

# Understanding the Experiences of Students of Color Transferring to a Private Institution

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## ABSTRACT

This case study used a revision of Tinto's theory of student departure and self-efficacy as frameworks, to explore the experiences of seven students of color who transferred to a small, private, and predominately White residential institution in the rural Midwest. All of the participants in this study faced challenges socially integrating into the campus community, but all participants displayed some degree of self-efficacy in their pursuit of a bachelor's degree. This study found that participants' commitment to the institution and persistence was positively impacted by their own ability to find common communities for socialization, their proactive social adjustment strategies, psychosocial engagement, and self-efficacy, but only among those identifying as traditional age and residential. Less support was found for the revised theory among non-traditional age commuters in the study who experienced less opportunity for social integration. Results of this study are valuable to higher education practitioners seeking to improve the experiences and/or recruitment and retention of transfer students of color. Small institutions which have historically served residential and predominately White students need to evaluate current programs, student organizations, campus environments, and social opportunities to determine if these services are meeting the needs of both non-traditional and traditional age transfer students of color.