

The Impact of Knowledge and Social Capital on the Perception of Staying Local
for Rural High School Juniors

by

Jenna Lowder

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Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Josephine Marsh, Chair
Lydia Ross
Cristen Mann

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

Regional locations for major universities were created to serve the local, often rural, population of the community in which it is situated. Arizona State University in Lake Havasu City, Arizona, is a regional university extension that serves Lake Havasu and the surrounding communities, but very few high school graduates from Lake Havasu High School choose ASU at Lake Havasu. There is a stigma that staying local for college is undesirable. The purpose of my action research project was to discover what effect a 5-week knowledge-building intervention, ASU Hometown Advantage, had on participants' perception of ASU at Lake Havasu as a college choice for themselves and their peers and to discover if and how they used their social capital to begin to reverse the stigma about staying local for college. The data for this project was collected through pre- and post-intervention surveys as well as an exit ticket at the end of each session and a post-intervention focus group. The intervention is framed by a discussion of college choice models, Social Influence Theory, and a discussion of social capital. The findings of this study reveal that an increase in participants' knowledge about ASU at Lake Havasu increased their positive perception of ASU at Lake Havasu as a college choice for themselves or their peers. Participants did begin to use their social capital to influence others. These findings indicate that informational programs on college-going can positively influence high school students' perception of local college choices.

DEDICATION

To my family, for your patience, dedication, understanding, and unwavering support.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Teaching senior English at Lake Havasu High School (LHHS) for ten years was one of the greatest joys of my professional career. I helped students think about college, and they would come back year after year to tell me about their college experiences. Some had graduated—they had degrees! And so many came back to tell me they dropped out of college, they couldn't afford it, it wasn't what they expected. These stories always made me sad. Because I had also been adjunct faculty at a community college during that same ten years I taught at the high school and then I had started as adjunct faculty at Arizona State University at Lake Havasu (ASU at Lake Havasu) in 2015, my interest in local college options for high school seniors was piqued. I wondered why more local students did not consider the local university ASU at Lake Havasu to be a viable choice for post-secondary education.

My personal educational journey and subsequent career were never quite linear, and those experiences led me to my current position with ASU at Lake Havasu and the problem of practice addressed in my dissertation—many students at LHHS attend college, but most do not consider ASU at Lake Havasu as a viable option for college. I grew up in Lake Havasu City, Arizona, and I graduated from Lake Havasu High School. I attended the local community college and then attended Northern Arizona University's statewide program, which was housed on the same community college campus where I already went to school. I stayed to teach in Lake Havasu Unified School District, first at the middle school and then the high school. I have a deep love for this community, and I know first-hand how a student who stays can impact the community.

While I taught at the high school, I primarily taught senior English, so I interacted with ten years' worth of 12th grade students. We often talked about their plans for after high school, and often I heard the same mantra over and over again: *I just can't wait to get out of Havasu*. This idea was so pervasive, it could have been each graduating class's motto. It seemed very few students wanted to stay, and over the years, I have seen countless students move away for college or a job opportunity, only to move back to Lake Havasu City, either in debt or realizing that they could have been successful if they stayed home. Nationwide, approximately 30% of college freshmen do not return for their sophomore year (Education Data, 2019). Cost, lack of readiness, poor fit, lack of support, and challenges of being a first-generation student are many of the common reasons so many college students nationwide return home after their freshman year (Matthiessen, 2017). As a small location with support from the main campus, ASU at Lake Havasu is positioned to combat many of the reasons first-year students drop out of college.

First-year college experiences often do not match up with students' expectations (Smith & Wertlieb, 2005). Paul and Brier (2001) discuss the "freshman myth" in which first-year students have unrealistically high expectations for their freshman year (p. 79). When things do not meet their expectations, they are more likely to leave college early. While I do not think that every student needs to stay local for their education, I do know many would benefit from starting their education at ASU at Lake Havasu because of the ways a smaller local location provides solutions for the most common reasons freshmen drop out. Cost and culture shock are two of the main reasons rural students who go away for college drop out within the first two years (Marcus & Krupnick, 2017). ASU at Lake Havasu offers more cost-effective tuition than Phoenix-area ASU campuses and offers

small class sizes with a family environment and plenty of support for all students (ASU at Lake Havasu, 2021).

In his book *The College Dropout Scandal*, David Kirp (2019) alludes to the “pile of debt” that dropouts accumulate and note that they then have no degree that would get them a job that would pay off that debt (p. 3). Students who stay local for education may benefit from less debt and a greater likelihood of degree completion. The most often cited cause of student dropout is financial difficulties (Hanson, 2021), and staying local means that students may often pay less in tuition (ASU at Lake Havasu, 2021) and can possibly continue to live at home and keep the same employment they had in high school.

When I was hired to teach English for the regional university extension ASU at Lake Havasu in 2018, I knew I wanted to do so much more. I had connections with Lake Havasu Unified School District, and because of my longtime residency in Lake Havasu and experience with the school district, I was uniquely positioned to connect the university with the community in ways it had not yet achieved. I immediately started working with our director to bring an education degree to our location. I also took the lead on Open Scale, to bring ASU classes to local high school students. Open Scale, now named Universal Learner, is a concurrent education program that allows high school students to take a selection of first-year ASU courses online in either 8-week or self-paced formats. Student pay \$25 to enroll, and upon course completion, they only pay for the course to be converted to university credit if they are satisfied with their grade. This allows high school students to try out college courses in a low-stakes way and without committing financially. This was one way I continued to connect with local high school

students and to attempt to grow ASU at Lake Havasu through creating a pipeline for local students.

Because of my 13 years as adjunct faculty in higher education, I also filled the role of ASU at Lake Havasu's Faculty Associate Liaison, connecting with and supporting community members who teach for ASU at Lake Havasu. Faculty at ASU at Lake Havasu wear many hats, and with my administrative aspirations as well as my deep care and concern for my community, I positioned myself to help grow the campus through local recruitment efforts and leadership roles.

Larger Context

Comprehensive university. Multi-campus university. Satellite campus. Branch campus. Rural university. Regional university extension. No matter what you call them, these institutions bridge the divide between the larger university and a local community college. Close to 70% of undergraduates in the United States who are pursuing four-year degrees attend these universities, "making them the nation's university workhorses" (Boggs, 2019, p. 4). Although their structure, location, population, and services differ, these institutions have a number of commonalities. Bebko and Huffman (2011) describe branch campuses as offering a wide range of programs that lead to degrees or certificates, as well as having their own budget, administration, student services, and resident faculty. These non-urban centers tend to have enrollment fewer than 1,000 students with a distance of 50 miles or more from the main campus (Bebko & Huffman, 2011).

Branch campuses typically form due to regional need or demand, with the colleges situated to serve the local communities or to provide specialized and localized education for a particular industry. Charles (2016) describes the three conditions on

which a rural college draws: (1) There is a demand from the local community driven by a need for access and equity with the expectation that the college will contribute to the local economy; (2) The parent university commits to meeting the demands of the local area; and (3) There is a political will and local investment in the new location. If they are to be successful, they must integrate fully into the ecology of the community. As Risser (as cited in Mills & Plumb, 2012) asserts, institutions cannot just exist in a location and expect attendance; they must meet students where they are and become integral to those geographical locations and take part in the community's overall well-being.

Campus and community partnerships are used by branch campuses to contribute to regional intervention. Universities are key to linking knowledge and research with students and local initiatives (Charles, 2016). The flow of knowledge is two-way—the students, college faculty, and community benefit from mutual engagement. This can be seen through ASU at Lake Havasu's social embeddedness in Lake Havasu City through its many connections such as student internships and campus clubs.

Branch campuses cannot merely be a carbon copy of programs offered at the parent university. Instead of mirroring what the parent university does, these branch campuses can contribute something different based on the local context (Rossi & Goglio, 2020). Because branch campuses are smaller and governed locally, there is a different kind of access afforded to students. Local campuses can have more direct control over academic programs and quality because they are given more autonomy over curriculum and instruction (Mills & Plumb, 2012). The program and degree offerings and subsequent work are typically designed to be region-specific and offer something unique from the parent campus. For example, ASU at Lake Havasu offers a degree in tourism and

recreation because that is the city's most lucrative industry. ASU at Lake Havasu also offers criminal justice, education, and nursing degrees as a way to help solve some of the rural shortages of police officers, teachers, and nurses.

The growth of branch campuses is not unique to the United States, as international branch campuses (IBC) are on the rise. There were fewer than 20 IBC's in the 1990's, but the early 2000's saw a rapid expansion, with over 200 IBC's by 2014 (Miranda, 2014). Though international branch campuses are frequently located in urban centers, many of the contributing factors for opening the institutions are the same as rural branch campuses—local need, community and college commitment, and political support (Miranda, 2014).

The development of branch campuses in the United States and internationally began in the 1960s (Rossi & Goglio, 2020). In Canada, the expansion of universities in the 1960s to rapidly expanding suburbs proved mutually beneficial to the regional location and to students, especially low-income students or those who cannot afford to move to attend school (Rossi & Goglio, 2020). This access to higher education for underrepresented populations is one of the driving forces for branch campuses on other continents (Briscoe and De Oliver 2006; Pennucci and Mayfield 2002 as cited in Rossi & Goglio, 2020).

With all of the positive reasons for creating a regional university extension, these locations still struggle. Because of their size and location, regional university extensions usually have limited resources (Rossi & Goglio, 2020). They cannot always meet the needs or expectations of the community. One of the main challenges for a regional university extension is choosing between meeting the needs of the immediate community

or focusing on research and teaching that affects the region (Charles, 2016). This is difficult, as Charles found. Local stakeholders in his study were not always satisfied with the college, even years after opening. The regional university extension was not meeting community expectations (Charles, 2016). In some cases, the scope of the degrees offered did not meet the business demands of the communities, and in other cases, community members expected the university to begin to create more of a cosmopolitan atmosphere in the community, but it did not. These challenges and those within the larger higher education system occasionally lead to threats of closure for the branch campuses (Charles, 2016).

The rationale for regional locations is the same across the globe, to help regional locations retain young citizens to support local businesses and the larger community and region (Charles et al. 2006 as cited in Charles, 2016). But what happens when local students don't want to stay? Local recruitment and retention of students are critical for the success of regional universities as Williams and Luo (2010) state, "Colleges and universities, particularly those rurally located, need research efforts to understand the impact of students' geographic characteristics on their persistence so that they can better target on the student group and efficiently allocate efforts and resources for effective retention improvement" (p. 363). My dissertation will contribute to this call for research to investigate why local rural students are not attending their regional universities and what actions may increase rural student attendance to them.

Local Context

Description of Local Setting. Lake Havasu City is unique because it does not quite fit the definition for "rural," yet it is most often categorized that way. According to

the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES; 2020), Lake Havasu City is considered a “small city,” not a rural region. A small city is defined as a “territory inside an urbanized area [50,000+] and inside a principal city with a population less than 100,000” (NCES, 2000). However, because of the remote nature of Lake Havasu City, Lake Havasu Unified School District is often considered part of a rural community. Rural remote can be defined as being 25 miles from an urban area (Byun et al., 2012). Lake Havasu City is 150 miles from Las Vegas and 195 miles from Phoenix. In fact, in 2017, Lake Havasu was named one of America’s Three Top Rural Communities in the America’s Best Communities competition, sponsored by Frontier Communications and DISH (*Lake Havasu City Named*, 2017). Of 350 communities that entered, Lake Havasu’s local Partnership for Economic Development presented an action plan called Vision 20/20 that focused on five pillars, one of them being education and workforce talent, and won \$2 million. So, while the NCES considers Lake Havasu City to be a small city because of the number of residents, the city is often considered rural because of its remoteness. The discrepancy in definition is important to note because much of the research on rural education applies to Lake Havasu Unified School District (LHUSD), even though Lake Havasu City has a population of 55,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.).

Lake Havasu High School and ASU at Lake Havasu. ASU at Lake Havasu has been operational in Lake Havasu City since 2012 and has graduated just over 150 students as of 2021. In recent years, enrollment has plateaued at 130-150 students, with very few regional students enrolling as incoming freshman. Fall 2021 saw an increase in enrollment to 175, but it is mostly attributed to the addition of a nursing degree which added 30 students and an influx of international students. Since opening in 2012, ASU at

Lake Havasu has seen just over 100 LHHS students enrolled. According to ASU at Lake Havasu Student Services data, approximately 28% of incoming student freshmen from 2016-2020 were from LHHS. While 28% may sound like a significant amount, that equates to an average of 8 of the 380 LHHS students who graduate each year. In other words, fewer than 2% of their graduating class chose to attend ASU at Lake Havasu as first-year freshmen.

To help students find colleges, LHHS hosts college and career fairs, informational nights, and college-specific presentations during the school day in their Career Center. Additionally, students receive general information about college preparedness, financial aid, and credit requirements in a periodic advisory period called Knight Time. LHHS students are going to college, but they are mostly choosing in-state schools that are not ASU at Lake Havasu. According to the Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR; n.d.), nearly 50% of LHHS students enroll in some college after graduation, with 40% (of the total number of graduates) enrolling at in-state institutions (National Student Clearinghouse, 2020). Of those in-state institutions, a little more than half enroll in four-year universities (National Student Clearinghouse, 2020), leaving the others to enroll in 2-year institutions. Of the entire graduating class, only 24% complete a degree (ABOR, n.d.). LHHS graduates are below the national average for college enrollment and below the state average for college completion (ABOR, n.d.).

ASU at Lake Havasu is the only local option for a completely on-ground four-year degree. Mohave Community College (MCC) offers associates' degrees and a variety of certificates, and they have even partnered with Northern Arizona University (NAU) to bring students access to a four-year degree via satellite campus or online after completion

of an associate's degree. However, according to MCC's Academic Chair Stephanie Dieringer (personal communication, March 30, 2021), all of the NAU courses are virtual. ASU at Lake Havasu is locally the only option for LHHS students seeking to earn a four-year degree in person.

The ASU at Lake Havasu location offers high-demand bachelors' degrees in fields including psychology, health and environmental sciences, criminal justice, organizational leadership, communication, and education (*Lake Havasu: ASU campuses and locations*, n.d.).

ASU at Lake Havasu (formerly known as ASU Colleges at Lake Havasu) opened in 2012 as a response to Arizona State University's charter and mission to increase accessibility and to serve communities regionally. Some of the critical statements in ASU's charter directly impacted the creation of ASU at Lake Havasu. These statements include:

- “Maintain the fundamental principle of accessibility to all students qualified to study at a research university.
- Maintain university accessibility to match Arizona's socioeconomic diversity, with undifferentiated outcomes for success.
- Enhance quality while reducing the cost of a degree.
- Engage all learners on all levels.
- Enhance our local impact and social embeddedness.” (*ASU charter and goals*, n.d.).

ASU at Lake Havasu has already contributed to the community of Lake Havasu City. For example, ASU at Lake Havasu students frequently participate in internships with the Parks Departments, the Chamber of Commerce, the Mohave County Sheriff's

Department, and local physical therapy offices. ASU at Lake Havasu graduates are teaching in the local school district and working local professional jobs. One such ASU at Lake Havasu graduate is Briana Morgan, a 2016 biology and environmental science graduate, who is now the city's water conservation specialist. She completed her senior capstone project on the importance of the Colorado River and the issues it was facing. Her project was a call to action for water conservation. As this example shows, not only do graduates work in the community, they give back to the community. Likewise, the ASU at Lake Havasu club Changemaker has taken over some of the functions of the recently closed Interagency, providing a hub for needed services in Lake Havasu City. Organizational leadership students frequently plan community events, such as Swing into Spring, an event that brought together local adoption agencies and foster families for a day of fun and information. In sum, ASU at Lake Havasu has become deeply embedded in the community.

Sphere of influence. As an instructor at ASU at Lake Havasu, I teach all the freshmen composition courses, so unless a student has taken dual enrollment or some kind of concurrent credit English in high school, I see all the freshmen. Part of our class discussions center on why they chose ASU at Lake Havasu, and most of the out-of-town students cite low cost and then small campus as being the deciding factors, while local students have very mixed responses. Some say their parents influenced them, some say cost influenced them, and some say they plan to transfer after a year.

I also facilitate the concurrent credit program called Open Scale (now called Universal Learner). This program has been my one consistent touch point with LHHS students, and it has served as a recruitment tool for local students. Local high school

students (second-semester sophomore or older) can take online classes through ASU's Earned Admissions platform. Although they do not earn admission through the platform (Earned Admission is only for post-high school students), it is a very low-stakes way for students to try a college class without spending a lot of money. They can convert the course to credit if they do well at a cost of \$400, and they do not have to convert to credit if they do not do well in the course. Although the cost of credit conversion is more than a typical community college course, it is less than in-state university tuition per course.

Open Scale so far has had varying degrees of success. Enrollment was far less than I expected two years into the program, with an average of 5-10 students per term enrolling in courses. Only one student from Open Scale has chosen to attend ASU at Lake Havasu so far. Our goals were to increase access to higher education for students who were nervous about college and to introduce students to ASU at Lake Havasu via on-campus informational sessions and check-ins. Although we still support Universal Learner, we are currently exploring other concurrent enrollment models.

Problem of Practice

In short, the problem of practice addressed in my action research dissertation is that Lake Havasu City students have access to a four-year university in their own community, yet less than 2% of the graduating class choose to attend ASU at Lake Havasu as first-year freshmen. Before conducting the action research reported, I conducted two cycles of research to explore this problem of practice and to test a preliminary intervention. I chose action research for its cyclical nature and immediacy within the educational context. Action research is systematic inquiry conducted by practitioners within their own context, often conducted in cycles, whose results have

immediate application (Mertler, 2020). My first cycle, Cycle 0, was a reconnaissance cycle. It consisted of 9 interviews with various stakeholders to determine if there was a problem and what may be causing it. Cycle 1 was a practice intervention with three students, including a pre- and post-intervention survey and a focus group. Based on Cycle 0 and Cycle 1 research, I determined that some of the major reasons LHHS students did not attend ASU at Lake Havasu was because of the stigma of staying local, perceived cost, and assumption that ASU at Lake Havasu does not have their major. These previous cycles of action research also revealed a stigma perpetuated by local high school students that staying in Lake Havasu City for college is undesirable. All participants mentioned the stigma of staying in Lake Havasu for college as one of the main reasons they believed local students do not choose ASU at Lake Havasu. From my experience teaching at LHHS for 10 years, I concurred with the participants. The students I knew stated that they wanted to “leave Havasu” as soon as possible after completing high school.

These previous cycles also revealed that LHHS students did not know much about ASU at Lake Havasu. I learned that once they learned more about it, they began to think of it as a viable college option for themselves or peers. Local students have an affordable four-year university option for continuing education, yet many choose to leave town for their schooling, and many may come back with no degree and in debt. According to The National Student Clearinghouse (2020), 10.3% of Lake Havasu High School students from 2013-2018 were no longer enrolled after their freshman year. That percentage increases each year they would be enrolled in college. Many dropouts accrue debt without attaining a degree similar to their national peers; in fact, nationally 56% of dropouts from public colleges and universities have student loan debt (Ezarik, 2020).

Arizona students rank 12th nationally for most student loan debt (Calonia, 2022). Student loan debt is a national crisis, and attending a regional university such as ASU at Lake Havasu with lower tuition and fees can reduce that debt.

It is important to note, as discussed previously, that LHHS student choice is anomalous and conflicts with related literature regarding rural student college choice. Many studies (Boggs, 2019; Education Data, 2019; Supiano, 2015) show that students tend to stay close to home for college. In 2013, 54% of college-going freshmen who attended four-year universities stayed within a 100-mile radius of their homes (Supiano, 2015). Another study claims that in 2014, nearly 60% of incoming students chose to attend a college within 50 miles of home, which has been a trend since the 1980s (Boggs, 2019). More recent research reveals that approximately 57% of college freshmen who attend public four-year colleges actually stay within 50 miles of home (Education Data, 2019). Because of the deep roots created in rural communities, students often prefer to stay close to their families and close-knit communities (Bauch, 2001, as cited in Griffin et al., 2011), but this is not true for LHHS students.

This trend of staying close to home certainly does not seem to be the case for LHHS students who are choosing not to attend their local four-year university. Approximately half of LHHS students are immediately going to college (National Student Clearinghouse, 2020), but only 2% are choosing ASU at Lake Havasu. This means that 48% of students are choosing to go elsewhere. In her study, López Turley (2009) investigated the process by which students choose which university to attend. She found that college choice is dependent on location, and students—especially minority or socially disadvantaged—tend to rank proximity to home as a top factor in college choice.

The population of LHHS is 33% non-White, and 42% of all students are eligible for free or reduced lunch (NCES, 2020). That is a significant amount of minority or socially disadvantaged students who, according to López Turley's (2009) research, would be the most likely to attend a university close to home.

Perhaps LHHS students just need to know more about what ASU at Lake Havasu has to offer before they can add it to their list of colleges to consider attending (Huntington-Klein, 2018). The purpose of my action research project was to bridge the gap between what students do and do not know about ASU at Lake Havasu. Through this action research, I implemented the intervention *ASU Hometown Advantage* to explore how more information about ASU at Lake Havasu impacts high school students' perceptions of ASU at Lake Havasu as a college choice. This study also sought to discover how students use their social capital or relationship with peers to influence their thinking about ASU at Lake Havasu once they have participated in *ASU Hometown Advantage*.

Intervention: ASU Hometown Advantage

Because of these initial findings, I created an intervention called *ASU Hometown Advantage*. This was an in-person program aimed at disseminating information and fostering positive feelings about ASU at Lake Havasu in order to change their perception about ASU at Lake Havasu as a choice for local students. This program was a series of five thematic presentations with wraparound activities. The five topics were (1) Virtual Tour of ASU Lake Havasu, (2) Student Life, (3) Concurrent Enrollment Options & Shadow-a Sun Devil, (4) Student Services, and (5) Financial Aid. Participants were LHHS juniors who volunteered to meet after school at Lake Havasu High School.

Using a pre- and post-test design for my action research project, I measured to what degree students gained knowledge about ASU at Lake Havasu and how it impacted their perceptions about ASU at Lake Havasu as a college choice for them and/or their college-going peers. I also had students self-report if they used their social capital to disseminate positive information about ASU at Lake Havasu. Overall, I wanted to find out if this intervention changed the perception LHHS students had about staying local for college, more specifically about attending ASU at Lake Havasu.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this research:

1. How and to what extent does participant knowledge shift after participating in *ASU Hometown Advantage*?
2. How and to what extent does perception about ASU at Lake Havasu as a college choice for local students change after participating in *ASU Hometown Advantage*?
3. How do juniors at LHHS who participate in *ASU Hometown Advantage* use their social capital about ASU at Lake Havasu?

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

For this research, I investigated what impact *ASU Hometown Advantage* had on Lake Havasu High School (LHHS) juniors. I investigated how participants' perceptions about ASU at Lake Havasu changed as a result of *ASU Hometown Advantage* and how they used social capital. One guiding concept and two theories provided the framework for this action research project. The guiding concept of college choice can be described through overarching and similar ideas within different college choice models (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Jackson, 1982; Litten, 1982; Perna, 2006; Skinner, 2019). The two theories Social Influence Theory (Hahn et al., 2019; Kelman, 1958; Kelman, 1974; Krezel & Krezel, 2017) and social capital (Coleman, 1988; Lin, 2001; Stanton-Salazar, 1997) were used to frame my research and explain my findings.

College Choice Framework

Models of college choice explain the thought processes and actions students take in selecting postsecondary institutions. Three early models of college choice (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Jackson, 1982; Litten, 1982) widely inform more contemporary models. Skinner (2019) relies on these early models to support his three-phase model of *cost*, *quality* and *match*. Perna (2006) relies on these early models, especially Hossler and Gallagher's (1987), to examine college choice through economic and sociological approaches.

History of the development of college choice models. In the early models, three comparable phases of college choice are widely accepted as college choice models by researchers (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Jackson, 1982; Litten, 1982) as seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Phases in Differing Models of College Choice Framework

College Choice Models		
Litten (1982)	Jackson (1982)	Hossler & Gallagher (1977)
desire	preference	predisposition
investigation-choice	exclusion	search
application - admission - enrollment	evaluation	choice

Litten’s (1982) model includes *desire*, *investigation-choice*, and *application-admission-enrollment*. *Desire* refers to the phase where a student considers whether they want to attend college. Litten identifies the next phase *investigation* as when students are influenced by parents, counselors, peers, publications, college officials, and what he has labeled “other media” (p. 388). Because the Internet and social media were not a part of the college investigation landscape when this model was created, “other media” may refer to television or other forms of advertisements. *Investigation* is also where they consider cost of attendance. One weakness of Litten’s (1982) study is that it focuses primarily on the college choice decisions of students living in metropolitan areas. The last phase *application-admission-enrollment* is when students may be granted aid and start to realize the true cost of the college they have selected. However, Litten’s three phases—

desire, investigation-preference, and application-admission-enrollment—and the influencers are similar to Jackson’s (1982) and Hossler and Gallagher’s (1987) college choice models. Litten’s model remains a pervasive early model that influenced later models.

Jackson’s (1982) model includes three phases a potential student goes through as they are making decisions about college: *preference*, *exclusion*, and *evaluation*. Jackson (1982) developed his model as a way of gathering information for the purpose improving information and suggesting specific tactics colleges might use for recruitment. Jackson recognizes sociological and economic models within college choice. Within the *preference* phase, he notes that “context variables are very important” (p. 240). Variables that strongly influence student choice include cost, family background, academic experience, and location. He also identifies three variables that moderately influence student choice—information, college attributes, and job attributes. Jackson notes that in the *exclusion* phase, students “typically exclude from their choice set colleges they ought to evaluate” (Jackson, 1982, p. 240). He explains that students often exclude college choice options based on partial information. In the *evaluation* phase, students judge the net cost as well as location and job benefits. A limitation that Jackson found is that students tend to have similar colleges in their choice set already by the time they arrive at the *evaluation* phase, and so they do not always consider some colleges that might be beneficial.

Hossler and Gallagher (1987) use Litten’s and Jackson’s models to inform the phases of *predisposition*, *search*, and *choice*. Students in the *predisposition* phase are deciding if they even want to attend college. They considered their model more

interactive, considering the nature of pre-college experiences and higher education and not just the characteristics of the students. Hossler and Gallagher (1987) claim colleges and universities have more control over the second phase, *search*. As students search for universities, universities can search for students. Hossler and Gallagher (1987) also recognize that peers and parents can influence enrollment plans. They, too, assert that peers have a lesser “reinforcing effect” in college choice (p. 211). They also assert that students in the *search* phase start to seek out information, but this does not assure a rational and well-researched college choice decision (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). They suggest that early information, especially about aid eligibility, can help them make better-informed decisions. Students investigate cost in the *search* phase and also use cost as a factor in the *choice* phase. The *choice* is when students evaluate their choice set is considered very interactive because this is when students receive information about possible aid and when colleges communicate more with students in a kind of “courtship” (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987, p. 216). Hossler and Gallagher’s (1987) model does not focus only on student attributes, but rather it recognizes that institutions may play a role in each phase.

Accurately communicating the cost of attendance is one way institutions can position themselves to become part of a student’s choice set (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). Hossler and Gallagher (1987) as well as Litten (1982) acknowledge cost as an important deciding factor, and more recent research (Skinner, 2019) lists cost as the most significant characteristic in what he identifies as the *application* phase.

Criticisms of early college choice models. Central to early college choice models is the simplified sequential choices of the college choice process and sweeping

assumptions about students' decision-making (Cox, 2016). However, these early models mostly assume the participants are traditional students and do not always consider “complicated guardian arrangements, transitory housing, and other economic obstacles” that may cause students to make college choice decisions based on more “immediate life circumstances” (Cox, 2016, p. 12). More recent models such as Perna (2006) and Skinner (2019) consider more complex economic and social contexts. Earlier models that mostly represented more advantaged students are inadequate for today's contexts.

A shift to more contemporary models. Although recent research does build upon the work of previous researchers (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Jackson, 1982; Litten, 1982), there are some newer considerations. Students are much more concerned now about a return for their investment (Skinner, 2019), which is an extension of the importance of cost as noted by Hossler and Gallagher (1987) and Litten (1982). Student concern about return on investment started with the economic downturn in the early 2000's coupled with the pervasive American idea that investing in higher education is valuable (Han, 2014). Han (2014) also recognizes that high-income students are more likely to attend private and 4-year universities. Cost plays an important role for low-income students with regard to proximity (Han, 2014).

Students are also increasingly more concerned with academic match as well when compared with earlier college choice models (Skinner, 2019). Skinner's (2019) work with college choice considers students to be “rational actors who weigh their options” (p. 155). This means that students are making the choices that they believe are best for their future, both academically and financially. One of these concerns is that their education will yield a wage return post college graduation (Skinner, 2019). College match also

refers to students choosing colleges with a student population whose SAT scores are similar to their own or higher than their own. Skinner (2019) found that low-income students were less sensitive to this kind of match when choosing a college.

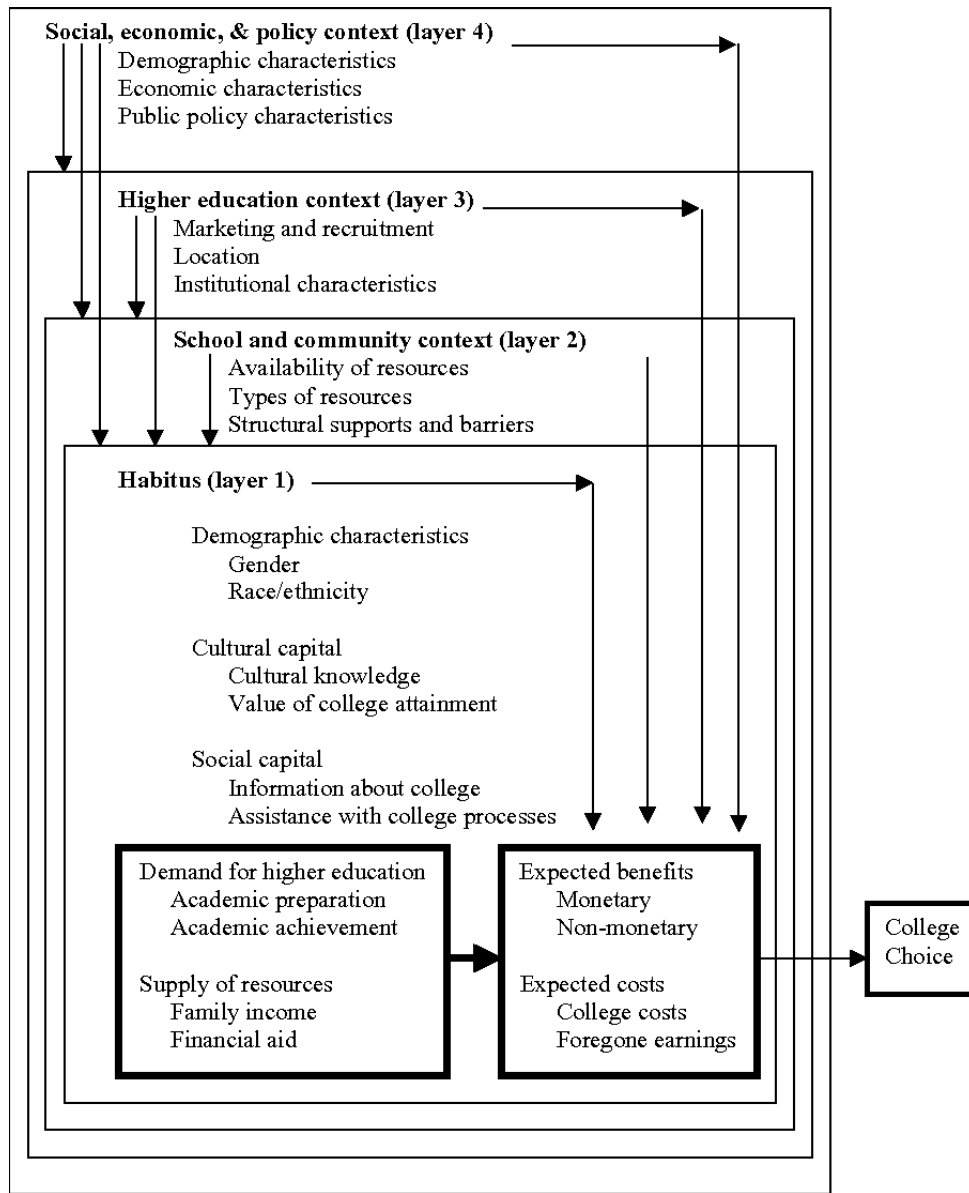
In a study of college choice and access, Perna (2006) uses Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) model of *predisposition, search, and choice* to guide her research and development of an economic model of college choice. Perna (2006) proposes a conceptual model for examining student college choice. This model not only draws on the concept of human capital investment related to cost as an important factor, but it also assumes that college choice is situated within layers of context such as community, school, and higher education.

Perna's (2006, p. 117) model (Figure 2) shows the layers of context that affect college choice, and these layers are considered in the intervention *ASU Hometown Advantage*.

Similar to Skinner's (2019) findings on return on investment, Perna (2006) cites the concept of "human capital investments" (p. 106) which is a theory that investing in mental and physical abilities is rewarded by higher wages. This research on rational behavior (students making choices in their best interest, mainly incurring less debt for a degree that would yield an acceptable wage) is also consistent with Skinner's (2019) assertion that students act as rational decision makers in the college choice process.

Figure 2

Perna's Proposed Conceptual Model of Student College Choice



Perna (2006) takes economic approach a step further and asserts that socioeconomic background influences college choice, which is in the outermost layer of her model. Perna is especially concerned with first-generation students, minority students, and low socioeconomic status (SES) students and their choices. She found that

when they do enroll, it is typically in lower-priced and less selective colleges and universities (Baum & Payea, 2004; Ellwood & Kane, 2000; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2003, 2004; Thomas & Perna, 2004, as cited in Perna, 2006).

Also embedded in Perna's (2006) approach is a consideration of the importance of the sociological constructs of cultural and social capital with regard to college choice. Perna (2006) uses Morrow's (1999) definition of social capital to include a focus on social networks and how individual connections are sustained. Students influence each other and gain access to information through social capital, which in turn may influence college choice.

Perna's (2006) layer 1 lists "information about college" under the "Social capital" heading. That supports *ASU Hometown Advantage's* goals of being a knowledge-building intervention intended to increase students' knowledge and positive perception of ASU at Lake Havasu as a good choice for local students and for students to use their social capital to share that knowledge. Layer 2 lists structural supports and barriers. As identified in Cycles 0 and 1, barriers include the student-perpetuated stigma that staying local is an unpopular choice for college. Additionally, *ASU Hometown Advantage* provides resources that make information about ASU at Lake Havasu readily available. Layer 3 consists of higher education contexts. These include marketing and recruitment as well as location. Again, *ASU Hometown Advantage* provides resources that fill the marketing and recruitment gaps, and the stigma of the hometown location is potentially counteracted by students receiving accurate information about ASU at Lake Havasu.

Finally, layer 4 concerns social, economic, and policy. These include demographic, economic, and public policy characteristics, over which I have no control.

ASU at Lake Havasu attracts different types of students with varying academic ability, but it is not known as a highly selective institution. Lake Havasu High School's population is 33% non-White and 42% of the students are eligible for free or reduced lunch (NCES, 2020). This population would seem to be the category of student who would be more interested in enrolling in lower-priced, less-selective institutions, as indicated by Perna's (2006) research. ASU at Lake Havasu fulfills both of those requirements by being low-priced and not selective.

Through the intervention *ASU Hometown Advantage* and the social nature of the intervention having been on the high school campus, students had the opportunity to share information with each other at school and beyond via social media. The activities embedded within *ASU Hometown Advantage* encouraged social media use and interaction with ASU at Lake Havasu social media accounts. The activities also encouraged students to share this information with parents and peers.

Social Influence Theory

Social factors influence college selection (Krezel & Krezel, 2017). Early research by Festinger (1954) shows that students seek approval from peer groups on their opinions and decisions. This peer approval may extend to college choice decisions. Building on this research, Kelman (1958) developed Social Influence Theory. Social influence is simply when someone's "emotions, opinions or behaviors are affected by others intentionally or unintentionally" (Hanh et al., 2019, p. 765). Because of social influence, individuals adapt their behavior as a result of the interactions with others (Hanh et al.,

2019). Abrams and Hogg (1990) categorize social influence by being part of a “two process dependency formulation” (p. 197) in which people rely on others for social approval and belief validation. They also make the distinction of normative and informational influence, where normative influence is a “pressure to comply” (p. 197) and informational influence is based on “reasons to agree” (p. 198). This can more simply be described as wanting to fit in versus having valid reasons to comply. Weitzner and Deutsch (2015) acknowledge that Kelman’s Social Influence Theory is a natural choice for researchers who focus on social influence with regard to shifting attitudes. They describe a process of continuous social interaction in which individuals emerge with collective attitudes that link them to the group identity (Weitzner & Deutsch, 2015).

With Social Influence Theory, Kelman (1958) posits that when certain conditions are met, a person’s opinion or perception can change as a result of social influence. Kelman’s (1958) Social Influence Theory has three stages of the process: *compliance*, *identification*, and *internalization*. *Compliance* is the need for a positive reaction or to avoid a negative response from a peer group. Hollebeek et al. (2021) explain that *compliance* may be a person doing what they are told implicitly or explicitly by an influencer, but the action of conformity does not always indicate agreement with the influencer. Compliance does not necessarily indicate agreement.

Kelman’s second stage *identification* is the need to create a positive interaction or acceptance in a peer group. This stage involves an individual identifying with a peer group. Bagozzi and Lee (2002) list several studies about peer influence on politics, consumerism, and sun protection and found that the explanation for all of them is that social forces lead to individual action. These individual actions then lead to positive

identification back to the peer group. This reciprocal action is way for individuals to accept influence and maintain a desired relationship to the peer group (Kelman, 1974).

The final stage in Kelman's Social Influence Theory *internalization* occurs when individuals accept influence, which can include information resources, and their behaviors change. Internalization occurs when the individual reconciles their acceptance of a decision with their own beliefs (Kelman, 1974). Bagozzi and Lee (2002) explain that although an individual may assimilate a group's values or goals, they do not necessarily define themselves only by the membership to that group. Internalization is an effect of group norms, but the individual's goals must align with the group goals for action to occur.

With regard to college choice, Hanh et al. (2019) found that social influence can cause students to make college choice decisions that might not be in their best interest. For example, Hanh et al. (2019) refer to "normative social influence" which is when students match their behaviors to other people's expectations (p. 766). They make the decision that is the most normal, or socially accepted within their social context. This may include choosing a college that is more widely accepted by peers. Social Influence Theory is a relational peer structure for the ways in which peers influence each other, and within this, peers use social capital to influence others.

Social Capital

Social capital is a concept that explains the structure of social relationships and how those relationships influence a person. The earliest scholars on social capital were Pierre Bourdieu and Robert D. Putnam. Bourdieu (1986) links social capital to class and power. Another early scholar James Coleman (1988) identifies social capital as

“obligations and expectations, information channels, and social norms” (p. S95).

Coleman and Bordieu both recognized that “social capital consists of resources embedded in social relations and social structures, which can be mobilized when an actor wishes to increase the likelihood of success in a purposive action” (Lin, 2001, p. 24). In contrast, Putnam (as cited in Kiechel, 2000) describes social capital as “connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (para. 2).

In a study on the role of social capital in higher education aspirations for disadvantaged girls, Fuller (2014) reports that the social capital of young people matters independently of their parents and that they build their own social capital. Fuller (2014) acknowledges the importance of social networks and the potential for positive consequences as a result of social capital. Fuller (2014) also says that social capital is important in education and can serve to reinforce positive attitudes about education.

Preliminary Cycle 0 research has shown that many LHHS students desire to leave Lake Havasu City after high school because they have always lived here and want to experience big city life, and college choice is one way they can move from their hometown. It has become the accepted and popular opinion of high school students that the best or most socially acceptable option after high school is to leave town. Students perpetuate this perception through social capital. Even some parents encourage their students to leave Lake Havasu City and to return after getting what they perceive to be a real college experience. This belief that ASU at Lake Havasu is less worthwhile college experience, as uncovered in Cycles 0 and 1, coupled with students perpetuating the idea

that staying in their hometown is undesirable, influence college choice for LHHS students.

The high school environment plays a role with social capital and college choice. Vandellano and Demanet (2021) discuss school-wide capital as being the mechanism that influences high school environments and can affect postsecondary enrollment. They assert that schools are a resource that bring information to students via social capital and can influence program choice. They posit that, “practitioners may wish to invest in *feeder networks* thereby establishing institutional networks between secondary schools and post-secondary education” (Vandellano & Demanet, 2021, 703). In other words, high schools can mobilize school-wide and individual social capital by connecting with post-secondary institutions.

Social capital and college choice. Bhandari and Yasunobu (2009) describe social capital as being centered on social relationships that may encourage cooperation and collective action that will benefit all involved. Stanton-Salazar (1997) created a network-analytic framework for understanding the distinction between racially minoritized youth and middle-class white youths. His ideas about social capital help to explain which social factors influence students’ college choice. Stanton-Salazar (1997) identifies institutional agents and protective agents as the two categories of people who gain and use social capital and influence students through information (especially about college choice decisions) and opportunities. Institutional agents include those who work for any institution, including the school. He also lists school peers as institutional agents (Stanton-Salazar, 1997), because the knowledge they would share would be in the school environment. Protective agents are community-based networks such as relatives and pro-

social peers. Peers are listed as both intuitional and protective agents, but it is the institutional peers who would use social capital to spread knowledge (Stanton-Salazar, 1997).

High school students have many different social structures and influences—parents, peers, teachers, and counselors. Students can obtain their information about college choice from a variety of sources, so the power of social capital is an important tool that colleges could harness when disseminating information for college choice. Griffin et al. (2011) present findings examining educational and occupational aspirations of rural high school students. The study examines where students get their information about their potential futures. The author found through the research that rural and low-income students rely on their teachers more than their counterparts in larger schools or who were higher-income. Students in grades 11 and 12 relied more on school counselors, college materials, campus visits, and college representatives, while students in grades 9 and 10 relied more on parents, guardians, relatives, and siblings for college information (Griffin et al., 2011). When all stakeholders have the necessary information, social capital worked to positively spread accurate and reliable information early. Griffin et al. (2011) found that because friends are important resources of college information, there is a “need for college and career information to be disseminated early and consistently to the entire student population” (Griffin et al., 2011, p. 177). Students spread information and attitudes about college choice. In a study about how high school contexts affect postsecondary enrollment, researchers Engberg and Wolniak (2010) discuss the kinds of capital available to students who are in the college enrollment process. They identify three kinds of capital that affect enrollment: human, cultural, and social. Within social

capital, peer networks are identified as a contributor to college enrollment decisions. Strong “peer networks” help facilitate college enrollment (Engberg & Wolniak, 2010). Similarly, Engberg and Wolniak (2010) found that the likelihood of attending a 4-year college increased for students who had friends who were also attending 4-year colleges. They also recognize social capital as having an important influence on post-secondary choice.

Social capital is especially important in rural locations where schools are often smaller and closely tied to the community. In rural areas, college choice may be influenced by a variety of people, especially family relationships. Of rural communities and relationships, Bauch (2001, as cited in Griffin et al., 2011) found that “rural families often have deep roots in their community, are often tight knit, have a community spirit, and have social activities in which the entire community participates” (p. 179). These relationships and community spirit may also have implications for spreading information about such college choice.

Other influencers. Convenience and family influence were major factors for why rural students chose branch campuses (Hoyt & Howell, 2012). In a study of the reasons and explanations given by students who enrolled at branch campuses, Hoyt and Howell (2012) used an online survey and blended the data with demographic data from the Brigham Young University to discover that convenience and family influence were major contributing factors explaining why students chose the branch campus of BYU. One student, commented, “My family encouraged me [to attend the Center], as I moved back home to Salt Lake City . . . for the spring and summer. The main reason was that I could save money in the spring and summer while working and taking classes so that I did not

have to pay expenses required in Provo (rent, food, transportation, etc.)” (Hoyt & Howell, 2012, p.112). This is an example of how parents influence students’ geographic and financial decisions relating to college choice.

Lin (2001) also acknowledges that social interactions and exchanges influence decision making. In a qualitative study on branding and college choice, Stephenson et al. (2016) concluded that certain people affect college choice. For instance, Stephenson et al. (2016) suggest that universities could use current students as brand ambassadors to provide a “valuable brand experience” to prospective students, and those ambassadors could “positively influence others’ decisions to attend the university” (p. 500). Thus, current and former students who serve as brand ambassadors could use their social capital to make connections with the high school students, enabling them to take purposive action in college choice.

Implications

The ways in which students choose colleges is complex and changes over time with shifts in technology, financial concerns, and social constructs due to social media. *ASU Hometown Advantage* considers these factors and was designed to provide the information that would most likely influence participants’ perception of a college. Specifically, *ASU Hometown Advantage* encourages peer interaction and social influence through the interactive nature of the sessions as well as the constant reference and in-session time to explore ASU at Lake Havasu digital spaces. Further, students were encouraged to use their own social capital to disseminate knowledge about ASU at Lake Havasu to parents/guardians, friends, classmates, and social network connections. Because convenience of information and the person who delivers the message were

important, *ASU Hometown Advantage* was conducted on site at Lake Havasu High School, and ASU student ambassadors as well as a strategically chosen Admissions Specialist delivered some of the sessions' content. The intervention *ASU Hometown Advantage* attempted to influence students' perceptions about staying local for college, and participants were encouraged to use their social capital to spread accurate and positive information about ASU at Lake Havasu as a college choice.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHOD

Action research is a cyclical process of practitioners seeking answers to questions specific to their own contexts (Mertler, 2017). Action researchers are interested in a systematic method of inquiry that gathers information about their students, pedagogy, or system. They use that information to inform best practices and decision-making (Mertler, 2017). Because action research is cyclical, it is also flexible, and can be adjusted to fit the researcher's needs (Mertler, 2017). Action research is often the method of choice for practitioners and education doctoral students because of the nature of their work in education coupled with a desire to affect their own context. Butin (2010) succinctly puts it: “[T]he education doctorate lies at the crossroads of theory and practice” (p. 4). Action research brings theory to life (Butin, 2010). I conducted action research to discover if a knowledge-building intervention (*ASU Hometown Advantage*) influences Lake Havasu High School (LHHS) students' perception of ASU at Lake Havasu as a college choice. The design of my intervention was impacted by knowledge that social capital is a valuable tool for influencing college choice (Engberg & Wolniak, 2010), and that by positively affecting social capital, the peer influence may shift to being supportive of ASU at Lake Havasu as a college choice.

Setting and Participants

Setting. The setting for my action research dissertation project was Lake Havasu High School in Lake Havasu City, Arizona. The sessions were held in the Career Center, which is centrally located on the high school campus. For students to acquire accurate and consistent information about colleges, students should have designated places and

people who can disseminate that information. Bell et al. (2009) conducted case studies of 15 high schools across five states to find out what 9th and 11th graders know about college, how they acquired this knowledge, and how the knowledge differed by context. The researchers found that students, especially minority students, have misinformation about college. As expected, Bell et al. (2009) found that by 11th grade, the way students gather knowledge about college has changed, and students tend to seek out information from more formal sources such as counselors and college representatives. With this in mind, *ASU Hometown Advantage* took place in the Career Center with the supervision of LHHS Career Center personnel. Not only were the Career Center personnel present for the sessions, but I made sure the Career Center and Counseling Office had updated information about ASU at Lake Havasu. I made sure that ASU Student Services provides enough pamphlets and brochures about current degree programs as well as admissions requirements. The Career Center at LHHS was important because it routinely gives students direct access to college representatives during the school year. From my 10 years teaching at LHHS, I know that students routinely go first to the Career Center for college information, so it was vital that the Career Center was engaged in this intervention. Bell et al. (2009) further support this need for a hub for information as they believe that designated places for resources are reassuring for students, and without them, students feel overwhelmed by having to search for information.

Lake Havasu City is a remote city of approximately 55,000 full-time residents and is situated 150 miles from the nearest urban location, Las Vegas, Nevada. Lake Havasu High School is the only public high school in the Lake Havasu Unified School District with approximately 1806 students (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES],

2020). NCES also reports that 67% of students are White and 26% of students are Hispanic, with 42% of all students eligible for free or reduced lunch (NCES, 2020). According to the Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR; n.d.), 57.9% of LHHS graduates enroll in college post-graduation, but only 20.1% complete a degree. LHHS graduates are below the national average for college enrollment and below the state average for college completion (ABOR, n.d.).

Participants. Participants were LHHS juniors who were in their spring semester. Of the 21 students, 47% were male, 33% were female, 5% identified as non-binary, and 5% identified as pan. The students were 38% Caucasian, 29% Latino/Hispanic/Latinx, 5% Asian, 5% Native American, 5% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 5% two or more, 9% other/unknown, and 5% prefer not to say. This is similar to the population of LHHS. When asked about the highest level of education their parents have earned, 29% reported some high school, 33% high school diploma, 10% trade school, 5% associate's degree, 10% bachelor's degree, 5% master's degree, and 10% prefer not to say/do not know. When participants were asked if they anticipated applying for financial aid or loans to pay for college; 48% answered yes, 52% answered unsure, and no one answered no or prefer not to say. This also aligns with the population data.

To recruit participants for my study, I used flyers, in-person, and virtual classroom visits. I met my target number of participants with just over 20 LHHS juniors agreeing to participate. There were approximately 400 students in the junior class. On the survey, students agreed to completing a pre-intervention survey, all five activities, a post-intervention survey, and an optional post-intervention focus group. Participants were included based on interest and willingness to participate in the intervention and data

collection. I did not exclude any interested participants, allowing room for some attrition. Students were included in the intervention *ASU Hometown Advantage* regardless of their initial college choice plan, gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. Because these participants self-selected, I did not control for any of the demographic variables.

Role of the researcher. As the facilitator of the intervention, I coordinated all of the *ASU Hometown Advantage* activities and coordinated with the various presenters who created content and presented directly to the class or interacted with students in person or via Zoom. Because I work for ASU at Lake Havasu, I am considered an insider and had to continually check my biases through member checking and researcher journaling. For example, through the nature of my position with ASU at Lake Havasu, it was obvious that I was an advocate for ASU at Lake Havasu, but my purpose was to provide activities so they could gather information and so that I could measure if and how much that knowledge changed their perceptions of ASU at Lake Havasu as a college choice. I reminded participants often that my work with them was primarily as a doctoral student and that *ASU Hometown Advantage* was a dissertation project, not a recruitment tool.

Also, because of my position within the university, I was available to students to answer any questions they had throughout the intervention or to connect them with the appropriate personnel including a student ambassador to answer their questions. As the researcher, I recruited, collected parental consent, collected the pre- and post-intervention survey data, facilitated the intervention sessions, conducted post-intervention focus groups, analyzed data, and interpreted data.

Intervention Rationale and Description

To increase the awareness and knowledge of the benefits of attending ASU at Lake Havasu, I administered a knowledge-building intervention called *ASU Hometown Advantage*. The 5 sessions were based on findings from previous cycles as well as related literature on rural student recruitment and college choice. A phone interview study on recruiting rural versus urban students by Hodges and Barbuto (2002) revealed that rural students ranked a campus tour, contact with faculty members, and speaking with current students as some of the most influential factors in college choice. These have all been included in the intervention. They also found that parents were very influential in the decision-making process. “The four factors found to be ‘critically important’ factors in college selection by students and parents were as follows: (1) How well the college prepares you for a career; (2) A quality education at a reasonable cost (a value); (3) The quality of the faculty; and (4) The quality of the specific academic program (“major”) of interest to the student” (Hodges & Barbuto, 2002, p. 4). The research by Hodges and Barbuto (2002) reinforces the activities in my intervention.

In a study examining educational and occupational aspirations of rural high school students, Griffin et al. (2011) report that for students in upper grades, “college resource materials, campus visits, and college representatives” were the most helpful sources of information when making college-choice decisions (p.177). Many of the activities in my intervention reflect this research, as seen in the description for each below. Relying on this research and others, the following is a list details each of the intervention activities.

- Day 1. Prior to watching the virtual tour, participants were asked to share what they thought they already know about the campus prior to viewing the video. Participants viewed a virtual **tour of ASU at Lake Havasu**. The tour was approximately 3 minutes and was led by a student ambassador who took them through classrooms, the science labs, popular hangout spaces, the dorms, and the gym. Although this tour was virtual, students were given resources to invite them to schedule an in-person tour or take a self-guided audio tour either with a map or in person. The participant and parent could schedule and attend a **tour of ASU at Lake Havasu** in addition to the in-class presentation. Campus visits are very important in the college-choice process (Stephenson et al., 2016). After the virtual tour, they shared what they learned about ASU at Lake Havasu in paired conversations and then were provided with a time to ask me questions. Participants completed a final written reflection: *What are your impressions of ASU@LH's campus? Please say something specific.* This was completed on an open-ended Google Form survey before leaving.
- Day 2. Participants experienced **student life at ASU at Lake Havasu** through a presentation by two ASU ambassadors who are student workers on campus. This presentation included two short videos. The first video was a montage of Welcome Week 2019 and is a little over 3 minutes. It was student created and showed the team-building activities of Welcome Week such as recreation at the Beach Hut, including paddle boarding, kayaking, and beach games. It also showed Water Wars, a series of beach games designed to get students working together in a competition. The video also showed Welcome Week's end-of-the-

week pool party at the local London Bridge Resort, a tourist resort located underneath the London Bridge. The second video was 1:23 minutes and showed Life at ASU at Lake Havasu. It showcased the clubs and community feeling and is overlaid with student testimonials and video of student rock climbing, experiential learning outside the classroom, and students socializing. The idea of these videos was to help the participants visualize themselves at ASU at Lake Havasu and to envision themselves as part of the community of the college. Participating in such activities should encourage belonging according to Stephenson et al. (2016), and so these participants were able to experience what it would be like to belong at ASU at Lake Havasu. In addition to the videos, students were asked to digitally explore the ASU at Lake Havasu website, especially the Clubs page. The student ambassadors told them about student life and answered any questions they had. They also provided them with relevant contact information or social media contacts and links. Ambassadors invited participants to follow ASU at Lake Havasu on social media. Participants completed a final written reflection: *Which ASU@LH clubs or activities would you be most likely to be involved in? Explain why you think this.* This was completed on an open-ended Google Form survey before leaving.

- Day 3. In this session, I facilitated a presentation via slide deck and website demonstration on **concurrent enrollment options** for LHHS students, and the Admissions Specialist presented via slide deck and website demonstration information about the **Shadow-a-Sun Devil** program. Participants learned about Universal Learner, and they had the opportunity to explore first-year classes in the

Universal Learner program and to begin to choose classes they thought they might like to take by searching for classes on the Universal Learner website. These classes are mostly self-paced online courses, but some are guided 8-week courses. Participants learned which classes they could use for high school credit as well. Although Universal Learner's purpose is to bring students access to higher education to those who traditionally might not have access, this program can be used for students thinking about going to college. Participants had the option to enroll in a Universal Learner course at no cost to them. Participants were introduced to Universal Learner as a pathway to ASU at Lake Havasu. Since LHHS does not have a structured college preparation program, Universal Learner can be used to orient participants to the college experience and to ease some of the financial burden by providing scholarships. Programs such as Universal Learner help students start to earn college credits before high school graduation and provide a much-needed framework to encourage them to continue college after high school (Bergerson, 2009). Three participants did enroll in Universal Learner courses. As a concluding activity, participants completed a circle map on the benefits of concurrent enrollment and then shared their ideas with a small group and added to their circle maps if they wanted to. This was not be collected so that participants could keep it as a reminder of the benefits of the program.

Within this same session, participants heard a presentation on **Shadow-a-Sun Devil**, a program where they would be released from high school for one day to shadow an ASU at Lake Havasu student, preferably in their desired major. Signing up for Shadow-a-Sun Devil was optional for *ASU Hometown Advantage*,

but participants, as recommended by Mills and Plumb (2012) may explore degree programs and choose to participate to see if there is a program that is a good fit locally. Six participants signed up for Shadow-a-Sun Devil. The Shadow-a-Sun Devil program is designed to allow students to experience their academic program or a similar program on the ASU at Lake Havasu campus. In addition to the informational video, participants viewed a student testimonial video (3:30 minutes) about their experiences with Shadow-a-Sun Devil. participants also spent time exploring ASU at Lake Havasu degree programs digitally. The Admissions Specialist answered questions they had and showed them how to sign up for Shadow-a-Sun Devil. The systems need to be connected, and Universal Learner and Shadow-a-Sun are two ways these institutions can be interconnected (Engberg & Wolniak, 2010). Participants completed a final written reflection: *Which Universal Learner course am I most interested in taking and why? Which degree would I most like to shadow and why?* This was completed on an open-ended Google Form survey before leaving.

- Day 4. The Admissions Specialist returned for a **Student Services ASU at Lake Havasu** informational session about admissions and degree offerings. The Admissions Specialist is both a LHHS and ASU at Lake Havasu graduate who shared information relevant to the LHHS to ASU at Lake Havasu experience. The Admissions Specialist discussed degrees, admissions requirements, and next steps. Participants were specifically given information about the advantages of staying local for college. Researchers Williams and Luo (2010) have documented that students may benefit from understanding that they are potentially more likely

to persist in college if they stay closer to home. Additionally, this session offered a Q & A with an ASU at Lake Havasu faculty member and current student who answered questions about their majors. Participants completed a final written reflection: *What important information did you learn today that you did not know before? Be specific.* This was completed on an open-ended Google Form survey before leaving.

- Day 5. The final session **Show Me the Money!** was a session on financial aid, paying for college, and what to expect for college expenses. All of the college choice models discussed previously (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Jackson, 1982; Litten, 1982; Perna, 2006; & Skinner, 2019) report that cost is a factor in student college choice decisions, so this session was developed. This final session was led by ASU at Lake Havasu's financial aid personnel and ended with students receiving their monetary incentive of \$100 for participating. Participants completed a final written reflection: *What was the most useful financial aid information you received today?* This was completed on an open-ended Google Form survey before leaving.

The goal of *ASU Hometown Advantage* was to increase knowledge and positive perceptions about ASU at Lake Havasu for LHHS juniors. The intervention spanned 5 weeks during the spring semester of the participants' junior year. All students participated in the exact same sessions of the intervention to increase consistency and reliability of the results. Students were expected to attend all 5 sessions, and I offered them a monetary incentive of \$100 for finishing all 5 sessions. This incentive was self-

funded. Students received a prorated payment of \$20 per session if they missed any sessions. Of the participants, only 2 attended 4 of the 5 sessions, the remaining 19 students attended all 5. Students answered a question on the post-intervention survey about the number of sessions they completed, and this was used as another data point to determine if number of sessions affected their perception.

The decision that all students needed to attend as many sessions as possible was an adjustment from the previous cycle where students were allowed to choose the activities that most interested them. As a result in the previous cycle, some students missed out on activities that would have increased their knowledge in specific areas. For example, if a student did not choose the Student Services informational session, then they did not hear about majors and admissions requirements, and they would not be able to attest to their knowledge of that on the post-intervention survey. See Table 1 for an overview of the 5 sessions of the intervention.

Table 1*Overview of ASU Hometown Advantage*

Session	Content	Support Activity	Recommended Actions
Virtual Tour	<p>Student-led Virtual Tour Video (Arizona State University, 2019)</p> <p>Additional resources on ASU at Lake Havasu website, Tours section</p>	<p>Pre-session discussion: 2 mins</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do you already know about the ASU@LH campus? 2. What do you expect to be on the campus? <p>Watch 360 tour video (2:56)</p> <p>Show students other tour resources: in-person and audio tour</p> <p>Digital campus exploration time</p> <p>Paired discussion questions: 5 mins</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Did anything surprise you about campus? 2. What features or places interested you the most? <p>Reflection (anonymous Google Form data collection): <i>What are your impressions of ASU@LH's campus? Please say something specific.</i></p>	<p>These actions were recommended to participants, but they were not required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule a tour • Share resources
Student Life	<p>ASU at Lake Havasu's Welcome Week Video (Bahde, 2019)</p> <p>Life at ASU at Lake Havasu Video (Arizona State University, 2018)</p>	<p>ASU Student Ambassadors Presentation and Q & A: Two student ambassadors were selected from this list to present and answer questions.</p> <p>Digital exploration: Explore ASU@LH's social media and clubs</p> <p>Reflection (anonymous Google Form data collection): <i>Which ASU@LH clubs or activities would you be most likely to be involved in? Explain why you think this.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow ASU@LH on social media • Connect with ambassadors

Table 1 continued

Session	Content	Support Activity	Recommended Actions
Concurrent Enrollment Program + Shadow-a-Sun Devil	<p>Concurrent Enrollment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jenna Lowder presentation Website Scholarships <p>Shadow-a-Sun Devil:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admissions Specialist presentation Classes How to sign up <p>Student Testimonies Video (Anderson, 2018)</p>	<p>Benefits of Concurrent Enrollment Circle Map</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed map individually Paired and shared map in small groups Added additional ideas from the group <p>Reflection (anonymous Google Form data collection): <i>Which degree would I most like to shadow and why?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enroll in Universal Learner Sign up to Shadow-a-Sun Devil
Student Services	<p>Presentation Admissions Specialist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degrees Requirements Next steps Q & A 	<p>Degree programs exploration on digital devices</p> <p>Q & A panel Student and Faculty Perspective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student Faculty <p>Reflection (anonymous Google Form data collection): <i>What important information did you learn today that you did not know before? Be specific.</i></p>	
Show Me the Money! (Financial Aid)	<p>Presentation Financial Aid Advisor</p>	<p>Q & A</p> <p>Distribute incentive</p> <p>Reflection (anonymous Google Form data collection): <i>What was the most useful financial aid information you received today? Why was it useful?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FAFSA explanation/start Share online resources for later use

Mixed Methods Action Research Strategies

Research Design. This research design is a mixed methods action research (MMAR) using both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods (Ivankova, 2015). My MMAR design follows the core characteristics of mixed methods research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 5, as cited in Ivankova, 2015, p. 6). The first Core Characteristic is that the researcher collects both qualitative and quantitative data based on research questions. My three research questions guided every stage of my project, and qualitative and quantitative data were collected in nearly equal amounts and with equal importance. Secondly, I combined the two types of data to build upon them strategically. This is evident in my study when I collected quantitative survey data before focus groups to ensure participants provided individual perceptions before participating in focus groups and possibly being influenced by other participants. Third, quantitative or qualitative may be emphasized or purposefully given equal priority. In my study, I used both types of data as equally as possible in my data analysis. I collected quantitative data pre- and post-intervention, and I collected small amounts of qualitative data during the intervention and more substantial qualitative data from focus group interviews after the intervention. Fourth, as outlined by Ivankova (2015), mixed methods are appropriate for a single study or cyclical study. Although two cycles of research informed the dissertation cycle, only the dissertation cycle data was used in my analysis. Fifth, mixed methods researchers frame their procedures with philosophical worldviews and theoretical lenses. In my case, I took a pragmatic approach to this study. Pragmatism is practical and relies on the research questions to guide the investigation, more so than the method (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Pragmatism places emphasis on the practical

outcomes, which are most important to my research. College choice models (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Jackson, 1982; Litten, 1982; Perna, 2006; Skinner, 2019), Social Influence Theory (Hahn et al., 2019; Kelman, 1958; Kelman, 1974; Krezel & Krezel, 2017), and social capital (Coleman, 1988; Lin, 2001; Stanton-Salazar, 1997) guided this research.

Following Ivankova's (2015) best practices for MMAR of focusing on real-life contextual understanding and cultural influences, I considered the participants' rural location as well as the established contextual stigma and belief that staying local was an unpopular choice. I used this information to inform my intervention and data collection. For example, in the post-intervention focus groups, I asked students to describe their perceptions of ASU at Lake Havasu and how those perceptions changed since participating in the intervention *ASU Hometown Advantage*. Additionally, per Ivankova (2015), my research utilized multiple data sources and data gathering methods, specifically written reflections, surveys, and focus group interviews. These methods were intentionally combined and sequenced so that the conversation of the focus group was informed by the quantitative data of the survey. One purpose of the focus group was to provide a deeper understanding of what students knew about ASU at Lake Havasu and how they perceived ASU at Lake Havasu as a college choice for local students. These student conversations expanded on the quantitative data collected in the post-intervention survey.

Data Sources

Quantitative data sources. The quantitative data was collected using a pre- and post-intervention survey. The pre-intervention survey (see APPENDIX A) was 20

questions: 4 demographic questions, 10 questions assessing their knowledge about ASU at Lake Havasu, and 6 questions assessing their perception of ASU at Lake Havasu as a good choice for local students. It is important to note that the knowledge questions were actual knowledge define, not perceived knowledge, so these were a list of 10 statements that participants had to choose from that they were sure they knew. The post-intervention survey (see APPENDIX B) was 18 questions: one question about which sessions they attended, the same perception and knowledge questions from the pre-intervention survey (see APPENDIX A) with the addition of 5 questions about how they used their social capital as a result of the intervention.

The one question about the number of sessions students attended was compared to their perception to determine if number of sessions impacts perception. The *knowledge* questions assessed information gathered during the intervention such as the types degrees offered at ASU at Lake Havasu, the average number of students in a class, the estimated cost of attendance for in-state students when compared to other in-state universities, and the names of programs or events. These questions were compared to the post-intervention survey to see if students increased their knowledge from pre-intervention to post-intervention.

There were also *perception* questions. These questions were answered using a Likert scale. The perception questions asked about overall perceptions of ASU at Lake Havasu including their opinion about the variety of major choices, student life, degree value, and their perception of ASU at Lake Havasu's role in the community.

The post-intervention survey included 5 questions about the ways participants may or may not have used their social capital as a result of the intervention. Questions are

all Likert scale and asked to what extent they shared information about ASU at Lake Havasu with parents and peers, if they interacted with ASU at Lake Havasu outside their high school classroom, and if and how they interacted with ASU at Lake Havasu on social media. These indicators of social capital provided me an idea of their behaviors, but the focus groups gave me a more nuanced understanding of what they gained from the intervention and if their perception really changed and how.

Qualitative data sources. I conducted one post-intervention semi-structured focus group with 4 participants. The intent of using the qualitative data with the quantitative data is to validate the survey data and gain a better understanding from the participants (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The topics were (1) knowledge, (2) perceptions, and (3) social capital use (see APPENDIX D for focus group protocol). Specifically, I tried to discover to what extent their understanding of ASU at Lake Havasu changed and if they felt more positively about ASU at Lake Havasu as a college choice for themselves and/or for their peers.

I conducted the focus group a week after the post-intervention survey. A focus group allowed me to collect data based on the interactions of the participants (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). A focus group was conducted in person and recorded for transcription and coding. Since one of the constructs was to determine if students used social capital to spread positive information about ASU at Lake Havasu, the social nature of focus groups also made sense. Creswell and Guetterman (2019) also explain that focus groups are beneficial when participants are cooperative with each other and supportive. Focus groups also encourage hesitant individuals to participate (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). I was mindful to keep everyone on track, to allow everyone to speak, and to make

sure that I asked questions related to knowledge, perception, and social capital. I also made sure that I did not answer for them and that I gave them space to talk by not talking too much myself.

Each data collection source is aligned to the research questions (see Table 2):

1. How and to what extent does participant knowledge shift after participating in *ASU Hometown Advantage*?
2. How and to what extent does perception about ASU at Lake Havasu as a college choice for local students change after participating in *ASU Hometown Advantage*?
3. How do juniors at LHHS who participate in *ASU Hometown Advantage* use their social capital about ASU at Lake Havasu?

Table 2

Data Collection Resources

Type	Data Source	Aligned with Research Question
Quantitative	Pre-Intervention Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 items • Will be matched responses by participants with post-intervention • 4 demographic • 10 <i>knowledge</i>: choose what you are sure you know • 6 <i>perception</i>: 5-point Likert scale • See APPENDIX A
Quantitative	Post-Intervention Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 items • Will be matched responses by participants with pre-intervention • 1 number of sessions • 10 <i>knowledge</i>: choose what you are sure you know • 6 <i>perception</i>: 5-point Likert scale • 5 <i>social capital</i>: 5-point Likert scale and 1 multiple answer • See APPENDIX B • RQ 1, 2, 3

Table 2 continued

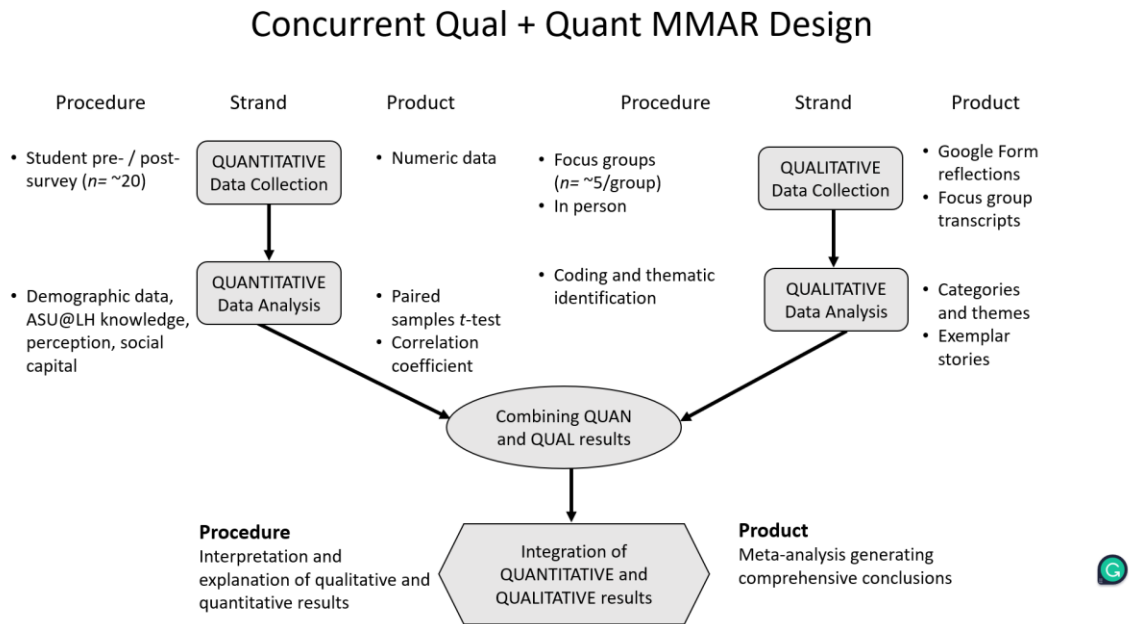
Type	Data Source	Aligned with Research Question
Qualitative	Reflections During Intervention collected via Google Docs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student self-assessment • Virtual Tour: <i>What are your impressions of ASU@LH's campus? Please say something specific.</i> • Student Life: <i>Which ASU@LH clubs or activities would you be most likely to be involved in? Explain why you think this.</i> • Shadow-a-Sun-Devil: <i>Which degree would I most like to shadow and why?</i> • Universal Learner: <i>Which Universal Learner course am I most interested in taking and why?</i> • Student Services: <i>What important information did you learn today that you did not know before? Be specific.</i> • Financial Aid: <i>What was the most useful financial aid information you received today?</i> • Building knowledge • Building/reinforcing positive attitudes and perception • See APPENDIX C • RQ 1, 2, 3
Qualitative	Focus Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 prompts total • 4 participants • See APPENDIX D • RQ 1, 2, 3

Data Analysis Procedures

As seen in Figure 3, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed with no discernable method given preference or weight.

Figure 3

Mixed Methods Action Research Data Analysis Plan



Quantitative data analysis procedures. Survey data was used to determine the correlation coefficient (Pearson product-moment) to determine if there is a relationship between perception change as knowledge increases. The correlation coefficient was also used to determine if there is a relationship between number of sessions attended influences perception. The correlation coefficient reflects the relationship between two variables (Salkind & Frey, 2020). This allowed me to determine if and how the value of one variable changed when the other changes (knowledge and perception). Specifically, the Pearson product-moment is a type of correlation coefficient that measures the strength of a correlation between two continuous variables (Salkind & Frey, 2020). The minimum sample size for a Pearson correlation would be 25 or more participants (David, 1938, as

cited in Bonett & Wright, 2000). The strength of the correlation would decrease if fewer than 25 participants took the pre- and post-intervention survey, and I had 21 participants.

A paired samples *t*-test relies on matched data from student generated codes from the pre- and post-intervention surveys to compare what students knew about ASU at Lake Havasu before and after the intervention. I also used a paired samples *t*-test to compare their attitudes about ASU at Lake Havasu before and after the intervention. The measures are repeated across time and participants are tested more than once, so the appropriate analysis is the paired samples *t*-test (Salkind & Frey, 2020). I also tested the assumptions for the paired samples *t*-test.

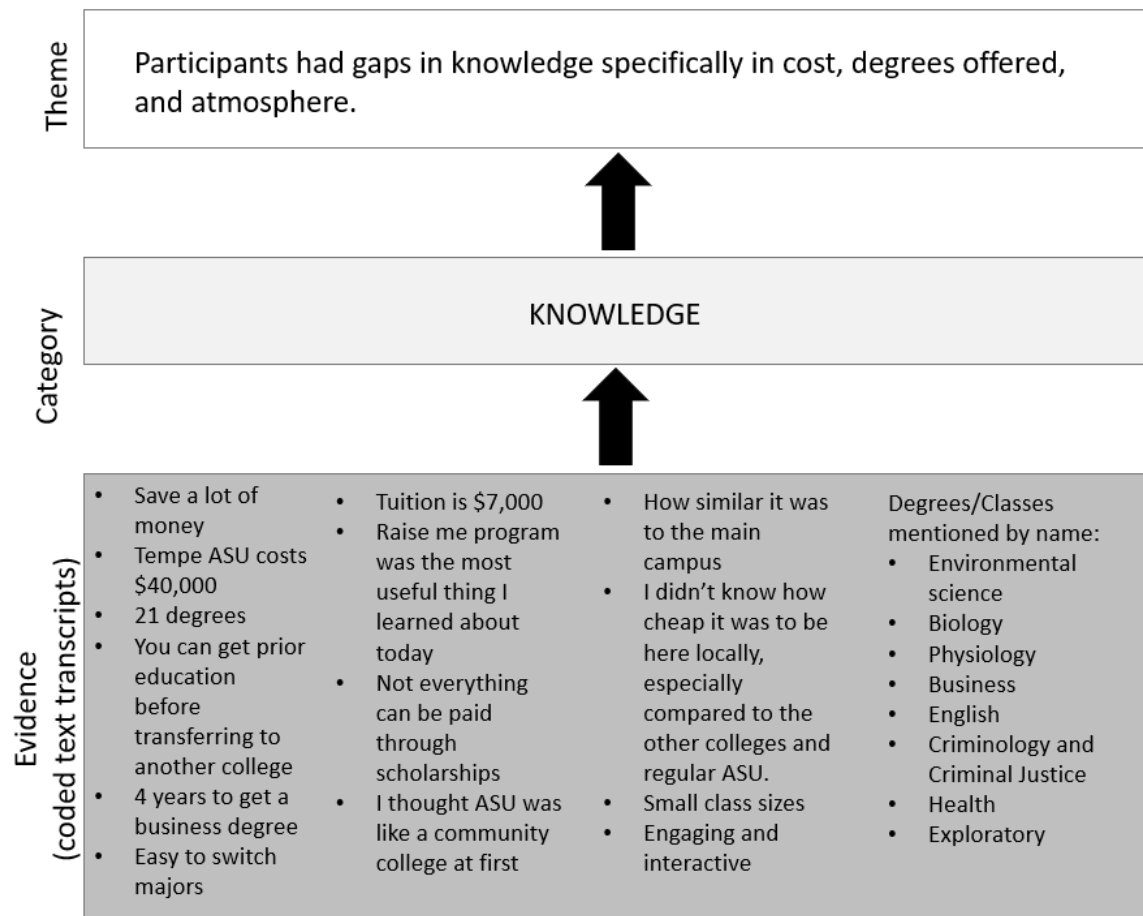
Qualitative data analysis procedures. As seen in Figure 3, I collected individual qualitative data via Google Form responses during all five of the intervention sessions. I also collected text via focus group transcripts. I followed the coding process outlined by Creswell and Guetterman (2019). They describe *codes* as labels used to describe a segment of text. *Categories* are the arrangement of codes into segments based on similarities. *Themes* are similar codes aggregated to form major ideas (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

First, I read the transcripts completely at least twice. I began to jot down codes in the margins to label ideas or comments that the students made. Codes may be phrases or single words (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Some pre-set codes I had already established were *knowledge*, *perception*, and *social capital*. Although I had these three codes based on my research questions, I also made marginal notes and highlighted other words and phrases that might have significance, allowing other possible codes to emerge. From these coded transcripts, I was able to separate the participant language into

categories and eventually the larger themes. Finally, I reduced the categories by identifying connections among them to 4 themes that have emerged. Creswell and Guetterman (2019) explain that it is better to provide a qualitative report about a few themes rather than a report with general information about many themes. See Figure 4 for an example of coded textual evidence in the *knowledge* category and the theme that emerged.

Figure 4

Qualitative Coding Example - Knowledge



Timeline and Procedure

From January 2022 - March 2022, participants participated in five knowledge-building activities after school on early release Thursdays in the Career Center. I recruited in various Junior classrooms prior to Day 1. I explained my research to the students and distributed parental consent. Students returned their forms to their classroom teacher or to the Career Center, and I collected the forms every couple of days until I had a minimum of 20 participants. Some students returned their forms on Day 1 of the intervention, and two students joined the intervention Day 2. I used the Remind texting app to send students reminders about the meeting days and to send the survey to their digital devices during the sessions. Students used their digital devices in class to complete these surveys. Students without their own personal devices were permitted to use the computers in the Career Center. Table 3 illustrates the timeline of the study.

Table 3

Timeline and Procedures of the Study

Time frame	Actions	Procedures
<i>Pre-Intervention</i> January 10 - 21	Visited junior classes to recruit for study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distributed parental consent forms • Teachers and Career Center collected parental consent
<i>Day 1</i> January 27	Pre-intervention survey <i>ASU Hometown Advantage</i> Session #1 Virtual Tour of ASU at Lake Havasu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collected consent forms • Students took survey in class on digital devices • 360 tour • Showed students other tour resources: in-person and audio tour • Google Form reflection
<i>Day 2</i> February 3	<i>ASU Hometown Advantage</i> Session #2 Student Life at ASU at Lake Havasu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student ambassadors • Digital exploration • Follow on social media • Google Form reflection

Table 3 continued

Time frame	Actions	Procedures
<i>Day 3</i> February 10	<i>ASU Hometown Advantage</i> Session #3 Concurrent Enrollment + Shadow-a-Sun Devil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lowder presentation • Student Services rep presentation • Student resources on website • Circle map • Google Form reflection
<i>Day 4</i> February 17	<i>ASU Hometown Advantage</i> Session #4 Student Services Admissions Informational Session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Services rep presentation • Digital degree exploration • Student and faculty Q&A
<i>Day 5</i> February 24	<i>ASU Hometown Advantage</i> Session #5 Show Me the Money! Financial Aid Session Post-intervention survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Aid presentation • Incentives • Scheduled focus groups
<i>Post-intervention</i> March 3-25	Focus Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ~5 per group • Transcribe
<i>Analysis</i> March 28+	Analyze data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare quantitative data • Transcribe audio recordings • Conducted qualitative analysis • Conducted quantitative analysis

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The results of this action research study are presented in two parts, quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis. Each section contains a brief review of the guiding concepts as well as a brief review of the data collection process.

Quantitative Data Analysis and Results

The quantitative data were collected via the pre- and post-intervention surveys (see APPENDIX A & B, respectively). The pre-intervention survey contained 20 items: 4 demographic, 10 knowledge, and 6 perception. The post-intervention survey contained 18 items: the same Likert scale knowledge and perception questions as the pre-intervention survey and the addition of 5 social capital questions. The pre-and post-intervention surveys were matched using a unique identifier that participants created on both surveys. The quantitative data addresses all three research questions guiding the study.

Reliability. The pre- and post-intervention surveys each contained constructs of knowledge and perception. Knowledge was not measured using a Likert scale, but rather the number of items that participants identified as being true. The post-intervention survey added the construct of social capital. Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability for the perception subscale, which consisted of 6 questions, and it was found to be respectable ($\alpha=.79$) on the pre-test and undesirable ($\alpha=.63$) for the post-test.

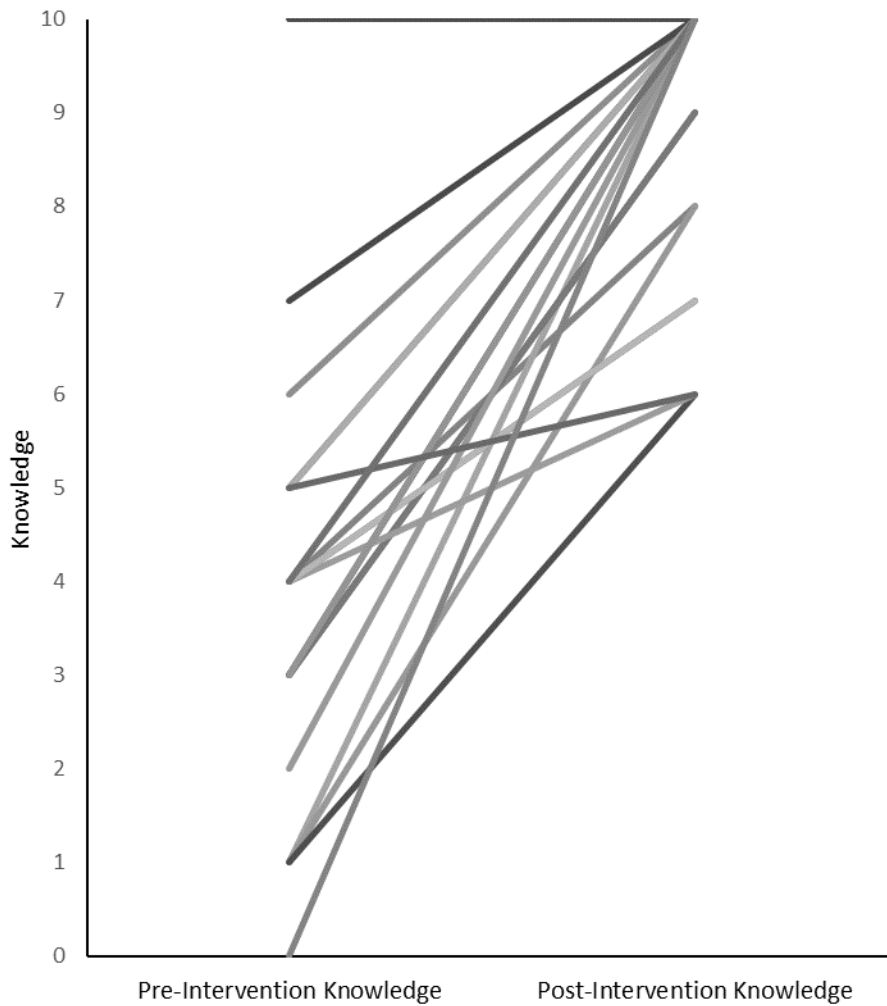
Paired samples *t*-test. A paired samples *t*-test was conducted to compare average scores on the pre- and post-intervention surveys to compare what students knew about ASU at Lake Havasu before and after the intervention. A paired samples *t*-test was also

used to compare their perception about ASU at Lake Havasu before and after the intervention.

The knowledge scores from the pre-intervention survey ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 2.26$) and post-intervention survey ($M = 8.86$, $SD = 1.56$) indicate that the participants' knowledge increased after participating in the intervention *ASU Hometown Advantage*, $t(20) = 9.17$, $p < .001$, *mean difference* = 5.10, 95% CI [3.94, 6.25]. The effect size for this analysis ($d_{rm} = 2.04$) was large. On average, scores increased by 5.1 points on a scale containing 10 items. See Figure 5.

Figure 5

Individual Changes in Knowledge Between Pre- and Post-Intervention Scores



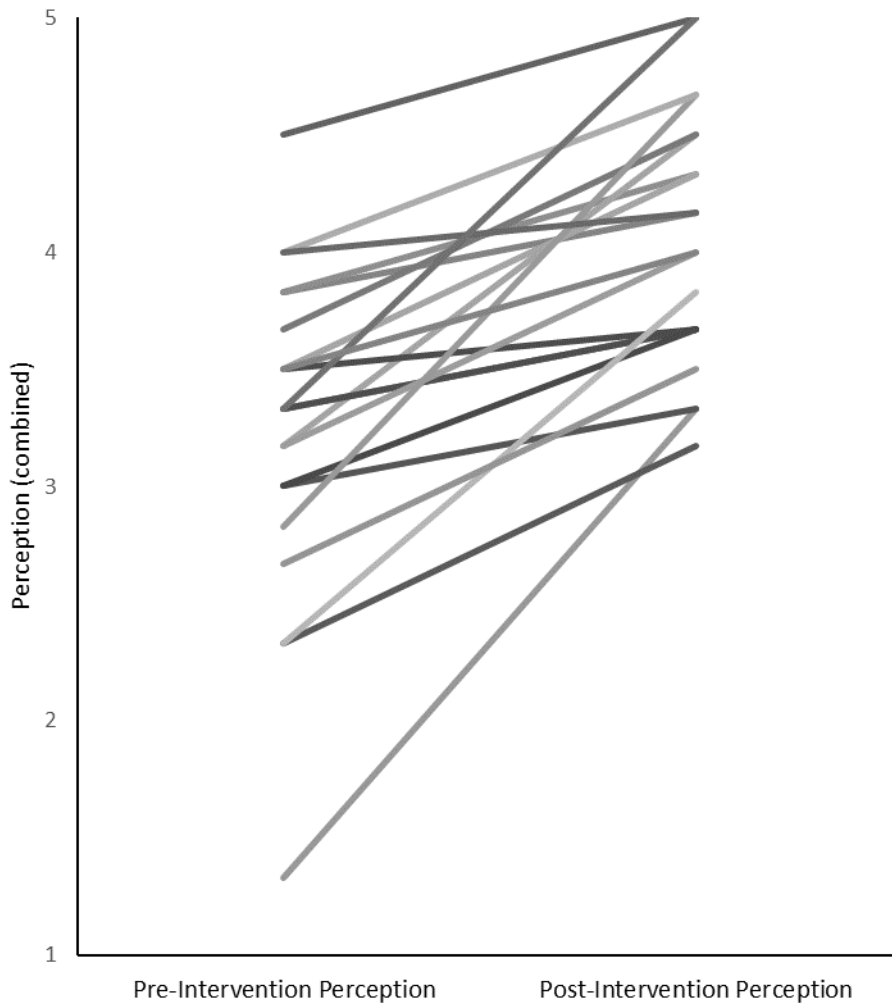
Note. Each line represents one participant and the change in individual score from the pre-intervention survey to the post-intervention survey. Overall, knowledge significantly increased.

The perception scores from the pre-intervention survey ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 0.70$) and post-intervention survey ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 0.54$) indicate that the participants' perception increased after participating in the intervention *ASU Hometown Advantage*, $t(20) = 6.76$,

$p < .001$, mean difference = 0.80, 95% CI [0.56, 1.06]. The effect size for this analysis ($d_m = 1.53$) was large. On average, scores increased by 0.80 points. See Figure 6.

Figure 6

Individual Changes in Perception Between Pre- and Post-Intervention Scores



Note. Each line represents one participant and the change in individual score from the pre-intervention survey to the post-intervention survey. Overall, perception significantly increased.

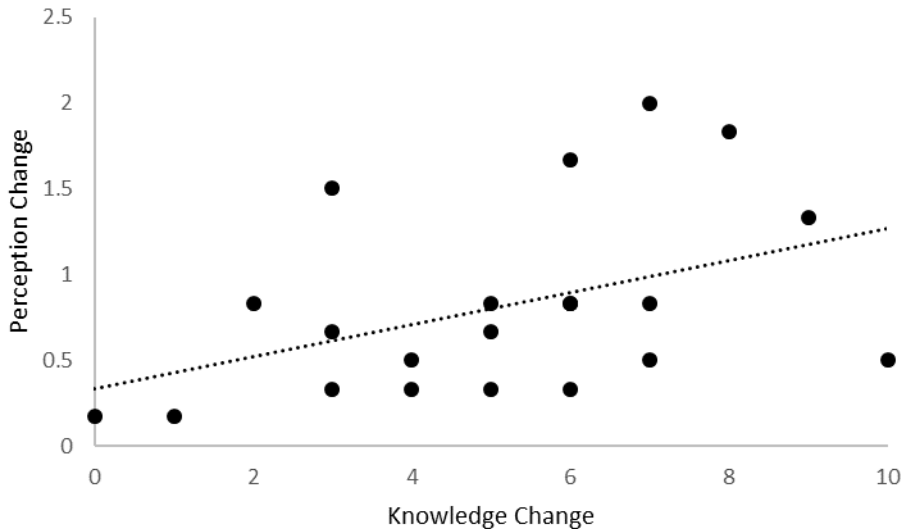
I tested all assumptions for the independent samples t -test to be sure that I could correctly draw conclusions from the results of the t -test. The assumption of normality of

different scores was violated for *perception*. The assumption of normality means that the differences in means of random samples from the same population would form a bell curve and would be considered normal. However, for *perception*, differences were positively skewed. This indicates that the mean is greater than the median and not normal. After running the *t*-test, I also ran a Wilcoxon signed-rank test, which can be used if data are not considered normal, and the pattern of significance was the same for both the *t*-test and the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, so I have reported the analysis of just the *t*-test for both constructs for consistency.

Correlation coefficient. A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed to assess the linear relationship between knowledge and perception. There was a positive correlation between the two variables, $r(19) = .44$, $p = .048$, $r^2 = 0.19$. The correlation is significant; knowledge accounts for 19% of the variance in perception. In other words, participants with higher knowledge scores also had higher perception scores. See Figure 7.

Figure 7

Association Between Change in Knowledge and Change in Perception Between Pre- and Post-Intervention Measures



Note. Each dot represents an individual participant. Scores are change in knowledge and perception between the pre- and post-intervention. People who showed a higher increase in knowledge also increased perception, and this relationship was significant (dotted line).

Social capital descriptives. On the post-intervention survey, participants were asked in what ways they spread information about ASU at Lake Havasu outside of the intervention. They were also asked how they interacted with ASU at Lake Havasu’s social media (Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook). The Likert scale for these questions were (1) *None at all*, (2) *A little*, (3) *A moderate amount*, (4) *A lot*, and (5) *A great deal*. Participants reported they used their word-of-mouth more readily than they used social media to spread information about ASU at Lake Havasu. Table 4 shows the mean amount that students reported sharing information about ASU at Lake Havasu or seeking out

information about ASU at Lake Havasu. The mean amount for sharing information with parents/guardians or friends/peers on a Likert scale was considered a moderate amount. The mean amount for students interacting with ASU at Lake Havasu personnel or seeking out additional information was a little. See Table 4 for average responses.

Table 4

How Participants Used Social Capital

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Shared information with parents/guardians	3.43	1.17
Shared information with friends or classmates	3.33	1.16
Interact with ASU@LH personnel (outside of intervention)	2.38	1.12
Seek out additional literature or information about ASU@LH	2.52	0.98

Note. The Likert scale for these questions were (1) None at all, (2) A little, (3) A moderate amount, (4) A lot, and (5) A great deal.

Participants interacted with ASU at Lake Havasu’s social media. Of the 21 participants, 48% liked a post on ASU at Lake Havasu’s social media, 5% shared an ASU at Lake Havasu Tweet or post in a direct message to a peer on social media, 19% screenshotted an ASU at Lake Havasu post to remember later, 33% follow at least one ASU at Lake Havasu account but have not interacted with it, and 33% do not follow any ASU at Lake Havasu social media accounts.

Quantitative data summary. In response to RQ 1, participant knowledge significantly increased after participating in the intervention. Participants answered 10 knowledge questions on the pre- and post-surveys. Participants on average increased their

knowledge by 5.1 items. In response to RQ 2, participant perception significantly increased as a result of participating in the intervention. Participants rated their perception of ASU at Lake Havasu on the pre- and post-surveys using 5-point Likert scales. Participants on average increased their perception on average by 0.80 points. Additionally, increase in knowledge was positively correlated with increase in perception. Participants who learned more about ASU at Lake Havasu significantly increased their perception of ASU at Lake Havasu. This correlation is of moderate strength (Cohen, 1988). In response to RQ 3, participants reported interacting with ASU at Lake Havasu social media and sharing information with parents/guardians and friends/classmates. On a Likert scale, participants reported sharing information a moderate amount or a lot.

Qualitative Data Analysis and Results

The qualitative data was collected from two sources, the end-of-session anonymous exit tickets via Google Form questions (see APPENDIX C) and the post-intervention focus group (see APPENDIX D). Data sources included transcriptions of five Google Form open-ended questions, one exit ticket from each session, as well as the transcription of one focus group session with 4 participants. The qualitative results are presented in sections according to the themes which emerged from the codes and corresponding research questions. In general, the three pre-set categories were *knowledge*, *perception*, and *social capital*. I have added an additional catch-all category that emerged during coding which can best be described as *recruitment personnel*.

Procedures. Before beginning to analyze the narrative transcripts, I first read and re-read them several times with some wait time of 24-48 hours in between. I began to

think about the ideas that stood out and if or how they connected to my research questions. Mertler (2017) explains that the key to coding is to look for answers to research questions as well as provide questions and challenges to current practice or inform future practices. With that in mind, I used the pre-set research-aligned categories of *knowledge*, *perception*, and *social capital*, but it was apparent that I needed to be open to additional categories revealing themselves as I coded the transcripts. Much of what participants said seemed to fit into an additional category.

After reading through the transcripts in their entirety, I read through them again, thinking only about *knowledge*. To begin to code the data, I needed to describe the main features of *knowledge* as a category. Mertler (2017) explains that a researcher must describe the main features or characteristics of the categories. Text coded as *knowledge* included anything related to specific information that participants learned during the intervention. It also included any specific information students already knew. I used a pink highlighter to identify any data related to *knowledge* and coded all of the transcripts. I also wrote marginal notes to summarize information or mark something for emphasis. See Table 5 for category description and participant excerpts from coded transcripts.

On my next read-through, I coded only for *perception*. Words and phrases were highlighted orange for *perception* when a participant expressed an opinion, either positive or negative, or when a statement included perception-revealing words such as *seemed*, *thought/think*, *felt like/as if*, *revealed*, *surprised*, and *really cool*. See Figure 8 for an example of text coded for *perception*. *Knowledge* and *perception* began to overlap. For example, one participant noted that tuition was “pretty cheap.” This was coded as both *knowledge* and *perception*, even though the term “cheap” is subjective. ASU at Lake

Havasu's tuition is cheaper than all the other in-state universities, and the word "cheap" is a subjective perception about the price of tuition. I made marginal notes as well, especially using a sad face to note when students made a negative comment or indicated that their perception did not change.

At that point, I was starting to notice text that seemed important but didn't fit into a category yet. I knew I would need to read through more carefully to see what other categories might emerge from these mysterious codes. I also began to consider that my exit tickets may not have been aligned to the research questions, and I pondered the reasons I used the exit tickets. I realized that I used them for student engagement and to keep them thinking about the topic as they left the session, but I could have aligned them more carefully for data collection purposes.

Figure 8

Sample Page (Exit Ticket Google Form Output) for Perception

Session 1 Exit Ticket

What are your impressions of ASU@Lake Havasu's campus? Please say something specific.

- 1/27/2022 The campus is actually very nice and looks very clean, the activities they offer look fun and looks like there's enough to do with friends or even on your own.
14:06:50
- 1/27/2022 It seems like a good school but my only worry is if they have the thing I want to study and how long it will take to finish it.
14:07:03
- 1/27/2022
14:07:03 There are a lot of areas for students to go and hang out or study with a group.
My impressions of asu are definitely changed from this presentation. I went there over the summer for a criminal justice camp and it has been a while. I think it's definitely changes since then but still kinda looks the same.
14:07:04
- 1/27/2022 I think it is a really nice campus. The amount of student areas like the lounge area or the gym surprised me.
14:07:05
- 1/27/2022
14:07:17 Its nicer than I expected it to be.
- 1/27/2022 I think it's a pretty neat campus. It looks very pleasant. The study room sounds like a place where I'd be very often.
14:07:20
- 1/27/2022 I think that the dorms were cool. I liked the social area that had the foosball table, lounge chairs, and games.
14:07:21
- 1/27/2022
14:07:37 It has a nice looking campus.
ASU has a wide majority of locations for students to use in order to have a useful and easier time in the campus, there is a lot of tools for students to use along with the locations and the activities provide entertainment and study opportunities in order to further education and growth in college/ASU
14:07:48
- 1/27/2022 my impression on asu campus was it seemed smaller then expected but i did think the center where the games and everything was what a neat feature, i think it's important that you meet and get to know the people around you and that may be in your classes.
14:07:59
- 1/27/2022
14:08:01 Its pretty cool because of the chill areas
i personally like it bc i like a small town school. i think having a small campus that is easy to navigate it great. so much more desirable than a big campus all around a city.
14:08:04
- 1/27/2022 also the small class sizes is really important to me bc i think you get a better connection with the teacher which leads to a better education in the long run i think.
14:08:04
- 1/27/2022
14:08:06 it looks very small but still makes space for people to have a good college experience
- 1/27/2022
14:08:36 It seems to be a very tight knit community and everyone knows everyone.
Originally I just saw ASU@Lake Havasu as a small community college with nothing very special about to offer, but seeing the tour revealed what the college really has to offer. The student center and small class sizes really surprised me. The student center really does seem to be an inviting atmosphere to be in.
14:08:40
- 1/27/2022
14:09:15 I didnt see anything that caught my eye.
Prior to attending this'd study, I was indeed very skeptical about attending ASU@Lake Havasu's campus as I had interest in several other university's; some of the universities being in state such as University of Arizona or ASU@Phoenix. However, my impression of ASU@LakeHavasu campus after learning more about it and seeing the virtual tours is better. I'm surprised that the campus has its own gym and it looked much better than I remembered it when I toured it in person.
14:09:22

Some
negative
impressions;
more
positive

The third pre-set category was *social capital*. I used a green highlighter to identify any text that described any ways participants shared or said they would share information about ASU at Lake Havasu with other people, any ways participants interacted on social media with ASU at Lake Havasu, or any ways participants reached out to ASU at Lake Havasu personnel outside of the intervention. During this round of coding, I began to see places where *social capital* overlapped with both *knowledge* and *perception*. For example, a participant said they would recommend ASU at Lake Havasu to peers, which demonstrates social capital, but then they also said the reasons why, such as “small community, great professors, very interactive, hands-on engaging activities, [and] student-led activities,” which demonstrates both *knowledge* and *perception*.

Finally, I needed to address this mystery category that was emerging. I read through again and highlighted in yellow important words and phrases that did not seem to fit in other categories. The types of phrases I highlighted were “you considered our feelings” and “I am so glad you were the one who did this program.” Students also mentioned the Admissions Specialist by name and commented on his “witty banter.” Another student mentioned one of the student ambassadors by name as well. This revealed to me that the people delivering the message matter a lot. This category became *recruitment personnel*, and although this was not a category outlined in my research questions, I believe it may have some bearing on future research or suggestions for the admissions team.

Themes

Coded text and categories combined together lead to a major idea or theme (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Table 5 shows coded textual evidence sorted into pre-set categories and then a one-sentence theme that makes sense of it all.

Participants had gaps in knowledge, specifically in cost, degrees offered, and atmosphere. The most common gap in knowledge was about the price of attending ASU at Lake Havasu, especially when compared to the metropolitan ASU campuses or other in-state universities. When asked to report what they learned on the Google Form exit ticket after Session 4 with the Admissions Specialist, more than half of the participants mentioned the cost of tuition. Participants cited “a major cost difference,” “save a lot of money,” and “cheaper at ASU than a bigger university.” During the focus group interview, another participant said, “I didn’t know how cheap it was to be here locally.” Unprompted, each presenter in each session mentioned the cost of attendance, and so this idea was pervasive throughout the intervention.

In addition to cost of attendance, participants often referred to the number of on-ground degrees that ASU at Lake Havasu offers. In the session 4 exit ticket, participants frequently mentioned the number of degrees specifically. They said, “ASU LHC has 21 different majors,” and “I didn’t know they offered the 21 [majors] that they offered.” One participant elaborated about the 21 degrees offered by saying that was “really cool because it gives me a chance to really look through all that it offers to see what interests me because I don’t really have much of an idea what I want to do after high school.”

Another participant mentioned the Shadow-a-Sun Devil program that lets them explore a

major. Session 3 exit ticket asked students about degree shadowing, and the most mentioned degree was business.

After cost and degree programs, the atmosphere or environment of ASU at Lake Havasu was the next most identified knowledge gap. During the focus group, one participant expressed “how similar it was to the main campus.” Another focus group participant said, “I thought ASU was like a community college at first, and then I realized that it is like a university but smaller.” About the atmosphere and learning environment, another participant noted, “One thing I learned is small class sizes and how engaging and interactive the professors in the courses are.” Not all responses were positive. In an exit ticket for Session 1 about the virtual tour, students said “it seemed smaller than expected” and “I didn’t see anything that caught my eye.” Others, however, from the same exit ticket said that “it seems to be a very tight-knit community,” and several students mentioned the gym and lounge areas as being of interest.

Overall, participants developed a better understanding of cost, degrees offered, and atmosphere at ASU at Lake Havasu. Participants mostly did not know the cost of attending their local university or that it offered many of the same degrees as the metropolitan campuses. Participants mostly did not know which degrees were offered or that students could start at ASU at Lake Havasu and transfer to one of the metropolitan campus or another university. Participants did not understand what the atmosphere was like at ASU at Lake Havasu with regard to student relationships, faculty relationships, and common spaces for socializing.

Participants were surprised at the college’s features, specifically price, physical spaces, and educational experiences. The most commonly mentioned features that

influenced perception are parallel to the items that were mentioned in the *knowledge* category. The most often mentioned positive feature of ASU at Lake Havasu was the cost of attendance. Participants frequently used words and phrases such as “cheap,” “save money,” or cost less.” Their perception about cost was that it was less money. During the focus group interview, one participant said, “It’s like a private college, but the cost of a public college, which is cool.” Another participant described ASU at Lake Havasu as being “exactly like ASU; it’s just cheaper, and it’s closer. There are a lot of benefits.” Another participant added to that statement that ASU at Lake Havasu provides “a hands-on experience for a cheaper price.”

Participants expressed surprise in some of the physical features of the campus. In the Session 1 exit ticket after the virtual tour, one participant said, “My impression of ASU at Lake Havasu after learning more about it and the virtual tour is better. I’m surprised that the campus has their own gym, and it looked much better than I remembered when I toured it in person.” Another participant expressed surprise at the number of social areas for students: “I think it is a really nice campus. The amount of student areas like the lounge area or the gym surprised me.” Other participants said, “It’s nicer than I expected it to be,” “It looks very pleasant,” “I liked the social area that had the foosball table, lounge chairs, and games.” Participants were able to easily identify areas on campus that they thought they would enjoy, and this gave them a positive perception of the campus. Two participants had neutral or negative impressions. One said “It seemed smaller than expected,” and another noted, “I didn’t see anything that caught my eye.” Aside from these comments, the other perceptions were overwhelmingly positive.

Participants noted less frequently their perception of educational experiences. Several mentioned the “hands-on” experiences and small class sizes. In the Session 1 exit ticket, one participant said, “I think having a small campus that is easy to navigate is great. It is so much more desirable than a big campus all around a city. Also, the small class sizes [are] really important to me because I think you get a better connection with the teacher which leads to a better education in the long run.” Although participants did not mention educational experiences as frequently, one noted that “professors are very accommodating which makes the campus seem more inviting.” Regarding courses and experience, one participant said, “I had felt it was a watered-down version of the main campus. However, now I see that they offer an abundance of courses as well.” One participant specifically mentioned criminology and criminal justice as sounding interesting. Health, psychology, English, and environmental science were also courses mentioned by name when participants were asked to identify which classes they would most like to shadow.

Overall, most participants described features about ASU at Lake Havasu that surprised them and gave them a positive perception. Similarly to the *knowledge* category, participants identified cost most frequently as the feature that surprised them. Most participants also expressed surprise at the student spaces on campus such as the Fitness Center and the Student Center. Participants mentioned quality of educational experiences less frequently, but all mentions of faculty or experiential learning were positive.

Participants will tell peers about ASU at Lake Havasu mostly if they are struggling financially, do not know what they want to study, or want a small college location. Participants expressed an increase in knowledge and perception, but their

willingness to recommend ASU at Lake Havasu to peers or classmates came with some caveats, such as being more willing to suggest it to peers who are financially struggling, don't know what they want to do in college, or want to stay close to home. For example, one participant said, "I think if I know a friend who is struggling trying to figure out how to pay for college, I will definitely recommend ASU at Lake Havasu." In response to the focus group question about recommending ASU at Lake Havasu, one participant said, "I would definitely recommend it to someone that was asking, if they wanted something with hands-on experience for a cheap price and close." Another participant said, "I would recommend it for someone who isn't sure on what their path is in the future or if they just want to stay home."

Not all students cited cost, location, or lack of direction though. Another participant listed many reasons they would recommend ASU at Lake Havasu. "I would recommend it definitely because of the way it is, how it is set up. Small community, great professors, very interactive, hands-on engaging activities, student-led activities. There're also many clubs—health clubs, student clubs. It's very student engaging and very student-led, and that's what I believe college should be." This was the only participant to list these other attributes—small size, quality instructors, and experiential learning—as reasons for recommending it to others.

Aside from these three dominant reasons for recommending ASU at Lake Havasu, one participant mentioned having a family member who has attended ASU at Lake Havasu as being an influence as well. One focus group participant even said they were considering going "for the first two years" before transferring. This reveals that participants also see ASU at Lake Havasu a viable option for early college experiences.

Overall, participants said they would recommend ASU at Lake Havasu mostly to students who were unable to afford a university experience away from their hometown, if they were not sure what they wanted to study, or if a more intimate environment was important. Although there were other one-off reasons for recommending ASU at Lake Havasu, the pervasive reasons among the students were that ASU at Lake Havasu was worth recommending mostly for the previously stated three reasons.

People delivering the message matter a lot; recruitment personnel must be friendly, engaging, and relatable. During the focus group, I asked participants what sessions were most engaging, and participants talked about the people who delivered the message more than the message itself. One participant named one of the ASU Student Ambassadors by name and said, “It was really cool seeing their perspective and how they view college...and their involvement in the community as well.” Another participant mentioned the Admissions Specialist by name, noting that they enjoyed his “witty banter.” When asked in the focus groups if they had any final comments, the participants expressed appreciation that I was the person conducting *ASU Hometown Advantage*. Specifically, they said, “I am glad you were the one who hosted it. You made it enjoyable.” They also said, “You considered our feelings.” Before I had arrived for the focus group, they had also all signed a thank you card for me. Their appreciation for the ambassadors I chose and for the ASU staff I chose as well as their actions and words towards me reveal that the person delivering the message is extremely meaningful.

Overall, participants mentioned three different types of university personnel as being memorable: The Admissions Specialist, the Student Ambassadors, and the program (intervention) facilitator. Students did not mention the Financial Aid specialist

or the faculty member who also presented, even though the content of the financial aid presentation was mentioned many times with regard to cost. Because the faculty member attended Session 4 and participants had already asked questions in Session 1-3, the faculty Q & A may not have been as meaningful. Also, because she was not a faculty member for the degrees participants most mentioned, they may not have been as interested in the content. Participants most connected to the presenters who were closer to their own age and who shared personal experiences from being a student at ASU at Lake Havasu.

Table 5

Themes, Category Features, and Coded Text Evidence

Theme	Category Description	Coded Text Evidence (sample not exhaustive)
Participants had gaps in knowledge, specifically in cost, degrees offered, and atmosphere.	KNOWLEDGE: specific information that participants learned during the intervention and any specific information students already knew	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Save a lot of money • Tempe ASU costs \$40,000 • 21 degrees • You can get prior education before transferring to another college • 4 years to get a business degree • Easy to switch majors • Tuition is \$7,000 • Raise me program was the most useful thing I learned about today • Not everything can be paid through scholarships • I thought ASU was like a community college at first • How similar it was to the main campus • I didn't know how cheap it was to be here locally, especially compared to the other colleges and regular ASU. • Small class sizes • Engaging and interactive • Degrees/Classes mentioned by name: Environmental science, Biology, Physiology, Business, English, Criminology and Criminal Justice, Health, Exploratory

Table 5 continued

Theme	Category Description	Coded Text Evidence (sample not exhaustive)
<p>Participants mostly viewed ASU at Lake Havasu as a good choice and were surprised at the college's features, specifically price, physical spaces, and educational experiences.</p>	<p>PERCEPTION: when a participant expressed an opinion, either positive or negative, or when a statement included perception-revealing words such as <i>seemed, thought/think, felt like/as if, revealed, surprised, and really cool</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I thought [at first] it was pretty shabby • I think it's because we never actually saw everything • I'm really actually considering going there now after attending the 4 sessions. • It's gonna be so much better [compared to Tempe] because it's bigger than I realized, that even though it's smaller, it's just as good or maybe even better because you get more personal experiences. • It's like a private college, but like the cost of a public college, which is cool. • a lot of benefits • My impressions of ASU are definitely changed from this presentation. • The amount of student areas like the lounge area or the gym surprised me. • It's nicer than I expected it to be. • It seemed smaller than expected. • So much more desirable than a big campus all around a city. • The small class sizes is really important to me because I think you get a better connection with the teacher, which leads to a better education in the long run I think. • It looks very small but still makes space for people to have a good college experience. • Tight-knit community • Originally, I saw ASU@LH as a small community college with nothing very special to offer, but seeing the tour revealed what the college really has to offer. • The student center and small class sizes really surprised me. • I didn't see anything that caught my eye. • My impression...is better. • I'm surprised the campus has their own gym and it looked much better than I remembered when I toured it in person. • 21 degrees are really cool

Table 5 continued

Theme	Category Description	Coded Text Evidence (sample not exhaustive)
Participants would tell peers about ASU at Lake Havasu mostly if they are struggling financially, do not know what they want to study, or want a small college location.	SOCIAL CAPITAL: any ways participants shared or said they would share information about ASU at Lake Havasu with other people, any ways participants interacted on social media with ASU at Lake Havasu, or any ways participants reached out to ASU at Lake Havasu personnel outside of the intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm more likely to recommend it now I know how cheap it is and how many courses it offers. • Before, I never tough of attending ASU Havasu, but I also have someone in my family who's attended and graduated from there, so I definitely think it is a real option for many students here, especially ones who still want that small community experience. • I know friends who are struggling trying to figure out how to pay for college...ASU at Lake Havasu is cheaper • Definitely recommend if they want some hands-on experience for a cheaper price and close • For someone who isn't sure what their path is in the future • I would recommend definitely because of the way it's set up
People delivering the message matter a lot; recruitment personnel must be friendly, engaging, and relatable.	RECRUITMENT PERSONNEL: category emerged spontaneously and may inform future actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • witty banter • It was really cool seeing their [student ambassadors'] perspective and how they view college...and their involvement with the community as well. • I'm glad you were the one who hosted it. You made it enjoyable. • She just opened up a new world of possibilities, and I really appreciate that. • You considered our feelings.

Support for Research Questions: Combining Quantitative and Qualitative Data

Because my study was a Concurrent Quan + Qual MMAR design (see Figure 3), I analyzed both quantitative data and qualitative data and combined the results to assess whether the quantitative and qualitative strands converged to answer research questions more completely. I also analyzed the strands to discover where they diverged and if further analysis was necessary (Ivankova, 2015). See Table 6 for combined quantitative and qualitative results.

RQ 1: How and to what extent does participant knowledge shift after participating in *ASU Hometown Advantage*? Participants demonstrated a large increase in knowledge from attending the 5 one-hour sessions. Every participant's *knowledge* score increased from the pre-to post-survey, with the exception one participant, who had the maximum number of correct knowledge statements on the pre-test, and, therefore, had no room for improvement and did not decrease. On average, participants' scores doubled from the pre-to post-survey. In exit tickets and the focus group, participants repeatedly cited cost and types of degrees as knowledge they did not have before the intervention but that they did have after the intervention.

Overall, participant knowledge statistically increased after participating in *ASU Hometown Advantage* by an average of 5.1 points on a scale containing 10 items. Qualitative results expand on the quantitative results by demonstrating that the increase in knowledge was specifically in cost of attendance, knowledge of specific degrees offered, and atmosphere of ASU at Lake Havasu.

RQ2: How and to what extent does perception about ASU at Lake Havasu as a college choice for local students change after participating in *ASU Hometown Advantage*? Participants demonstrated an increase in positive perception about ASU at Lake Havasu as a choice for them or their peers after participating in the intervention. Every participant reported an increase in perception from the pre-intervention survey to the post-intervention survey. Although the average increase was only 0.8 points, the qualitative data revealed the participants' surprise at what ASU at Lake Havasu offers. They often used the word "surprised" or "cool" or "I didn't know..." to describe features of ASU at Lake Havasu. Qualitative data also revealed that most students see ASU at

Lake Havasu as a choice for students who are concerned about paying for college or who are not sure what they want to do in college. Favorably, students did cite ASU at Lake Havasu's hands-on nature and close-knit community feel as well as personalized attention as positive attributes.

Participants' responses showed significant increase in perception, and there is a correlation between an increase in knowledge and an increase in perception. The qualitative data supports the quantitative data, as many participants reported feeling "surprised" at many of the features ASU at Lake Havasu offers, such as the cost, the degrees, and the physical spaces. Overall, participants had a favorable perception of ASU at Lake Havasu as a result of the intervention.

RQ3: How do juniors at LHHS who participate in *ASU Hometown Advantage* use their social capital about ASU at Lake Havasu? This question may take some more time before the true answer is revealed, but during the 5 weeks of the intervention, students did interact with ASU at Lake Havasu on social media according to the quantitative data, and they would recommend ASU at Lake Havasu to peers according to the qualitative data. Combining these two data sources indicates that students may be shifting the way they view ASU at Lake Havasu and may be willing to use that new knowledge and positive perception to continue to recommend it to peers. Overall, participants are interacting with ASU at Lake Havasu's social media, and they are willing to recommend ASU at Lake Havasu to peers, especially if the peer is struggling financially, has not chosen a major, or who wants a smaller campus.

Table 6

Integrated Results Matrix for Concurrent Quan + Qual MMAR Design

Research Question	Quantitative Result	Qualitative Result	Combined Result
RQ 1: How and to what extent does participant knowledge shift after participating in <i>ASU Hometown Advantage</i> ?	<p>paired samples <i>t</i>-test for <i>knowledge</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scores increased by 5.1 points on a scale containing 10 items • statistically significant increase in knowledge 	<p>Participants had gaps in knowledge, specifically in cost, degrees offered, and atmosphere.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Tuition is \$7,000” • Degrees/Classes mentioned by name: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Environmental science, Biology, Physiology, Business, English, Criminology and Criminal Justice, Health, Exploratory” • “Small class sizes” 	<p>Participant knowledge increased after participating in <i>ASU Hometown Advantage</i>, especially in cost, degrees offered, and atmosphere.</p>
RQ2: How and to what extent does perception about ASU at Lake Havasu as a college choice for local students change after participating in <i>ASU Hometown Advantage</i> ?	<p>paired samples <i>t</i>-test for <i>perception</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on average, scores increased by 0.80 points • statistically significant increase in perception <p>correlation coefficient</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge accounts for 19% of the variance in perception. • increase in knowledge increased perception • correlation is significant 	<p>Participants mostly viewed ASU at Lake Havasu as a good choice and were surprised at the college’s features, specifically price, physical spaces, and educational experiences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It’s gonna be so much better [compared to Tempe] because it’s bigger than I realized, that even though it’s smaller, it’s just as good or maybe even better because you get more personal experiences.” • “My impressions of ASU are definitely changed from this presentation.” 	<p>Participants’ perceptions increased as a result of the intervention, specifically price, physical spaces, and experiences.</p>

Table 6 continued

<p>RQ3: How do juniors at LHHS who participate in <i>ASU Hometown Advantage</i> use their social capital about ASU at Lake Havasu?</p>	<p>social capital descriptives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 48% liked a post on ASU at Lake Havasu’s social media • 5% shared an ASU at Lake Havasu Tweet or post in a direct message to a peer on social media • 19% screenshotted an ASU at Lake Havasu post to remember later • 33% follow at least one ASU at Lake Havasu account 	<p>Participants would tell peers about ASU at Lake Havasu mostly if they are struggling financially, do not know what they want to study, or want a small college location.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I know friends who are struggling trying to figure out how to pay for college...ASU at Lake Havasu is cheaper” • “Definitely recommend if they want some hands-on experience for a cheaper price and close” • “For someone who isn’t sure what their path is in the future” 	<p>Participants interact with ASU at Lake Havasu via social media and would recommend ASU at Lake Havasu under certain conditions, such as to a peer who struggles financially, does not know what they want to study, or wants a small campus.</p>
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Conclusions. The correlation between knowledge and perception was significant. Knowledge and perception about ASU at Lake Havasu significantly increased after the intervention. Participants went from knowing an average of 4 items on the pre-survey to knowing an average of 9 items out of 10 on the post-survey. This increase in knowledge is positively correlated with an improvement of perception. The intervention *ASU Hometown Advantage* was effective at increasing participants’ knowledge and positively influencing perception.

It is difficult to evaluate how students will use social capital in the long-term. It is also difficult to evaluate how students used social media since one-third of participants

reported not following ASU at Lake Havasu on social media, so it is likely that those students did not interact with the ASU at Lake Havasu social media accounts. If that were true, then of the participants who do follow ASU at Lake Havasu, the percent who interacted is much higher. Although the intervention was successful for increasing knowledge and perception, it is unclear if students will use their social capital to influence peers.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter presents a discussion of the qualitative and quantitative results in relation to the previously reviewed literature for each of my research questions:

1. How and to what extent does participant knowledge shift after participating in *ASU Hometown Advantage*?
2. How and to what extent does perception about ASU at Lake Havasu as a college choice for local students change after participating in *ASU Hometown Advantage*?
3. How do juniors at LHHS who participate in *ASU Hometown Advantage* use their social capital about ASU at Lake Havasu?

Results in Relation to Reviewed Literature

The innovation *ASU Hometown Advantage* was designed using one guiding concept and two research theories. College choice models were consulted to guide the session topics during the 5-week intervention. Social Influence Theory and social capital were used to frame the research study, explain my findings, and suggest implications for continuing practice and for future research.

College choice models. During early cycles of the innovation and while planning for the five sessions of *ASU Hometown Advantage*, I sought to discover how high school students made decisions about college choice and what gaps in knowledge local high school students had about ASU at Lake Havasu. I relied on early college choice models (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Jackson, 1982; Litten, 1982) and more contemporary models (Perna, 2006; Skinner, 2019) to inform my intervention. Each model in some way

acknowledged cost as one of the most significant characteristics in college choice. This is consistent with my research findings. In the quantitative results, participants identified ASU at Lake Havasu as having lower tuition when compared to other in-state universities and the ASU metropolitan campuses. In the qualitative results, participants said they would recommend ASU at Lake Havasu as a college choice, especially for students who might not be able to afford another 4-year university. Participants also mentioned cost frequently in the exit tickets, with many correctly stating the cost of local tuition versus the cost of attending the ASU metropolitan campuses, indicating that they had learned the true cost of attending a regional university in comparison to other in-state university options. I focused some of the sessions on cost based on my early literature review on college choice, and students also seemed to recall information about cost more readily than other types of information that pertain to college choice.

Perna (2006), as described in Chapter 2 Figure 2, provided a college choice conceptual model that situates college choice within layers of context such as community, school, and higher education. Broadly, these layers are as follows:

- Layer 4: Social, economic, and policy context
- Layer 3: Higher education context
- Layer 2: School and community context
- Layer 1: Habitus (demographics, cultural capital, social capital)

Participant responses in both the quantitative and qualitative data collection supported Perna's layers of context. Participants were representative of the demographic that Perna described as first-generation, minority, and low socioeconomic students who typically enroll in less selective colleges and universities. With regard to selecting colleges and

universities that are less selective, the quantitative data did find that these students believe ASU at Lake Havasu is a good choice for these students or their peers, and the qualitative data suggests that these participants especially think it is a good choice for students who have financial barriers to attending college.

Perna (2006) also indicates that what students know about college falls under the social capital heading also in Layer 1, but it is Layer 3, higher education marketing and recruitment, where *ASU Hometown Advantage* was able to fill in the gaps about what they didn't know. *ASU Hometown Advantage* provided knowledge to the participants, and based on the data, participants' knowledge of ASU at Lake Havasu as a college choice significantly increased along with their perception of it as a choice for themselves or their peers. Complementing these layers of context was the location of the intervention, Lake Havasu High School Career Center. I was able to confirm that the Career Center provides comprehensive and updated resources for ASU at Lake Havasu to the students as well as add some more updated materials to their files. Perna (2006) mentions availability of resources, types of resources, and structural supports as the context for Layer 2.

Layer 4: Social, economic, and policy context, are characteristics that influence college choice over which I had no control. Although I did collect demographic characteristics and can connect participant characteristics to Perna's (2006) assertions about college choice, these were not demographics for which I controlled. Similarly, Layer 1 includes social capital, and although I did collect data on perception and if participants told parents/guardians and peers about ASU at Lake Havasu during the intervention, it is impossible to predict in the long-term how that information spreads

without follow-up data collection. The quantitative data on social media interaction with ASU at Lake Havasu indicates that students would use social media and their own influence to tell others about ASU at Lake Havasu. Also, the increase in perception from the pre-intervention survey to the post-intervention survey as well as participants' indication that they shared information with parents/guardians and peers may indicate a willingness to use their social capital to spread information about ASU at Lake Havasu as a college choice.

Social Influence Theory. Social influence theory can be described as the ways people rely on each other for social approval and validation. Weitzner and Deutsch (2015) suggest that Kelman's (1958) Social Influence Theory is a natural choice for researchers who study how people influence each other with regard to shifting attitudes. Weitzner and Deutsch (2015) detail a process of social interaction that leads to an emergence of collective attitudes and a group identity. The post-intervention focus group suggested that participants were thinking similarly about ASU at Lake Havasu as a college choice. They expanded on each other's responses with consistently positive perceptions and attitudes about the university's characteristics and offerings. Further evidence of this collective attitude and sense of belonging is the hand-made Thank You card the 4 participants signed for me at the end of the focus group session.

The social nature of *ASU Hometown Advantage* was a choice I made based on Social Influence Theory. Each session started with a social time, complete with cookies and snacks. During the sessions, there were times when I asked students to share previous experiences they have had with ASU at Lake Havasu, and those share-outs reminded other participants of experiences they had, and that encouraged others to share as well. I

also included time for participants to pair-and-share answers to prompts and share the circle map they had created. Additionally, the ASU at Lake Havasu Student Ambassadors asked participants to follow ASU at Lake Havasu on social media. Participants were continually encouraged to share information with each other, with parents/guardians, and with peers. By the end of the 5 weeks, there was a palpable camaraderie and buzz in the room that was not present at the first session.

Social capital. The role of social capital in college aspirations is important, especially for disadvantaged youths (Fuller, 2014). Fuller (2014) also notes the importance of social networks and the reinforcement of positive attitudes about education. My research data supports the use of social networks. For example, 36% of participants reported liking an ASU at Lake Havasu social media post. This means that their network would then see the post in their own feed, reaching more students. Of the participants, 23% follow ASU at Lake Havasu on social media, which means that potential future interactions may also be seen by their own social networks as well. Although there is no direct proof that *ASU Hometown Advantage* increased social media traffic to ASU at Lake Havasu accounts, according to the ASU at Lake Havasu's social media manager, analytics for Facebook and Instagram engagement increased during the month of *ASU Hometown Advantage*, with a spike in engagement particularly in new Instagram followers after Session 2 when the Student Ambassadors invited participants to like and follow ASU at Lake Havasu on social media.

This research was partially motivated by the overwhelming response in previous cycles of research that local students perpetuate a stigma about staying local for college. Many participants echoed this sentiment in the pre-intervention survey, but by the post-

intervention survey, participants' positive perception had significantly increased. For example, no participants chose the options that ASU at Lake Havasu offers no or few majors of interest. Additionally, on the post-intervention survey, no participants reported thinking that ASU at Lake Havasu offers an inferior experience overall. These are positive consequences as a result of the intervention, and participants' survey responses indicate that they shared information with parents/guardians as well as peers. Although this is difficult to quantify in the short-term of this project, qualitative data from the focus group suggested that participants intend to use their social capital to spread this new positive perception they have of ASU at Lake Havasu.

Stanton-Salazar (1997) identifies two categories of people who gain and use social capital to influence students through information, including college choice decisions. The session presenters and I would be considered institutional agents, along with the director of the Career Center. We also used our capital to influence students to use theirs as we shared knowledge in the school setting and beyond. The importance of institutional agents became apparent after I analyzed the qualitative data and the surprise theme emerged: *People delivering the message matter a lot; recruitment personnel must be friendly, engaging, and relatable*. This theme supports Stanton-Salazar's (1997) research that institutional agents are influential and also use their social capital to spread information. As discussed by Stanton-Salazar (1997), the second type of agent who uses social capital to encourage collective action are protective agents. School peers are considered both institutional and protective because they use social capital at school and outside of school. Participants became both institutional and protective agents. One example of participants using social capital early on is in recruitment efforts. Although

not an intentional measure of social capital, it is important to note that two participants heard about the first session from a friend who was participating in *ASU Hometown Advantage* and emailed me to ask if they could still join for the remainder of the four sessions, which they did.

Implications for Practice

For high school students to make informed decisions about college choice, they must have adequate and accurate information about the college characteristics that matter most to them. For rural students, this may also mean combatting the perception that staying local for college is an undesirable choice. Because students often rely on social influence and peer networks, giving the students the information is one way institutions can influence college choice.

Response to RQ 1. Participants increased their knowledge as a result of *ASU Hometown Advantage*. Participants learned critical information about the cost of attending their regional university extension when compared with the metropolitan campus or other in-state universities. Participants also discovered what ASU at Lake Havasu offered its students, such as the physical amenities of the campus, the clubs and activities, opportunities for experiential learning and internships, and close-knit relationships with other peers as well as faculty and staff. Programs for rural students to understand more about their college options should include a consideration of the college choice characteristics that are most important to students, specifically cost, degrees offered, and atmosphere of the university.

Response to RQ 2. Participants increased their perception of ASU at Lake Havasu as a result of *ASU Hometown Advantage*. Specifically, students believed the local

campus was a good option for local students, and they believed that the local campus offered many majors that are of interest to them or their peers. Participants acknowledged college match as being important, and some said they would recommend ASU at Lake Havasu to students who struggle financially, who don't know what they want to major in yet, or who like a more intimate school environment. Overall, perception changed significantly and was very favorable towards the college's features, specifically price, physical spaces, and educational experiences.

Response to RQ 3. Juniors who participated in *ASU Hometown Advantage* began to use their social capital to spread knowledge and convey a positive perception about ASU at Lake Havasu. Most of the participants reported sharing information about *ASU Hometown Advantage* with their parents/guardians or with peers. Half of the participants reported interacting with an ASU at Lake Havasu social media post. It is important to note that 33% of the participants do not follow ASU at Lake Havasu on social media, so of those who do follow ASU at Lake Havasu, most of them interacted with ASU at Lake Havasu in some way on social media. Most participants reported they were likely to recommend ASU at Lake Havasu to a friend or classmate. This just begins to tell how participants used their social capital.

The impact of *ASU Hometown Advantage* shows that research-based, targeted sessions can begin to change the perception of rural students about staying local for college. However, the presenters must be dynamic and engaging and deliver content that students are interested in. Student Ambassadors and former Lake Havasu High School students who attended ASU at Lake Havasu would also continue to be good choice for presenters. The nature of the small group may have also made the students more

accountable for paying attention, and the financial incentive, snacks, and swag may have been motivational. However, there are opportunities for university recruitment personnel to create a similar environment for students to gain knowledge about ASU at Lake Havasu. For example, there is always university swag to be used for promotion, and recruiters can do drawings for smaller prizes. Fun and engaging recruiters can create the same atmosphere for learning about the college.

Implications for Future Research

This study reveals the importance of knowledge in the perception of local college choice for rural high school students. With many other regional universities around the country and even the world, recruitment and admissions teams could create similar short-term programs to begin to change the perception of staying local for rural students. These research teams may wish to create their own research cycles to include a reconnaissance cycle and practice cycle that would be specific to their own contexts. These research cycles could be improved with each intervention cycle.

Additionally, creating similar *Hometown Advantage* programs may create consistency with the intervention, giving researchers an opportunity to collect more data over time. Data could be compared to determine more broadly the needs and desires of rural students with regard to college choice. With more data from more locations, the intervention could be honed, and researchers could begin to track how high school students use their social capital in the long-term. *Hometown Advantage* programs could be used by regional universities and community colleges to systematically reach high school students and impact local communities as well as the body of research surrounding regional campuses.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First of all, during the previous cycle of research, I did not conduct in-person sessions with high school students. Rather, because of Covid-19 restrictions, I conducted a very small sample cycle with the sessions being on video. Because of this, I did not have a true sense of the necessary minutia of the sessions. I had planned for the overarching ideas for each session, but I did not test the in-session activities or exit tickets. I had intended the exit tickets to be used for student engagement and to keep them thinking about the topic as they left the session, but I could have aligned them more carefully for data collection purposes. While the qualitative data from the exit tickets was valuable, I could have used the verbiage from the research questions.

Content alignment is another limitation. For the in-session activities and content plan, I would have asked the Admissions Specialist to talk about degree programs more specifically or to do a more explicit activity surrounding degree exploration. Participants had an opportunity to use digital devices to explore the degrees on the ASU at Lake Havasu website, and an exit ticket asked them which degree they would shadow, but I do not think that gave them a true sense of what degrees ASU at Lake Havasu offered. I did not micromanage the content of the presenters, and in a future cycle or when advising another college on this intervention, I would make sure the session content is more aligned with the survey questions and exit tickets.

Finally, time constraints were another limitation. Because I only had 5 weeks with the participants and no plan to track their social capital use post-intervention, I was unable to determine how effective the intervention was in beginning to reverse the stigma

of staying local for college. I can make some predictions based on post-intervention surveys and focus group responses, but for this to be truly effective, *ASU Hometown Advantage*, or a similar targeted program, would most likely need to be consistent, and the participants would need to be re-surveyed periodically, at least through their senior year.

Lessons Learned

I did keep a practitioner journal after each session, but upon reading the journal again, nothing significant stood out. It is important to note that Covid-19 also may have impacted two of the intervention sessions, but I would not label that a limitation. I had Covid-19 during the second session, and the two student ambassadors used Zoom to bring me into the Career Center, and they facilitated the whole session. This was difficult for me at first because there were technical difficulties and I was frustrated not to be there, but the ambassadors worked it out, totally took the lead, and really demonstrated what being an ASU at Lake Havasu student looks like. They showed the participants that they were willing to work closely with a faculty member and take a leadership role in my absence. Secondly, the Admissions Specialist was quarantined and had to deliver the fourth session remotely. Because he had already visited in person for the third session, the participants were already familiar with him, and it went smoothly. From these I learned that things do not always go as planned, and it is important to relax and just know that whatever data I gathered would be combined with other data and would ultimately give me an overall picture. Nothing ever goes quite as planned, and sometimes magic happens, like the Student Ambassadors really having the opportunity to shine.

Closing Thoughts

This research study was the ideal of a cyclical action research dissertation. From the reconnaissance cycle to the final data analysis, I had the unique opportunity to interact and learn about so many different pieces of the puzzle that make regional higher education work. I was able to work closely with ASU at Lake Havasu Student Services to gather preliminary data and learn more about the admissions process. I was able to form deeper connections with the local school district and work with high school students again. I was able to plan an intervention based on what research said students needed, not based on what curriculum told me I had to deliver or what a textbook thinks is most important. I was able to share my research with colleagues in different departments and reach out to other personnel at other regional universities for input early in the planning stages and for possible future research opportunities. It may take consistent programming and implementation of *ASU Hometown Advantage* to really measure how participants used their social capital and if this stigma of staying local can change. If this small research study is any indicator, it is possible to change the perception of high school students around staying in their hometown for college

Positively impacting students, my work environment, the local school district, and my community are vital values that drive my work as an educator. To be able to systematically work to make real change in all of these areas and to have the opportunity to continue that work in service to others is what is at the core of education.

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APPENDIX A

PRE-INTERVENTION SURVEY AND PARTICIPANT ASSENT

Hello!

My name is Jenna Lowder, and I am a graduate student in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University working under the direction of Dr. Josephine P. Marsh, a faculty member at Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, ASU. I am conducting a research study to determine if an intervention aimed at increasing student knowledge about ASU at Lake Havasu influences Lake Havasu High School students' perception of ASU at Lake Havasu as a college choice for themselves or their peers. This study also seeks to discover if and how students use social capital to influence peer perception about attending ASU at Lake Havasu. There will be a \$100 cash incentive for completing all 5 sessions. You may also choose to enroll in one Universal Learner course for \$25, and that fee will be reimbursed to you upon proof of enrollment.

I am inviting your participation, which will involve a pre-intervention survey (10 mins.); an intervention which will be administered in the Career Center on early release Thursdays once a week for an hour (1:15pm – 2:15pm) for 5 weeks which includes videos, live presentations, activities, Q & A sessions with ASU at Lake Havasu students and staff, and other written or digital wraparound activities; a post-intervention survey (10 mins.); and a post-intervention focus group (optional; 20-30 mins.). Students will also use anonymous Google Forms at the end of each session to answer one open ended prompt about the session, for example Which ASU@LH clubs or activities would you be most likely to be involved in? Explain why you think this. These prompts will be completed on digital devices (student's own or Career Center computer). You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop participation at any time. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty, it will not have any influence on your current status as a student or future admission to ASU. You must have prior parental consent to participate in this study. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

Your survey responses will be anonymous, and you will use a unique identifier on both the pre- and post-intervention surveys to match up your before and after responses. Your focus group responses will be coded so that your name will not be used in transcribing or in data analysis and reporting. Focus groups will be audio or video recorded. De-identified data will only be used for the purpose of this research. Due to the nature of focus groups, complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed among participants.

The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications, but your name will not be used. I would like to audio record or video record the focus group interviews at the end of the intervention. The interview will not be recorded without your permission. Please let me know if you do not want the interview to be recorded; you also can change your mind after the interview starts, just let me know. There will be time for this later. If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact me at jenna.lowder@asu.edu or my dissertation chair josephine.marsh@asu.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788. By clicking "I agree" below, you agree to participate in the study.

I agree

Please create a unique identifier so that your pre- and post-intervention survey answers can be compared. This unique identifier will protect your identity. Please use capital letters and no space. For example, my name is Jenna Lynn and I was born on the 21st. My unique identifier would be J21L. Single digit days would contain a zero, such as 08 if you were born on the 8th.

1. First letter of your first name
2. Day of birth
3. First letter of your middle name (if none, use X)

Gender

- Male
- Female
- Transgender Male
- Transgender Female
- Non-binary
- Other (write in) _____
- Prefer not to answer

Ethnicity

- Caucasian
- Black
- Latino, Hispanic, or Latinx
- Asian
- Native American
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Two or more
- Other/Unknown
- Prefer not to say

What is the highest degree or level of education your parent(s) have achieved? (Choose only one answer for the highest degree or level).

- Some high school
- High school diploma
- GED
- Trade school
- Associates degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree
- Prefer not to say/Do not know

If you were to attend college after high school, would you be applying for financial aid and/or loans to pay for college?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure
- Prefer not to say

How likely are you to recommend ASU at Lake Havasu to a friend or classmate (even if it is not the right fit for you)?

	Extremely unlikely	Somewhat unlikely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Somewhat likely	Extremely likely
Likelihood of recommending ASU at Lake Havasu	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

This next section will ask you questions about your knowledge about ASU at Lake Havasu.

Please select statements below that you are certain are true about ASU at Lake Havasu.

- I can take ASU classes while I am a high school student and earn both high school and college credit.
- ASU at Lake Havasu offers lower tuition than Northern Arizona University and the University of Arizona.
- ASU at Lake Havasu has special regional pricing that is lower than the metropolitan ASU campuses.
- I can shadow a current ASU at Lake Havasu student for a day and attend their classes with them to see if I like it.
- Class sizes at ASU at Lake Havasu are usually 5-20 students.
- ASU at Lake Havasu offers experiential learning, which means I can do an internship or job shadowing and have the opportunity to work in the community in my field.
- I can take a guided tour of ASU at Lake Havasu on campus.
- ASU at Lake Havasu offers more than 20 undergraduate degrees on their campus.
- ASU at Lake Havasu seniors do a year-long capstone project.
- There are many student worker jobs available at ASU at Lake Havasu.

This next section will ask you about your perception of ASU at Lake Havasu.

What is your overall perception of ASU at Lake Havasu?					
	Extremely negative	Somewhat negative	Neither positive nor negative	Somewhat positive	Extremely positive
Overall perception of ASU at Lake Havasu	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
What do you think about the major choices at ASU@LH?					
	Offers no majors of interest to local students	Offers very few majors of interest to local students	Offers some majors of interest to local students	Offers a decent amount of majors of interest to local students	Offers a wide variety of majors of interest to local students
Major choices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What do you think about student life at ASU at Lake Havasu?					
	Nothing to do for students	Not much to do for students	Very few activities for students	Some activities for students	Many activities for students
Student life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How does a degree from ASU at Lake Havasu compare with a degree from the metropolitan campuses or other in-state universities?					
	ASU at Lake Havasu offers an overall inferior degree experience	ASU at Lake Havasu offers a slightly inferior degree experience	ASU at Lake Havasu is not better or worse than other ASU locations	ASU at Lake Havasu offers a slightly better degree experience	ASU at Lake Havasu offers a better degree experience
ASU at Lake Havasu compared to ASU metropolitan campuses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What do you think about ASU at Lake Havasu's role in the community of Lake Havasu City?					
	Not at all involved	Slightly involved	Somewhat involved	Moderately involved	Extremely involved
ASU at Lake Havasu's community involvement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

APPENDIX B
POST-INTERVENTION SURVEY

Please create a unique identifier so that your pre- and post-intervention survey answers can be compared. This unique identifier will protect your identity. Please use capital letters and no space. For example, my name is Jenna Lynn and I was born on the 21st. My unique identifier would be J21L. Single digit days would contain a zero, such as 08 if you were born on the 8th.

1. First letter of your first name
2. Day of birth
3. First letter of your middle name (if none, use X)

Number of Sessions Please check which sessions you attended:

- Virtual Tour
- Student Life
- Concurrent Enrollment (Universal Learner)/Shadow-a-Sun Devil
- Student Services
- Show Me the Money!

How likely are you to recommend ASU at Lake Havasu to a friend or classmate (even if it is not the right fit for you)?

	Extremely unlikely	Somewhat unlikely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Somewhat likely	Extremely likely
Likelihood of recommending ASU at Lake Havasu	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

This next section will ask you questions about the knowledge that you gained by participating in *ASU Hometown Advantage*.

As a result of *ASU Hometown Advantage*, how much do you think your knowledge about ASU at Lake Havasu has increased?

	None	Very little	Somewhat	A lot	A great deal
How much has your knowledge about ASU@LH increased?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please select statements below that you are certain are true about ASU at Lake Havasu.

- I can take ASU classes while I am a high school student and earn both high school and college credit.
- ASU at Lake Havasu offers lower tuition than Northern Arizona University and the University of Arizona.
- ASU at Lake Havasu has special regional pricing that is lower than the metropolitan ASU campuses.
- I can shadow a current ASU at Lake Havasu student for a day and attend their classes with them to see if I like it.
- Class sizes at ASU at Lake Havasu are usually 5-20 students.
- ASU at Lake Havasu offers experiential learning, which means I can do an internship or job shadowing and have the opportunity to work in the community in my field.
- I can take a guided tour of ASU at Lake Havasu on campus.
- ASU at Lake Havasu offers more than 20 undergraduate degrees on their campus.
- ASU at Lake Havasu seniors do a year-long capstone project.
- There are many student worker jobs available at ASU at Lake Havasu.

This next section will ask you about your perception of ASU at Lake Havasu now that you have completed the intervention *ASU Hometown Advantage*.

What is your overall perception of ASU at Lake Havasu?

	Extremely negative	Somewhat negative	Neither positive nor negative	Somewhat positive	Extremely positive
Overall perception of ASU at Lake Havasu	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What do you think about the major choices at ASU@LH?

	Offers no majors of interest to local students	Offers very few majors of interest to local students	Offers some majors of interest to local students	Offers a decent amount of majors of interest to local students	Offers a wide variety of majors of interest to local students

Major choices	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
What do you think about student life at ASU at Lake Havasu?					
	Nothing to do for students	Not much to do for students	Very few activities for students	Some activities for students	Many activities for students
Student life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How does a degree from ASU at Lake Havasu compare with a degree from the metropolitan campuses or other in-state universities?					
	ASU at Lake Havasu offers an overall inferior degree experience	ASU at Lake Havasu offers a slightly inferior degree experience	ASU at Lake Havasu is not better or worse than other ASU locations	ASU at Lake Havasu offers a slightly better degree experience	ASU at Lake Havasu offers a better degree experience
ASU at Lake Havasu compared to ASU metropolitan campuses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What do you think about ASU at Lake Havasu's role in the community of Lake Havasu City?					
	Not at all involved	Slightly involved	Somewhat involved	Moderately involved	Extremely involved
ASU at Lake Havasu's community involvement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Last section! Keep going!					

The following questions will ask you about your experience sharing information about ASU at Lake Havasu during or after the intervention.

	None at all	A little	A moderate amount	A lot	A great deal
To what extent did you share information about ASU at Lake Havasu with your parents/guardians during the weeks that you were participating in the activities?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To what extent did you share information about ASU at Lake Havasu with your friends or classmates during the weeks that you were participating in the activities?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To what extent did you interact with ASU at Lake Havasu personnel during the weeks that you were participating in the activities? (This does not include the time spent in the classroom during the intervention activities.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To what extent did you seek out additional literature or information about ASU at Lake Havasu outside the provided activities? (This could be through the website, social media, current students, counselor, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If you follow ASU at Lake Havasu on any social media (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook), have you done any of the following actions? (Choose all that apply.)

- Liked a post
- Shared a post/retweeted a post to my own feed
- Shared a post/tweet in a direct message with a peer
- Screenshotted a post to remember later
- Direct messaged ASU at Lake Havasu with a question or comment
- I follow on at least one account, but I have not done any of these
- I do not follow ASU at Lake Havasu on social media

APPENDIX C

END-OF-SESSION GOOGLE FORM PROMPTS

Session 1: Virtual Tour

What are your impressions of ASU@LH's campus? Please say something specific.

Session 2: Student Life

Which ASU@LH clubs or activities would you be most likely to be involved in? Explain why you think this.

Session 3: Concurrent Enrollment + Shadow-a-Sun Devil

Which degree would I most like to shadow and why?

Session 4: Student Services

What important information did you learn today that you did not know before? Be specific.

Session 5: Show Me the Money!

What was the most useful financial aid information you received today? Why was it useful?

APPENDIX D

POST-INTERVENTION FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Turn on recorder.

Hello, everyone, and welcome to our session. Thanks for taking the time to join me to talk about your experiences with ASU Hometown Advantage, the knowledge-building intervention activities that you participated in with ASU at Lake Havasu. The purpose of the intervention activities was to find out if your knowledge about ASU at Lake Havasu increased and if your perception about ASU at Lake Havasu as a college choice for you or your peers changed.

I have collected some information through the post-intervention survey, so today I will mostly be asking you to tell me about your experience with the activities that you participated in. However, anything you want to add is fine by me. There are no wrong answers but rather differing points of view. Please feel free to share your point of view even if it differs from what others have said. Keep in mind that I am just as interested in negative comments as positive comments. All honest comments are helpful to me.

Because I don't want to miss a thing, I am asking for your permission to record this focus group session. Please indicate your agreement by saying yes.

We will be on a first name basis today, but I will never use any names in my research. You may be assured of complete confidentiality. Well, let's begin.

1. Which session of *ASU Hometown Advantage* was most memorable? (Virtual Tour, Student Life, Concurrent Enrollment + Shadow-a-Sun Devil, Student Services, Show Me the Money!). Explain why you think this.
 - a. Which was most engaging? Why?
 - b. Which was most informative? Why?
2. Knowledge: What critical information did you learn about ASU at Lake Havasu that you did not know before or that you think is most compelling?
3. Perception: What perceptions do you have now about ASU at Lake Havasu as a college choice for local students?
4. Social capital: If you were not planning to attend ASU at Lake Havasu prior to participating in these activities, how likely are you to attend ASU at Lake Havasu now? Or how likely are you to recommend ASU at Lake Havasu to a friend? Explain your responses.
5. Is there anything else you wish to add?

Conclusion:

Thank you so much for participating in this research. I appreciate the time you have taken to fill out both surveys, participate in the activities, and talk with us in this focus

group. Again, I want to remind you that your responses will remain confidential, and I will use this information to inform my dissertation.

APPENDIX E
IRB APPROVAL

APPROVAL: EXPEDITED REVIEW

[Josephine Marsh](#)
[Division of Educational Leadership and Innovation - Tempe](#)
 480/727-4453
josephine.marsh@asu.edu

Dear [Josephine Marsh](#):

On 12/20/2021 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	The Impact of Knowledge and Social Capital on the Perception of Staying Local for Rural High School Juniors
Investigator:	Josephine Marsh
IRB ID:	STUDY00015056
Category of review:	
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASU Hometown Advantage_Session 1_Virtual Tour_16-12-2021.pdf, Category: Other; • ASU Hometown Advantage_Session 2_Student Life_16-12-2021.pdf, Category: Other; • ASU Hometown Advantage_Session 3_Concurrent Enrollment_Shadow a Sun Devil_16-12-2021.pdf, Category: Other; • ASU Hometown Advantage_Session 4_Student Services_16-12-2021.pdf, Category: Other; • ASU Hometown Advantage_Session 5_Financial Aid_15-12-2021.pdf, Category: Other; • focus group protocol_30-11-2021.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions); • IRB_Jenna_Lowder_14-12-2021.docx, Category: IRB Protocol; • LHUSD permission 23-11-2021.pdf, Category: Off-site authorizations (school permission, other IRB approvals, Tribal permission etc); • participant_assent_01-12-2021.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • pre_post_survey_30-11-2021.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group

	questions); • recruitment letter_parental consent__14_12_2021.pdf, Category: Consent Form; • recruitment_methods_flyer_poster_20-12-2021.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials; • supporting documents_30-11-2021.pdf, Category: Other;
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The IRB approved the protocol from 12/20/2021 to 12/19/2026 inclusive. Three weeks before 12/19/2026 you are to submit a completed Continuing Review application and required attachments to request continuing approval or closure.

If continuing review approval is not granted before the expiration date of 12/19/2026 approval of this protocol expires on that date. When consent is appropriate, you must use final, watermarked versions available under the "Documents" tab in ERA-IRB.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

REMINDER - All in-person interactions with human subjects require the completion of the ASU Daily Health Check by the ASU members prior to the interaction and the use of face coverings by researchers, research teams and research participants during the interaction. These requirements will minimize risk, protect health and support a safe research environment. These requirements apply both on- and off-campus.

The above change is effective as of July 29th 2021 until further notice and replaces all previously published guidance. Thank you for your continued commitment to ensuring a healthy and productive ASU community.

Sincerely,

IRB Administrator

cc: Jenna Lowder