifying a theme: recurrence (two or more parts of an answer have shared meaning or reference points) and repetition (the restatement of words and phrases

throughout respondent answers). Consistent with Buzzanell and Turner's (2012) study of how families talk about disruption, I also examined processes, structure, and content throughout the community resilience themes as well as how these themes shifted over time; for example, analyses demonstrated how students' resilience capacities diminished as burnout developed. Themes were also arranged hierarchically into major and minor themes to assist in analyzing the structure and processes of the participants' responses (Hoppe-Nagao & Ting-Toomey, 2002). Throughout the community resilience analysis, I identified common themes across respondents as well as the individual experiences that were unique to respondents and that supported or even rejected the patterns that emerge (Buzzanell & Turner, 2012). Multiple analytical passes of the data and the codes were conducted to ensure adequate reliability and examination. When analytical passes of the data no longer added significant value to the emergent analysis, I reached theoretical saturation and concluded analyses (Tracy, 2019).

Analytical Memos

I used analytical memos to collect any observations, brainstorms, or contributing thoughts that occurred during and immediately following the collection and analyses. In the focus groups and one-on-one interviews, for example, the memos provided an opportunity to record informal thoughts about a specific comment made by a respondent, the way one respondent reacted to another's answer, and/or a moment that needed follow-up questioning later in the focus group or interview process. The memos from the data collection process also proved valuable and important for examination in the coding process. In the coding process, the memos provided an opportunity to record informal thoughts about patterns that started to emerge, pieces of the data that I wanted to come back to with more exposure to the data, and/or ways of beginning to notice structure across the data. Analytical memos were invaluable to this

qualitative approach because they "serve as a key intermediary between coding and writing a draft of the analysis" (Tracy, 2019, p. 228).

In short, this study of social capital and everyday communication in the resilience of the campus community relied on qualitative methods, including focus groups and one-on-one semi-structured interviews as well as analytical tools such as a grounded-theory approach, first- and second-level analysis, and analytical memos. Qualitative methods were most effective for this study because they captured the discursive, contextual nature of communication in this research; moreover, qualitative methods gave space for meaningful experiences, stories, and ideas to be co-constructed in the data-collection process, which mimicked the purpose of this study. The following chapter describes key findings regarding the social capital and everyday communication of the campus community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chapter 4: Findings

This study investigated five research questions that sought to understand the roles of social capital and everyday communication among students, faculty and staff in shaping university students' capacities for resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. Qualitative focus groups and semi-structured interviews were used to answer these questions. Thirty-three participants across seven student focus groups, two faculty and staff focus groups, and five semi-structured student interviews resulted in 557 pages of single-spaced transcripts and analytical memos. This data resulted in rich findings across the five research questions, which follow.

RQ1: How do students experience social capital during the disruption of their campus community?

Students made sense of their campus community disruption during COVID-19 through a series of contradictions pertaining to their social capital. Students reported a disconnect from the physical university community, repeating that they were not on campus despite living in on-campus residence halls. Students talked about how important campus organizations and structures were in getting them plugged in but, at the same time, talked about how COVID-19 protocols made those experiences limited. Students also felt remarkably isolated in their sense of community despite making intentional choices to build routines designed to buffer that isolation.

Living on Campus, But Not **Being** *on Campus*

While navigating the COVID-19 pandemic and their college experience, students experienced a complex relationship with their physical community, with their residence halls or off-campus homes, social and academic spaces, and the greater university campus. For example, students felt burdened by their inability to balance work and personal space in their on- and off-campus residences, which created a cycle of campus disconnect. This complexity is revealed in a

comment Amber, a freshman political science and journalism major, made multiple times in both the focus group and follow-up semi-structured interviews. Despite living in an on-campus residence hall, Amber talked about not being on campus: "I don't see myself going to campus or being on campus for any reason anymore." Amber's paradox of actually living on-campus while talking about not being on campus is the ideal example for analogizing the disconnect students felt from their campus. Simultaneously, in trying to cope with the feeling that one was not connected to their physical campus, many students turned to alternative on- and off-campus spaces, which counterintuitively, further drove students away from campus.

In light of students learning virtually across the fall 2020 and spring 2021 semesters, dorm rooms and off-campus housing turned into classrooms, offices, and study spaces. Whereas students traditionally left their dorm or off-campus home and traveled to an on-campus classroom, students, more often than not, made the few-feet commute from their bed to their desk to complete schoolwork. Consequently, several students reported that the line between work and personal space was incredibly blurred, joining class via Zoom while still in bed and repeating the need to establish "balance," "boundaries," and "separation of space." For freshmen and upperclassmen alike, they had few reasons to explore campus because most events or activities were hosted virtually. As Amber explained, "I don't have a reason to, you know, leave the building even [and] there's literally no reason to get out of bed." The same goes for off-campus students like Nicole, a sophomore exercise science major, who said she had no reason to commute to campus with classes held virtually. Nicole also said that the "separation of spaces" presented a severe challenge to her productivity: "I sit at the same desk that's next to my bed all day, every day. It takes everything I have not to just crawl into that bed and do homework there. Motivation to get up and move around is not there that much anymore."

Another point of tension for students stemmed from the significant amount of time they spent in their residences. Caroline, a freshman human development and family sciences major, said getting out of her dorm was a "priority." Amber said a "change of scenery" was a small thing that made a big difference. Lacey, a junior communication major, said that being "stuck" in a dorm room all day was "so draining — you feel like you do nothing all day and you're so tired." Annie, a junior communication major, said working in her apartment all day made her feel like she was trapped in a "little bubble."

Students also repeatedly talked about the enforcement of mask policies in the residence halls as a frustrating barrier that prevented students from feeling like they were on a college campus. Parker, a freshman finance major, was given a $150 fine by a resident assistant (RA) for visiting a friend in another dorm "for like 30 seconds without a mask on." Emily, a freshman agriculture communications major, also felt the strain of COVID policy enforcement in her dorm:

> We were living together for an entire semester and couldn't walk to the bathroom without having a mask on. And there was like very, very, very little leniency in that, and it also just caused immediate animosity between us and our RAs because there weren't opportunities for us to get to know them or to be friends with them and then our first interaction with them would be them writing us up.

Moreover, for students in apartment-style residence halls — suites with a communal living space and separate bedrooms — the design of the residence hall, which keeps people in their suites with no need to walk down the hall for the bathrooms or common areas, created a space that was not conducive to fostering interaction.

Nevertheless, students found ways to manage the feelings of frustration with their physical community. In some cases, students coped with this frustration by intentionally immersing themselves in campus spaces, even if those spaces were not nearly as populated due

to COVID-19 restrictions. A few students created boundaries for themselves by refusing to work on their laptop in bed and by taking their work to a study room in their dorm. For those feeling trapped in their residences, alternative communal spaces throughout campus became an escape, and many made goals for themselves to leave their room at least once a day. The student union, dining halls, friends' dorms, and open classrooms became spaces where students could take a break from their residence and build meaningful connections, or place attachments, to campus. For Amber, the student union, in particular, was a place of accountability and collective understanding among peers:

> There are [students] doing the same thing that you're doing. They're working for school or whatever, but they're also feeling the same that you are, thinking the same that you are. [...] You're just kind of bonded in that way, without knowing it. So, that was definitely a big motivator, just sitting there and like looking around with everyone else, doing the same thing.

For students in traditional residence halls — dorm rooms down a long corridor with communal bathrooms and common spaces — the necessity to leave the dorm room proved beneficial. This sentiment was shared by Emily, the same student who reported frustration with her residence hall's mask enforcement: "I brush my teeth almost with the same girls every night, and that sounds silly but I really do, so I know probably 75% of the girls that live on my floor."

However, some students coped with the disillusionment from campus life by retreating from campus altogether. Students went to restaurants, coffee shops, friends' apartments, or even home for students who lived close enough. For example, Jessie, a junior math and computer science major, said that the primary way she was able to "stay sane" was to visit her parents or her boyfriend's parents throughout the week as a means for escaping her off-campus residence. Others, such as Kyle, an undeclared freshman, and Marcy, a freshman elementary education major, took advantage of local state parks and hiking trails as a means of building a place

attachment to the greater northwest Arkansas community. Students' desire to get off campus, however, resulted in a paradox. Rather than finding ways to invest in and connect to their physical campus community during the pandemic, students resorted to pushing themselves further and further from campus as a coping strategy — one that only perpetuated their cycle of campus disconnect.

Inside an Organization, But Feeling on the Outside

Students reported that campus participation played a crucial role in their social and academic lives during the pandemic. However, students also reported feeling the challenges of COVID being ever-present, even to the extent that they felt disconnected from the organizations of which they were apart. For example, COVID safety protocols prohibited traditional involvement in Greek life and campus organizations (e.g., in-person recruitment and meetings, social mixers, frequent and casual visiting at the fraternity or sorority house). For instance, Amber called her Greek life social experience "very limiting." Mary, a freshman psychology major, also felt like she was not fully experiencing what it meant to be in the Greek community:

> Sororities have a stigma that you're paying to make friends, but, honestly, this year it doesn't feel like that at all just simply because we don't know people. [...] I think that there's about half of my pledge class that I don't even know their name or their face just because we haven't been able to have events.

Additionally, upon logging into the Zoom meeting for her focus group, Emily exclaimed that it was nice to actually see the face of her peers in the focus group who were also in the Freshman Leadership Forum of which she was a member. Emily later commented on how their in-person meetings had been burdened by social distancing and masking protocols that led to limited genuine social interaction.

Upperclassmen also experienced the strain of safety procedures on their campus participation experiences. Lacey and Evan, a senior history major, were heavily involved in

Residence Life and Army ROTC respectively and found that their participation provided

consistency from a "normal" school year to a COVID school year. Nevertheless, they also

believed COVID safety protocols encumbered their experiences. Lacey said that casual,

everyday interaction with her residents was minimal, at best, and that participation in residence

life events was basically nonexistent. Evan's involvement with Army ROTC was less focused on

connection with his peers and more focused on "trying to help mentor [freshmen] and trying to

help them figure stuff out" — that is, figure out their place in the organization amid challenging

operating procedures.

Interestingly, participation in Greek life was a positive experience for upperclassmen like

sophomore economics major, Jake, who said living in his fraternity house promoted a positive

social experience during COVID, but upperclassmen had the advantage of being established in

their organizations. Freshmen, on the other hand, started from nothing amid especially

challenging circumstances. The difference between freshmen and upperclassmen reactions to

campus participation is of particular interest because it highlights an important distinction.

Whereas upperclassmen relied on existing campus participation as one of many tools in their

toolbox for managing their COVID-19 college experience, freshmen had to insert themselves

into already-existing organizations. As Jamie, a freshman international business major, said:

"You couldn't let the opportunities come to you. You had to go out there and find them." Even

then, inserting oneself into already-existing organizations proved challenging due to safety

protocols, which ultimately inhibited one's ability to connect with the organization and peers.

This finding of freshmen's complex relationship with campus organizations is a bit

contradictory, however, considering that freshmen alone mentioned 10 different registered

student organizations (RSO) and campus programs that facilitated a positive adjustment to their

university experience during COVID: Freshman Leadership Forum, Path Program, Lead Hogs, Young Democrats, Honors College, Ultimate Frisbee Club, SpikeBall Club, Jump Start Program, Razorback Marching Band, and Associated Student Government (ASG). For example, the Jump Start Program, which is designed to give high school seniors a jump start on the college admissions and adjustment process, provided a catalytic moment for Brooke, a freshmen social work major, when the friends she made from the summer before finally arrived on campus:

> I didn't really feel like I was a part of the University of Arkansas until that Saturday. [...] Really the first time I ever felt like I was in a community was when I saw all of them again. [...] We had a really awesome day. I met a bunch of people, and I was like, "Oh dude, this is what it means to be a Razorback."

For upperclassmen, Greek life, Army ROTC, Math Club, Residence Life, and ASG also proved significant to the positive maintenance of their college experience during COVID-19. This incongruity points to the recurring theme of students' experiences in which traditional elements of social capital that support resilience were inverted and contradicted.

The Only Student at a Large University

Unfortunately, traditional means of establishing a sense of community (e.g., in-person orientations and recruitments; tailgating and weekend activities; in-person classes and study sessions; packed dorm rooms, residence hall common spaces, and dining halls) were either completely gone or virtually unrecognizable during the 2020-21 school year. Overwhelmingly, students reported that the greatest challenge they experienced while in college during a global pandemic was building a healthy social life that adhered them to the greater community. Interestingly, a number of students, like Emily, also called "community" one of the greatest challenges, lumping together their overall sense of community experience. Emily said the beginning of her college experience felt remarkably isolating: "When you're about to go to a big school like Arkansas, [people] always say, 'You're going to be a tiny fish in a big pond,' and I

was a tiny fish in a big pond — only the big pond was just me." Especially for students who live off-campus and/or by themselves, such as Micah, a senior exercise science major, isolation was a serious concern. For Jessie, making new friendships was "extremely difficult," and even the maintenance of existing friendships was hard for some, including Nicole:

> I would try really hard to text a few people I know and be like, "Hey, I'm going hammocking on campus," and it only lasted about two weeks until people kind of stopped wanting to show up. [...] I kind of started to see the true side of people that I thought were my friends and kind of lost a lot of people in my life.

For students like Maggie, a freshman English and journalism major, who lives on-campus in a residence hall with a roommate and surrounded by their peers, finding a sense of community felt hopeless: "I would just say that my roommate is my only friend, and it really seems like it's too late to start making friends, if that makes sense, like especially around us on this floor. It seems like everyone else is already friends with each other—" As she said this, tears welled up in her eyes, and she cut her response short as she turned off her microphone and camera.

Even the "little things," as one participant put it, that were often taken for granted in building a sense of community were now glaringly obvious. Students said missing out on before-class small-talk with peers was a challenge in a fulfillment of academic needs and in building casual social relationships. Mary said the worst day of her fall 2020 semester was a tipping point in which she was struggling to prepare for an exam when she realized that "I didn't have somebody to text and say, 'Are you stressed about this test? How do you feel about it?' [...] I didn't have somebody else to bounce off, validate my feelings and make me feel better." Peers having their cameras off during Zoom class made socialization limiting, and COVID protocols prohibiting residents from leaving their doors open for easier socializing in the residence halls piled on to the greater social challenges. Rituals like celebrating a 21st birthday or a friend's

graduation on Dickson Street, Fayetteville's bar district, were replaced by no celebration at all for Evan, impeding his emotional connection to those events, places, and friends.

Despite these challenges, students found ways to cope and develop a sense of community. Students in the focus groups consistently talked about the importance, more than ever, of building a routine for their social lives, repeating words like "routine," "each week," and "intentional," referring to making socializing a top priority in their schedules. This routine-building took many forms for students: established meals times in the dining halls, religious services together each weekend, set study times in the student union, Tuesday Zumba classes via Zoom, recurring Saturday night sand volleyball, a daily walk around campus, Monday night Zoom watch parties of "The Bachelor," weekly flag football at the intramural fields, visiting home on the weekends, and weekend hikes at the local state park. Developing these routines and making definitive choices to maintain them served as a respite from the challenges of COVID-19 during college — as something that was "really therapeutic," according to one student. More specifically, these intentional routines helped students create and maintain a sense of community that contributed to their community resilience capacities.

RQ2: What messages do students send and receive among each other when experiencing campus community disruption?

When examining the messages that university students shared with each other during the COVID-19 pandemic, three primary themes emerged: expressing pre-COVID college nostalgia, navigating social contracts and operating procedures, and identifying positive aspects amid challenging situations. First, upperclassmen expressed nostalgia for a pre-COVID college experience, whereas freshman experienced nostalgia as a burden to their college identity-building process — that is, they felt the nostalgia as a burden in their process of building an

identity as a University of Arkansas student and in feeling like a member of the campus community. Second, students experienced a deep, contradictory divide in navigating what social contracts and operating procedures were appropriate for managing their community during a global pandemic; in other words, students were unsure of how to follow health and safety protocols across varying social scenarios. Third, while recognizing the challenges of their college experience during COVID-19, students simultaneously highlighted the academic, social, and personal benefits that emerged. These messages simultaneously divided and united students in their campus identity formation and meaning-making processes, which reinforced the contradictory and conflicting nature of their resilience capacities.

'It Just Seemed Like Such a Different World'

Both freshmen and upperclassmen reflected on and longed for a pre-COVID college experience. Despite the saturation of this theme throughout the focus groups, the division among students was stark. Upperclassmen recalled rituals, traditions, and stories from their college experience before COVID-19; in doing so, they used nostalgia as a coping mechanism in which their positive recollections buoyed them through their turbulent COVID-19 school year. Freshmen, on the other hand, felt anything but nostalgia for a pre-COVID college experience; of course, as one freshman noted, a COVID-laden college experience is all freshmen knew. Instead, freshmen had high expectations of what their college experience would be, and those expectations were not met. Moreover, freshmen felt that hearing about upperclassmen's nostalgia reinforced feelings that they were not experiencing the authentic campus community. As Summer, a freshman business major, explained, "it just seemed like such a different world" when upperclassmen expressed their nostalgia. This stark contrast in messages split the student community, hindering their collective identity-building toward resilience.

It was nearly impossible for upperclassmen to keep from reflecting on the rituals, traditions, and stories from their previous years in college, according to Lacey, who said that "every day, I feel like I have a moment of, 'Well, last year…'." Lacey, an RA in a dorm next to the football stadium, recalled how going with her residents to tailgating and football games was an experience she could neither describe nor recreate this year. Nicole recalled her residence life experiences in previous years in which "I had this big community aspect that I never had before" and now longs for. Annie told stories highlighting moments with her friend group from freshman and sophomore years while admitting "I can't imagine coming into this as a freshman." Additional upperclassmen longed for in-person Greek life and student organization events, going out for dinner and drinks with friends, and engaging in discussions through in-person classes.

Over and over again, freshmen collectively mourned their freshman experience. Parker, a freshman finance major, explained: "Everyone has stories — I know a lot of sophomores — and they're like, 'Oh you're missing out on this. We did this this time last year.' And I feel like we're just missing out on that, which kind of sucks." Freshmen Mikayla and Macie nodded their heads in agreement with Parker, who continued, "It's awful just because we don't know when it's going to be back to normal." Mikayla added that upperclassmen expression of nostalgia and empathy is especially frustrating:

> You're like, "Oh, I'm a freshman," and they'll be like, "Oh, I'm so sorry." That's their instinct — their auto reply. [...] Every time that happens, it's like, "This isn't what you think it is." […] When they say like, "Oh, I'm so sorry," like it doesn't — it's only more annoying than helpful.

Caroline said upperclassmen's expression of nostalgia made her "sad" and "only made things harder." Amber said her sorority tried to recreate new-member initiation on Zoom, but "it wasn't really recreating it — it was just telling us what we missed out on." Summer said weekly dinner at her sorority house was filled with older members talking about what they would do on the

weekends "in a typical year," and small-group meetings with a student organization turned into older members talking about how things "used to be done." The nostalgia of a "normal college experience" even came from older siblings and parents, according to Kyle, who felt the messages of a missed college experience emanate from nearly everyone in his close social networks.

This perpetual expression of nostalgia from upperclassmen only worsened unmet expectations that freshmen were already experiencing. For some students, like freshman Emily, those unmet expectations were massive: "My whole life I just hyped up going to college, being a part of this huge community, being a Razorback, and all these things we get to do, and then, none of that was happening." Amy, a freshman human development and family sciences major, said she was looking forward to "a fresh start" at college with high expectations of meeting new people and finding her identity as a college student. However, she soon realized that, "Oh, this isn't how college is supposed to be." Instead, identity as a freshman manifested itself in a collective grief for an unmet experience that was only worsened by upperclassmen, whose identity manifested itself in nostalgia for rituals, stories, and experiences. At once, identities were affirmed and counteracted. Identity building and reconciliation was deeply split among freshmen and upperclassmen, dividing the community during a time in which connection was already splintered.

Making Sense of Right and Wrong

Among students, social contracts and operating procedures of how to engage socially during a global pandemic were especially inconsistent, contradictory, and varied. Interpersonally, students were unsure of whether or not to wear a mask in small-group settings and with friends. Institutionally, certain places on campus, such as residence halls, upheld different safety protocols from others. In big and small ways, students were constantly negotiating what was

right and what was wrong socially during the COVID-19 pandemic. In that negotiation, students employed often contradictory, alternative logics to make sense of and to defend their decisions about socialization and community building among peers.

Students consistently reported an inability to discern what COVID-19 safety protocols should be employed even in social situations with close friends. For some students, like Amy, safety protocols were non-negotiable: "Even like if there's no one around me, I'm going to be wearing a mask just because that's who I am and I want to take those precautions and protect others around me." For other students, like Jake, a sophomore economics major, protocols were not as serious of a concern: "The fraternity house is basically a dorm with all guys and all people I know and we weren't very strict and on top of it, so it was just kind of normal." Differences in protocols across the institution, especially across residence halls, also perpetuated confusion. For example, three students said that residence life staff in their dorms rarely enforced mask and social distancing protocols while three other students said that residence life staff strictly enforced protocols — even if you were in a study room by yourself, per Amber's experience. Even for students who took safety protocols less seriously, they still repeated words like "decency" and "respect" when referring to honoring their peers' wishes, despite taking action that did the opposite.

With differing perspectives on safety protocols, students found themselves in countless situations in which the social contracts were unclear. To make sense of the confusion, students employed a number of alternative logics — oftentimes contradictory logics — to rationalize their decisions. Jennifer, a freshman apparel merchandising and product management major, said she experienced extreme guilt when thinking about socializing during the pandemic, but the guilt was a double-edged sword: "When I do go out and I do find friends, I feel guilty about going out.

But I also feel guilty staying in because I feel like lame, I guess, because I'm not going out, and I'm in college. I should be out partying, but at the same time I shouldn't." Weighing the risk with the reward was a common form of negotiation for students who justified socialization and breaking health protocols in the name of building or maintaining a community. Evan, who lives off-campus with several roommates, even acknowledged the contradictory nature of his justifications:

> We're all in a close enough circle to where we decided that if one of us gets COVID, it doesn't matter what happens, we're all going to get COVID. So, let's just go hang out at somebody's apartment. I know it's probably not a great thought, but there's less than eight of us.

Carlie, a freshman biomedical engineering major, also recognized the contradictory nature of her justifications. At the beginning of the school year, Carlie, who said members of her close family were at high risk, took safety precautions more seriously. When she got settled into campus and started building her community, however, she realized that her adherence to strict safety precautions was limiting her interactions with friends. Shortly thereafter, she also realized that her family, who lived nine hours away, would not know if she followed the safety precautions they expected of her. Her family's distance and her desire to make connections served as justification for breaking the protocols she had so closely followed. Even after the personal bargaining and negotiation, Carlie said her family still ended up getting COVID: "So, I guess it didn't really matter after all."

Transcending Grief for Resilience

Despite the challenges college students experienced during COVID-19, of which there was a seemingly endless supply, students talked frequently about positive aspects of the academic year foregrounded in their challenging experiences. By recognizing the challenges while qualifying them with positives, students demonstrated their capacity to use everyday

communication as a resilience tool — moving away from their community disruption and toward new, resilient realities. Interestingly, students talked about how finding the positives despite such a harsh reality was an intentional choice that had to be made — an intentional choice that ultimately was for the better. Mary, for example, argued that "the people that were able to find positives are the ones who would be more successful." Nicole believed "that there's always going to be some sort of positive in situations, even if you don't want to see it." Amber said she caught peers, and even herself, "looking at the light at the end of the tunnel when you're missing all the stuff that's happening right now." Students made the intentional choice to identify their positive experiences, resulting in three primary categories in which positives were present: academic life, social life, and personal life.

While quickly admitting the challenges that online learning poses, students were also quick to talk about ways in which they have benefited from remote learning. Re-watching lectures, flexibility of where students can attend class, pass-fail grading options, alleviation of speaking and presentation anxiety, and less time commuting to and around campus were some of the primary benefits of remote or hybrid learning that students reported. For students such as Jessie, who has dyslexia and is immunocompromised, attending class remotely with her camera off was extremely beneficial on days in which she was not feeling well. Moreover, Jessie said universal access to lecture recordings was a game changer for re-watching and better processing lecture material that she might have missed.

Students' social lives were undoubtedly one of the most impacted parts of their experience during COVID, but some still found ways to foreground positive perspectives about their social life. Several students talked about how mutual suffering coupled with maintaining close, tight-knit social networks as a health precaution allowed them to build "deeper" and

"closer" relationships with their friends, especially roommates with whom they spent considerable time. Amber said the people who have "kept me going" during the pandemic became some of her closest friends and that she wondered if she would have gotten to know them so well if circumstances were different. Annie mentioned multiple times that her social life dramatically improved because she had fewer opportunities for overcommitment: "This is the best my social life has ever been [because] I actually have more time to spend time with my friends." In particular, Annie and a close friend spent their newfound time to create a podcast, an activity she said was a serious highlight and lifeline throughout her fall semester.

Personal growth was another defining highlight of students' experiences this academic year. For most students, leaving one's comfort zone was a necessity that heeded a positive outlook on their ability to adapt and overcome. For some, their social comfort zone was the hardest to leave, but being forced out of their social comfort zone led to meaningful relationships, a process that might not have happened otherwise and that helped remedy social anxieties. Parker said that his capacity for accountability grew exponentially, and that his COVID college experience "helped me grow up a little like quicker." Evan shared a similar sentiment:

> Establishing that routine and that discipline has been big. Even though I could use COVID as an excuse or I could do the bare minimum here, that's not going to benefit me in any way — that's not going to help me kind of make the most of the situation.

Students also held themselves accountable from a self-care perspective. Carlie, who was a self-proclaimed overachiever and competitive dancer in high school, said she tended to overextend herself, and COVID provided a reality check and more time to think about what she truly values: "I've used this year [...] to say, 'This is what I value as a person. This is what I want to do. It was great that I did this a year ago, but it's just not for me anymore.' It's a kind of self-reflection

where I found an identity." Carlie's self-reflexive posture demonstrated that students held within themselves an important duality: One can simultaneously give appropriate space to both the immense challenges and the transformative potentials of community disruption as a means of transcending their grief toward resilience.

RQ3a: What messages do faculty and staff send to students when experiencing campus community disruption?

Three dominant themes emerged from the faculty and staff focus groups, in which they discussed the conversations with students and colleagues regarding the university community during a global pandemic: a) recognizing the severe challenges in keeping students connected and engaged, b) empathizing with students despite their disconnection and disengagement, and c) considering the long-term consequences and the resilience capacities of students. First, faculty and staff were overwhelmingly concerned about the lack of engagement by students across all aspects of the university (e.g., classes, campus activities, programming, and student support services) even when students expressed the desire and necessity for these opportunities. Second, students' lack of engagement, which was to the dismay of faculty and staff work and effort, did not stop employees from empathizing with the immense challenges that faced students. Finally, faculty and staff raised substantial, complex questions about the long-term consequences of the pandemic on students and how students will fare once university operations returned to in-person instruction and campus operations.

Keeping Students Connected and Engaged

Faculty and staff alike overwhelmingly and recurrently reported that keeping students engaged in their respective campus operations was a serious challenge, a threat to their abilities to do their jobs, and a blow to the meaningful time and effort they place in their campus roles.

While students openly admitted to disengaging from Zoom classes, the virtual classroom was not the only place of student disengagement, according to faculty and staff; campus activities, campus programming, and student support services also felt a disconnect from students more than any year prior, as one staff member said. In an attempt to tailor campus programs and activities to what students wanted and needed over the pandemic, faculty and staff sent surveys soliciting feedback from students. Even when surveyed about which events would interest them, students did not show up and did not follow through with the needs they reported, demonstrating a steep disconnect between what students thought they needed in the moment and what students actually needed. What students actually needed, though, remained unclear.

In the classroom, John, an assistant professor, experienced student disconnect so severely that it reached a tipping point: "I actually had to end class prematurely on Wednesday because of the lack of engagement. It's not something I would normally do, but [...] I thought I just don't know how else to get their attention, but to say, 'I'll see you on Monday.'" John laughed about his experience in an ironic way as he called it "painful — just so painful" while the other faculty and staff lamented his experience and empathized with the tough reality. Nadine, who works in student success services and is an instructor, also said that virtual classes were remarkably challenging in terms of keeping students engaged. She had students in her class — at least two, regularly — who remained in the Zoom classroom, cameras off, even after she dismissed class, indicating that they "are clearly not paying attention enough to know that class is over." Nadine's story affirmed anecdotes from students who admitted to burnout and disillusionment with online learning, which will be discussed in the findings for RQ4.

Christine, a graduate assistant in the Honors College, said she experienced similar disengagement from students in Honors College programs, regardless of whether or not they

were social or academic in nature. She said students' lack of connection to events and activities was attributed to them being "Zoomed out," admitting that she was over it, too. Students, according to Christine, missed "just being in a room and seeing other people in person." James, who develops diversity and inclusion programming and who joined the university at the beginning of the pandemic, said he had serious difficulties connecting with students because of the sheer number who were disengaged.

Interestingly, even when faculty and staff reached out directly to students to learn what they would be interested in and what needs they needed met, students still did not participate. For example, Nadine led an effort in her role with student support services to survey students about what resources would be helpful during fall 2020 finals week. Hopeful about the more than 500 voluntary responses to the survey, Nadine said turnout to the events they planned as a result was extremely low — "almost no students attended [...] even though these were the programs they wanted." Christine said that the Honors College had similar experiences by more informally polling students via Instagram about what events they would like to attend, but "then it comes time for the actual program and we get like a handful of students," adding "it's exhausting." As for an explanation, Nadine said that "students are expressing what they need in the moment, but it's probably not what they actually need — although nobody knows what anyone actually needs."

Empathizing with Students

Faculty and staff frustration with students' disconnect and lack of engagement during the pandemic did not stop them from empathizing with students about burnout and missed opportunities. They empathized with the big things — seniors missing their graduation — and the little things — students not experiencing living together without concerns for their health and

safety. As one faculty member said, "we asked our students [...] what they are looking forward to when this is over, and all of our freshmen were so excited to live in houses with friends."

Upon the "gut-wrenching" realization that the spring 2020 semester would be unimaginably upended, Melissa, who works in student-athlete development, said her immediate thoughts were about her students:

> I thought about all of the spring sports student-athletes and seniors who were really embracing every moment of their senior year — trying to enjoy their final practices and final games — and then they just have all that pulled right out from underneath them. That was just so hard when you build relationships with the students like I do.

In the days and weeks following the cancelation of all college and professional athletics in spring 2020, Melissa said she spent most of her time helping students "come to terms with the shock and devastation," something she also called "a grieving process," especially for seniors "who felt gutted."

John said he heard from a number of his students who felt cheated about their education over the span of the entire pandemic. He and his colleagues worked to "acknowledge the fact that [students] felt cheated and then try not to silver-line it too much." Part of that empathy process, especially in his field, soon turned to helping his students understand that their experiences would make them better able to empathize with future clients by "really trying to process what it meant to have your school life truly collapse into your personal space and how that's disrupted their habits, routines, and relationships." Other faculty and staff, while perhaps not as directly expressing their empathy, said they tried to be considerate of students' difficult circumstances when designing courses and programs and outlining deadlines and expectations.

However, empathy was not an immediate response for some, like Nadine who said she "was frustrated with students at the beginning of this, but I've come more around to their point of view." Nevertheless, she admitted that she believed "students are doing their best [and] are

genuinely trying to do a good job, wherever they're at. I don't always feel that in regular semesters." Ultimately, faculty and staff empathy resulted in a meaningful perspective-taking stance in which faculty and staff were able to understand and share in the experiences of the students who they served. This ability to foreground empathy for students amid their frustrations demonstrated an opportunity in which faculty and staff helped students do the same — to foreground positives of being a student during the pandemic amid the challenges — regardless of whether students acknowledged that help or not.

Asking Complex Questions About Students But Not Of Students

Faculty and staff were also concerned about and questioned the pandemic's long-term impact on students. Moreover, these questions led to speculation about whether or not students were practicing resilience, what characteristics were present among resilient students, and what exactly defined student resilience. Interestingly, however, while faculty and staff readily shared these questions and concerns among each other, they did not report sharing these questions with their students — the subjects of these questions. While conversation and questioning in the focus groups perhaps did not spur these discussions, it does not dismiss the possibility that faculty and staff were likely only having these conversations internally. In other words, faculty and staff missed an opportunity to turn these questions toward students to facilitate transformative meaning-making and practical takeaways that could positively shape resilience.

Numerous questions were posed by faculty and staff focus group participants about the responsibilities, work, and expectations that they faced as the pandemic's impact on the university passed the one-year mark and as vaccinations led to the hopeful return of full-capacity, in-person campus operations in fall 2021. John questioned how students were going to unlearn the habits and routines "that have maybe worked in the short-term" but will not sustain

them long-term, questioning how "we," in reference to his colleagues, are going to accomplish the task of helping students "extinguish bad habits and learn new ones." Christine wondered how universities were going to continue to support non-traditional students who have benefited from the remote or hybrid opportunities to attend class, meetings with professors, or student support services. She also wondered how students "who are coasting right now" would react when they enroll in upper-level courses and apply for internships and jobs post-pandemic in which "they're going to realize how different things are."

Nadine, in particular, raised numerous questions about students post-pandemic: "When we come out of COVID, will everything just be thrown out the window because we don't know how students will act — what will they want, are they going to be excited, are they going to be exhausted, what will things look like when we're free?" She brought into question the concerns of students who will be sophomores in fall 2021 — students who have not even experienced full-capacity, in-person campus operations. As a student support staff member, Nadine questioned the long-term planning capacities of students who "aren't great at it anyways" and who have resorted to short-term, triage-like planning during "a year when everything is so uncertain." She also speculated whether or not pass-fail grading systems have set students up for success to receive traditional grades once the pandemic is over.

In each of the faculty and staff focus groups, these questions led to conversations about students' capacity to be resilient during the pandemic and conversations about student resilience in general. John said that some students were building resilience, but other students "are just sucking it up and that's very different than attending to creating a space for inquiry and taking stock of where to put their focus." Whereas John took a more critical stance in questioning students' resilience, Christine argued that the sole act of survival is resilience. Christine argued

that "when this is all over, if the student has made it through and is still in school, that will be resilience for me." This difference demonstrated steep contrasts in understanding resilience at the faculty and staff level, which prompts uneven social support mechanisms for students.

Speculation about what exactly made a student resilient during the pandemic followed. According to Melissa, many of the student-athletes who she works with managed their lives as college students during the pandemic particularly well because of past exposure to adversity:

> I think student athletes have the benefit, unlike other students on campus, to have had practice [with] and learning how to respond to adversity — whether it's a change of coach or [...] you transfer or a losing streak or whatever the case may be. So, their bounce back was probably a little bit easier.

Students who were able to harness their resilience capacities, according to John, likely had more support in their social networks, which bolstered their accountability and perseverance "in healthier ways."

RQ3b: How did students perceive messages about campus community disruption emanating from faculty and staff?

Students' perceptions of communication from faculty and staff during the pandemic were largely contradictory. If anything, students trended toward a positive affect with faculty and staff members — faculty, in particular — and a negative affect with administration. Interestingly, when talking about administration, most students' negative affect was in reference to emails from the offices of the Chancellor and Provost regarding COVID-19 on campus, and few had actual conversations with members of upper administration. Moreover, students disengaged from messages emanating from administration over the course of the school year, but their opinions of faculty and staff messages remained relatively consistent. It is likely that students' more frequent, interpersonal interactions with faculty and staff resulted in their positive evaluations, whereas students were only on the receiving end of administration's mediated communication.

Moreover, some students also remarked about unclear health and safety protocols from administration, which likely furthered their negative evaluations, despite the fact that most students also reported that they engaged in contradictory justifications of their personal health and safety protocols. What resulted was a double bind for administration: If administration had not communicated with students, they would have been criticized for a lack of communication. However, when administration did communicate, they used mediated communication to reach students. Given the size of the student body and the nature of the pandemic, this form of communication was their primary way to reach a mass audience, but students admittedly disengaged with this type of communication from administration over the course of the school year, especially when the communication was more frequent. With few outlets to assign blame for the disrupted college community experience, students resorted to scapegoating university administration.

Positive Responses to Faculty and Staff Messages

Many faculty during the 2020-2021 school year received positive praise from students. Most students who spoke positively of faculty highlighted their willingness to be accommodating given the pressures on students. Students repeated words like "empathetic," "understanding," and "flexible" when describing faculty, and they also praised faculty who went above and beyond to meet student needs. One faculty member, according to Chris, gave out their personal cell phone number in case students had emergencies, and another faculty member, according to Emily, gave freshmen bonus points for visiting student organization events, which Emily said ultimately resulted in her making a few new friends. Mary said she felt "really blessed" by the empathetic faculty she encountered during her freshman year: "[My professor knew] how hard it is, and a lot of them were willing to make it easier for us because they understood that being a freshman in

college is not easy to begin with, but adding a pandemic on top of it just made it that much worse." Jamie joined in support of Mary's comments about empathetic faculty, saying that many went "above and beyond" and citing one professor who worked with academic administration to move her fully remote course into a hybrid setting to better serve and engage her students.

Other students commended the work of staff members who aided students during the pandemic. For example, Brooke said that the director of her freshman Honors College program was someone to whom she could share openly and honestly about her challenges during the year. Of course, a few students had negative things to say about faculty and staff, too. Most negative evaluations of faculty were similar to Nicole's, who said that faculty claimed they were understanding of the challenges but "then put so much busy work on you just because they have to." Students also criticized professors' delays in responding to emails and inability to adequately teach a fully virtual course.

Placing Administration in a Double Bind

The majority of criticism, however, was directed toward administration. For example, Jessie said she felt emails from administration came across as "trying to absolve themselves of things without actually doing anything about it," adding that COVID-19 responses across the board were underwhelming and often contradictory:

> The fact that they were blaming students but also putting two people to a dorm kind of made me mad because if they really [felt the] need to keep students safe, then they would put one person to a room to minimize the spread, especially in the beginning, but they didn't. Also, the promise of cleaning supplies in classrooms I've heard fell apart within a couple of weeks and putting masks places and whatnot — promises that weren't kept.

Evan echoed Jessie's frustration and said that "the powers that be" did not provide the "order in the chaos" that they are supposed to:

> Specifically at the university level, I feel like I have not felt any more comfortable with any of the COVID stuff that's been going on after I get a Chancellor Steinmetz email.

I'm like, "Oh, yeah, great, awesome! I still feel like this whole place is going to come crumbling down so I appreciate that, Chancellor."

Evan's sarcastic tone gave way to him admitting that "they're doing the best they can" but that many decisions and communication from administration, in his opinion, "haven't been in the best interest of students and really have [...] created a lot more chaos." Maggie agreed and said that "communication from the University and enforcing COVID-19 procedures needs to be better addressed because I'm not seeing what should be happening." Amy said that while she felt communication and direction from administration was sufficient in fall 2020, spring 2021 communication about COVID-19 was "non-existent."

Other students, admittedly, cared less about communication from administration. A few students admitted that they did not read the emails from administration about COVID-19, and Mikayla's assessment of the communication was explicitly neutral: "I feel like the administration has done a job — I don't really know if it's good or bad." Over time, students who were initially concerned about COVID-19 communication from administration began to see the messages as less salient. For example, Summer said that she regularly checked emails from the university in the fall to learn about the latest COVID-19 procedures and statistics on-campus, to the extent of discovering the exact time each week that the university's health services updated their website's COVID-19 statistics. As the semester progressed, her daily checks turned into monthly checks and lessened concern about COVID on campus. Annie, whose father works in administration at a different university, admitted to the same practices. "I was reading every single email very thoroughly," Annie said, but "then it was once a week basically saying the same thing [...] so I would just delete it the second I got it." Annie said while she felt that administration could have engaged in better communication, knowing her father's perspective made her realize the double bind in which university administration found themselves. In other words, administration's

double bind, in which additional communication might have suade the negative perspectives from certain students simultaneously caused others to simply delete the frequent emails. Subsequently, with few outlets for expressing their frustrations about their disrupted college experience, students turned their frustrations to administration as a scapegoat.

RQ4: In what ways has campus resilience communicatively evolved over the lifespan of the COVID-19 pandemic?

At best, students' perspective about how their personal and community experiences over the course of the pandemic were mixed: half of the students reported their experiences had gotten better and half of the students reported their experiences had gotten worse. However, even for the students who held positive views, they still experienced serious low points and barriers along the way and longed for "things to go back to how it should," as Amber said. Amber's comment, which was one repeated throughout the data, coupled with several students who reported that things over time had only gotten worse, reveals an unfortunate truth: students, overwhelmingly, were not developing normalcy and bolstering their resilience capacities throughout the course of the pandemic. To put it another way, students were simply surviving, not thriving.

Embracing a Difficult Long-Term Reality

For most students, suspension of in-person campus operations in spring 2020 was certainly a frustration, but more than that, students initially saw it as two to three weeks of taking a break before they returned to campus. They soon realized, however, that was not the case. Lacey said those first few weeks felt like the euphoria that freshmen experience when they move onto campus for the first time, but that euphoria dissipated with the reality that college as she had known it would be remarkably different and difficult. Indeed, participants felt like fall 2020 required them to adapt to socializing and to learning non-traditionally, and many were exhausted

by mid-semester because their fall break, which normally provides a much-needed respite, had been moved to Thanksgiving break to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

A few students did experience positive shifts in their pandemic trajectory. Macie said things got slowly better as the school year progressed, and Parker said becoming more familiar with campus and building his social networks made things "a little better." Adjusting to online learning improved as well as professors' abilities to engage with students virtually, according to Annie, but "it's obviously not ideal." Mary said her overall trajectory and adjustment during the pandemic was positive but soon corrected herself: "I'd describe it almost as like a roller coaster."

At first glance, the data suggests that students' capacity to manage the pandemic was hopeful. For example, some students found that things got easier with time. Others developed routines and immersed themselves in campus organizations as a way to stay sane. Many acknowledged the challenges that they faced but qualified them with positives, lessons learned, and highlights of their COVID-19 college experience. However, a closer look at how students coped with their community disruption over time suggests that they suffered immensely. Amber said each day, week, and semester gone by while being a college student during a pandemic was like a "domino effect" with a slim hope that "maybe next semester will be better."

Surviving a Rollercoaster Resilience Trajectory

Unfortunately, for most, spring 2021 proved just as — if not more — challenging. Amber said the spring semester was filled with less novelty and fewer opportunities for involvement than the previous semester. Whereas, in the fall, she would normally leave her dorm during the day to be around campus, she spent most days in her room during the first two months of the spring semester. Jennifer had a similar experience in the spring semester:

> Last semester, I had a lot of days when I would get up early, I would get dressed and do my hair and everything. [...] And then, it's kind of started where I just get up at eight and

sign on [to class] in bed. There's even some points where I would just fall asleep during class and I would wake up and the class be over. I was never the kind of person to do that in high school.

The same was true for Nicole, who lives off-campus. In the fall, Nicole said she was "determined to still be on campus" but resorted to only going to work and back home again during the spring semester. Nicole added that her motivation was severely damaged as she struggled to meet deadlines and always felt "like I'm behind, [...] I never know if I've done enough." Jessie said maintaining a positive mentality and "trying not to let everything get to you" was especially challenging as the school year continued. Jennifer said the constant negotiation of social contracts and operating procedures was "really, really exhausting." Annie said that her "motivation to even try just kind of kept spiraling."

While the evidence of students' diminished capacities for resilience over the course of the pandemic was obvious across all years in school, Amber's recollection of a freshman's experience sums things up well: "I think in the beginning, it felt normal because that's what we knew — like that's all we knew, [...] but now it's like — okay, when can we go back to how it was? How it should be? I guess throughout time, I learned what it was like for people before." Students' increasing lack of motivation throughout the course of the pandemic, their disconnect from their physical community, confusion about what safety procedures were appropriate when, and their nostalgia for a pre-COVID college experience intersect at a precarious spot. Students during the COVID-19 pandemic were not thriving; instead, they were simply surviving in the hopes that soon things would "go back to how it should be."

Students' perspectives on burnout throughout the course of the pandemic provide an interesting lens to view into how students understand resilience. Their perspectives reveal a taken-for-granted assumption: Things were tough, but things should become easier with time.

Unfortunately, their perspectives on burnout prove their assumption about resilience trajectories to be untrue and reveal that many anticipated their trajectories to be linear. When students experienced burnout — and when many had "reality check" moments, as they called them, in which they more fully understood the persistence of their pandemic challenges — they felt defeated, resulting in diminished capacities for resilience. A few, however, like Mary, recognized that resilience is not a linear process; rather, it is like a rollercoaster, with highs and lows throughout the course of the community disruption.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to understand the role of social capital and everyday communication in the community resilience processes of university students during the COVID-19 pandemic. By conceptualizing the university campus as a community, this study applied community resilience frameworks to posit the pandemic as a major disruptor to that community. Moreover, this study used qualitative methodology to examine components of social capital (e.g., place attachment, sense of community, and citizen participation) that point toward resilience alongside theoretical perspectives about how communities use everyday communication to talk resilience into being. Student, faculty, staff, and administration offered their perspectives on campus disruption. Their conversations about what resilience is and how it is implemented in a campus setting revealed that the communicative construction of what it means to be resilient is often contradictory. This chapter provides a discussion of the implications, limitations, and directions for future research. First, I explore the theoretical and practical implications of the findings. Then, I review limitations and offer opportunities for future research about resilience and the campus community.

Theoretical Implications

Theoretically, this study provides five primary implications: (a) offers novel conceptualizations of community and displacement, (b) affirms and contradicts existing resilience frameworks, (c) underscores the value of studying resilience across the lifespan of the disruption, (d) reveals the impact of a divided community working toward resilience during disruption, and (e) emphasizes the communicative, dialectical nature of resilience.

Novel Conceptualizations of Community and Displacement

First, this study expands the definition and scope of a community. Existing disaster research generally holds narrow conceptualizations of a community. For example, disaster research that studies tornado impacts likely looks at a municipality or group of municipalities that were displaced by the disaster (e.g., studying the Joplin, Missouri, and southwest Missouri communities following the 2011 tornado). This study, on the other hand, asks researchers to consider broadening their scope of communities. Specifically, this study demonstrates that a micro-community — or a community within a community — such as a college campus, experiences sharp disruptions and suffers the consequences in the same manner that a traditionally conceptualized community might. Similar conceptualizations of a micro-community could include workplaces, neighborhoods and subdivisions, religious groups, and shared identity groups within a community. By expanding the definition of what constitutes a community, this research emphasizes the value of expanding disaster and resilience research to alternative communities. In doing so, this supports a central assumption within community research, which holds that communities are especially contextual structures that have unique needs, challenges, and opportunities (Longstaff et al., 2010).

Moreover, this study offers novel conceptualizations of displacement. Whereas existing disaster research posits that displacement, by way of disruption, means that you exit the community, this study examined what happens when one belongs to multiple communities. In this study, students exited a micro-community (i.e., their university) for another community to which they belong (i.e., their homes/permanent address) and then returned to the micro-community as the disaster was ongoing. For example, per the findings in RQ1, upon returning to their micro-community from which they were initially displaced at the start of the pandemic,

students still felt remarkably disconnected. Despite efforts to reconnect to their micro-community, students were physically disconnected from campus even while living on campus, struggled to connect with campus organizations even while being a part of the organization, and felt increasingly isolated from the greater campus community. These contradictions indicate that displacement, therefore, is not linear but rather actively negotiated. In other words, displacement is not a one-time occurrence with a defined beginning and end point; displacement, as this study demonstrated, can occur even when individuals return to their community, causing the displaced to actively negotiate their community connection. This conceptualization of displacement significantly impacts community resilience capacities and questions existing conceptualizations of displacement in disaster research.

Existing Community Resilience Frameworks

Second, this study simultaneously affirmed and contradicted existing frameworks about community resilience, especially those relating to social capital and talking resilience into being. For example, the aforementioned discussion of RQ1 demonstrated that traditional elements of social capital that lead to community resilience, such as place attachment, sense of community, and citizen participation (Houston et al., 2018; Norris et al., 2008), were met with hesitation and contradiction by students. Even then, students coped amid the contradictions by building routines that adhered them to their communities, built place attachments with off-campus spaces, and immersed themselves in campus organizations. In addition, students especially exercised bonding social capital as they relied on their close social networks with friends and peers to overcome the challenges that they were facing (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015). The deployment of bonding social capital makes sense in that it affirms existing research, which found that bonding social capital is often the first type of capital deployed by community members in disaster

(Aldrich & Meyer, 2015). However, linking social capital, which connects the average individual with those in power (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015), was largely missing from the community resilience processes of the campus community, as students reported in RQ3b that they felt displeased with university administration's efforts to manage the community during the pandemic. However, as findings in RQ3b also highlighted, linking social capital was burdened by the double bind facing university administration, in which students disengaged from university administration's communication about COVID-19, but a decrease in communication would have resulted in critique from students who demanded greater involvement and information from administration. This double bind raises theoretical questions about linking social capital's resilience capacities when community power structures (e.g., municipal governments) face such a limiting double bind. For example, if linking social capital connects community members with community power structures (Aldrich & Meyer, 2015) but community power structures are unable to effectively reach and aid community members, linking social capital's ability to develop community-wide, top-down resilience capacities is significantly stunted. Especially if community members perpetuate the disconnect by placing institutions in a double bind, community power structures' ability to build resilience becomes a game lost before it even began.

Findings also drew direct connections to Buzzanell's (2010, 2018) communication theory of resilience, which states that individuals and communities can literally talk, and thus enact, resilience into being via five meaningful strategies: (a) crafting normalcy, (b) affirming identity anchors, (c) maintaining and using communication networks, (d) putting alternative logics to work, and (e) legitimizing negative feelings while foregrounding productive action. While students' ability to craft normalcy was not consistent and their identity affirmations were often

divided, students utilized communication networks, alternative logics, and emotion foregrounding most frequently to build resilience capacities during the pandemic.

Findings from RQ2 demonstrated that students were able to legitimize negative feelings about their community's disruption while foregrounding productive action about how to cope with the disruption. For instance, Carlie capitalized on the newfound time provided by fewer social opportunities to focus on discerning personal values and boundaries, and Parker found that he became more self-accountable as a college student during the pandemic For many students, this legitimization was especially transformative in moving them past the feeling of a missed community experience and toward focusing on making the most of their present realities.

Interestingly, despite confirming the use of Buzzanell's resilience strategies, this study revealed that the use of these resilience strategies does not always help people cope, and may in fact, prolong disasters. For example, maintaining and using communication networks is Buzzanell's (2010) third resilience strategy and was demonstrated in findings from RQ2, in which students expressed nostalgia for a pre-COVID college reality. However, this use of their communication networks drove a wedge between upperclassmen and freshmen. Whereas upperclassmen recalled rituals, stories, and experiences about their campus community before COVID as a means to cope with the present disrupted reality, freshmen overwhelmingly reported that this nostalgia only worsened their grief for unmet expectations about their freshmen college experience. Students also used alternative logics to make sense of and justify their actions in maintaining their community during a pandemic, which demonstrates Buzzanell's (2010) fourth resilience strategy. Jennifer used alternative logics when she argued that the risk of not building friends and community was greater than the risk of contracting or spreading COVID. As another example, Evan and his friends conceded that if one of them contracted COVID, all of them

would, as justification for defying social gathering protocols. However, their use of alternative logics actually increased their exposure, and thus the entire community's exposure, to COVID-19, which only elongated the pandemic and further postponed the community's ability to bounce forward. Ultimately, more work is needed to explore how these communication strategies foster and impede resilience efforts.

Studying Resilience Lifespans

Third, this study underscores the importance of theorizing the construction of resilience across the lifespan of a community's disruption. Perspectives from students revealed that attitudes over the course of community disruption can shift drastically. In particular, many students experienced reality checks early in their community disruption that underlined the long-term nature of the disruption, and as that long-term disruption played out, students' resilience capacities were anything but linear. Findings from RQ4 demonstrated that students were not bolstering their resilience capacities over the lifespan of the pandemic; rather, students were continually searching for motivation and coping strategies that would hold them over until their "normal" university experience returned. This resulted in a rollercoaster-like resilience trajectory over the course of the pandemic, which begs theoretical inquiries about how resilience lifespans develop and evolve over the course of the disruption. Moreover, this inquiry is especially important because it reveals practical implications of how to best mitigate and sustain weary attitudes, such as the students', that only persist over the course of community disruption.

Divided Communities' Resilience Capacities

Fourth, this study found that the way individuals discuss their pandemic experience has the potential to cultivate divisions within a community, which, in turn, can be counterproductive to fostering resilience. Specifically, this study demonstrated that contrasting perspectives about

the pandemic across the university community alienated groups within the community from one another. For example, RQ2 found that upperclassmen and freshmen held contrasting ideas about idealizing and recalling a pre-COVID college experience. In addition, RQ3 demonstrated that faculty and staff had serious questions and doubts about whether certain groups of students were resilient during the pandemic, and RQ4 demonstrated that students felt a lack of connection to and trust in the administration's efforts to navigate the university through the pandemic. Divisions in relationships between students and between students and faculty/staff were readily apparent across the findings.

These divisions among the university community present implications for how researchers theorize the impact of community-wide divisions. Extant research has shown that division, understandably, is a serious barrier to community resilience because it erodes mutual trust and understanding that builds the collective action necessary to adapt and bounce forward (Kulig, 2000; Norris et al., 2008). For example, despite their cultural and economic differences, Japanese and Indian communities' recovery from earthquakes in 1995 harnessed collective trust, norms, and participation to recover more quickly from the disaster (Aldrich, 2011; Takeda et al., 2003). The communities' strong levels of mutual trust and dependence on one another increased disaster management awareness and volunteer opportunities, which supported community resilience. Conversely, when collective trust is depleted due to mistrust, conflict, and dissensus, communities' ability to build consensus and mobilize is severely threatened (Norris et al., 2008).

In this study, findings from RQ2, RQ3a, and RQ3b in which messages divided the community, demonstrated the destructive nature of division. When freshmen resented upperclassmen for their nostalgia of a pre-COVID college experience, community trust and dependency threatened collective action and community resilience capacities. When students felt

disconnected from university messages and misconstrued social operating procedures, conflict

and dissensus about how to handle the pandemic, again, served as a barrier to collective action.

In sum, this study demonstrated that community divisions are detrimental to building collective

decision-making throughout all levels of the university community to move them into a resilient

reality. Therefore, this study provides a theoretical contribution in highlighting how communities

can actually divide themselves as they try to unite themselves toward a new normalcy. Moreover,

because these divisions aggravate the resilience process, this implication expands theoretical

insights about the identity-affirming processes of talking resilience into being and about the

resilience lifespan of community disruptions.

 Additionally, divisions between faculty and staff's declaration of student resilience and

students' own ideas of who was resilient raise theoretical implications in line with Bean (2018).

For instance, John explicitly said some students failed to enact resilience whereas Nadine said

students who simply made it out the other side of the pandemic practiced resilience. Bean (2018)

argues that "who is able to assert the need for, enactment of, and attainment of resilience is

ambiguous" and is laden with influences of power, politics, and ethics, especially as it concerns

marginalized communities (p. 23). In other words, Bean (2018) asks who gets to decide if a

community is resilient or not. Community members may not be able to objectively discern their

resilience capacities, whereas community power structures may not be able to comprehensively

understand individual resilience experiences. At the same time, community members'

subjectivity provides rich experiences on resilience, whereas community power structures'

objectivity provides a neutral outsider perspective on resilience failures and successes.

Moreover, community members may not have knowledge of practical resilience strategies for

proper assessments, but power and politics may play a destructive role in power structures'

assessment of community resilience. Each of these considerations pose theoretical implications derived from divisions between community members and power structures within the community.

Communicative, Dialectical Nature of Resilience

Fifth, this study emphasized the theoretical perspective that resilience, especially at the community level, is inherently communicative and that resilience strategies are especially dialectical in nature. For example, findings from RQ1 demonstrated that students' social capital strategies were interdependent; students' disconnect from their physical campus inevitably led them to a deeper lack of community, as did their feelings that they were not able to connect wholeheartedly to campus organizations and structures. In addition, students' contradictory operating procedures likely only perpetuated the spread of COVID-19 on campus, which prolonged community disruption, further disconnecting them from their physical campus and from one another. Finally, each component of students' community resilience capacities, whether harnessed for a positive or negative potential, was inherently communicative. Their social networks were built upon their relationships with one another, and their ability to use those networks toward resilience relied on their ability to communicatively foster productive action. Their casual conversations with one another, of which the focus groups served as clear evidence, led them to coping about their missed community, empathizing with the missed experiences, and building reciprocal strategies for moving forward. Moreover, their engagement, and lack thereof, with communication infrastructures highlighted glaring opportunities for building a stronger community.

This study's emphasis on the communicative nature of resilience affirmed existing models of communication in resilience, which argue that communication is not just one capacity

of community resilience but rather the foundation on which resilience capacities are built. For

example, Buzzanell's (2010) model holds that communication at the individual level harnesses

transformative bottom-up resilience potential, and Houston and colleagues' (2015) model holds

that communication at the group level (with particular regard to community power structures)

harnesses a transformative top-down resilience potential. Moreover, this study contributes to

resolving Houston's (2018) argument that "little is known about what individuals in a resilient

community talk about" by analyzing what various groups in this micro-community talked about

and how those messages impacted collective resilience (p. 20). Ultimately, this study

demonstrated how communication served as the foundation for students' self-reflexivity and

relationships with others that built individual resilience on the ground in the university

community. Simultaneously, it demonstrated how communication served as the foundation for

faculty, staff, and administration's connection to and with students that built collective resilience

across the university campus. Unfortunately, this study also demonstrated the destructive

consequences when individual and collective resilience capacities do not leverage effective,

comprehensive communication to build community resilience.

Practical Implications

Practically, this study provided numerous takeaways for students, faculty, staff, and

university administration. First, findings about the messages students shared with one another

provide opportunities for developing dialogic, student-owned and student-disseminated messages

about managing community disruption. Second, contradictions in students' construction of

resilience provide opportunities for university faculty, staff, administration to develop

meaning-making strategies that help students understand and learn from the community

disruption. Third, findings about communication to students from faculty, staff, and

administration suggests that a multi-modal approach to reaching students during community disruption is especially important.

First, RQ2 demonstrated that the messages shared between students during the pandemic divided and confused the student community. Reflections on the pre-COVID college experience divided upperclassmen from freshmen. Students' negotiations of operating procedures with one another made social interactions, at best, confusing, and, at worst, isolated students who took safety protocols more seriously. This division and confusion provides a learning opportunity for future university community disruptions, in which student social structures, as well as official university structures (e.g., student affairs, residence life, administration), should consider how to positively influence student interaction toward productive community action. For example, student government associations, student Greek life councils, and prominent student leaders could collaborate to develop programming and campus campaigns that provide clear, concise student-driven communication about what safety protocols were most appropriate. Moreover, these student structures could also develop social support trainings and opportunities (e.g., social events, listening sessions, community events) that provide students with a dedicated space for sharing their negative community experiences openly and empathetically. In other words, community resilience communication, especially among students, needs to be dialogic: two-way resilience communication that promotes mutual understanding among community members and community leaders rather than defaulting to isolated decision-making (Nicholls, 2012). This focus on student-driven communication could provide a conciliatory approach to students' shared meaning-making processes, which might be especially transformative since it is void of the power and politics that students may assign to similar communication from administration.

For example, a study by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) found that 100,000 Students Against COVID-19, a program engaging college students from eight universities in Senegal in COVID-19 prevention and information dissemination, increased "the ability of the Senegalese government to respond to this pandemic, [increased] the sense of engagement and commitment among the nation's young workforce [and] ultimately [increased] Senegal's resilience" (USAID, 2021, p. 5). More specifically, success of the student-centered initiatives' four focuses (Community Surveillance, Awareness and Prevention, Identification of Opinion Leaders, and Innovation and Initiative) demonstrated that students hold the "capacity to be changemakers and invaluable assets to the success of a community's response in a crisis" (USAID, 2021, p. 6).

Second, each research question demonstrated contradictions in students' construction of community resilience. In an effort to cope with disconnect from their physical campus community, students went off-campus, further separating them from campus, and students blamed university structures for poor communication about health and safety protocols while using their own contradictory logics for socializing. As the findings demonstrated, these contradictions prolonged negative feelings about students' community disruption, often at the cost of students who lacked social capital and who seriously struggled to manage life as a college student during the pandemic. As the pandemic begins to subside, it may be beneficial for students to learn how to construct narratives that help them understand and learn from the pandemic's community disruption. In other words, students may benefit from intentional work that helps them make sense of their experiences in a way that positions them to bounce forward toward a post-pandemic reality. For example, universities, especially university structures to which students feel especially connected (e.g., residence halls and student organizations), could

develop workshops or social events that foster these meaning-making strategies. Moreover, university faculty could easily implement these meaning-making conversations in their courses during the summer and fall 2021 semesters.

This trauma narrative building is a research-proven strategy for actively intervening in community's trauma experiences, through community relationships and support services, to build community strength and enhance resilience (Mohatt et al, 2014; Pressley & Smith, 2017). Meaning-making, in this circumstance, can arise from stories, memories, routines, and rituals that help the communities understand how they "endured despite loss and suffering" while actively shaping and framing their community disruption experiences (Buzzanell, 2018, p. 5). Regardless of the medium of this narrative building (e.g., in classrooms, in residence halls, in organization meetings), intentional, proactive meaning-making forgoes understanding resilience as a one-time achievement. In other words, this meaning-making asks students to move past a fleeting, inadequate assessment of their experiences (e.g., "That was terrible, but at least it's over."). Rather, this meaning-making asks students to understand how they built resilience and what lessons they learned so that they can practice resilience in the future. Students, and communities experiencing disruption everywhere, must think about how they productively adapted and how they can replicate that in future difficult circumstances.

Third, RQ3a and RQ3b demonstrated that communication to students from faculty, staff, and administration often did not achieve its goals, and students largely did not respond in a productive manner to the communication. Even when faculty, staff, and administration, designed messages and programming that students said they wanted, students reported that the messages and programming were far from effective. Consequently, students' perceptions of administration communication dwindled over the course of the pandemic. Thus, faculty, staff, and

administration should employ a multi-modal approach in reaching students during future community disruptions. Administration should take a more proactive, comprehensive communication approach (perhaps social media and marketing campaigns or direct text-messaging programs) to reach students, who said that they quickly stopped reading email communications from university administration.

For example, research and interviews with 37 university presidents, provosts, and leaders recommended university administration expand collaboration with experts in psychology, anthropology, and sociology whose deep knowledge of human experience can better advise communication strategies and outreach (Burke, 2020). Additionally, this study demonstrates the need to add communication experts to this list to ensure that proper consideration is given to the deliberate, empirically informed creation and execution of communication to the community. The research also recommended that university's provide prompt, transparent, and honest communication about disasters rather than withholding information for fear of community panic: "we know from 40 or 50 years of research that panic is largely a myth. It's much harder to get people to comply with our recommendations than to be concerned about panic" (Burke, 2020). Additional research underscored the understated value of university's communicating with parents/guardians of students, especially since students abruptly left their campus community and returned to their permanent residences, many with parents/guardians (McMillan, 2020).

Limitations and Future Research

As with all research, this study had several limitations. First, sampling and data-collection limitations provide opportunities for future research that employs a broader scope to examining communication and resilience. Second, this study utilized a thematic analysis in examining the qualitative data, but a narrative analysis would especially compliment the lived

experiences of community disruption and further illuminate the data. Third, a content analysis of official messages exchanged and texts emanating from the community would provide a closer look at the role of communication infrastructures during community disruption.

First, despite several targeted efforts to recruit a diverse sample, the sample of research participants was mostly white, freshman female students. This limited the potential of capturing perspectives across student populations. This limitation is especially important given the fact that college students most negatively impacted by the pandemic were those in racial and ethnic minorities and from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Browning et al., 2021; Kantamneni, 2020; Lederer et al., 2020). Clearly, to fully capture the struggles and challenges facing the university community during community disruption, a more diverse sample is needed. Future qualitative research about campus community resilience should employ maximum variation sampling to address the full scope of students' needs expressed during community disruption (Tracy, 2019), especially those from marginalized and underrepresented student groups. This study also had a small number of faculty, staff, and administration participants, which limited the breadth of experiences about reaching students. Future research could add faculty, staff, and administration participants to build a more robust pool of data to triangulate student responses. Future research could also focus primarily on understanding the university community experiences of faculty, staff, and administration and the role that played in their ability to serve their students. Of course, the sample's data was qualitative, which was beneficial for uncovering rich data, but future research could use quantitative data and a larger sample size to better measure and compare variables and outcomes of the university community resilience process.

Second, this study relied on thematic analysis for analyzing the respondent data, which was beneficial in mining recurring patterns, messages, and experiences emanating from the

university community. However, Buzzanell (2010) suggests that data analysis about resilience could employ a narrative focus to understand how people construct resilience in a variety of story-focused ways, including metaphor and plot. Thus, future research could conduct a narrative analysis of qualitative data. For example, a narrative analysis would allow researchers to ask new questions about community resilience: What is the plot of the community's story? Who do community members identify as the protagonists and antagonists? Where is the conflict and tipping point in the community's disruption story?

Third, the data in this study was limited to the anecdotal evidence reported by students, faculty, staff, and administration. Although this anecdotal evidence was meaningful because of its ability to capture pandemic experiences through rich, collaborative storytelling, future research could look at official messages and texts that were exchanged throughout the university community during the pandemic. For example, a content analysis of the emails from university administration about COVID-19 could better understand the reasoning behind students' disengagement from university communication. Moreover, a content analysis of safety procedures communicated to students from residence halls, Greek life houses, and student organizations could better explain the contradictory stances that students took in justifying their social interactions.

Conclusion

This study set out to understand and make sense of how an especially unique community — one filled to the brim with maturing, molding, life-defining moments of relationship, challenge, and success — overcame the obstacles that upended nearly every "normal" aspect of life in their community. In the early days of the pandemic, when students perhaps did not fully comprehend the disruption that would engulf their community, Dan Chiasson (2020), professor

of English at Wellesley College, shared a poignant, sobering realization in *The New Yorker*: "as students get ready to say goodbye to one another, maybe for a long time, it seems a special kind of irony that they're not supposed to come into contact. Not a hug, not even a handshake" (para. 8). Throughout the course of the next year, students came to terms with that realization. That coming to terms looked different for each student, some of whom made the best of their difficult situations and others who, understandably, struggled endlessly to make sense of their strange new world. Regardless, communication played a foundational role. Relationships, stories, and conversations were the vessel on which students hoped to be delivered back to their pre-pandemic community, one they mourned deeply and wholeheartedly. To put it another way, communication provided the hope, and thus the action, that students needed to transcend day one — and then the many, many days that followed — toward their new normal.

At the end of his essay about students leaving their campuses, Chiasson (2020) speculated, quite accurately, about what the future would hold: "The old ways of holding your body in relation to another person must, apparently, be redesigned, and under conditions in which a show of personal warmth or connectedness seems especially crucial" (para. 8). This study demonstrated that, indeed, personal warmth and connectedness, especially, are crucial. Communication provided the connectedness that built the university community's resilience, and, unfortunately, connectedness faltered when communication was not harnessed to its fullest transformative potentials. While many questions are raised from this research, one thing is clear: Students, belabored and tired as the pandemic slowly comes to a close, are ready to begin again, in personal warmth and connectedness, toward a stronger, more resilient community.

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Appendices

Focus Group Questions

Below are focus group questions for each of the research questions for this study. In addition, focus group questions are preceded with their participant demographic focus (e.g., freshmen, upperclassmen, and faculty, staff, and administration).

RQ1: How do students experience social capital during the disruption of their campus community?
- Freshmen: Talk about your first few weeks on campus this school year.
  - Describe your experiences of building relationships and meeting people.
  - Describe your experiences of adjusting to your dorm and campus.
  - Describe your experiences of adjusting to the community here.
- Freshmen: How have these experiences changed now that you've completed a semester of college?
- Freshmen: Talk about a specific moment when you felt the challenges of adjusting to college this school year.
  - How did this realization make you feel?
  - How did you manage those feelings?
  - How have you seen your friends/peers manage similar feelings?
- Upperclassmen: Talk about a specific experience when you felt the challenges of adjusting to college this school year.
  - How did this realization make you feel?
  - How did you manage those feelings?
  - How have you seen your friends/peers manage similar feelings?
- Upperclassmen: Talk about a specific experience when you knew this school year would be a significant change from previous years.
- Upperclassmen: In what ways have you adapted socially, academically, or in any regard from spring 2020 to fall 2020?

RQ2: What messages do students send and receive among each other when experiencing campus community disruption?
- All students: Talk about the ways that you and your friends/peers have talked about managing college this school year.
  - How have you and your peers talked about managing your social life this school year? For example, what are some common phrases you've heard repeated about managing social life this school year?
  - How have you and your peers described managing academics and classes this school year? For example, what are some common phrases you've heard repeated about managing academics and classes this school year?

RQ3a: What messages do faculty, staff, and administration send to students when experiencing campus community disruption?
- F/S/A: Talk about the day that we learned university operations were moving online.
- F/S/A: What do you remember thinking and feeling?

- F/S/A: What responses did you hear from students?
- F/S/A: How have these feelings changed now that we're nearly a year into this experience?
- F/S/A: Talk about a specific moment when you noticed the students you work with experience the challenges of adjusting to college in a pandemic.
- F/S/A: Share a conversation you have had with colleagues about strategies for engaging students and fostering their belonging and sense of community on campus this year.
- F/S/A: How has your programming for and approach to students shifted from last fall, to the spring, to this fall?
- F/S/A: What conversations have you been in with colleagues about managing this adjustment into the upcoming semesters and also if something of this magnitude occurs again?

RQ3b: How did students perceive messages about campus community disruption emanating from faculty, staff, and administration?
- All students: Talk about the ways that faculty, staff, and administration have talked to you and yours peers about college this school year.
  - How have they talked about social life this school year? For example, what are some common phrases you've heard repeated from F/S/A about college life this school year?
  - How have they talked about academics and classes this school year? For example, what are some common phrases you've heard repeated from F/S/A about academics and classes this school year?

RQ4: In what ways has campus resilience communicatively evolved over the lifespan of the COVID-19 pandemic?
- Upperclassmen: Describe the weeks following the move off campus and online in the spring semester.
  - How did you manage your feelings during this time?
  - How did you manage your relationships with friends/peers during this time?
- Upperclassmen: Describe returning to campus for activities and learning this fall.
  - How did you manage your feelings during this time?
  - How did you manage your relationships with friends/peers during this time?

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Below are semi-structured interview questions for this study. These questions were derived from initial coding of respondent data from the focus groups, and responses from these interview questions were used to affirm, counteract, and triangulate overall findings.

1. The focus groups identified that students often felt trapped in their dorms and needed to get out and about to deal with learning and socializing during a pandemic. Can you attest to this experience and, if so, can you talk about a time in which you might have experienced this?
2. Many students in our focus groups talked about positives amid the challenges of this school year. Do you feel the same way? What do you think this says about you and your peers' ability to cope with your college community experience during a pandemic?
3. It seems that students struggled with managing social contracts of how to engage socially during the pandemic. Can you talk about a time in which you might have experienced this?
4. While some students reported that college during a pandemic became more normal with time, some also reported things only becoming more challenging. Did you experience either of these feelings? Did you experience both?
5. Many students, especially upperclassmen, expressed a nostalgia for a pre-COVID college experience. Do you think we'll be able to return to that, and why do you think that?
   a. If not, how does that make you feel? How are you managing the belief that your college experience will never be what it was once -- or was hyped up to be?

IRB Approval Letter

UNIVERSITY OF
ARKANSAS.

To:	Kaleb A Turner
	BELL 4188
From:	Douglas J Adams, Chair
	IRB Expedited Review
Date:	12/17/2020
Action:	**Exemption Granted**
Action Date:	12/17/2020
Protocol #:	2011300791
Study Title:	Exploring Campus Community Resilience During a Pandemic

The above-referenced protocol has been determined to be exempt.

If you wish to make any modifications in the approved protocol that may affect the level of risk to your participants, you must seek approval prior to implementing those changes. All modifications must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have any questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact the IRB Coordinator at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

cc: Matthew L Spialek, Investigator