

THROUGH THE READING LENS: A CASE STUDY EXPLORATION OF THE
TRANSFER ASPIRATIONS OF LATINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
STUDENTS ENROLLED IN DEVELOPMENTAL
LITERACY COURSEWORK

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family, without whom none of this would have been possible.

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ABSTRACT

Many students who begin postsecondary education at community colleges indicate holding aspirations of transferring and obtaining a bachelor's degree or higher, but less than a third of these students transition to a four-year university within six years (Schudde et al., 2018). Guided by my assumption that reading-readiness is a requirement for college success, I explored the community college transfer rate through an investigation of how first-time-in-college Latina students enrolled in developmental literacy coursework at a community college and with aspirations to transfer to a four-year institution perceived their readiness for transition. Conducting the research using a reading focus mattered because placing into developmental education has been presented as a barrier to transfer (Crisp & Delgado, 2014; Valentine et al., 2017), whereas developmental education professionals consider placement in developmental literacy coursework an opportunity to learn postsecondary reading strategies and skills that will prepare students for upper-level classes (Holschuh, 2013; Palmer & Davis, 2012), and, ultimately, motivate students to persist to degree completion. The study data yielded four major findings: community college was considered less than attending a four-year institution, students were motivated to succeed and perceived they would get what they needed at a community college to transfer, they had expectations of support and guidance for their transfer goals from the community college and from family, and finally, students expressed that reading is reading meaning that there were no expectations for needing to

focus on reading when preparing to transfer from community college to a four-year institution. These findings have implications for community colleges becoming a more important presence in students' educational journey, for developmental literacy courses imparting the importance of reading for learners' postsecondary success, and for future research as a call to action for conducting additional university-level research through a reading lens.

I. INTRODUCTION

A considerable portion of U.S. high school graduates--39.5% in the fall of 2017--begin their postsecondary education at community colleges (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2019, p. 15). The evidence is indisputable that community colleges are doing important work educating a large sector of the American population (Shapiro et al., 2018). Traditionally, however, the highest degree that students can attain at a community college is an associate's degree (AACC, 2019; Bragg, 2017) and though obtaining an associate's degree has been shown to be more advantageous than having only a high school diploma (Jurgens, 2010; Romano, 2011), research shows that both the employment rates and earning rates are higher for young adults—25 to 34-years old—who have obtained a bachelor's degree compared with an associate's degree (McFarland et al., 2018). What this means is that community colleges are a good place to begin postsecondary education, but for reasons of career advancement and upward social mobility transferring from community colleges to four-year institutions remains an important goal for students aspiring to obtain a bachelor's degree.

Texas community colleges serve as a case in point for the importance of these institutions in educating the states' diverse population. The most recent data provided by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) indicates that more than 1.7 million students enrolled in postsecondary education—two- and four-year institutions—in Texas in fall 2018 (THECB, 2019, p. 12). The latest research on postsecondary education in Texas also shows that 46% of Texas undergraduates in fall 2018 enrolled at a public two-year institution compared to 33% in the U.S. (Fletcher et al., 2020, p. 17). Texas community college student demographics from 2018 show that of those enrolled in

postsecondary institutions, 47% were enrolled in community colleges; of which 46.6% were classified as Hispanic compared with 31.7% as White, 13.2% as African American, and 4.7% as Asian, reflecting a diverse student body with a large population of Latinx students (Texas Association of Community Colleges [TACC], 2020, “Diverse and Under-Served Population” section). Latinx students are more likely than other student populations to enroll directly from high school at a two-year community college than at a four-year university (Flink, 2018; Krogstad, 2016; Shapiro et al., 2018). Even as the Latinx population continues to grow in the U.S. and there is an increasing presence of Latinx and other non-White students on college campuses nationwide, the needs and statistics of White students are still the normative scale against which all other students are compared (Esquibel, 2013; McFarland et al., 2018; Shapiro et al., 2018; U.S. Census Bureau, 2018).

More research is needed about non-White students and underrepresented groups if, as researchers and educators, we want to know how to increase equitable access to educational opportunities for historically underserved and marginalized student populations. Data shows that between 2000 and 2017 postsecondary enrollment for Latinas between the age of 18 and 24 increased from 25% to 41%, reflecting the highest increase of any ethnic/racial group, which is laudable progress, indeed, until we note that 41% is the percentage of White females who were enrolled in 2000, meaning that Latinas are still behind because in the same period the number of White females increased to 44% (Bustamante, 2019, “By Race Over Time“ section). The same report shows that in 2018 “33% of White Americans over the age of 25 hold a bachelor’s degree compared to 19% of Black Americans and 16% of Hispanic Americans” (Bustamante, 2019, “By Race

Over Time” section). In other words, the U.S. has much work to do before declaring success in matters of equity, equality, and inclusion in postsecondary education.

Overview of Chapter 1

To put this study into context and provide the background that explains the relevancy of the problem addressed with this research, the rest of the chapter is divided into the following sections. First, there is an outline offered of the Latinx student population in general, then an overview of the study’s target population Latinas in postsecondary education. Next, there is a presentation of the problem statement, purpose statement and research questions, followed by rationale and significance, the glossary, and delimitations of the study. Finally, there is an explanation of the structure of the dissertation and a summary of the chapter.

The Latinx Student Population

The Lumina Foundation’s Goal 2025, which aims for college attainment of 60% of the population by the goal year reports that the issue is no longer about higher education increasing earning potential, but it is a matter of being able to obtain a job in the first place (Lumina Foundation, 2019). This means that those without a college degree face diminished opportunity for job consideration, independent of the job type. A 2015 report, in which the authors gathered data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, shows that compared to other racial groups Latinx had higher labor force participation, but lower weekly earnings and lower levels of degree attainment; 18% of the Latinx population 25 or older had a bachelor’s or higher compared to 59% of Asians, 37% of Whites, and 27% of African Americans (Excelencia in Education, 2015, p. 11). Though the high school dropout rate has declined for Latinx students, the Latinx student

population is still “less likely than other groups to obtain a four-year college degree” (Gramlich, 2017, para. 7). Available data indicates that for academic year 2016-2017 only 24% of Latinx adults, 25 years-old and older, in the U.S. had obtained an associate degree or higher to 44% of all adults in the U.S. (Excelencia in Education, 2019, “Latinos and College Completion” section). With approximately 51% of Latinx students choosing to begin their postsecondary education at community colleges (Shapiro et al., 2018, p. 7), even in times of decreasing enrollment numbers, these institutions can be said to be a valuable entry point for Latinx students (AACC, 2019; Schmidt, 2018).

One of the factors to consider for students beginning at community colleges is the number of Latinx students who place into developmental education. The Latinx college students make up a large portion of the students who place into developmental education (Bahr, 2010; Doran & Singh, 2018). Research shows that reasons Latinx students place into developmental education include limited social capital (González et al., 2003; Rios-Aguilar & Deil-Amen, 2012; Strayhorn, 2010), a complex concept, which in this case speaks specifically to parents and other family members’ perceived limited knowledge of the American education system, especially the maze that is applying to, attending, and succeeding at the postsecondary level. Studies have also found other reasons to include inequitable educational opportunities (Martínez & Deil-Amen, 2015; Ruecker, 2013) and socioeconomic, cultural, and ethnic/racial differences (Becerra, 2010; Lopez, 2013; Martinez-Vogt, 2015; Sánchez et al., 2010). Placing into developmental education often increases students’ time in college thus also increasing students’ education costs (Jimenez et al., 2016). The rising student debt and the extra costs to students of registering for non-credit bearing courses has been a major justification when federal and state policymakers

or institutions seek to take steps to reform developmental education by limiting where or how it is offered (Boatman & Long, 2018; Jimenez et al., 2016; U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Though financial worries are not the only reason for low transfer rates among Latinx students, often Latinx students entering the university for the first time originate from a lower socioeconomic status (SES) and college attendance increases the anxiety caused by the financial strain that a college education places on students and on their families (Hernández, 2015; O’Neal et al., 2016; Penfold Navarro, 2011).

There is considerable research on the challenges (e.g., Hodara et al., 2017; Hu et al., 2018; Xu et al., 2018), benefits (e.g., Berger & Malaney, 2003; Ellis, 2013; Lichtenberger & Dietrich, 2017; Roksa & Calcagno, 2008; Wang et al., 2017), and general state-of (e.g., Jenkins & Fink, 2016; Taylor & Jain, 2017) transfer from community colleges to four-year institutions. There is research that provides data on the transfer challenges of the Latinx student population (e.g., Bensimon & Dowd, 2009; Card, 2017; Crisp & Nunez, 2014; Jabbar et al., 2017; Suarez, 2003), and there is even some research that focuses on transfer and the Latino male (e.g., Gayer, 2017; Peña & Rhoads, 2019), but there is a need for research that shines a light on Latinas and community college transfers.

Latinas in Postsecondary Education

In this brief introduction to the study’s target population, Latina college students, my focus is on centering Latinas in this study (Delgado Bernal, 1998). In chapter 2 of this dissertation, I address in detail the various factors that influence the educational trajectory of Latina college students, such as perceived cultural expectations, *familismo*, and even the *marianismo* belief. Often added to financial pressure are what is perceived as the

cultural traditions of gender expectations presenting Latinos as aggressive and domineering and of Latinas as caretakers and self-sacrificing (Peña-Talamantes, 2013; Piña-Watson et al., 2013). The importance of culture and family in Latina college students' lives is a theme with broad coverage in the academic literature (Meléndez & Meléndez, 2010; Mireles-Ríos & Romo, 2014; Pyne & Means, 2013; Sy & Romero, 2008; Torres & Hernández, 2007). The themes of perceived familial expectations and feelings of obligations as stress-inducing factors are also widely covered in the literature. An examination of the distress experienced by Latina college students because of friction in behavior acculturation and enculturation supports the findings of another study on coping strategies for Latina first-generation college students who try to balance a college education with family demands (Cano & Castillo, 2010; Gloria & Castellanos, 2012; Piña-Watson et al., 2013).

Cultural beliefs may form part of a culture's traditions or as is demonstrated by the term *marianismo*, and with Latinas in mind, may be exogenous deficit thinking imposed on a culture; either way, these beliefs will play a part in setting educational expectations for historically underrepresented students (Gloria et al., 2005; Gonzalez, 2001; Harklau, 2013). To make clear that the Latina college population has obligations, cultural expectations and experiences that are different from other student populations, it is important to center Latinas in a research that addresses that population's uniqueness (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). Latina college students face discrimination and micro-aggressions in educational settings because of their ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, perceived language limitations, or dis(ability) in any combination that their individual identities intersect (Liang et al., 2017; Vetter et al., 2011; Yosso et al., 2009).

The present study addressed the educational needs of Latinas who have a goal of transitioning from community college to a four-year university through a reading lens because of the importance of reading in college for the attainment of a college degree and for overall postsecondary academic success (Armstrong & Stahl, 2017; Nist & Simpson, 2002; Schnee, 2018). In exploring Latinas' reading histories, however, it is necessary to allow for multicultural and multilingual experiences that influence students' cognitive and motivational development. A discussion on the benefits of Latina students learning to read in Spanish before learning to read in English is beyond the scope of this research; however, the fact remains that many Latinas first learn to read in Spanish, speak Spanish at home and with their friends at school, and navigate a reading development that moves from Spanish to English and thus impacts Latinas' college reading readiness and reading development (Alexander, 1997). Exploring Latina college students' perceptions of readiness to transfer matters because their cultural experiences and backgrounds are not generally considered in a postsecondary environment. According to Williams (2018), "if your sense of self and the identities you want to perform do not fit comfortably within the dominant culture's narratives, you can feel misunderstood, devalued, ignored, even threatened" (p. 8), and having such feelings and experiences would certainly influence a student's decision to continue and attain a postsecondary degree.

Focus on Perception

This study asked of Latina college students how they perceived their readiness for transitioning to a four-year institution and how they perceived their reading readiness for a four-year institution. Students' self-perceptions matter if they are to persist in achieving

their goals of attaining a postsecondary degree. In his book addressing literacy practices and perceptions of agency, Williams (2018) explains,

At any moment many factors shape agency and literate identities—from social forces of community, cultural conventions, and technology to internal influences of emotion, motivation, and memory. These ongoing, interanimating interactions of the personal and the social shape what actions we see as possible, and are constantly at play, creating patterns of perception and behavior. (p. x)

A student's belief that they have achieved the expected literacy level to transition to a four-year institution and obtain a bachelor's degree or higher is an important factor because if they do not believe they are ready, or, even more critical, can learn what they need to be ready for transition, they will not do what is necessary to achieve their goals.

Focus on Reading

For the purposes of this study, I define reading as a deep engagement with text that includes critical exploration of textual meaning and understanding of how the reader can use the text in their educational journey. Shannon (2011) reminds us that “All text composers (regardless of medium or mode) design text with intended meanings for an imagined, ideal reader” (p. 44) and goes on to explain various theories that attempt to explain the effect of text on readers. As I read these theories, I asked myself, which is more powerful, the writer or the reader? Shannon presents three text effects theories, one holds that the text composer leads the reader in a certain direction, the other claims that the composer is simply representing society, and the third that there is no way to guess the effect text will have on readers. According to Shannon, “the theories imply that reading of text is a site of negotiation among composers, readers, and social forces within

mundane and profound contexts” (p. 46). The notion of the effect of text on readers presupposes that readers are engaging deeply with the text, in various medium, and it is this type of engagement and negotiation with text that drives this study’s focus on reading.

Reading Readiness

Though there have been many efforts to define college readiness (Conley, 2005, 2012), it is a construct that is difficult to define because of the many elements and factors that must be considered. Similarly, there is no clear definition as to what constitutes reading readiness for postsecondary education (Schnee, 2018). And though there has been positive movement toward putting the onus on institutions to be student-ready rather than attempting to force a deficit view on students of college readiness, reading readiness offers different challenges. One point is that students who arrive at postsecondary institutions already know how to read, but that is if only if reading readiness is defined as the skills and abilities gained from learning to read at a young age. Holschuh and Paulson (2013) argue that “coursework in college-level reading is an important part of a postsecondary educational context” (p. 4), yet the only context for literacy instruction at postsecondary institutions is developmental reading courses. The question remains as to what constitutes reading readiness at the postsecondary level, and therefore this is one of the questions posed to the participants in this study. Their answers revealed that one of the areas where postsecondary education can make a difference is through targeted focus on reading instruction at the postsecondary level.

The diversity and heterogeneity of the Latina population is also noted in the present study as a point of strength that may or may not impact the Latina’s educational

goals but must certainly be acknowledged as a vital part of the student's identity. Research shows that there is a need to increase the number of Latinx students graduating with a bachelor's degree (Arbona et al., 2018; Madrigal-Garcia & Acevedo-Gil, 2016). With estimations that Latinas will make up about a third of the U.S. female population by the year 2060, there is growing importance to increasing Latinas' graduation from postsecondary institutions (Gándara, 2015).

Problem Statement

Given that so many students begin postsecondary education at community colleges, these institutions serve a crucial role in meeting the nation's educational goals. Many community colleges offer students educational plans geared toward transferring to a four-year university that include students completing basic academic requirements (Crisp & Nuñez, 2014; Vaughan, 2006; Xu et al. 2018). Research shows 81% of all students who begin postsecondary education at a community college aspire to obtaining a bachelor's degree or higher, but less than a third of these students transition to a four-year university within six years, even with transfer programs in place and articulation agreements with four-year institutions (Horn & Skomsvold, 2011; Schudde et al., 2018). This dissertation study focused on the challenges of transferring by exploring the transfer aspirations of one sector of the college population, Latina college students in developmental literacy classes.

For students in developmental literacy classes, researchers have found a connection between completing a reading program and college completion (Pinkerton, 2010). Worley (2003) found that persistence was greatest for students who acquired college-level reading skills before moving on to college-level courses than for those

students who tried to acquire higher level reading skills while enrolled in college-level classes. Certainly there are arguments to be made for focusing on math or writing when researching the Latinas in college and their transfer aspirations; however, if about 85% of learning in college happens through reading (Nist & Simpson, 2002, p. 648), not enough research on student success is being conducted through a reading lens as doing so benefits student success across the curriculum.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of the present study was to explore self-perceptions of Latina students' readiness to transfer from a community college to a four-year institution, and to investigate these self-perceptions of readiness through a reading lens. By identifying and examining Latina students' self-perceptions of readiness to transfer at the beginning of their postsecondary journey, it is anticipated that the findings of this study will guide the actions of postsecondary educators, advisors, and administrators to help increase the transfer rates from community colleges to four-year institutions. Further expectations of applicability of the present study's findings is that through an analysis of students' own expressed needs and expectations, results of this study will promote culturally relevant teaching practices and provide colleges and universities relevant information on motivating underrepresented and underserved student populations to complete school transfer requirements.

To explore the problem of readiness to transition from community college to a four-year baccalaureate-granting institution, I sought answers to three questions related to a population of students who identify as first-time in college Latina, enrolled in

developmental literacy coursework at a community college with aspirations to transfer to a four-year institution. The research questions were as follows:

1. Why do Latina college students report beginning their postsecondary education at a community college instead of enrolling directly at a four-year institution?
2. How do Latina college students perceive their readiness for transition to a four-year institution?
3. How do Latina college students perceive their reading readiness for a four-year institution?

Rationale and Significance of Study

As mentioned earlier, Latinx students begin the postsecondary education journey at a community college in larger numbers than other student populations (Shapiro et al., 2018; THECB, 2016). To remain competitive on the world stage, the U.S. must both produce greater numbers of graduates and focus on producing graduates with high-performing literacy, numeracy, and technology problem-solving skills (Goodman et al., 2015). All indications are that more work is needed in all education areas to increase college graduation rates in the U.S. The hope is that by focusing this study on Latinas in community college developmental literacy classes, the findings will help guide the actions of postsecondary educators, advisors, and administrators to facilitate and ultimately increase the transfer rate to four-year institutions, and by doing so assist in meeting national and statewide education and graduation goals.

The current study investigates Latina students' transfer aspirations through a reading lens because placing in developmental literacy coursework has been presented as

a barrier to transfer (Crisp & Delgado, 2014; Valentine et al., 2017), whereas developmental education professionals consider placement in developmental literacy courses an opportunity to learn postsecondary reading strategies and skills that will prepare students for upper-level classes, and, ultimately, motivate students to persist to degree completion (Armstrong & Stahl, 2017; Holschuh, 2013; Palmer & Davis, 2012).

Delimitations

According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) a study's delimitations "are those characteristics that define and clarify the conceptual boundaries of your research" (p. 207). The scope of this research was narrowed by a few delimiting choices and one of the clearest delimiting factors of my research was the target population: self-identified, female members of the Latinx student population who matriculated at a community college after high school graduation and are enrolled in developmental literacy coursework. I focused on this population because 1) I wanted to know why they began their postsecondary education at a community college rather than at a four-year institution; 2) I wanted to know about their reading experiences throughout their educational journey and how that may relate to their placement in a developmental literacy course; and 3) I wondered if reflexively students may see a connection between their reading history, placement in developmental literacy coursework, and their perceptions of being reading ready for transfer to a four-year institution.

Another delimiting factor was the choice I made about the data collection timeframe. It was important to conduct interviews with these students during the fall semester, which would have been for most participants the first or perhaps second semester of classes at the community college after high school graduation. This was an

important factor because I wanted to have a sense of why they began community college with the intention to transfer and if they were aware of what this aspiration signified. Finally, a third delimiting choice was to continue calling the course in which the students were enrolled developmental literacy rather than integrated reading and writing even though the semester I collected data the developmental reading and writing classes at the community college had combined into integrated reading and writing courses (INRW). I thought it important to continue calling the classes developmental literacy because I believe literacy as a term covers all modes including reading and writing, but especially because I wanted to keep the students thinking about the reading part of the class and not so much on the writing.

As a researcher, I am aware that there were different choices I could have made about the data collection, the population, and the questions, but the delimiting choices I made with this study were necessary in the frame of a case study research in which I explored the self-perceptions of Latina students' readiness to transfer from community college to a four-year institution through a reading lens. The next section offers definitions of the various terms used in this study.

Glossary of Terms

Community college

For the study, I leaned on Vaughan's definition of a community college "as a regionally accredited institution of higher education that offers the associate degree as its highest degree" (Vaughan, 2006, p. 1).

Developmental education

Offers support services that focus on the holistic postsecondary success of all students, specially students who require have been underprepared in the PK-12 system for rigorous college-level work. The student support offered includes developmental math, reading, and writing courses, learning frameworks courses, and study skills courses.

Developmental literacy courses

These are reading and writing classes designed by colleges and universities to prepare students who require intervention before beginning college-level reading and writing intensive courses. To emphasize that these are not only reading or writing courses the classes are called integrated reading writing (INRW).

Familismo

Familismo is a strong connection to and respect for family members (nuclear and extended) that is often considered the norm in Latinx families. Bardis (1959), an early developer of a familism scale, based his original scale on the definition of familism as “strong in-group feelings, emphasis on family goals, common property, mutual support, and the desire to pursue the perpetuation of the family” (p. 340).

Four-year institution

Any postsecondary institution that offers baccalaureate degrees and higher to which students who matriculated at a community college may transition.

Hispanic

The term was first approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in 1977 and first used by the U.S. Census Bureau in 1980 (Nuñez, 2014). The OMB

considers Hispanic or Latino an ethnicity category and defines the term as “a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race. The term “Spanish origin” can be used in addition to “Hispanic or Latino” (U.S. Census, 2018). I will use this term only in direct quotes or if I must use it as a point of reference in the literature.

Latinas/os

Latina is specific to the female gender and Latino is the male gender. These terms are very specific and exclude all who identify along the gender spectrum. I use these terms when in direct quotes and when referenced in the literature. However, my study population focus are college students who identify as female Latinx and, in this study, I address the population as Latinas.

Latinidad

I interpret the term latinidad as an expression of pride in the Latinx culture and background. The Latina Feminist Group (2001) defines the term as referring both to national origin and allowing for individual expressions.

Latinx

In this document, I use the neutral term Latinx whenever not addressing the population that is the focus of the study, females who self-identify as Latinas. “Latinx is the gender-neutral alternative to Latino, Latina and even Latin@. [...] In addition to men and women from all racial backgrounds, Latinx also makes room for people who are trans, queer, agender, non-binary, gender non-conforming or gender fluid” (Ramirez & Blay, 2016, para. 7).

Marianismo

First written about by Stevens (1973), the marianismo belief system assigns gender role expectations to the female in the Latino family and placing the Latina on a pedestal at the same level as that reserved for the Virgin Mary in the Catholic religion.

Placement in developmental education courses

In Texas, a student's score on a college readiness assessment called the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) determines placement in developmental education courses. A student who does not meet the State's minimum college readiness benchmarks in math, reading, and/or writing will need to enroll in and pass the corresponding subject area course before the student is allowed to enroll in college-level courses.

Transfer

Discussions of transfer refer specifically to transfer of students from one postsecondary institution to another—not to be confused with transferring knowledge gained in one academic domain to further knowledge in a different academic domain.

Organization of Dissertation

Chapter 1 was a presentation of the problem of forward transfer from community colleges to four-year universities as will be addressed in this dissertation through a study that took place at a community college in Texas focusing on Latinas enrolled in developmental literacy courses. This chapter provided an overview of the literature addressing Latinas in postsecondary education, offered a broad look at the Latinx student population and laid out the purpose of the study.

Chapter 2 offers a critical review of the literature as relates to Latinas, community colleges and transfer, developmental education, and college reading. This chapter is also a presentation of assumptions and an explanation of the three pillars of the conceptual framework, which grew out of the review of the literature.

Chapter 3 details the research methodology employed to explore how Latina students enrolled in developmental literacy coursework at a community college and with aspirations to transfer to a four-year institution (1) perceive their readiness for transition to a four-year university and, specifically, how these Latinas (2) perceive their reading readiness to transition. This chapter outlines in further details the context of the study, research design, methodology and data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, and limitations.

Chapter 4 is a presentation of within-case data analysis via five categories and cross-case data analysis based on seven themes; also, the chapter offers a delineation between themes and study findings. Finally, chapter 5 is an analysis of the findings, a discussion of implications and recommendations, and a conclusion of the dissertation.

Summary of Chapter 1

In chapter one, I presented a discussion of the Latinx students in postsecondary education, introduced the research problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the rationale and significance of the study. This chapter also included a glossary section to facilitate the reader's understanding of key terms in the study. The study was delimited by the choices I made of the study population, the timeframe for data collection, and the decision to call the course developmental literacy rather than INRW. Finally, this chapter provided an outline of the rest of the dissertation.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of the present case study was to explore self-perceptions of Latina students' readiness to transfer from a community college to a four-year institution, and to investigate these self-perceptions of readiness through a reading lens. The research problem, as presented in the previous chapter, is the need to further explore students' readiness to transition from community colleges to four-year institutions, where they may complete a bachelor's degree. The literature informed the development of the study's research questions and ongoing critical review of the literature informed all aspects of the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Overview of Chapter 2

The chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section is an outline of my conceptual framework, beginning with a discussion of the researcher's assumptions. The conceptual framework was used as a guide for this study and impacted every facet of the research from inception to completion. The second main section of this chapter is a review of the literature pertinent to my study and is divided into three major segments. In the first segment of the review I examine studies conducted addressing various factors that are potential influencers of Latinas' educational trajectories, cultural expectations, familismo, and marianismo. The second segment is a presentation of studies and literature related to community colleges including transfers and the link between community colleges and developmental education. Finally, the third segment is an outline of developmental education and the place of developmental reading within postsecondary education. The chapter ends with a summary.

Conceptual Framework

Extensive reading and a critical review of the relevant literature guided the development of the study's conceptual framework. Ravitch and Riggan (2017) define conceptual framework as "an argument about why the topic one wishes to study matters, and why the means proposed to study it are appropriate and rigorous" (p. 5). Early in the planning stages of this study and throughout, I was and continue to be guided by a desire to not perpetuate a deficit model. Therefore, the assumptions I hold as a Latina, an educator, and a researcher, all played a role in my chosen topic and literature reviewed for this study. Anfara and Mertz (2015) remind the researcher that "a framework or theory allows the researcher to 'see' and understand certain aspects of the phenomenon being studied while concealing other aspects" (p. 15); consequently, as the researcher I chose theories based on personal assumptions of my research topic and what may be involved in answering the study's research questions.

Assumptions

Based on my own experiences as a Latina who moved to this country at a young age and struggled to fit into the American education system, I made four main assumptions going into this study. Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) say that "these statements reflect what you hold to be true as you go into the study and from which you believe you will be able to draw some conclusions" (p. 130). My first assumption is that a bachelor's degree has become a necessity for anyone seeking to improve their career prospects and to make any sort of social advancement in American society. At the time I graduated high school, a bachelor's degree was an exciting goal because it was a guarantee of a better life, but in 2020 a bachelor's degree is the minimum requirement for

consideration of employment for many fields. My second assumption is that in many situations, including in pursuit of education, Latinas encounter ethnic, racial, and gender obstacles that cannot be addressed as separate instances because all these identifiers intersect to make up who they are and how they experience life events (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). A third assumption is that reading and reading critically can change lives. This assumption comes from my experience as a person who learned to read at a young age and then became so confident in my ability to decipher meaning from words that I stayed in school because I wanted to keep reading. Confidence in my reading abilities changed my life and fueled my desire to do the same for others. Finally, my fourth and final assumption is that students placed in developmental literacy classes will learn strategies and skills that will prepare them for advanced academic rigor they will encounter in upper level credit-bearing courses. This assumption is in line with my third assumption because, as a professional in the field of developmental education, I believe developmental literacy coursework is an opportunity to (re)introduce students to the value of reading; therefore, I view developmental literacy courses as offering an opportunity for obtaining critical lifelong reading abilities (Alexander, 2005).

Based on these four assumptions and my stated desire to eschew deficit thinking (Valencia, 1997), the conceptual framework for this study is founded on three different theories—or pillars. These theories are 1) Chicana/Latina feminist epistemology (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Nuñez-Janes & Robledo, 2009), 2) intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1991; Hancock, 2016; Collins & Bilge, 2016), and 3) a lifespan development of reading framework (Alexander, 1997, 2003, 2005). The graphic representation (figure 1) of the conceptual framework shows a blank center that represents my goal of

“uncovering the meaning of a phenomenon” (Merriam, 2009, p. 5) through the combination of these theoretical lenses that drive all parts of the study from beginning to end. The following subsections will detail each of these theories individually.

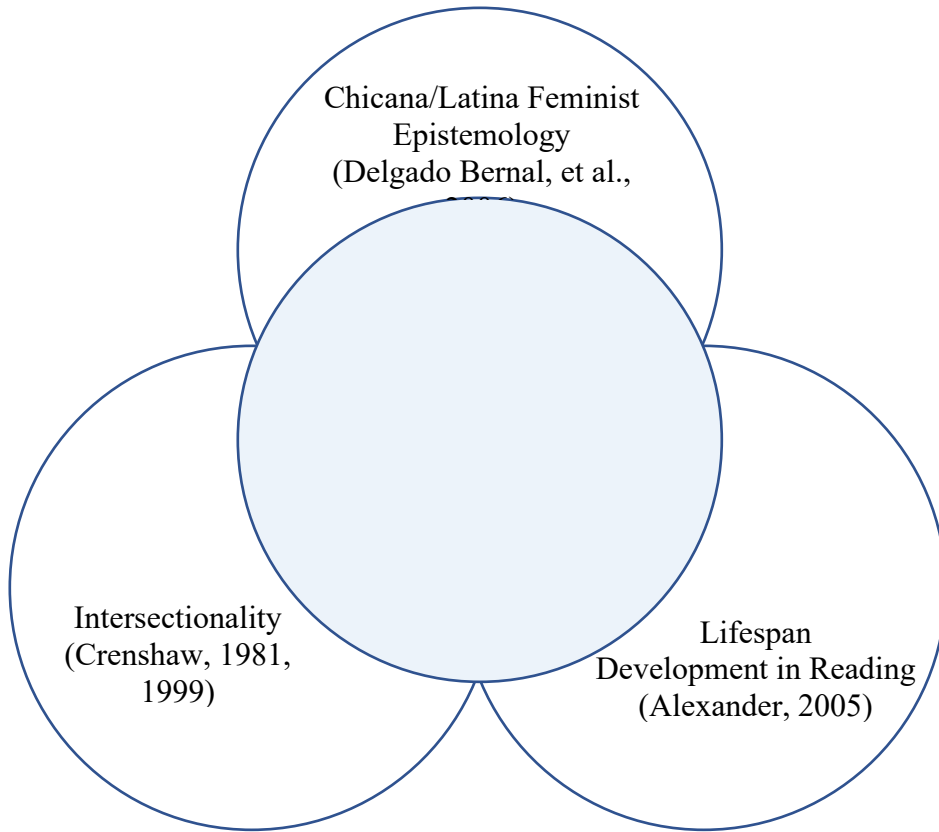


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Chicana/Latina Feminist Epistemology

The Chicana/Latina Feminist Epistemology (CLFE) addresses Latinas’ concerns from a strengths-based rather than deficit-based lens. In her initial sketch of the Chicana Feminist Epistemology framework, Delgado Bernal (1998) explains that she positions Chicanas as the center of her research to offer them a medium through which they may feel empowered to resist educational racism. Through Chicana feminism, Delgado Bernal

implements a powerful platform to “examine the gender, ethnic, and class oppression that contribute to the unique positions of working-class Chicana students” (Delgado Bernal, 1998, p. 557). Delgado Bernal uses the term Chicana to mean specifically women who are of or identify as having Mexican origin and not of other Latinx culture, such as Central and South America or the Caribbean nations of Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. Subsequently, Delgado Bernal co-edited an anthology titled *Chicana/Latina Education in Everyday Life: Feminista Perspectives on Pedagogy and Epistemology* (Delgado Bernal et al., 2006); in the introductory chapter the editors as authors explain, “we seek to connect Latina/o Education, Chicana Feminism, and Chicana/o Cultural Studies” (Villenas et al., 2006, p. 3). In a later publication, Delgado Bernal et al. (2012), widened the lens to Chicana/Latina feminism and charted the significance of the testimonio genre as a methodological and pedagogical tool for listening and acting, so that “a story of marginalization is re-centered to elicit social change” (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012, p. 364). This study’s conceptual framework thus encompasses the wider Chicana/Latina population to allow for the addressing of a wide array of educational, political, and social issues experienced by Chicanas, Latinas, and women of color.

The CLFE framework is founded on the work of Chicana/Latina feminist scholars and focused on education research (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Saavedra & Perez, 2013). According to Saavedra and Perez, CLFEs make use of Gloria Anzaldua’s border theory with Delgado Bernal’s Chicana/Latina feminist epistemology and the testimonios genre to “embody the multiple linguistic and cultural borderlands that are traversed, often times on daily bases, both by choice and for survival” by Chicanas and Latinas (Saavedra &

Perez, 2013, p. 129). Latina scholars have long tried to present the educational experiences of Latinas from an angle of strength to shift the focus of the conversation from what is often a deficit view of Latinx in education (Barajas & Pierce, 2001; Flores, 2000; González, 2001).

An aim of this study is to center Latina students as a unique population in the academy who deserve to be more visible as students to fulfill their aspirations (Pyne & Means, 2013). Because the Latinx community is a heterogeneous group that, nonetheless, shares certain characteristics within the community and with other non-White groups, using a Chicana/Latina feminist framework rather than one that singles out Chicanas matters (Kiyama, 2018; The Latina Feminist Group, 2001; U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). The Chicana/Latina feminist epistemology framework allowed me to re-center the academic conversation to emphasize the importance of Latinas' success to the overall success of the Latinx community in the United States. Using a Chicana/Latina feminist framework as one of the lenses through which I analyzed the data means that I maintained the attention of the research on the Latina college students as they shared their experiences from their unique individual perspectives as women, as college students, and as members of a racial minority whose multiple intersecting identifiers at times contributes to their invisibility in postsecondary education (Liang et al., 2017; Muñoz & Maldonado, 2012). Latinas who aspire to transfer to a four-year institution face ethnic, racial, gender, language, and other obstacles that cannot be separated into individual sections because who they are intersects at those individual elements (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Lykke (2011) describes intersectionality as another tool in the "feminist toolbox"

(p. 208) and as such it is a useful “nodal point for different feminist strands of theorizing (p. 207). Intersectionality theory is the second pillar of this study.

Intersectionality

The Latinx community in the United States is designated an ethnic classification on any federal data that is Hispanic or Latino, defined as “A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020, para. 1). From personal experience as an Afro-Latina, my skin color (race) is as much a part of my identity as is my Latinidad, gender, sexuality, language, and other categories that make up who I am and influence my daily existence. Describing the make-up of their group, the Latina Feminist Group explained that for them “*latinidad* acknowledges national origins, and at the same time explores the nuances of difference” (2001, p. 7). Further, the group said about skin color that “[w]e might be described within our cultures by our skin color as ‘*las cafecitas, indias, negritas, trigueñas, güeras y blanquitas*’ (brown, Indian, black, olive, light or White)—problematic terms of endearment that evoke racist connotations” (The Latina Feminist Group, 2001, p. 7). About languages, the group states,

The languages we speak come from our colonial and diasporic conditions. Some of us are Spanish dominant, others bilingual; some easily code-switch between English and Spanish; others struggle to learn Spanish or indigenous languages. A few of us negotiate multicultural situations where Black English and regional Spanish, or where different national and class dialects of Spanish, contribute to a complicated polyglot mixture. (The Latina Feminist Group, 2001, p. 8)

In using intersectionality as the second pillar of my conceptual framework, my study supports Collins and Bilge (2016) who say that people who use intersectionality in research analysis “find intersectionality’s core insight to be useful: namely, that major axes of social divisions in a given society at a given time, for example, race, class, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, and age operate not as discrete and mutually exclusive entities, but build on each other and work together” (p. 4).

The legal scholar, Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991) is credited with originating the term intersectionality to help explain “the race and gender dimensions of violence against women of color” (p. 1242) and in so doing defined structural intersectionality as an investigation of how the intersection of race and gender for women of color makes their experiences and needs “qualitatively different than that of White women” (p. 1245), political intersectionality as the use of feminist and antiracist politics to marginalize the issues, and representational intersectionality addressing the “cultural construction of women of color” (p. 1245).

For students who place into developmental literacy coursework, students will learn strategies and skills that will prepare them for academic success and offers a necessary foundation for obtaining critical lifelong reading and learning abilities (Alexander, 2005; Conley, 2012).

Lifespan Development in Reading Framework/The MDL

Alexander’s (1997, 2003, 2005) lifespan development in reading is the third pillar of my conceptual framework. One of my assumptions is that education is a lifelong endeavor and that we are always learning, hence my enthusiastic support for developmental literacy classes and the opportunities these classes offer students to further

mature in reading competence. Often, however, students who place into developmental literacy classes because of low reading scores in a college entrance exam, have difficulty accepting the placement because they know how to read and cannot accept that they have anything else to learn in that subject (Koch et al., 2012; Martin et al., 2017). In making an argument for the Model of Domain Learning (MDL), Alexander posits that learning a subject matter—domain—does not happen in a single exposure to the domain, but rather that it is a lifelong process because people, society, and even domains are dynamic and change over time. Alexander warns that the journey from acclimation to competence and on to proficiency is not easy and this holds for all domains, including the terrain of developmental reading as critical to college and lifelong success (Holschuh & Paulson, 2013). Alexander found that the MDL

is particularly relevant to this topic of lifespan development in reading [because] it is concerned with academic domains; focuses on cognitive and motivational factors; and explores systematic changes in those factors across three stages of development: acclimation, competence, and proficiency/expertise. (Alexander, 2005, p. 416-417).

Among the characteristics of lifespan development in reading, Alexander (2005) found that, as in other domains, “reading development is a lifelong journey that unfolds in multiple stages” (p. 413) and the stage a learner is in is not based on age, but depends on much more, including life and school experiences. If we consider the past eras of reading from the inflexible behavioristic views to a greater focus on reader goals and engagement, then we can help students understand that placement in developmental

literacy coursework is an opportunity to continue developing toward reading proficiency (Alexander & Fox, 2013).

Summary of Conceptual Framework

In this section, the theoretical literature used to build the conceptual framework was reviewed. Any one of the three theories could have guided my research separately, but based on the assumptions, which drive this study, these theories are inextricably linked. First, I go back to my firm belief that a postsecondary education is necessary for career and social advancement, but for learners to have equitable access to educational opportunities, their needs must be centered in academia. The Chicana/Latina feminist epistemology provides for the centering of student needs. Yet, this cannot be the only lens because factors such as culture, race, socioeconomic background, and gender complicate a postsecondary education and this calls for an intersectionality lens. Finally, reading is critical to postsecondary education success and the lifespan development in reading framework (Alexander, 2005) allows that reading is not a skill we learn at a young age and can then forget about, but rather reading must be nurtured and developed throughout life. Together these different lenses allow me to build on postsecondary education as important with reading as a lens that drives access and success for underrepresented and underserved student populations. With these lenses as the study's foundation, the rest of this chapter is a focused review of the literature.

Review of Literature

By implementing the Chicana/Latina feminist epistemology, I commit to maintaining Latinas and their stories central and visible throughout the study (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). Following a comprehensive review of the

literature, I recognized three factors related to Latina students that were pertinent in the majority of the research. I have chosen to structure this review based on these factors, which are 1) cultural expectations, 2) familismo, and 3) gendered beliefs. Maintaining balance between the Latinx home culture and the wider American postsecondary education expectations is an important factor for encouraging Latina students' transfer aspirations. Next, there is a brief overview of the history of community colleges as the place where Latinx students most often begin postsecondary education. Then, a review of the history of developmental education, including developmental reading because of my adherence to the belief that becoming a competent reader is a lifelong endeavor; and, for this reason, I conducted this research by talking with, listening to, and centering Latina students who have placed in developmental literacy courses (Alexander, 2005).

Latinas

The research literature shows that there are many factors that come into play as influences in a Latina's education trajectory. Researchers examining the increase of the Latina college student population over the years have documented the sacrifices made by Latinas to achieve these educational gains (González et al., 2004), studied how and why Latinas are outperforming their male counterparts in degree attainment (Ovink, 2014), detailed why Latinas may be considered feminists when choosing to not pursue higher education (Harklau, 2013), and recorded the achievements of high-performing, professional, and educated Latinas (Ek et al., 2010; Espinoza, 2010). But there is a lack of research on the self-perceptions of readiness to transfer of Latinas who begin postsecondary education at community colleges with aspirations to transition to four-year institutions. Some of the literature reviewed here has a strong self-efficacy component

because the self-perceptions of readiness to transfer or self-perceptions of reading readiness do not reside in a vacuum but rather can be linked to a person's motivation.

Bandura (1997) explained

that efficacy beliefs affect thought processes, the level and persistency of motivation, and affective states, all of which are important contributors to the types of performances that are realized. People who doubt their capabilities in particular domains of activity shy away from difficult tasks in those domains. They find it hard to motivate themselves, and they slacken their efforts or give up quickly in the face of obstacles. In contrast, a resilient sense of efficacy enhances sociocognitive functioning in the relevant domains in many ways. People who have strong beliefs in their capabilities approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided. (p. 39)

Studies that have researched self-efficacy and Latinas are included in this review because they speak to the motivational goals associated with the aspiration to transfer. This section of the review focuses on three vital factors that have been shown consistently in the literature to influence Latinas' education: 1) culture, 2) familismo, and 3) gendered beliefs. Perhaps the question arises with the reader of how one can separate culture, family, and gendered beliefs as individual elements when discussing the Latinas in any realm, including education? It is not possible, nor is it desirable to treat each element as if one had no bearing on the other. Indeed, throughout the discussion, it will become obvious that all these factors cross and intersect to form one major influence in a Latinas' education choice. It is however possible to emphasize each element based on

previous research and in so doing discuss the different literature and findings that have bearing on the current study.

Cultural Expectations

Study findings posit that culture and family have a notable influence on the adjustment to college of women of color, specifically for Latina students; however, research suggests that the level of adjustment to college expectations increases with student's perceived parental support (Meléndez & Meléndez, 2010). In a quantitative study investigating the influence of parental attachment on the college adjustment of White, Black, and Hispanic women, Meléndez and Meléndez (2010) recruited participants at a commuter college with a reputation for having large numbers of first-generation college students. The final study subjects selected included 24 White, 27 Black, and 44 Latina students, for a total of 95 female participants. The subjects were all between the ages of 17-25 enrolled in their first year of college. Important to the study was the fact that 91% of the participants lived at home with their parents; this allowed for close examination of the attachment theory. Findings indicated that culture and family have a notable influence on the adjustment to college of women of color.

The strength of the Meléndez and Meléndez (2010) study lies in the researchers' inclusion of various racial groups to arrive at a balanced solution to the problem they address in their research. The problem presented is one of perspective to discover why women of color, who perform with greater success than men of color, are performing at a lower level when compared to their White female counterparts. The researchers use attachment theory to analyze the reasons college students of color may have difficulties when separating from parents and leaving home for university. Overall, the researchers

advocated for culturally sensitive college environments that consider the family values of diverse cultures and the effect these values have on the challenges faced by their female college students of color. Significantly, as relates to Latina students, the Meléndez and Meléndez study findings suggest that the higher the perceived parental support, the higher the level of adjustment to college expectations. In other words, when Latinas believe that their parents support their college aspirations, they have an easier time adjusting to American postsecondary education expectations. Though the stated goal of many of the studies that research Latinx culture and postsecondary education is in the vein of advocating for culturally sensitive college environments, these findings are important because the balance between cultural expectations and postsecondary demands may prove key to fulfilling Latina's community college transfer aspirations.

Cano and Castillo (2010) implemented a quantitative research design, which included using a demographic questionnaire, administering a behavioral acculturation and enculturation scale, a White attitudinal marginalization scale, and an Outcome questionnaire to determine the amount of distress experienced by the Latina college students. The purpose of the research study was to determine the influence of acculturation and enculturation in the level of distress among Latina college students and make targeted arrangements to alleviate the distress. Cano and Castillo recruited 141 undergraduate and 73 graduate Latina students at two Southern universities from Latino student organizations at each of the campuses. Most of the students identified as Mexican American with more than 60% of the total number of participants second generation American or higher. The findings indicated participants experienced higher levels of distress when they had maintained a low level of their heritage cultural norms

(enculturation) and had a high level of White American cultural adaptation. An interesting result of the study was the determination that a majority of the Latinas who participated in the study had adopted the behaviors of White culture, but not the values and norms.

Gloria and Castellanos (2012) also acknowledged the distress and stress experienced by Latina college students in their qualitative study examining the coping responses for the problem of Latina students' invisibility within postsecondary education. The invisibility contextualized by the researchers refers to the struggles and stresses experienced in silence by Latinas because of family obligations, and cultural expectations while, as mainly first-generation in college students, they attempt to forge ahead in their educational pursuits. The purpose of the study was to bring clarity to the various stresses and challenges faced by first-generation Latina college students. Specifically, the researchers offered guidance to administrators of four-year institutions about ways to help Latina college students succeed in higher education, in part by acknowledging these unique stressors. This was a qualitative study that included interviews with seven Latina students (five were undergraduates and two were graduate students); and, because part of the goal was to assist administrators, researchers gathered information from two student services personnel and one mental health service provider. Five of the study subjects were first-generation in college students. All seven participants attended a four-year university directly from high school. Research findings indicated that even though the Latina students felt honored with the opportunity to attend college they described struggles stemming from family misunderstanding why their daughters had to go off to school, family expectations that the students maintain a high level of responsibilities, and

the students' own push to succeed on behalf of their families. The adult participants in the study confirmed the need to address the unique struggles of Latina students.

The Gloria and Castellanos (2012) research backs the Meléndez and Meléndez (2010) study that supported the role of culture and family on Latinx students' success. Family as key and, most significant to study, the importance of a mother's influence was found in a study on Latina adolescents' childbearing attitudes in which the researchers determined that a mother's "high educational expectations" (Mireles-Ríos & Romo, 2014, p. 1553) can play a significant role in a girl's delayed desire for childbearing. Through the lens of expectancy-value theory, Mireles-Ríos and Romo (2014) addressed the problem of perception that Latina adolescents receive more familial support for motherhood and marriage than for academic and career goal attainments. The purpose of the study was to expound on maternal expectations for daughters' educational attainment and examine whether these expectations influenced the daughters' childbearing attitudes. The researchers sought to debunk the commonly held stereotype and hypothesized that higher maternal expectations would coincide with increased communication about education between mothers and daughters. Such discussions would in turn influence a daughter's desire for higher educational goals and increase the desire to put off childbearing until an older age. To this end, the researchers recruited 146 Latina mother/daughter pairs with the mothers ranging from 28 to 55 years, and the daughters ranging in age from 12 to 18 years. Of the daughters in the study, about two-thirds were born in the U.S., and the rest were born in Mexico, 69% preferred to speak English only and the rest preferred both Spanish and English, a large majority received A's and B's at school, and about 67% were experienced sexually. In addition to support for the

researchers' hypothesis related to maternal expectations, the findings of this comprehensive study indicated that Latina adolescents who expect to succeed in college will delay motherhood to a later age to increase their chances of achieving college and career goals.

Familismo

As the previous section shows, family support is a critical component of Latinx students' matriculation and persistence in higher education (Auerbach, 2007; Gloria & Castellanos, 2012; Meléndez & Meléndez, 2010; Mireles-Ríos & Romo, 2014).

Auerbach's study of racially and ethnically diverse families with high school children in a college access program, concluded among her list of findings that "support takes multiple forms—some invisible to the school—shaped primarily by parents' social location but also by a web of cultural and psychosocial factors in specific home, school, and community contexts (2007, p. 278). Auerbach (2007) found that familial support is indeed available in various forms for high school students seeking to matriculate at an institution of higher learning, and Gloria and Castellanos (2012) posit in their study that "family was a complex factor in relation to academic persistence considerations" (p. 87). The complexity arose from family members' inexperience with what it means to go to college. These fears stemming from the unknown will decrease by increasing the number of Latinas attending institutions of higher education.

Sy and Romero (2008) conducted a study addressing the conflict experienced by Latina students when the expectations at home conflict with their own educational expectations. The purpose of this study was to research the lived experiences of underrepresented Latina college women. The researchers posited that family influences in

Latinx homes are based on *familismo*, which emphasizes closeness and loyalty and is carried forth from one generation to the next. To learn more about Latina college students' family requirements, obligations, and the potential conflict with a college education, Sy and Romero interviewed 20 Latina adolescents and young adults between the ages of 18 and 29 years. All participants were first or second-generation Americans who attended or had attended a four-year university. Findings revealed that the Latina college students were eager to become self-sufficient, so they could help the family financially, either by paying their own way through college or making financial contributions to the family. Though the women refused to consider it an obligation, they did feel the need to voluntarily contribute financial assistance to help their family. The Latina college students were often also surrogate parents to younger family members. The research indicated that all these reasons served as detractors from Latinas being able to focus on their college education.

The "potential for negative psychological outcomes" because of the conflicts that arise from familial expectations and educational responsibilities is comparable to research on Latinx ethnic identity development on self-authorship and the difficulties that arise when students' knowledge base shifts from an external source, such as family, to internal self-awareness (Sy & Romero, 2008, p. 213; Torres & Hernández, 2007). Using Baxter-Magolda's longitudinal study questions that help determine self-authorship of White college students, the researchers addressed the problem of ethnic identity on the lived experiences of Latinx college students. The purpose of the study was to determine the influence of ethnic identity on Latinx students' meaning-making behavior. The data presented by Torres and Hernández (2007) was the qualitative data of a longitudinal

mixed-method study looking at the epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal dimensions of self-authorship through construction of relationships. Students from four different institutions of higher learning participated in the study. For the qualitative part, there were 29 students total, 19 women and 10 men, who were interviewed over a period of between three and four years. The Torres and Hernández study findings indicated that in the cognitive dimension students moved from relying on trusted authority to depending on their own internalized formula based on context. More advanced cognitive development allowed one Latina to see multiple perspectives when she transferred to a predominantly White institution. For intrapersonal development, one Latina who had not internalized her motivation for attending school stopped out because she was still doing what she thought her family expected. Students at the interpersonal dimensions of development were able to analyze multiple perspectives without ignoring their Latino cultural family obligations.

In a study conducted with students at community colleges, Zell (2010) confirmed the importance of identity development when she addressed self-efficacy in her findings that successful Latina college students though stressed by family obligations, “did not feel a discrepancy between academic culture and their own culture” (p. 174), which serves as testament to the belief that though perhaps a source of stress, the Latina’s family is indeed a great source of strength and support. The purpose of the Zell (2010) study was to examine the experiences of Latinx community college students and how these experiences impact their college persistence and higher education goals. The method employed by the researcher was to conduct in-depth interviews with 15 Latinx community college students. The interviews were about 1 ½ hours in length and

addressed questions of educational experiences, support systems, barriers to their educational attainment, and influential people along the way to college matriculation. Zell's findings indicated that many students did not go directly to college from high school because they doubted their abilities to succeed and believed their status as minority group members limited their educational opportunities. Zell concluded that Latinx students lacked social capital, but the students developed self-efficacy, learned problem solving skills, developed a sense of purpose, perceived faculty as advocates, but had negative perceptions of academic advisors. The Latinx students indicated family support was important to their continued attendance at college. Latina college students face unique circumstances in academia because of family expectations, perceived obligations to self and to family, acculturation and enculturation demands, personal developmental shifts that conflict with parental expectations, and Latinx culture gender role demands.

Gendered Beliefs

In her 1973 seminal essay, Evelyn P. Stevens coined the word *marianismo* and called it “the cult of feminine spiritual superiority” (p. 91) In the essay, Stevens gives a brief history of how the positioning of women as above reproach may have come into being and explains how the belief is different in Latin America than in other parts of the world:

There is near universal agreement on what a “real woman” is like and how she should act. Among the characteristics of this ideal are semidivinity [sic], moral superiority, and spiritual strength. This spiritual strength engenders abnegation, that is, an infinite capacity for humility and sacrifice. No self-denial is too great

for the Latin American woman, no limit can be divined to her vast store of patience with the men of her world. (pp. 94-95)

According to Stevens (1973), marianismo belief is the flip side of machismo, which she states, “can be most succinctly described as the cult of virility. The chief characteristics of this cult are exaggerated aggressiveness and intransigence in male-to-male interpersonal relationships and arrogance and sexual aggression in male-to-female relationships” (1973, p. 90). As a political scientist who spent long periods of her life in Latin America, Stevens felt compelled to write about what she termed marianismo because she saw it as a pattern of beliefs and behaviors that women in Mexico (and, according to Stevens, most of Latin America) used to their advantage and rather than try to abolish, she believed women used to their advantage because they did not want to “relinquish their female chauvinism” (Pescatello, 1973; Stevens, 1973, p. 100).

Stevens’ (1973) definition of marianismo has become a part of the research and scholarly vernacular as either a useful theory or an example of academic generalizations that lack rigorous research (Browner & Lewin, 1982; Ehlers, 1991; Gil & Vazquez, 1996; Moreno, 2009; Navarro, 2002; Vuola 2017). Despite this, marianismo has generally been accepted as the beliefs system that assigns traditional cultural gender role expectations to the female in the Latinx family (Arciniega et al., 2008; Castillo et al., 2010; Piña-Watson et al., 2014; Rivera Marano, 2000). Equally, there has been an effort by Latina scholars to claim the term marianismo and turn it from a female ideal to “a value [that] no longer has to be viewed as negative because Latinas are changing statistics and breaking boundaries every day” (Bonilla-Rodriguez, 2013). Referencing *The Maria Paradox* by Gil and Vazquez (1996), Bonilla-Rodriguez proposes a modern marianismo that offers a way to

“embrace our cultural upbringing as a crucial part of our success, find common ground for our dual cultures, and leverage what it means to be Latina and Americana” (para. 9), which I interpret as an acknowledgement that the term is here to stay. As proof of the staying power of the term, Castillo et al. (2010) developed the Marianismo Beliefs Scale (MBS) as a potential tool for studying marianismo, acculturation, and enculturation, though they declared that, “the cultural value of marianismo may place Latinas in conflict with their families as need for peer approval and pursuit for autonomy become prominent in adolescence” (p. 173). Certainly, such a declaration relates directly to Latina college students’ level of self-efficacy and motivation to achieve set goals.

First-generation Latina college students form a distinct group whose experiences and expectations may differ tremendously even with those of other first-generation students. For example, Boswell (2012) conducted an empirical research where she studied the link among academic entitlement attitudes, college course self-efficacy, and social network use. Particularly interesting and related to the Latina self-efficacy issue are Boswell’s examination of academic entitlement and first-generation students. Boswell hypothesized that study participants would report lower academic entitlement than continued generations, which would increase with continued college standing. Boswell found that the “study’s results indicate that [first-generation students] do not differ in their entitlement attitudes regarding success in higher education” (p. 361). However, Boswell’s study did find a correlation between academic entitlement and self-efficacy. Indeed, the academically entitled students “externalize responsibility for their course success” (Boswell, 2012, p. 362), which means a low level of self-efficacy as the students believe they have no control over the college course outcome. A first-year first-

generation Latina college student, however, experiences different challenges both because of her gender and because of cultural expectations.

Though it seems clear from the many studies that Latinas are a diverse and heterogeneous population, I concur with Díaz de Sabatés (2007) who stated that

In an educational system where... true leadership only applies to those who exhibit traditional White European male individualistic traits, where being different from the norm is penalized, and where the Latino culture is viewed as inferior, there is no doubt that Latinas are seen as *lacking* something. (p. 20; emphasis in original)

In her study, Díaz de Sabatés (2007) discussed the importance of advisors and teachers at institutions of higher education understanding the experiences of Latinas. These experiences include the reality that many Latinas were first-time-in-college students whose parents possessed limited social capital to help them navigate the American education system. Latina college students want to involve their parents in their education. For this reason, Torres and Hernández (2007) suggested that there are ways to begin to avail parents of the social capital they need by keeping “Latina/o families involved in their children’s education is vital to a better understanding on the part of the parents about the needs and responsibilities of their children while in college” (p. 92). Though parents, extended family, and various cultural obligations have been proven to be a source of distress for Latina students, family and cultural beliefs are also the foundation from which Latina students gain the confidence to succeed. Latinas in college are driven to stay in school and complete their education through personal self-efficacy and through the desire to make their family proud.

Texas community colleges serve as a case in point for the importance of these institutions in educating the states' diverse population. For example, total enrollment for two-year public institutions in Texas for fall 2018 was 758,133 of which 45.2% were classified as Hispanic, 31.1% as White, 12.9% as African American, and 8.1% as unspecified other (THECB, 2020, p. 46). Transferring matters as, according to that same report, "More than half of students who successfully transfer graduate within four years of transferring to a university" (THECB, 2020, p. 15). However, the numbers are not promising for actual transfers from community colleges to four-year institutions in Texas. A look at the 2012 cohort shows that only 21.1% of Hispanic students transferred within six years, and as for other student populations, 27.2% of White, 15.9% of African American, and 42.4% of Asian students transferred to a four-year university (THECB, 2020, p. 15). These numbers show that more work is needed to increase transfer rates and, ultimately, postsecondary degree attainment for Latinx students in Texas.

Community Colleges

Bearing in mind that Latinx students will often choose to begin their postsecondary education at community colleges and the present study recruited participants at a community college with the expressed intent of transferring, it was important to research the literature surrounding community colleges (Krogstadt, 2016; Viramontes & Urrieta, 2018). This segment of the literature review, then, offers a brief historical overview of community colleges to put their existence into perspective within the context of this study and offers a nuanced review of literature focused on community college transfers, community colleges and the Latinx student population, and community colleges and developmental education.

A Brief History of Community Colleges

A uniquely American institution, the two-year college system was proposed in 1900 by William Rainey Harper, president of the University of Chicago and would do more than what existing preparatory academies were doing by giving students an opportunity to “terminate their education after completing the junior college to seek positions as teachers or to go into business pursuits” (Wattenbarger & Witt, 1995, p. 566). Known as junior colleges when the movement first began, the idea was that students would complete the first two years of the basic liberal arts curriculum and any needed remediation before continuing to university (Vaughan, 2006).

Outlining this history matters to this study because community colleges across the country were instituted with the mission to “break down the barriers of access to higher education” during a time when postsecondary education was most accessible to wealthy White men (Dassance, 2011, p. 32). Community colleges and these institutions’ roles in motivating transfer to four-year institutions for continued college education are a vital contribution to making certain the clocks are not reverted back to the time when four-year institutions were all exclusive, elitists, and the domains of White men with money. According to Vaughan (2006), the community college mission is guided by five key tenets, which include open access and equity for all students, a comprehensive curriculum, being connected to and based in the community, dedication to teaching and learning, and promoting lifelong learning. The community college in Texas where this study was conducted recently began offering a bachelor’s degree, but still fits Vaughan’s (2006) definition of a community college because it remains a two-year institution and the bachelor’s degree is a new venture for the college with the program only being

available to students who have already obtained an associate's degree; thus, it is not a standard four-year program when compared to those offered at four-year universities.

Community Colleges and Transfers

Community colleges will often have transfer understandings with four-year universities in the same state, making it possible for students to begin their postsecondary education at a community college and then transfer to a university for a bachelor's degree and higher (Vaughan, 2006). Many researchers have taken on the challenge of addressing the issue of community college transfers (Budd & Stowers, 2015; Gard et al., 2012; Harris, 2017; Jabbar et al., 2019; Peña & Rhoads, 2019; Umbach et al., 2019; Wood & Palmer, 2016). Using data from the California Community College system, Budd and Stowers (2015) found that community colleges with higher transfer success numbers are more likely to have a school culture that encourages transfer, offer students support in their transfer aspirations, and offer student different support services. Umbach et al. (2019) used data from the North Carolina Community College system and the University of North Carolina system to arrive at their findings, which includes a positive outcome for transfer when there is a public university near a community college and for students who transfer to public HBCUs. A valuable finding from the Umbach et al. (2019) study that parallels one of my assumptions for this study is that the researchers found "that students who make it through remedial courses and complete some college-level work prior to transferring can succeed" (p. 612). Other studies focused on exploring the individual experience.

In a study that employed focus group participation and followed up with survey questions, Gard et al. (2012) found that from the students' perspective what students seek

to achieve successful transfer is competent and informed advising, financial support for the transfer, and familial support. Though more dated than the rest, the Gard et al. study is important because the researchers were extending the work of Townsend (1995) to find out from the students themselves about the transfer process and experience. Most of the study participants were Latinx (10 out of 12), but race/ethnicity was not a factor in the study though it did come up in the findings. There were some comments in the findings that were difficult to decipher, such as “One male student noted that his father did not believe that college was important; the student perceived this to be a dominant view of his specific ethnic group” (Gard et al. 2012, p. 838). In a more recent study, drawing data from longitudinal interview data, Jabbar et al. (2019) investigated student transfer success and found that even when students have access to social capital, transfer impediments may show up in the form of fear of applying to college, commitments outside of school, and lack of information about school funding opportunities. Similarly, the researchers found that “family support is beneficial to transfer-intending students” (Jabbar et al., 2019, p. 10). Family support is a factor in most research related to transfers, but certainly in qualitative studies that explore the transfer experiences directly with students.

Harris (2017) conducted a study that documented the successful outcomes of students who transferred from a community college to a Tier 1 university. All the participants were Latinx students who were part of the honors program at the community college and they all transferred to a Tier 1 university. Results from this study are similar to those of the Budd and Stowers (2015) study because the Harris what students found most helpful to them meeting their transfer goals was support from faculty and staff because they helped prepare them for what they would encounter at the university—the

work, high academic expectations, as well as teaching them to seek out support when needed, students received financial support to continue at a Tier 1 university, and they talked about the importance of having family and community support for their ambitions. Harris concluded that the positive outcome for these students was an example of how the community college they attended “showed that lower cost of education did not have to equal a lower commitment from the community college to ensure student success” (2017, p. 120). This is certainly an important message for community college faculty and staff to keep in mind as the Latinx population continues to increase in the U.S. and many Latinx students choose to begin postsecondary education at a community college. Latinx students also make up a significant portion of the students who place into developmental education (Brathwaite & Edgecombe, 2018; Doran & Singh, 2018;).

Latinx Students in Developmental Education

The Latinx student in the developmental education classroom as compared to the Latinx student who did not place into developmental education is predominantly female (Nora & Crisp, 2012); the student is also Mexican American, with a high school GPA lower than 3.5, did not take much math in high school, and does not receive much financial aid in college. One of the key findings from the Nora and Crisp (2012) investigation is that “four-year Hispanic students who remediate during the first year may be more likely to persist or earn a degree compared to two and four-year Hispanic students who do not remediate” (p. 16). This investigation aligns in a couple of ways with this study: 1) Nora and Crisp present an argument for researching Latinx students who enroll in developmental education and 2) the key finding on four-year Latinx students

who place into developmental education opens the door to focused research that helps Latina college students succeed in developmental literacy coursework.

In the case of students who may need to enroll in a developmental education course, many factors can influence the decision. These factors include personal demographics, such as race and socioeconomic levels, high school background, and college requirements (Community College Research Center (CCRC), 2014). Students in developmental education require additional guidance to arrive at the belief that they can learn to master literacy skills without teachers (Elbow, 1973). Uncertainty in educational abilities is not an uncommon factor of most students in developmental education, but the uncertainty gains greater urgency when the student is an English language learner (Lesgold & Welch-Ross, 2012). Hence, the role of the developmental education instructor includes that of helping students acquire literacy independence.

Developmental Education

The National Organization for Student Success (NOSS), formerly the National Association for Developmental Education (NADE), defines developmental education as “a comprehensive process that focuses on the intellectual, social, and emotional growth and development of all students” (thenoss.org, n.d., para. 4). At the postsecondary level, developmental education professionals prepare students for academic success through programs that focus on math, reading, writing, and comprehensive learning support. However, to understand the importance of this field and why I am focusing this study on students in developmental reading, it is advantageous to first review the history of developmental education.

Though U.S. education historians tend to ignore or minimize the role of developmental education when recounting the history of postsecondary education (Arendale, 2002), there have always been students who, once accepted to a postsecondary institution, need help meeting the academic demands of that institution. This section is an accounting of developmental education in U.S. postsecondary institutions. Using Brier (1984) and Arendale (2011) as guides, I detail the six time periods or phases of developmental education in U.S. education, and add a seventh period, which is the period since 2010 during which the place of postsecondary developmental education has continued to evolve. Next, I turn to the various terms that have been, and continue to be, used to name this field of study. Lastly, I include a discussion on the Latinx students in developmental education.

An Abbreviated History of Developmental Education

The passing of the Higher Education Act in 1965 opened university doors and gave hope of postsecondary education to members of U.S. society who never dared dream of obtaining a university degree, which was previously limited to rich White men. The passing of this Act is not the beginning point of developmental education in postsecondary institutions. Admitting students from economically disadvantaged or other non-privileged backgrounds simply increased the diversity of student populations entering postsecondary institutions unprepared for the rigors of college course work (Brier, 1984). In fact, the need to increase students' academic levels to meet the rigors of postsecondary institutions was apparent with the founding of America's oldest university, Harvard.

Mid-1600s – 1820s

Outside the field of developmental education, it is not often acknowledged that its history can be traced back to Harvard University, which was established in 1636 with the hope of educating an illiterate population, or “teach remedial reading to adults” (Dotzler, 2003, p. 122). Colleges established during the colonial period and before the American Revolution were meant to serve the needs of a homogeneous student body—White, male, from wealthy families (Brock, 2010). The tutoring provided to the incoming students was to increase designed students’ skills in Latin (Boylan & White, 2014), the language of instruction. Students attending America’s early colleges, which, along with Harvard, included William and Mary, established 1693, and Yale, established 1701, were primarily educated to join the ranks of the clergy (Arendale, 2011). The debate on the level of preparation of an incoming student at a postsecondary institution has been going on for quite a while; as evident by Brier’s discovery of an 1828 Yale school newspaper column “calling for an end to the admission of students with ‘defective preparation’” (*Yale Report*, as cited in Brier, 1984, p. 2).

1820s – 1860s

In the 19th century the major criterion for college acceptance was the ability to pay, so tutoring programs were essential for postsecondary institutions (Boylan & White, 2014; Wyatt, 1992). Pedagogical signs of modern-day developmental education begin to emerge in 1849 at the college preparatory department at the University of Wisconsin, which was established to teach reading, writing and mathematics (Arendale, 2011; Brier, 1984; Dotzler, 2003).

1860s – Mid 1940s

The Morrill Act of 1862, also known as the Land Grant Act, “was designed not only to expand the number of qualified engineers, agricultural, military, and business specialists, it was also designed to promote access to higher education for a greater variety of citizens” (Boylan & White, 2014, p. 8). The number of colleges and universities in the country grew and with it an increase in the number of underprepared students enrolling in postsecondary institutions (Boylan & White, 2014). Even students enrolling in elite institutions were underprepared as made evident at Harvard University where in 1874 the faculty acknowledged the need for the development of students’ literacy skills so that they may succeed academically (Munsch et al., 2015). In 1890, the second Morrill Act was passed to provide funding for the establishment of colleges for Black students and placed a “curricular focus on mechanics, agriculture, and the industrial arts” (Harper et al., 2009, p. 395). By the 1920s high school were an accepted education trajectory, and the number of community colleges increased (Coley, 2000; Vaughan, 2006). The 1930s and 1940s saw a rise in junior colleges serving as two-year preparatory institutions for high school graduates, which allowed four-year institutions to raise admission standards (Blair, 1991).

Mid 1940s – Early 1970s

After World War II, the GI Bill provided a way for veterans to attend university, including providing for the establishment of tutoring centers at the institutions to assist veterans (Olson, 1973). In 1947, the Truman Commission Report advocated the creation of community colleges that would focus on serving the area where they are located (President’s Commission on Higher Education, 1947). Many junior colleges changed

their names to community colleges and during the 1950s and 1960s, these schools were often created as feeder schools for universities that wanted to expand (Arendale, 2011). The Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965 was passed and with which “Johnson hoped to provide a mechanism that would expand and protect the political and social/economic opportunities of the traditionally dispossessed” (MacDonald, Botti, & Clark, 2007, p. 479). With the HEA came opportunities for federally funded financial assistance for the anyone who wanted to attend a postsecondary institution (Brock, 2010).

Early 1970s – Mid 1990s

During the 1970s, colleges and universities began to setup learning centers to support the work of faculty by providing tutors and supplemental assistance to all students enrolled at the institution; in other words, the assistance was not only “for student subpopulations that had identified academic deficiencies” (Arendale, 2004, p. 5). The Higher Education Act of 1972 established Title IX which prohibited sex discrimination in education as a way of increasing the number of women in postsecondary institutions (Astin & Snyder, 1982). The early 1970s is also the time when the term developmental education came to be used and differentiated from remedial because of a focus on the total development of the student and not as an attempt to remediate an educational wrong (Arendale, 2014; Higbee, 1993). In the 1980s and 1990s there was an increase in the college enrollment of older students, nontraditional students, who required access to academic assistance outside the classroom (Lesgold & Welch-Ross, 2012).

Mid 1990s – 2010

In 1995, 29% of first-time freshmen at public four-year institutions in the U.S. enrolled in at least one remedial reading, writing, or math course and 41% of first-time freshmen at public two-year institutions (U.S. Department of Education, 1996, p. 9). A U.S. Department of Education report published in 2016 shows that for students who enrolled in postsecondary education the 2003-2004 academic year, 40% at public four-year institutions and 68% at public two-year institutions enrolled in at least one remedial course between the years 2003 and 2009 (U.S. Department of Education, 2016, p. 15). While the numbers of students participating in developmental education remained high, during this time period several states began implementing legislation and other action to offer developmental education courses only at the community colleges (Bastedo & Gumport, 2003).

2010 – Present

Developmental education in postsecondary institutions remains a point of contention, and “an important, yet divisive, issue in which educators, administrators, taxpayers, policymakers and, most importantly, students all have a vested interest” (Bahr, 2010, p. 178; Ignash, 2007; Parker, 2007). In 2012, Complete College America followed up its previous year’s report *Time is the Enemy*, which reported on the college graduation rates of 33 states, with *Remediation: Higher Education’s Bridge to Nowhere* and provided an argument for the nationwide legislative actions against the continuation of developmental education programs. Yet, studies indicate that the number of students who begin postsecondary education needing to enroll in one or more developmental course is not diminishing and despite all the recent steps being taken to eliminate developmental

education, an educated U.S. population is still the most important goal (Lumina Foundation, 2018; Mangan, 2019; U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Whatever developmental education is called when provided at postsecondary institutions, the field is an integral part of postsecondary education.

A History of Terminology

As this timeline has made clear, developmental education has a long, rich, and complex history in American postsecondary institutions. Whether supported or rejected by scholars, colleges and universities have had to figure out how to address the academic needs of students who begin their course of studies underprepared for the rigors of postsecondary education. Over the course of the field's history, many terms have been used to describe what is currently known as developmental education as an attempt to place it either within or without the realm of academia. In other words, those who agree with and support the work of developmental education in postsecondary institutions offer kinder terminology than those who believe the work has no place in American colleges and universities. In her dissertation, Doran (2015) offers a well-researched history of the field and includes a list of the various labels by which the field has been known. In this section, I offer a brief discussion of each.

Basic Skills Education

A focus on basic skills means teaching the beginning foundations of reading, writing, and arithmetic, which has consistently been shown to be demoralizing for adult students (Hechinger, 1979). Basic skills education is defined as education that is “typically below high school level and offered noncredit, to assist adults with low ability or training in reading, writing, or mathematics” (Hagedorn & Kuznetsova, 2016, p. 63).

Bonehead English

This was the unofficial name for the class where students placed who did not have the ability to pass a regular English class. In his seminal, *Lives on the Boundary*, Rose (1989) explains that at UCLA the most basic English classes were known by all as “bonehead English” classes (p. 2). Placing students in English class based on their academic abilities after initial testing has not changed much over the years, but the history of calling those who place into developmental classes “boneheads” may explain why students are ashamed to acknowledge the placement (Barnard, 1958). Wermuth (1957) lamented the sectioning of students into English classes by ability as doing a disservice to the students placed in the lowest ability class, Bonehead English, and as being tortuous for the instructors. Wermuth suggested that if a student did not have the intelligence to meet the low minimum test requirements, then “he simply is not college material” (p. 106). The term appears to have been an accepted way of describing students, as a year later in an article concurring with Wermuth’s argument, Barnard (1958) “confess[ed] to feeling more sympathy for the ‘boneheads’ and more hope for their salvation” than does Mr. Wermuth” (p. 33). To be fair, both Wermuth and Barnard were making an argument for what is now called mainstreaming and discussed what they believed was the best solution for educating all students by combining all levels but being called “boneheads” may have contributed to developmental education students’ resistance to placing in these classes.

Compensatory Education

In advocating for compensatory education, Guthrie and Kelly (1965) championed schools as the place for “rehabilitation of culturally deprived children” (p. 70).

Compensatory education is meant to make up for the missed educational opportunities that were not provided at home or in the communities because of poverty and other deprivations. According to Clowes (1980) the term came into existence in the field of education after World War II with the 1965 elementary and secondary education act. Clowes explains that “in practical terms compensatory education implies offsetting a home environment unsupportive of educational attainment” (p. 8) and gives as examples the TRIO programs put in place by the Office of Education. At the postsecondary education level, all programs that prepare and supplement a college student’s educational development would be considered compensatory (Clowes, 1980). The problem here is that if schools work from a stance of compensating for what a student lacks, then they are working from a deficit point of view with which they can claim that “the student who fails in school does so because of internal deficits or deficiencies” (Valencia, 1997, p. 2) ingrained in the student from that unsupportive home environment mentioned by Clowes. In its inception, compensatory education was meant to identify “those efforts designed to make up for the debilitating consequences of discrimination and poverty” (Frost & Rowland, 1971, p. vii as cited in Clowes). Meaning that students are marked as lacking simply because of their low socioeconomic background, which damages can only be counterbalanced, according to Clowes, in residential programs, such as “the success of traditionally black colleges can best be explained as an application of a compensatory model in residential institutions of higher education where the college clearly assumes a strong *in loco parentis* role” (p. 8, italics in original).

Developmental Education

Visitors to the NOSS website learn that the term developmental education “includes, but is not limited to, tutoring, personal/career counseling, academic advisement, and coursework” (NOSS, n.d., para. 4). Boylan and Bonham (2007) explain the term “refers to a broad range of courses and services organized and delivered in an effort to help retain students and ensure the successful completion of their postsecondary education goals” (p. 2). Acknowledging the negative connotations of the terms remedial (discussed below) and compensatory, Clowes (1980) found that the term developmental education gained traction in the 1970s from initiatives taken within academic and student affairs fields to create “programs which stressed the value and worth of each individual, which saw the individual differences not as negatives but as unique possibilities, and which focused upon the notion of continuing growth and change for the individual” (pp. 8-9). Developmental education then, is a focus on the overall development of the student and includes increasing college-level skills in math, writing, and reading (Arendale, 2011; Boylan & Bonham, 2007). Certainly, for the developmental education professional, it is important that the term not be considered a synonym of remedial education (Breneman & Haarlow, 1998).

Remedial Education

As noted earlier in this section when discussing Clowes (1980), remedial education has negative connotations. Higbee (1993), defines remedial education as, “programs [that] ‘remedy’ academic deficiencies, thus implying a medical model; the student has a weakness that must be cured. The function [of remedial education] is to

assist college students in mastering material they should have learned in high school” (p. 99). Higbee goes on to describe students enrolled in remedial education classes as feeling they have failed, regardless of passing grades in high school. These students may also perceive themselves as less capable of succeeding in college level work than other students. Low self-esteem, lack of self-confidence and minimal self-expectations may serve as critical barriers to academic success for this population. (1993, p. 99)

Unlike developmental education, which has roots in developmental psychology, the term remedial education has its roots in medical terminology and the connotation that the student must be fixed because something went wrong in the k-12 system (Boylan et al., 1999; Breneman & Haarlow, 1998). As discussed in the beginning of this section, however, remediation has always been a part of postsecondary education, beginning with the need to tutor incoming students at Harvard University from the institution’s inception (Arendale, 2011; Breneman & Haarlow). What the field focused on student development and success is called matters because of the connotations that come with the chosen terminology because the fact is that students who need assistance to reach academic goals remain an important a part of postsecondary institutions (Clowes, 1980; Eberly, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

Most importantly, these terms have the added purpose of serving as reasons to exclude those who are deemed less worthy of a college education. As Mike Rose noted in *Lives on the Boundary*, “Such talk carries with it the etymological wisps and traces of disease and serve to exclude from the academic community those who are so labeled” (1989, p. 210).

Developmental Reading

Students who test into college developmental reading and gain higher reading levels have a greater chance of persisting to degree completion (Pinkerton, 2010; Worley, 2003). For students in developmental reading classes, researchers have found a connection between completing a reading program and college completion (Pinkerton, 2010). Worley's (2003) study on students with reading deficiencies found that persistence was greatest for students who acquired college-level reading skills before moving on to college-level courses than for those students who tried to acquire higher level reading skills while enrolled in college-level classes. Beyond persistence, and more significant for this research is the knowledge that about 85% of learning in college happens through reading (Nist & Simpson, 2002, p. 648). As this study's investigation is being conducted via a reading lens, the first part of this section offers a historical perspective of reading and postsecondary education and the final part is a review of literature that gives insight into postsecondary education reading strategies and skills.

Reading in Postsecondary Education

In this section, I provide a targeted historical perspective of reading; in other words, the history of reading is investigated as it relates to the success of students in postsecondary education.

To read and comprehend at a postsecondary level, students must have the skills and confidence to feel they can negotiate the meaning of the text. Based on the transactional theory of reading, meaning is created during the transaction (Rosenblatt, 1994) between reader and text. How the reader processes the text, or reading comprehension, is thus an important factor in the transaction. Studies focused on existing

or new reading strategies to measure reading skills have demonstrated significant results, which opens up the possibilities for researchers and educators on ways to influence reading comprehension levels (Hall et al., 2014; Linderholm et al., 2014). Hall et al. (2014) tested the expressive vocabulary of native English-speaking adult learners with the aim of finding out the skills possessed by these learners and to what extent the expressive vocabulary skills influence reading skills. After conducting hierarchical regression analyses of the data, Hall et al. found results showed a relationship between expressive vocabulary and reading skills that provided an argument for including explicit teaching in the reading classroom. Similarly, Linderholm et al. (2014) conducted two experiments with college students in which they tested self-explanation and explicit instructions strategies for reading multiple texts. Results indicated that self-explanation increases reading comprehension and that instructions do not need to be very explicit to make a difference to a students' level of reading comprehension. These studies exemplify attempts by scholars using practice-focused classroom tools to influence reading comprehension levels of college students.

Anderson and Kim (2011) created a study that implemented a program for Reading Across the Curriculum (RAC). The Anderson and Kim (2011) RAC model focused on college faculty revising their individual courses. Anderson and Kim agreed that “Reading encapsulates more than the ability to pronounce words from left to right; it also includes the ability to extrapolate implicit and explicit meanings from those words, form judgments about those words, and connect them to other texts” (2011, p. 62)—making reading instruction the responsibility of all faculty across the curriculum. Using a quantitative design, the researchers collected data from discipline-specific pretest and

posttest that happened before and after instructors administered reading comprehension-strategy assignments. Results indicated significant improvement by the students in reading comprehension by discipline and positive feedback from the faculty regarding the strategies and the results (Anderson & Kim, 2011).

The feedback is important because if the faculty approve of the results, then they will be more willing to implement reading comprehension strategies in the classroom. In a theory-oriented paper discussing the various reading comprehension strategies available to college instructors, Lei et al. (2010) explain that college instructors expect incoming students to have the necessary skills to tackle college level readings. The authors reference White (2004) who held that “In the United States, freshman college students typically finish the end of their first year with little reading comprehension skills” (Lei, Rhinehart, Howard, & Cho, 2010, p. 30) in advocating for instructors across the disciplines using various reading strategies.

Potential effective strategies, according to Lei et al. (2010) include such methods as using students’ background knowledge, assigning relevant homework and classwork, but also using skill and drill methods to improve vocabulary, so that students “learn and practice the most frequent words until they become instant/sight words” (p. 95) and using SQ3R-style methods such as repeated reading of text. Though Lei et al. focus on English language learners, these are unfortunately the types of teaching methods regularly employed in developmental literacy classes, with the thought that using such “method for remediation is to increase students’ ability to decode the text until words are identified immediately” (p. 98) thus aiding in reading comprehension. An effective developmental literacy course, however, must avoid methods that encourage such repeated reading as

these methods do not encourage deep, active learning and engagement with different mediums and modes of text at different levels.

Research indicates that there is continued need for effective and efficient developmental education programs (Bettinger et al., 2013; CCRC, 2014; Gerlaugh et al., 2007) nationwide. The need is no less in the state of Texas. In a report to the Texas Legislature, the THECB proposed 2012-2017 statewide developmental education plan states that

the population of underprepared students in Texas higher education [...] accounts for more than 40 percent of all new enrollments at Texas public institutions of higher education in general, with more than 80 percent of those students enrolling in Texas public two-year colleges. (p. 1)

In a separate overview of the state of developmental education in Texas, THECB reports that of the more than 40% requiring developmental education, about 32% enroll directly from high school and almost 56% do not enroll directly after high school (Overview, 2012). Based on the numbers the conclusion is that readiness—or making certain students begin higher education with the academic levels to succeed—should be a focus of improvement, while at the same time continuing to try new ways of implementing effective developmental education programs.

Gap in the Literature

The present study contributes to the research of Latinas in college and adds to the literature that informs students' readiness to transfer from community colleges to four-year institutions. There is, for instance, a study that looked at determining factors of intent to transfer among Black male community college students, researchers found that

students who identified transferring as a primary goal were more committed to their educational goals, as indicated by the time spent studying; and were more involved in extracurricular activities, which is an indication of social integration. These students were also more engaged in active and collaborative learning and used student services on campus, which is reflective of academic integration. (Wood & Palmer, 2016, pp. 20-21)

Another interesting finding from the Wood and Palmer study was the conclusion that “participation in developmental education was a positive predictor of students’ intention to transfer as a primary goal” (2016, p. 21). However, there is no similar study for Latinas in community college.

As shown in this review, the existing research that addresses familial support of women of color in academia (Meléndez & Meléndez, 2010) and the stress Latina college students experience in academia (Gloria & Castellanos, 2012) and even, identity development of Latina community college students (Zell, 2010); however, there is no research that uses a reading lens when addressing access and success of Latina students in postsecondary education.

In addition, this study aligns with literature that addresses the importance of education for the female in Latinx families because of perceived cultural beliefs of a woman’s role within the family (Aguayo et al., 2011; Castillo et al., 2010), Latinx mothers’ roles encouraging their daughters’ academic goal attainments (Mireles-Rios & Romo, 2014), their influence in Latino males’ education (Saenz et al., 2018), and other studies that speak to the value of focusing on Latinas in postsecondary education

(Castillo-Montoya & Torres-Guzman, 2012; Gonzalez et al., 2003) and the missed opportunities when this population is ignored (Gloria et al., 2005; Kiyama, 2018).

Summary of Chapter 2

In chapter two, I began with an explanation of the three pillars of my conceptual framework. Knowing that all parts “of the study are affected by its theoretical framework” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 86), my search of the literature was guided by my assumptions, which I used to guide my research of the literature and on which I base my conceptual framework. Following, I reviewed the literature on Latinas and cultural expectations and synthesized findings of studies documenting that cultural expectations are a strong motivator for Latinas students. The section on Latinas and familismo offered information on the family as at times a source of stress for Latinas, but also an important part of Latinas’ lives and often the basis of decision making. I included a discussion on Latinas and the marianismo belief system because, though controversial, over the decades marianismo has become an often researched topic, and it is a term that is now being repurposed as a showing that Latinas can keep their Latinidad and move forward with their education and in achieving all their goals.

Further, I found it necessary to give an overview of the community college history to explain why it is the first place where many students matriculate following high school graduation—including Latinas. The section on developmental education was detailed because I think it important to make clear why and how the field gained its place in postsecondary education and why it should remain in postsecondary institutions. It was also important to present the field before discussion in specifics the domain of college developmental reading. In their totality, the topics I presented in this chapter are meant to

form an argument for the importance of investigating how first-time-in-college Latina students enrolled in developmental literacy coursework at a community college and with aspirations to transfer to a four-year institution perceive their readiness for transition.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study explored self-perceptions of readiness to transfer from community college to a four-year institution through a reading lens because placing in developmental literacy courses is often presented as a barrier to transfer and this was an opportunity to document student voices about what they believe will help them prepare to transfer and what they think is meant by reading readiness to transfer (Crisp & Delgado, 2014). My focus population is Latina college students because Latinas form part of a student population, the Latinx population, that matriculates in consistently high numbers at community colleges (source) and as Latinas' self-perceptions of readiness to transfer may provide information that is immediately useful to postsecondary developmental literacy instructors and student advisors. A driving force of my study is helping Latina college students successfully meet their postsecondary educational goals. To address the problem of readiness to transition from community colleges to four-year baccalaureate-granting institutions, the research questions in this study sought to inquire the following about Latina students enrolled in developmental literacy coursework at a community college and with aspirations to transfer to a four-year institution:

1. Why do Latina college students report beginning their postsecondary education at a community college instead of enrolling directly at a four-year institution?
2. How do Latina college students perceive their readiness for transition to a four-year institution?
3. How do Latina college students perceive their reading readiness for a four-year institution?

Overview of Chapter 3

This chapter details the research methodology employed to explore how Latina students enrolled in developmental literacy coursework at a community college and with aspirations to transfer to a four-year institution (1) perceive their readiness for transition to a four-year university and, specifically, how these Latinas (2) perceive their reading readiness to transition. The rest of the chapter outlines the context of the study, research design, participant sampling and data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, and limitations.

Context of Study

The research site was a large, urban public two-year institution in Texas, identified in this study by the pseudonym SWCC (Southwest Community College). The college is a Hispanic-Serving Institution and in fall 2018 just over 37% of the 38,362 total student population was designated as Hispanic (THECB, 2019, p. 51). The college offers associate degrees and certificates. Developmental courses are offered in math, reading, and writing. Beginning fall 2019 all reading and writing courses became integrated; for clarity's sake, I call these classes developmental literacy throughout this study. When discussing the classes with study participants during interviews, however, I used the school catalogue name, INRW.

Student outcomes in the courses encompass academic literacy and cognitive markers that indicate a learner's readiness to move on to college-level reading and writing intensive courses. These outcomes include locating explicit textual information, drawing complex inferences, and describing, analyzing, and evaluating the information within and across multiple texts of varying lengths. Another outcome is understanding

and using vocabulary effectively in oral communication, reading, and writing. There are also reading across the curriculum outcomes that include identifying the intended purpose and audience of a text, critically analyzing textual information, adapting reading strategies according to structure of texts, and connecting reading to historical and current events and personal interest. In the next section, the present study's research design is outlined.

Research Design

According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007) qualitative research is composed of five features: naturalistic in that the researcher tries to obtain the information in the setting within which it occurs; descriptive data in that the researcher will collect all the possible data in as many methods and formats as possible to have rich and in-depth descriptions; concern with process in that researchers are interested in *how*, *why*, *what*, *when* and looking for specifics not just the outcomes of an investigation, but the process of it; inductive as the researchers are not trying to prove a hypothesis but “the abstractions are built as the particulars that have been gathered are grouped together” (p. 6) and the data emerges; and, finally, meaning in that researchers are seeking how the participants make meaning and will gather this information in the most accurate way possible.

In a more succinct manner, Creswell (2014) speaks of qualitative research as “an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 3). Maxwell (2013) holds that the most important consideration when deciding on a qualitative research design are the research questions, which in turn depend on the other components that Maxwell posits make up the research design. These components are: the goals, which outline the reasons for the study; the

conceptual framework, which helps place the research within existing theory and literature; the methods, which determine what will actually happen during the research; at the center of it all are the research questions which delineate what the researcher wants to understand; and, Maxwell has a fifth component to his model which he calls validity and explains the ways a researcher decides if conclusions are viable and what threats (or limitations) may exist. Based on the research questions that arose from the review of literature, a case study qualitative research design was the most appropriate for the present study.

Case Study Method

The case study can be implemented as a methodology and as a method (Creswell, 2013; Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013; Yin, 2009, 2014). Often referred to as the father of case study research, Stake (1995) wrote the seminal work on this design in which he defines the case study as “the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (p. xi). According to Stake, the case can be an intrinsic case study, which helps the researcher figure out some way of being or system or event that the researcher is curious about; or, it can be an instrumental case study, which serves the purpose of representing a greater problem, cause, system, etc.; and, the collective case study, in which the researcher investigates groups of entities that represent the search for a greater truth.

On the other hand, Yin (2014), defines case study as a study that “investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the case) in its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (p. 2). Yin stipulates that for a case study the researcher should seek answers to “how” and “why”

questions of a social phenomenon. Merriam (2009), a professor of adult education, offers the clearest guidance for designing a case study research in education. Merriam defines case study as “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (p. 40) emphasizes the importance of it being a bounded system. This means that the case study has finite data collection possibilities- there is a beginning and an end. Considering these definitions and explanations of case study by these methodologists, it became clear that based on the research questions the best design for the present study was a case study design. Specifically, I conducted a collective case study to “study a number of cases in order to investigate a phenomenon, population, or general condition” (Stake, 2000, p. 437), which in this instance is Latinas’ postsecondary literacy perceptions of readiness to transfer.

Ethical Considerations

This study was submitted for review and approval to the researcher’s university and the targeted community college’s Institutional Review Boards (IRB). All students present in the developmental literacy classes at the community college during participant recruitment visits, received a copy of IRB-approved informed consent forms. The forms provided students with detailed information about the study. As part of the recruitment efforts, all students were advised that, as part of the study, their anonymity would be maintained, and that no identifiable information of participants or institution would be included in the study. Equally important, both verbally and in writing, students were informed that participation throughout the investigation was voluntary and they were free to withdraw from the study at any time, no questions asked.

Participant Sampling

Purposeful sampling was used in this collective case study. Defined by Patton (2015) as the process of “selecting information-rich cases to study, cases that by their nature and substance will illuminate the inquiry question being investigated” (p. 264), purposeful sampling allowed for the selection of several cases to increase what could be learned about the research problem (Stake, 1995).

A total of eight classes were visited over a five-week period in the fall of 2019. In those eight classes, 61 students signed both consent forms and survey forms. Of the students who signed consent forms and completed the survey forms, 42 self-identified as female, and of those 19 expressed a willingness to participate in the study. Finally, of the 19 students who expressed an interest, six agreed to participate in the interviews. All six participants completed three separate interviews each.

Incentives

Participants were compensated in two separate ways for involvement with the study. As a sign of appreciation for allowing classroom recruitment and for listening to a presentation, the class received one or two baskets filled with a variety of candies and chocolates. In addition, study participants who completed all three interviews were compensated with a \$25 Visa gift card at the end of the third interview.

Participant Overview

The main sources of data for the current study were a series of interviews with Latina students who identified as first-time-in-college and were enrolled in a developmental literacy course at SWCC during their first (full) semester (one participant had previously attempted college, but stopped out after a couple of weeks). Students who

indicated on the survey form that they were willing to participate in the study were contacted via text message as soon as possible after the class visit. The text message included a brief introduction of who was sending the message and why the student was being contacted. Contacting the student as soon as possible after the visit was an important component as the visit would be a recent occurrence from the developmental literacy class. Responses to the initial text messages varied from students having changed their minds, not being interested, indicating they would contact the researcher at a later date, setting up meetings and then cancelling for numerous reasons, to the six who were willing and available to participate. This section provides a brief portrait of each participant. All names used are pseudonyms and are presented here alphabetically. Spanish is the native language of all study participants.

Alexa

Alexa chose to begin her postsecondary work at the community college because she felt it would help her get used to all the work she will do at a four-year university. She has read three books and various articles in her developmental literacy class but does not think she has learned any skills in that class that she uses in other classes, other than reading. Interestingly, she could choose the books she read in her developmental literacy class and she chose three books she had already read in high school. Alexa is the oldest of five children. Her mother emphasizes that school should be her priority, so Alexa does her best to keep up with schoolwork, even taking time to do journaling and other assignments while at work.

Carmen

Carmen enrolled directly at the community college after high school graduation because, she noted that, she thinks it is a good place to start before transferring to a four-year university. She believes her developmental literacy class is teaching her word usage and helping her improve her writing skills, but she does not think she uses any of the skills she is learning in her developmental literacy class in other classes. Carmen has four siblings; her parents are supportive of her education and tell her they make sacrifices so that she can complete her degree.

Concepción

Concepción did not apply to a four-year university because she did not think she would be accepted, and for this reason decided to begin at a community college. She has learned skills in her developmental literacy class, such as annotating, that she has used to figure out word problems in her math class. Concepción has two siblings; she is the middle child. Her parents know she will move on to a four-year university and believes it is up to her to do what is in her best interest.

Natalia

Natalia was attending her first full semester in college, but she had attempted college in 2017 when she graduated high school, but it did not go well; she stopped out a couple of weeks into the semester. Unlike the other participants, Natalia first learned to read in English, then was obligated to learn to read in Spanish when her mother sent her back to Mexico for a few years before returning to attend high school in the United States. Natalia enjoys her developmental literacy class and indicated that in her math class, she uses some of the reading strategies she has learned in her literacy class. She has

an older brother on whom she depends for advice. Natalia works a 40-hour per week job but is motivated to do her work at the community college and move on to a four-year university.

Olympia

Olympia applied but was not accepted to a four-year university. She decided to attend her local community college to acquire the basic requirements and then transfer to her first-choice university. Olympia believes she is learning good reading skills in her developmental literacy class and has used some of the strategies she learned in the developmental literacy class in her math class. She is an only child, lives at home with her parents, and works three different jobs to help her mother financially, and to pay for personal expenses.

Patricia

Community college was not Patricia's first choice, she never imagined herself attending a community college. Patricia is the oldest of four children in her family. She has not done much extensive reading in her developmental literacy class- all their readings have been online resources, articles and one short online book. One thing she has learned in her reading class that she has used in her other classes is simply to focus or pay attention while reading. She is very close to her mother, who advises Patricia to stay in school and complete her degree. Patricia is eager to move on the four-year university of her choice.

In the next section the study's research design is described, including method used, data collection, data analysis, researcher positionality, and trustworthiness.

Data Collection

Data collection procedures for the case study investigation included gaining access to the cases through a full-time employee at the community college. Once my applications to the institutional review boards (IRB) at the home institution and the target institution were approved, developmental literacy instructors at the community college were contacted to request permission to address students for approximately 10-15 minutes either at the beginning or the end of class to explain the study and recruit participants. Included in the presentations was an appeal to students' sympathetic participation through an explanation of the researcher's background as the first in the family to go to college and, currently, as a student wanting to complete a degree requirement (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Also, it was hoped that a connection would be made by opening up about being a first-generation Latina college student who placed into developmental math as an undergraduate. At these visits, first consent forms were distributed and read to the class. Then, the recruitment instrument, the survey, was distributed. Following, details are provided about the data collection instruments used in this study.

Data Collection Instruments

There were two major collection instruments: a survey form and interview protocols and are each described in this section.

Surveys

Survey instruments (Appendix A) were distributed to all students in attendance at the time developmental literacy classes were visited. The surveys served as a participant recruitment tool. It was made clear to all students in class that the survey was a

recruitment tool and if they were interested in participating, then there was space in the form for them to provide contact information. Both through the verbal presentation and written information, clarity was provided in the form of explaining the participants sought for study participation. The survey requested 12 different data points: gender, age category, race/ethnicity, high school month/year graduation, semester in college, reason for attending community college, first in family to attend college, main languages used for communication, first language in which student learned to read, languages student reads now, why did student register for the developmental literacy class, and student's educational goals. The last page of the survey was a contact information page on which to provide name, email, and mobile number, if student was willing to participate in the study.

Prior to completing the survey students were provided with informed consent forms (Appendix C), which was read to the students and explained that if they decided to participate in this first part of the study, they could sign the consent form and then complete the survey. Also, it was explained that not participating would not affect course grades in any way. All students, whether they chose to participate by completing the survey or not, were given a copy of the consent form to keep. Students who indicated on the survey forms a willingness to participate in the rest of the study were contacted if they met the study participant criteria.

Interviews

After every class visit, I sorted the surveys and immediately began sending text messages to students who had provided contact information and indicated an interest in participating in the study. This began the process of setting up the first interviews as soon

as possible after visiting classes in the hope that potential participants would not have a change of heart. All interviews took place on the same SWCC campus where the student attended the developmental literacy class. At the end of the first interview, I discussed and set up a date and time for the second interview. The process was the same for the third and final interview.

Yin (2009) differentiates between different levels of questions with Level 1 being specific questions asked of interviewees during interviews, Level 2 are asked of each case during within-case analysis, Level 3 are asked of patterns or themes between cases, Level 4 are asked of the entire study as a way of understanding the big picture, and Level 5 are questions directed at study conclusions as they affect policies (p. 87). I kept these in mind while collecting data and was able to return to these and address them as part of my data analysis. However, I drew heavily from Seidman (2013) for the three-interviews format I used to collect data for this study.

First Interview. The first interview with Latina college students with aspirations to transfer were level 1 questions as they are those asked of all participants during each of three meetings. Seidman (2013) posited that “at the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (p. 9). The goal for this first interview was understanding participants’ reading developments and the potential importance placed on reading for college success to assist with students’ transition to a four-year institution. Questions for the first interview (Appendix B) delved into participants’ reading histories and development, such as “Think back to when you first learned to read and tell me about that

experience—how old were you? Who taught you to read? In what language or languages did you first learn to read?”

Second Interview. Seidman (2013) suggested that the second interview “concentrate on the concrete details of the participants’ present lived experience in the topic area of the study” (p. 21). Therefore, during this interview I asked the participant to talk about her life now: what experiences are you having in the developmental literacy class? What is your schedule like including all your responsibilities and study time? What else do you do besides school? At the end of the second interview, I made an appointment to meet for the third and final interview.

Third Interview. For the third and final interview with Latina college students with aspirations to transfer I focused on asking participants to reflect on specific meanings, such as the meaning of college readiness and reading readiness. I asked participants to consider why they find it important to transfer to a four-year university and complete a college degree.

Member Checking

There are numerous ways to conduct member checks and allow for findings to be “subjected to the scrutiny of the persons who provided information (or counterpart persons)” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 236). Creswell (2013) categorizes member checking as one of eight validation strategies—these strategies include prolonged observation, triangulation of methods, peer review, negative case analysis, clarifying researcher biases, member checking, rich and thick descriptions of cases, and external audits (pp. 250-252). The member checking strategy used in this study consisted of reading a summary of the first two interviews to each of the participants at the beginning of the

third interview. After reading the summary, I asked for participants' reactions, suggestions for changes, and specifically I asked for corrections of information I may have misunderstood. This was a valuable part of the research and it had the added benefit of serving as concrete evidence to my study participants that I heard them, I appreciated them, and I was interested in each one as an individual.

Data Analysis

This study was based primarily on data collected from Latina college student interviews, even though sampling and data analysis were informed by the surveys. Data analysis was inductive, with a goal toward using logical thinking for identifying themes that remain true to participants' voices and consider all available evidence (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2009). The data were gathered during fall semester 2019, with participants recruitment and interviews beginning shortly after IRB approval was granted by the community college in October and final interviews taking place in December. Drawing on Seidman's (2013) three-interview series, the six students each participated in three interviews in which they discussed their reading histories, recounted experiences in their developmental literacy courses, and reflected on their perceptions of readiness to transfer to four-year universities, all of these being elements that align with my research questions. The three-interview format allowed for various opportunities for Latina college students to discuss why they chose to begin their postsecondary education at a community college rather than enrolling directly at a four-year institution (RQ1), how they perceive their readiness for transition to a four-year university (RQ2), and how they perceive their reading readiness for a four-year university (RQ3).

Immediately after the first interview and similarly with all subsequent interviews, the audio-recording was uploaded and sent to a professional transcription service. Turn-around time between submission of audio for transcription to receipt of transcribed interview was from a few hours to two days. Not having specified verbatim transcriptions for the first two audio-recordings meant spending time adding all the “ums,” “ahs,” and re-starts, but for all subsequent audio-recordings, verbatim transcriptions were selected. The importance of reviewing the transcripts immediately after receipt became more apparent after reading a second interview transcript that was unacceptable. If any instances in the transcripts were marked as “inaudible” by the transcription service, I consulted field notes and replayed the audio until the words were clear. There was thus only one certain instance that the words could not be deciphered, and the text remained labeled as “inaudible.” The pre-coding phase included a first listen and edit of the transcript, before returning to the audio recording and transcript of an interview with an initial thought of the conceptual framework for guidance on codes that might develop from the first review of data.

Saldaña (2016) divides coding into two main cycles, first and second, which I have opted to call phases because the data underwent ongoing development or change through constant comparative interaction and each phase afforded a different view of the data with each round of analysis. As per Seidman (2013) and Merriam (2009), the process of coding data begins with reading and making annotations along the margins of the text of those items that are interesting or stand out in some way to the researcher. Annotating of text was included in a preliminary phase of data analysis; that and all coding phases are explained over the following several sections of this document.

Explanation of Coding Phases

Data analysis for this study revolved around three phases of coding with multiple rounds within each phase. The first phase consisted of a series of rounds of preliminary coding of within-case analysis and included in vivo hand coding, descriptive coding in MAXQDA, and affective (emotions, values, valuation) in MAXQDA. The second phase of coding for within-case analysis drew from Saldaña (2016) to sort the data into categories using open coding and from Merriam (2009) to “visualize how the categories work together” (p. 189), which allowed me to develop categories from the various rounds of data analysis. Phase three of data analysis was the cross-case analysis to search for themes across the cases (Yin, 2009, 2014). Each phase of coding is detailed below.

Phase 1—Within-Case Analysis

According to Saldaña (2016), in vivo “as a code refers to a word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative data record” (p. 105). Through the implementation of in vivo coding and using “the actual language of the participant” (Creswell, 2014, p. 198), the focus remained on participants’ words and, more importantly, it is authentic to the Chicana/Latina feminist epistemology as this centered Latinas’ voices within the research. That was the first round. A second round of coding in this preliminary phase allowed data to be examined using the study’s research questions and conceptual framework. In this second round, text was analyzed using a descriptive coding method. In this way, descriptive codes allowed for a focus on repeated words and phrases, such as “time management” and “reading,” which could prove meaningful after further analysis. Conducting this descriptive round of coding was important because it

kept the focus on participants' words and on their descriptions of personal experiences, which would continue to guide what would eventually emerge as the themes of the study.

Finally, phase one of within-case analysis involved a third round of coding using Saldaña's (2016) affective methods as a way of delving deep into students' perceptions of their readiness to transfer. Merriam (2009) holds that "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 5), and implementing affective methods coding provided the tools for investigating participants' words for their subjective meanings. For Saldaña (2016) affective methods coding is an umbrella term that includes coding for emotions, values, and evaluation. Saldaña explained that

affective coding methods investigate subjective qualities of human experience (e.g., emotions, values, conflicts, judgments) by directly acknowledging and naming those experiences. Some researchers may perceive these methods as lacking objectivity or rigor for social science inquiry. But affective qualities are core motive for human action, reaction, and interaction and should not be discounted from our investigations of the human condition. (2016, p. 124)

With a goal toward documenting the participants' experiences, actions, and meanings as they relate to the research questions and participants' perceptions of readiness to transfer, data were coded in separate readings for signs of emotions (3a), values/beliefs (3b), and evaluations (3c). Examples for these types of codes included "love" for when a participant stated she used to love reading and "sad" for a response about feeling sad and overwhelmed with school; the values/beliefs codes included

discussions of “family” and wanting to make parents proud because of sacrifices parents made for participant’s education; and evaluation codes were used for discussions about what institutions at both the high school and college levels could do to help participants prepare for postsecondary education and prepare to transfer to four-year institutions.

Following is an explanation of each round of coding in the preliminary phase.

Phase 1 Round 1—In Vivo Coding

As this was a collective case study and each participant represented a single case (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009), it was appropriate to use in vivo coding as the first round because it is categorized by Saldaña as a “generic coding method” (2016, p. 73), and allowed for the first round of coding to use participants’ words verbatim. The first round of coding was done by hand and followed Seidman’s (2013) recommendation for researchers [to] work first with a paper copy of the interview material and then transfer their highlighting and labeling to a computer file. Therefore, in this preliminary round the transcripts were edited while listening to the audio and confirming verbatim transcription of participants’ words. Hard copies of the transcripts were then printed leaving a wide right margin for annotations and in vivo coding. In this round, words and phrases that were deemed significant were highlighted, written in the margins, and any evaluative comments added. The goal of this first round was gaining familiarity with participants’ words, phrases, expressions, and even with the speaker’s tone. Round one was conducted after receiving the initial transcript from the transcription service, which was often within a day of meeting with participant. In this way, this first round of in vivo coding included notes and observations from the recent meeting. Table 1 is an example of the first round of in vivo coding with observer evaluative comment.

Table 1*Phase 1 Round 1—In Vivo Coding Method Example*

Participant	Quote	Annotations
Natalia	“Well, right now were working on, um, analysis of educational history, and we have read, um, <i>I Just Wanna Be Average</i> by Mike Rose, <i>The College Fear Factor</i> by Rebecca D. Cox, and... also other readings.”	talking about what she is working on in her developmental literacy class o.c.: there is quite a drastic difference in reading assignments per class

Round two of the preliminary coding phases included uploading the text to the qualitative data analysis software program, MAXQDA, and then conducting descriptive coding of data. The purpose of using the software program was to have a single, secure digital space where data were organized and managed. An explanation of the descriptive coding method conducted in the second round of phase 1 is provided in the following section.

Phase 1 Round 2—Descriptive Coding

Even though Saldaña (2016) “strongly recommend[s] that Descriptive Coding *not* be used for case study or small group interview transcripts because the noun-based codes of this method will not reveal very much insight into participants’ minds” (emphasis in the original, p. 102), using the descriptive codes method in this round was appropriate because it was an opportunity to dissect the data and learn from it through a different perspective. Despite this being a preliminary round in the sense that no definitive decision was being made about codes, this second round was the first phase of generating codes in that tentative words were included from the study’s research questions and the

conceptual framework. For example, words and phrases from the conceptual framework included such codes as “learning in Spanish helped,” and “family,” which referenced Chicana/Latina feminist thoughts; “self-realizations, epiphanies,” “helping-siblings,” and “Spanish spoken during interview” were codes that spoke to potential matters of intersectionality; “reading decline” and “reading improvement” were codes that referenced lifelong reading development. Examples of codes that related to the study’s research questions in this round included “CC reasons,” and “schooling expectations” as references to reasons for matriculating at a community college rather than directly at a four-year institution; “readiness to transfer” and “transfer of learning” which described participants’ readiness for transition to a four-year institution; and, codes such as “reading-ready meaning” and “reading skills and strategies,” which helped assess participants’ perceived reading readiness for a four-year institution.

Coding in this round consisted of reading participants’ answers to questions and generating the words or phrases that best fit the participant’s response. Illustrations of this round of coding are provided in tables 2 and 3. For example, the Vocabulary/Grammar code (table 2) was generated after multiple readings of the transcripts showed that all participants had something to say about word usage, vocabulary, or grammar. The code was noted per individual participant and began to provide a picture of a potential theme for what participants perceived they need to know before transferring. Yet, at this point in the data analysis process, no meaning was placed on words or phrases used by participants. Similarly, data were coded for family (table 3) any time family was mentioned in any interaction with participants, without seeking to arrive at any type of insight this early in the analysis stage.

Table 2*Phase 1 Round 2—Descriptive Coding Method Examples*

Participants	Vocabulary/Grammar Codes
Carmen	I feel like this class has helped me a lot, especially in like, words that people confuse. For example, like where and then wear, all those words.
	I know it's different, like how my spelling is way better, my grammar is better.
Concepción	I hate that, you know. I wish I could, uh, read more in order for me to, you know, um, expand my vocabulary.
	I'm gonna have to like expand that vocabulary type. So, I think specific books will help me-

Table 3*Phase 1 Round 2—Descriptive Coding Methods Examples*

Participants	Family Code
Carmen	I have four siblings. I'm the oldest from the girls, so one boy and we're all girls
	my brother came here, he was going to transfer, but right now he's taking a little bit of a break.
Concepción	my dad I think he dropped out of high school, then my mom, uh, she didn't finish, uh. She finished I think around middle school I believe, eighth grade.
	He actually, he graduated with, uh, class of 2017. He, um, once he was done in high school he just started working, you know.

Next, there is a description of the third and final round of the preliminary phase of data analysis.

Round 3—Affective Methods Coding

Conducting descriptive coding was valuable because it began the process of using codes that were shaped by the study's research questions and conceptual framework. However, because round 2 of coding was focused on words, a third round of analysis in this preliminary phase of coding was conducted in MAXQDA to begin fleshing out participants' self-perceptions of readiness to transfer. Saldaña (2016) was again an instrumental guide in this effort to find a coding method that would allow for another in-depth review of the data. The affective methods codes included emotion, values, and evaluation coding and were used in this analysis because it was noted during the several times that the interviews were listened to and the transcripts were read that participants expressed a multitude of emotions that needed to be acknowledged (Miles et al., 2014). Discussions of family were marked by descriptions of familial values and beliefs, and participants also had evaluative comments about what can be done differently at both the high school and college levels. According to Saldaña, "affective qualities are core motives for human action, reaction, and interaction" (2016, p. 124) and in this study, in which Latina voices are centered, the using the affective methods coding for emotion, values, and evaluation provided another level of understanding of participants' experiences.

For this round of coding, the interview transcripts were uploaded to the software program to begin anew. Implementing Saldaña's (2016) affective methods coding, which covers a variety of coding approaches, meant that this third round consisted of three

separate sub-rounds with the documents: round 3a, round 3b, and round 3c. The first sub-round described here is emotions (3a) codes. These are codes that “label the emotions recalled and/or experienced by the participant or inferred by the researcher about the participant” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 125). In this round, data were highlighted and coded for any expressions of emotions, such as hope, love, pride, sadness, regret, and even confusion. Through this emotions coding process, questions arose as to whether emotions play a part in participants’ decisions to attend community college or in their self-perceptions of readiness to transfer. Table 4 offers examples of data coded for emotions.

Table 4

Affective Methods Coding—Emotion Codes Examples

Participants	Phase 1 Round 3a		
	Code: Hope	Code: Regret	Code: Sad
Concepción		You know, there wa- I was just, wouldn’t read that much. I kind of regret it, you know.	
Natalia	But completing my degree will make me feel accomplished.		Cause if I don’t- if I don’t go to see her at all, then it gets really sad y’know.
Olympia		So, like I honestly regret Friday. I feel, I feel dumb that I didn’t do the... Uh, what’s it called? The work, ‘cause that’s if. If it’s not gonna... It’s gonna affect me, but it’s gonna affect my grade too, like-	And I, I’ve already faced one. Like one example, like on Friday I was not f- Was it Friday? I think it was, yeah, it was Friday night. I was like, I wasn’t depressed, but I was like sad. Like, like, like all my like-
Patricia		Um, I, my grades were really bad. They were really	

low and I regret it. I
 re- really regret it.
 Um. But I guess
 books never caught
 my attention when
 I was in high
 school.

These emotions were at times also included in discussions about the participant’s family values or beliefs. Therefore, sub-round 3b involved re-reading the transcripts with the goal of labeling value statements. Saldaña (2016) explains that value codes “reflect a participant’s values, attitudes, and beliefs, representing his or her perspectives or worldview” (p. 131). Similar to emotions coding, questions arose about the influence of participants’ values, beliefs, or even attitudes about school, family, transferring, and reading that might have provided answers to the study’s research questions or aligned with the conceptual framework. For example, a values/beliefs code included in this round was “BA as necessary for career and social advancement,” another was “expectations of college,” both of which spoke to participants’ self-perceptions of readiness to transfer. Table 5 shows responses coded for the value participants placed on a bachelor’s degree as necessary for career and social advancement.

Table 5

Affective Methods Coding—Values/Beliefs Code Examples

Participants	Phase 1 Round 3b
	Code: BA as necessary for career and social advancement
Alexa	Yes. I’ve always wanted to be teaching.
Carmen	Hm, like I said, uh, they’re gonna give me, ah... They’re gonna get me through, get higher in my education.
	Yeah, I want to be an orthodontist.
	Because it shows that I put effort in everything I did.

Concepción	It will help me in the future to have a better, uh, a better life and more better life than what my parents had.
Natalia	I want to grow to be something better. So, that's why I feel like a, transferring to a four-year university maybe will give me more, expand my brain.
Olympia	And I was like, "Yeah." And then my stepdad recently asked, and I was like, "No, I think I'm gonna be a doctor, not a doctor, but like the ped-pediatric nurse." So completing my degree is important to me because I want to have like, I want to be independent when I grow up. I don't want to depend like, get married, depend on my husband too much.
Patricia	Well when I grow up I wanna be a behavior analyst. Uh. But I know if I went to like a four-year college, I'm gonna be like happy.

Finally, sub-round 3c of affective methods coding was evaluative codes. In the course of reading the transcripts and listening to the audio recordings, participants' comments came to the fore about their high school experiences and their ideas of what high school, college, and educators at these levels could do better. For this sub-round, data were considered for statements that appeared to offer evaluative comments. Saldaña (2016) states that these "codes emerge from the evaluative perspective of the researcher or from the qualitative commentary provided by participants" (p. 141). Table 6 offers examples of data coded using evaluative codes, sub-round 3c, for "How others can help."

Table 6

Affective Methods Coding—Evaluative Code Examples

Participants	Phase 1 Round 3c
	Code: How others can help
Alexa	In the community college, I think that they should, in my point of view, or maybe I just, I've never heard about it, but do more like groups too, so they can show us what we need or how we can transfer to a university.

Carmen

Um, I feel like high school teachers should start having, like, special classes. Like, I know they have special classes, but they should make it for everyone because when I was in high school, they didn't teach me anything about college.

Natalia

Well, for my instructor, [...], to give me more, uh, more like readings for my personal reading. But not for a grade. you know. But just for me to take with me.

Olympia

And then the college, I feel like the community college is, has been helping me out a lot. Even though I could have gotten a little more help- ... with the teachers.

By this point in the data analysis process, there was a comfortable familiarity reached with the data, which completed the preliminary phase. It was time to begin identifying codes that would eventually be collapsed into categories. Based on memos written throughout the preliminary coding phase on my thought processes about the coding, I had reached what Saldaña (2016) calls the post-coding transitional stage. Uncertain as to how to proceed after the multiple rounds of coding, it was best to step away from the data for a few days, return to the literature, read the memos, and consider next steps. After reading further in Saldaña (2016) and Merriam (2009), I opted for reading the participants' words without my words, meaning that I took from the transcripts my questions and commentaries. By this point, I was familiar enough with the data to know what question the participants were answering at what point in the conversation. This would begin phase two of the data analysis.

Phase 2—Codes to Categories Development—Within-Case Analysis

Though time consuming, the separate rounds of coding in phase 1 ultimately helped determine the type of coding in phase 2 that would lead to building categories and, eventually, themes. Saldaña calls this phase the second cycle and he holds that at this

stage, the existing codes “are reorganized and reconfigured to eventually develop a smaller and more select list of broader categories, themes, concepts, and/or assertions” (p. 234). For the first round of phase 2, I opted for eclectic or open coding (Saldaña, 2016), which Saldaña classifies as a transition code in that it is helpful after “an initial review of the corpus and provides additional methods for reorganizing and reconfiguring your transformed work” (p. 212). The codes used to label participants’ responses in round 1 of phase 2 were largely determined by the research questions and the researcher assumptions that informed the conceptual framework. This phase of data analysis consisted of two rounds of coding and categorizing. Details of each round of coding in phase 2 are provided in the next section.

Phase 2 Round 1—Eclectic (Open) Coding

For this round, hard copies of every participant’s interview were printed; these print outs contained only the participants’ words. The data were coded by hand. Merriam (2009) states that “the challenge is to construct categories or themes that capture some recurring pattern that cuts across your data” (p. 181), and as such this phase of coding served to revise the phase 1 codes into more targeted categories directly linked to the study’s research questions. In this phase of coding, the focus was on finding responses that spoke to participants’ decisions for choosing community college over a four-year institution, to their perceptions of readiness to transfer, and to their perceived reading readiness for a four-year institution. During the process of labeling the transcripts, previous codes were revisited with the intention of organizing codes into larger categories. According to Merriam (2009) “category construction is data analysis” (p. 178), and so began the process of analyzing the data again, but this time reading only

participants' words, allowing a focus on what mattered to them specifically. In this way chunks of text for each individual interview were labeled using constant comparison of data. The first round of phase two eclectic/open coding yielded 21 codes as illustrated in table 7.

Table 7

Phase 2 Round 1 Eclectic/Open Codes List

Code Name	Abbreviation
1. Community college is not the big school	CC≠Uni or CC≠C ded or
2. Dedicated	FOCUS
3. Education journey	Ed. J
4. Family	FAM
5. Focus	FOCUS
6. Languages	LAN
7. Personal goals	P.G.
8. Reading decline	R-
9. Reading development	R+
10. Reading growth	RG
11. Reading is reading	R=R
12. Reading skills & strategies	RS&S
13. Roadblock	RB
14. Self-doubts	SD
15. Self-awareness	Self
16. Support from others	Support
17. Time management	TIME
18. Transfer of Skills	ToS
19. Words=Education	W=E
20. Words=Knowledge	W=K
21. Writing emphasis	WE

To illustrate the thought process during this coding round, table 8 is a representation of hand-coded data that I labeled as Reading Development (**R+**) and Reading Decline (**R-**) for each of the participants.

Table 8*Phase 2 Round 1—Eclectic/Open Codes Examples*

Participants	Codes: Reading Development (R+)/ Reading Decline (R-)
Alexa	<p>Oh, uh, I started reading when I was in kindergarten. I was probably like five or six. (R+)</p> <p>That's where I started going a little bit like low on my reading. It was... I wouldn't get books from the library as much, except if it was required for my classes. (R-)</p>
Carmen	<p>Well, I started reading, I'm not sure when I started reading. I think I was in first grade and it was in Spanish. It was like, it was really easy for me to catch in Spanish. I don't know why. The more I read like the little books, I think it was in elementary, like it was crazy. And then I guess when English started to come up in my language, it wasn't as easy as I thought it was. (R+)</p> <p>Like, actual reading? Because high school is more of like you're reading problems, or like questions, but not like actual reading. (R-)</p>
Concepción	<p>You know, they started teaching me how to read in Spanish and then English. And, um, once I got into school, you know, um, I started reading in a higher level than the whole class. (R+)</p> <p>kinda made me little different, you know. I stopped reading for a little bit and, um, like my level of like, um, reading was going a little low, you know. So that happened. Um. And then, um, you know, I used to be, um, how do I say, I used to use more bigger words- (R-)</p>
Natalia	<p>Yeah. I learned how to read. We were reading books, fun books, like monkeys jumping on the bed. You know, those basic readings of children's. (R+)</p> <p>I kind of relate to the reading that my teacher gave us, ah, um, Achievement of Desire by Richard Rodriguez. He talks about how high school, um, they put you on different groups depending on how smart you are, and I was, I was one of those kids that were placed in the lower level 'cause I wasn't caught up on my English. Like, it was really bad. (R-)</p>
Olympia	<p>That's how I started reading English. I would read passages and I would annotate them on the side. Words I didn't know I would circle them and then the next day she would grade it and I would get some of them wrong because I didn't understand it. (R+)</p> <p>Yes. I liked the movie. I don't know why, but I like watching the movies better than reading. It gets my attention even more than the book. (R-)</p>

Patricia	And then she will, she gave them to me, I will start learning. I mean, I will start reading them. And then well basically I taught myself English. (R+)
	Um, because well whenever they separated me from my family, um, I couldn't, I guess I wouldn't read as much. (R-)

Phase 2 Round 2—Building Categories

For round 2 of this second phase, codes were collapsed into categories based on the study's research questions and loosely informed by the conceptual framework. To arrive at this point, the list of codes from the first round of phase 2 was reviewed and consideration given to how these codes might fit into categories defined by the research questions while addressing "the tight relationship between conceptual framework and the framing and analysis of data" (Ravitch & Riggan, 2017, p. 117) and how researcher assumptions and immersion in the theoretical literature influences the analysis of data. The result of this process is displayed in table 9 and table 10.

Table 9

Collapsing Codes into Categories Based on Research Questions

Why a 2yr v. 4yr (RQ1)	Readiness to Transition (RQ2)	Reading Readiness (RQ3)
1. Community college is not the big school	2. Dedicated	8. Reading decline
3. Education journey	5. Focus	9. Reading development
13. Roadblock	7. Personal goals	10. Reading growth
14. Self-doubts	15. Self-awareness	11. Reading is reading
	17. Time management	12. Reading skills & strategies
	18. Transfer of skills	19. Words=Education
		20. Words=Knowledge

Table 10*Collapsing Codes into Categories Based on Conceptual Framework*

Chicana/Latina Feminism	Intersectionality	Lifespan Development in Reading
4. Family	6. Languages	8. Reading decline
6. Languages		9. Reading development
16. Support from others		10. Reading growth
		21. Writing emphasis

Keeping in mind, Merriam's (2009) suggestion that applying the constant comparative method of data analysis and "making sense out of data involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read—it is the process of making meaning" (pp. 175-176), it was time once again to organize the data in MAXQDA where each participant had a separate file. Hand codes were transferred to the software program and through repeated immersion with the data, the categories within the individual cases were addressed. At this point in the data analysis, my goal was to do justice to the uniqueness of each case and identify the individual patterns that would lead to the various categories within each case (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2009). This was a rewarding experience as some of the results were quite enlightening. For example, Concepción gave many details about her family and eventually stated at our third meeting that, "I wish that my parents were a little more involved in my school," And, when speaking of what others can do to support and guide her, Concepción, stated:

Hmm, I feel like, well, my friends are, are really, you know, uh, supportive. ...My parents on the other hand, uh, well, my mom's always working. So, I rarely have time to talk to her to- ...about, like, what I'm doing.

Further analysis of the cases meant an opportunity to focus in on another participant's, Patricia's, sentiments about attending a community college. Patricia stated, "So, okay, SWCC was never my choice. Um. Never my choice. I never imagined myself going to SWCC, um because my goal was to go to a four-year college." Using this case as an example, in Figure 2 and Table 11 I illustrate how I went about making decisions about pattern coding that led to themes coding (Patton, 2015; Saldaña, 2016).

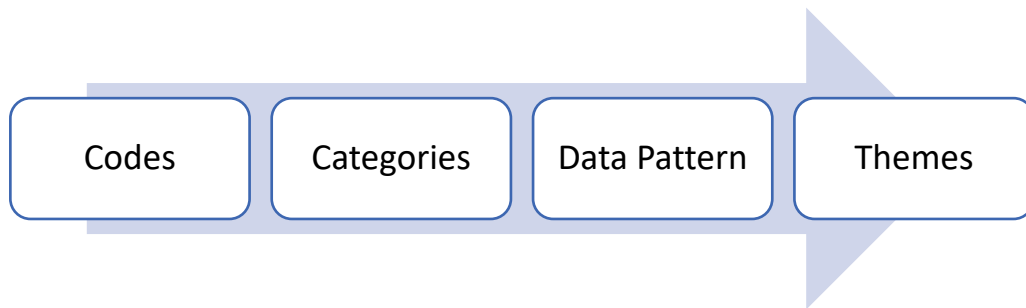


Figure 2. Arriving at Themes using Data Patterns

Table 11

Example of Data Patterns to Theme Development

Participant	Code	Category	Data	Theme
Patricia	CC ≠ Uni or CC ≠ C	Community College is not the big school	So, okay. SWCC was never my choice. So, I decided to go to SWCC because I didn't want to, I didn't wanna have a break. Because I know for a fact that if I stay at SWCC my two years, I know I don't wanna go to school again in, or like I wanna, okay so yo quiero ir a un colegio de verdad,	"CC as less than"

de cuatro años
(Spanish: *I want to
go to a real college,
of four years*).

While going through the process of categories development for individual cases, I wrote reflective memos about my observations of participants during the interviews and my own biases and personal involvement with each participant. For example, participants felt safe speaking Spanish with me and did so when they felt they could express their sentiments better in the Spanish language. I became aware of this action and this was the type of reflection that went into my memos which I then used to build the within-case analysis. I applied the same iterative process to phase 3 of data analysis, the cross-case analysis, explained in the next section.

Phase 3—Cross Case Analysis

Miles et al. (1994) posited that a “fundamental reason for cross-case analysis is to deepen *understanding and explanation*” (italics in original, p. 101), and Yin (2009) speaks of level 3 questions, which are those that address patterns across the cases. Similarly, Merriam (2009) and Patton (2015) mention the relevance of recurring patterns that lead to common themes. With this guidance in mind, for this phase of data analysis, I organized all the interview transcripts as one file in MAXQDA and began by listening to each audio recording while re-reading each transcript. As I listened to the audio and read the transcripts, I paid attention to words, phrases, or ideas that stood out as patterns. Specifically, for this phase of data analysis I drew from Saldaña’s (2016) focused coding and Patton’s (2015) cross-case pattern analysis and cross-case thematic analysis to arrive at findings that address the purpose of this study across all participants.

Using focused coding meant I “search[ed] for the most frequent or significant codes to develop the most salient categories in the data corpus” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 240) to conduct a cross-case pattern analysis, defined as “descriptions of actions, perceptions, experiences, relationships, and behaviors that are similar enough to be considered a manifestation of the same thing” (Patton, 2015, p. 551). Employing focused coding to conduct a cross-case thematic analysis of the data, which meant “interpreting and assigning meaning to a documented pattern by giving it a thematic name, a term that connotes and interprets the implications of the pattern” (Patton, 2015, p. 551). These types of data analysis methods for identifying themes across cases were appropriate for this study because these offered a very specific way of examining data through the study’s purpose of exploring how Latina students enrolled in developmental literacy coursework at a community college and with aspirations to transfer to a four-year institution perceive their readiness for transition to a four-year institution during their first semester in college.

In practical terms, using the research questions as guidance, phase 3 of data analysis meant organizing chunks of text from each case that seemed similar to the text from other cases, then noting the pattern of the chunks of text, and finally deciding on the theme represented by the patterns in the text. Table 12 illustrates the work that led the first theme of the cross-case analysis and the definition of that theme.

Table 12*Focused Coding for Cross-Case Theme #1*

Participants	Chunks of Text	Patterns	Common Categories/Themes
Alexa	"I feel like when I, when I got, got out of high school I wasn't prepared to go into like a higher education"	Not prepared for higher education, so applied to a community college	Community College is not higher education, not college
Carmen	"But I fell like I started off in community college because from what I've heard it's easier to get your credits and then transfer to a good university."	Community college is not challenging, so it is easier to get the credits you need for a four-year university	Community college is not challenging, is less than a good university
Concepción	"Um, I didn't for, because of that reason, cause I was like, well, they're not going to accept me. So, might as well just start here and just, you know, get the GPA up."	Will not be accepted with low grades at a four-year university, so will begin at a community college because it is not as difficult	Community college is easy, not challenging
Natalia	"Get familiarized with how colleges and get familiarized with the stuff that I'm going to learn in university because I know university, they're more strict, more ... They really, really grade you based on what you learn and remember. I think community college is more	Four-year university is stricter than a community college, which is more flexible so will start here to be ready to learn somewhere else at a higher level.	Community college is not strict, not challenging, is less than a four-year

flexible on how
you're learning.”

Olympia

“I'm learning day by day that's how a real college is going to be. So I feel like it's preparing me to go to a four-year university. I'm going to be a little bit more prepared for the big ones, an actual big college. I feel like it has gotten me mentally prepared for bigger things 'cause I know, I know this is not like the four year universities.”

Community college is not a real college, but it will prepare me for a real college, which is a four-year university.

Community college is not college, but will prepare me for a four-year university

Patricia

“I feel like yes because since, I feel like I just haven't tried in here because, I don't know, 'cause I just been bummed out- that I'm not into, I'm not in a four year college. And so, I just get sad. I don't know. I don't know how to explain it. Like I just get depressed because of that. But I know if I went to like a four year college, I'm gonna be like happy.”

It's not fun or exciting to be at a community college, would rather be at a four-year university.

Community college is not college; not something to be happy about attending

Theme #1 Participants descriptions of why they began their postsecondary education at community college depended largely on how

they perceived their goal of transferring to a four-year institution.

Definition The overall descriptor for attending community college was that of the community college as a steppingstone to something bigger and better.

By breaking the data into chunks that address the study’s research questions, I could identify cross-case connections of the data to the study’s purpose. In this way, I redefined some categories from within-case analysis and integrated others to develop cross-case themes. Rubin and Rubin’s (2005) recommendation that “to figure out what a specific concept means, you look at all the data units where that concept is discussed and then bring together in one file the separate definitions, examples, and refinements” (p. 203) was instrumental for illustrating the data analysis for this phase. Table 13 is another example of coding for the cross-case analysis of data. Here the second theme became evident through participants’ responses of needing guidance and support at different levels and from different entities.

Table 13

Focused Coding for Cross-Case Theme #2

Participants	Chunks of Text	Patterns	Common Categories/Themes
Alexa	“In the community college, I think that they should, in my point of view, or maybe I just, I've never heard about it, but do more like groups too, so they can show us what we need or how we can transfer to a	Support groups for students who want to transfer; guidance from someone who knows more, who has experience; students are expected to know what to do just because they are now in college	Students require support and guidance; no not expect students to automatically know what to do because they are now older and enrolled at the community college

	<p>university. 'Cause I'm new at this and I don't know what to do or where to go or like what's gonna happen, so I would like a little bit like a guidance-”</p> <p>“Cause I know we have to do stuff by own 'cause we are growing up, but just a little guidance of what to do or what to expect.”</p>		
Carmen	<p>“Um, I feel like high school teachers should start having, like, special classes. Like, I know they have special classes, but they should make it for everyone because when I was in high school, they didn't teach me anything about college.”</p>	<p>Support at different institutional levels, so not just from the community college but also from the high schools before students enroll at a postsecondary institution- support from teachers</p>	<p>There are unmet institutional expectations; students expect to be prepared for the different academic levels</p>
Concepción	<p>“So, you know, even, it doesn't have to be just like for them [community college teachers] to listen you about, like, what's going on at home, just like about everything, you know. Just ideas, you know, they've been through some more stuff than we have. We're barely starting, you know.”</p>	<p>Teachers and others at the college already know what students who want to transfer need to know, more communication with students, guidance from teachers</p>	<p>Support and guidance from teachers so that students feel they are backed in their goals</p>

Natalia	<p>“Well, for my instructor, Ms. B., to give me more, uh, more like readings for my personal reading. You know. But just for me to take with me. So other people would just throw it away, not read it. But I would read it.”</p>	<p>If teachers see that a student is not being challenged, then offer more work and expect more from those students, support to learn more</p>	<p>Academic support and guidance, challenge the students</p>
Olympia	<p>“And like... They show us little by little how it's going to be in a four year. I mean they, in the four year what's it called? University, like in my English class like, she doesn't pass out like any notes.”</p> <p>“And then the college, I feel like the community college is, has been helping me out a lot. Even though I could have gotten a little more help ...with the teachers.”</p>	<p>Support from teachers and guidance on what to expect at the four-year university</p>	<p>Support and guidance from teachers at community colleges because they know what students do not yet know</p>

Theme #2 As students with aspirations to transfer, participants stated they need guidance, information, and resources to meet their educational goals.

Definition Students seek and require institutional support and guidance once at the community college to meet educational requirements to be college-ready, transfer ready, and to complete a degree.

Trustworthiness

Many qualitative researchers choose to adhere to the construct of validity, such as Maxwell (2013) who when discussing validity of data posits that though the concept's applicability to qualitative research is doubted by many researchers, this is a way of examining the ways the researcher may be wrong and "as a component of your research design, consists of your of these threats and the strategies you use to discover if they are plausible in your actual research situation" (2013, p. 123). Still others, such as Lincoln and Guba (2000) find that a big problem with validity in qualitative research is that subjectivity and bias have long been difficult to separate; they state that there is one

central question imbedded in validity: How do we know when we have specific social inquiries that are faithful enough to some human construction that we may feel safe in acting on them, or, more important, that members of the community in which the research is conducted may act on them? (p. 180)

Lincoln and Guba also posit that there is an ethical relationship with validity that links what we know with the way in which we know and influences the researchers' relationship with the study participants. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) also speak of trustworthiness and state, "It is the training, experience, and 'intellectual rigor' of the researcher, then, that determines the credibility of a qualitative research study" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 260). Merriam and Tisdell note that it is during the data collection and findings dissemination that ethical issues most commonly arise. In this argument, I choose to use the term trustworthiness as it seems to reflect the nature of the qualitative paradigm more accurately.

In the present study I aimed to achieve trustworthiness before collecting data through the clarification and acknowledgement of my personal assumptions, during data collection via member-checking, and throughout the study by writing reflective memos. It was important to acknowledge my biases and assumptions to minimize “the influence of the researcher on the setting or individuals studied” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 124). According to Maxwell, “qualitative research is primarily concerned with understanding how a *particular* researcher’s values and expectations may have influenced the conduct and conclusions of the study (which may be either positive or negative) and avoiding the negative consequences of these” (italics in original, p. 124). To avoid inflicting my own values on the data, I summarized the first two interviews and read the summary to the participant at the beginning of the third interview. This member-checking process gave participants an opportunity to check the accuracy of both their history and my understanding of their experiences. Based on my own past, I brought my own preconceived ideas to the interactions with participants and, for this reason and through the writing of memos I was able to reflect on my reactions, thoughts, and ideas while collecting and analyzing study data. Presenting myself as a Latina first-generation college student when recruiting participants may certainly have influenced students’ decisions to participate (Creswell, 2014).

Summary of Chapter 3

In chapter three, I outlined the study context, the case study methodology I used to investigate how first-time-in-college Latina students enrolled in developmental literacy at a community college and with aspirations to transfer to a four-year institution perceive their readiness for transition via a reading lens. I explained the process of data collection

and data analysis, discussed trustworthiness of research, and included a discussion of the limitations of the present study.

IV. FINDINGS

As the previous chapter was a detailed explanation of the coding process, this chapter is a presentation of the study's within-case and cross-case themes and how these informed the present study's four major findings. The purpose of the present study was to explore self-perceptions of Latina students' readiness to transfer from a community college to a four-year institution, and to investigate these self-perceptions of readiness through a reading lens. All six study participants were enrolled in a developmental literacy class, and though the class was integrated reading and writing, the study focus was reading because studies have shown that most learning in college happens through reading (Nist & Simpson, 2002; Odom, 2013). Participants were interviewed three separate times. At the first interview, participants shared their reading histories, at the second interview, participants talked about what specifically they were doing and learning in the developmental literacy class and provided information about their daily schedules, and at the third interview participants reflected on their readiness to transfer and defined in their own words the constructs college-ready and reading-ready.

These three interviews resulted in many pages of data that were then analyzed in three separate phases. Phase one of data analysis was a preliminary phase to gain familiarity with the data. This phase was divided into three separate rounds, beginning with a round of in vivo hand coding of transcripts, continuing with descriptive coding using a software program for organization and data management purposes, and finalizing with a round of affective methods coding, which included three separate sub-rounds to code data for emotions, values/beliefs, and evaluative codes. Table 14 demonstrates a list of 40 codes after the first phase of data analysis, which in the software program,

MAXQDA, were linked to an emoji or some other symbol for reasons of data management.

Table 14

Data Entry Codes in MAXQDA After Phase 1 Round 1

Code	Definition
Books - Specifics	references made to specific books, either by title, author, or content
Career Expectations	statements related to future career ambitions or expectations
CC Reasons	denotes reasons given for attending community college
Classes - any	mentions of classes at any level of schooling
Cleaning Job	Any mentions about cleaning jobs, cleaning houses, or other cleaning work
College-Ready meaning	The meaning of college ready to participant
Degree Important because	responses about why completing a college degree is important
Demographic info	all demographic information
Expectations from Others	responses about expectations from family, friends, and/or Latino community
Family	statements about family whether in a negative or positive way
Helping Siblings	any mentions of helping siblings or spending time with siblings
Home chores	Discussions of chores to be completed at home
Language Use - any	any mentions of language use- Spanish, English, or other
Latinx	responses that mention Latinx people
Learning Difficulty	a participant mentions having learning difficulty or impediment
Learning in Spanish helped	learning to read in Spanish helped with reading in English
Movie & Books	any reference to watching a movie either before or after reading a book; any discussions of movie and books.

Persistence	responses that indicate a desire (determination) to persist to degree completion
Preparation to Transfer	talk about what participants need to transfer to a four-year university; need to learn at cc to help them transfer
Reading	any mention of reading
Reading Decline	indicates a decline in reading, such as less reading happening overall or an expression that is a dislike of reading
Reading Improvement	indicate an improvement in reading, whether reading more, better, etc.
Reading Skills & Strategies	mentions of reading skills and strategies learned or used
Reading-Ready meaning	responses indicating what reading-ready means to participants
Scholar - First in family	first in family to go college
Schooling Expectations	comments that school was different than expected- at any level (elementary, middle school, high school, college)
Self-realizations, Epiphanies	indicating participant had an epiphany or realized something about their lives that helped them make a change or began a change in actions or attitude
Spanish spoken during interview	Indicates parts were participants spoke Spanish
Speech	references to speech, speaking difficulties or challenges, reading/writing and speaking- or any such mix
Struggles - personal	mentions of personal struggles, difficult experiences, or negative changes growing up
Teachers - all levels	any mention of teachers at any level - elementary to college
Test on reading	mentions of quizzes, tests, or exams based on reading
Time management	mentions of time management
Transfer of learning	responses that mention transfer of skills or learning from what

Transferring important because	participant learns in the developmental literacy class to use or not use in other classes indicates why transferring to a four-year university is important to the participant
Vocabulary/Grammar	Discussions of vocabulary, grammar, mechanics, etc.
What others can do to help	indicates what others (family, friends, CC, community) can do to help participant reach her goal of transferring to a 4yr university
Who taught reading	Mentions of who taught participant to read
Work Paid	any paid work other than cleaning work
Writing	writing assignments tied to the reading, or mentions of reading and writing

Through a constant comparative process in phase 2 of data analysis, the first round of coding yielded 21 codes for the individual cases, which as illustrated in the previous chapter were divided based on the study's research questions and conceptual framework. Then, the codes were collapsed into five categories for individual cases as illustrated in tables 15 and 16.

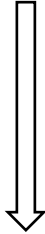

Table 15

Codes that Led to First Two Categories for Within-Cases

Codes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • education journey • reading development • reading growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • roadblocks • reading decline • reading is reading • writing emphasis
Data Pattern		
Categories	Reading Development	Reading Decline

Table 16

Codes that Led to Next Three Categories for Within-Cases

Codes		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community college is Not college • roadblocks • self-doubts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dedicated • Focus • personal goals • self-awareness • time management • transfer of skills • words=knowledge • words=education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • family • languages • support from others
Data Pattern				
Categories		Community College is Not College	Readiness to Transfer Subtheme- Reading skills & strategies	Familial Involvement Matters

The five categories—reading development, reading decline, community college is not college, readiness to transfer, and familial involvement matters—are the results of the first two phases of data analysis. As these are the categories that stood out after a complicated, recursive process of data comparison, which included looking for data patterns that highlighted the uniqueness of each case (Patton, 2015). Each category is presented per participant in the within-case section of this chapter.

Phase 3 of data analysis was the cross-case comparisons. Focused coding was implemented to search for words, phrases and other expressions from the participants that denoted a theme and showed a pattern across cases (Patton, 2015; Saldaña, 2016). The result of the constant comparison of cases were seven themes. The themes of the cross-case analysis and their presentation are explained in the latter part of this chapter.

Overview of Chapter 4

This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section is a presentation of the results of the within-case analysis of the participants. The cases are organized alphabetically by pseudonym and each begins with an introduction to the participant before leading into a narrative that highlights the uniqueness of the case (Stake, 1995). The participants' narratives are divided into the categories identified from the data for the individual cases. The second main section of this chapter is a cross-case analysis of the six cases. An analysis of the cases showed patterns that coalesced into themes (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2009, 2014) across the cases. Seven themes were recorded as a result of the cross-case analysis. The final part of the chapter is a presentation of the study's four major findings and an explanation of how I derived the findings from the cross-case themes.

Within-Case Analysis

The within-case analysis yielded five categories (figure 3) that addressed the present study's research questions and/or conceptual framework in varying ways and so were the focus of the data analysis for each individual case. Each case is unique, and their uniqueness is magnified in the participants' responses as presented per category. These categories were derived from the coding of interview transcripts and informed by the answers to the survey instrument used as a recruitment tool during data collection. See appendix D for a list of the categories and their definitions.

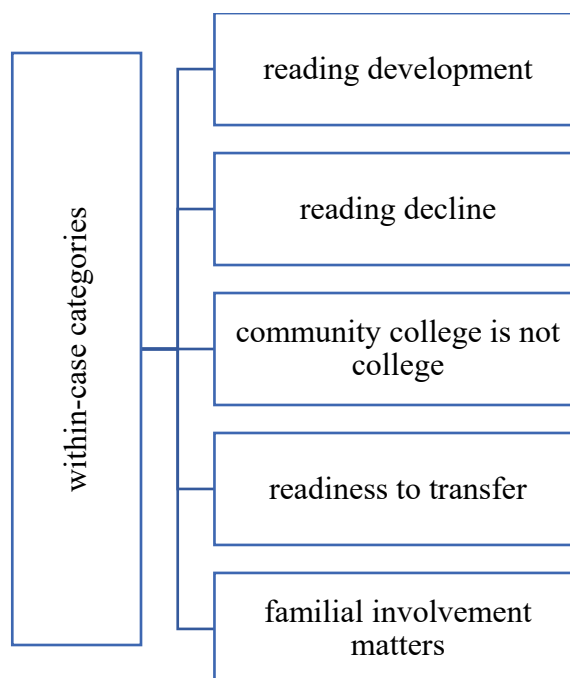


Figure 3. Categories After the First Two Phases of Within-Case Data Analysis

In this section each case is introduced with a few words of how we met or anything that stood out in my observations of the case, then a general narrative of the case is given, and finally participants' voices are centered through the five categories: reading development, reading decline, community college is not college, readiness to transfer (with sub-theme reading skills and strategies), and familial involvement matters.

Introducing Alexa

We went back and forth several times via text messages trying to figure out the best date and time to meet. Finally, we set our first meeting at 6:00 on a Thursday evening at a time when Alexa would normally have class, but that according to her had been cancelled and so she would meet with me instead. Yet, I was not surprised to receive a text message from Alexa at 3:01 the afternoon of our meeting day informing me that she had contacted her professor and the class would be taking place as usual. She suggested meeting a half hour before the class start time for our interview, but I assured

her I was happy to meet with her after class and so we arranged to meet that same day at 8:15 p.m.

We were meeting at one of the community college's larger campuses and, as it turned out, Alexa was not very familiar with the layout of the campus. I had told her where I would wait for her, what I would be wearing, and the New Yorker bag I would be carrying assuming this would be enough information for our meeting. About 45 minutes prior to our meeting, however, Alexa texted wondering on what floor the information desk I had described to her was located. She explained that the campus was "still new to me." As we were meeting late in November, I had erroneously assumed that she was familiar with the campus, but even months into the semester, Alexa considered the environment new and unfamiliar territory.

Waiting to meet a participant for the first time was, for me, an exciting and nervous time. I worried about being friendly and professional, but mainly I worried about making participants feel comfortable so that they may feel they could speak freely. As I waited for Alexa to arrive that night, I wondered if it was too late an hour to meet for a discussion about reading. Luckily, I could tell as soon as met Alexa that she was a bundle of energy. She was friendly and apologetic about the many times she had to reschedule our first interview. By the time we met, it was 8:30 p.m. and because most classes had let out, we were able to go into an available classroom to talk. I had brought her a bag with various snacks, candies, and a bottle of water. She looked in the bag and mentioned that she would share the snacks and candies with her siblings who would be happy to eat them all. This was a great segue into our conversation and, once consent forms had been read

and signed, she began by telling me a bit about her family before delving into her reading history.

Alexa's Narrative

Alexa's native language is Spanish, and she first learned to read in Spanish. She reads in both Spanish and English. Alexa has four younger siblings, two in elementary school and two in high school. She was the first in her family to go to college. Alexa was five or six and in kindergarten when she first learned to read. At home she would read in Spanish. At school she had two different teachers—one would teach her in Spanish and the other would teach her in English. She had the help of an extra teacher through third grade. She remembered loving to read and had a little library at home. Alexa's favorite books when she was young were the Junie B. Jones books, which she read in English. She continued reading and checked out books from the library when she was in middle school. She would take these books home because she had class assignments to complete at home, such as writing summaries. Alexa read less in high school where she would read one or two books a semester. Some of the books she read were *Frankenstein*, *The Great Gatsby*, and *Of Mice and Men*. Alexa stated that she scored low on the placement test and stopped reading in high school and because of this was placed in the developmental literacy class in college.

Over the course of the semester in the developmental literacy class, Alexa read various articles and three books. Her developmental literacy instructor allowed students to choose the books they would read in class. The books Alexa chose to read were *The Great Gatsby*, *Of Mice and Men*, and *Pride and Prejudice*. One of the assignments related to the reading was writing in a notebook any words she did not know or

understand from the book she was reading. As explained by Alexa, the assignment included writing the definition of the word and the parts of speech. Students were required to have 400 words by the end of the semester, and Alexa completed the assignment. The book from which she pulled the most words was *Pride and Prejudice*; she noted that this was probably because of the time period the book was written. Alexa made time to study in the afternoon because she usually worked in the mornings helping her mother clean houses and she had recently started a part-time job in the afternoons working at a food truck. Being so busy, Alexa explained that she tried to focus on accomplishing all her responsibilities. One of the ways she manages her time is by taking her literacy class journal to her job at the food truck, which allows her to write in her journal when she has time available during her shift. Alexa emphasized that her mother wanted her to stay in school and graduate. Even though her mother will miss her when Alexa goes to a four-year university, her mother told Alexa that she knows that it is important that Alexa go so that Alexa can accomplish her dream of becoming a teacher or a nurse.

Alexa reported that her main reasons for wanting to transfer to a four-year university were to make her mother proud and to get a better education for a better job. Alexa said she felt that a degree offered better chances for a better future. To Alexa, college-ready meant being prepared or knowing that college is different from high school because college teachers, according to her, “will not go easy on you.” To Alexa, being reading-ready meant to understand what you are reading. She reported thinking that something the community college could do to help her achieve her goals of transferring is to provide her with more guidance “of what to do or what to expect.” She already had

support from her family. As far as Alexa's mother was concerned, all she asked was that Alexa stay in school and focus. Focusing more in class was also something that Alexa herself reported that she needed to do.

Reading Development—“*Yeah, I had a little library in my room.*”

Alexa began by explaining that she was the oldest of five children. Alexa's reading development began at a young age as she recalled that she first learned to read when she was five or six, “my mom would teach me at home, but I had... In school, I had two different teachers in Spanish and English, ‘cause my first language is Spanish, but I was in an English class.” She explained that this was a bilingual class and she received the extra help because she did not know English. Her mother taught her to read some in Spanish before Alexa began kindergarten and “some words are kind of similar [to English], so it kind of helped me.” Alexa liked having both a teacher who spoke to her in English and one who spoke to her in Spanish, ‘cause well, I was still a little kid and my English was not good, so I needed someone to talk in my language.” She was in bilingual classes from first to third grade, and by fourth and fifth grade school had become “way easier, ‘cause I understood more stuff,” Alexa explained. She continued, “[in elementary school] I remember I would love to read. I would love...to le- read and write a lot.” It was during this time period, she said that “Yeah, I had a little library in my room.”

Alexa read all the Junie B. Jones books series in English: “I read every single book, yeah.” “I would always remember the first sentence when it started, ‘My name is Junie B. Jones.’” Alexa mentioned that while growing up she had opportunities to read in Spanish at home, but did not offer any titles or examples of the type of reading she did in Spanish. Alexa continued reading in elementary and in middle school. She said that her

learning experience “got easier ‘cause I had more experience in- with reading in English.” At that point, she no longer needed help from an extra teacher, and she found herself reading every day because her English class had a “read along.” When asked to compare, Alexa reflected that she did more reading in middle school than in elementary school.

Reading Decline—“*So, um, I feel like I stopped reading in high school.*”

Alexa’s reading skills began to regress in high school, “That’s where I started going a little bit like low on my reading. It was...I wouldn’t get books from the library as much, except if it was required for my classes.” When asked how much reading was required, Alexa said, “We did two books each semester, or one book semes- for- per semester.” She clarified that beginning her freshman year, they read one book per semester. Alexa attended the same high school all four years and the books they read were fictional novels, such as *Pride and Prejudice*. Alexa liked this book and stated, “That was the last book I read in high school.” During our conversation, she also remembered that in high school they started reading *Frankenstein* and they read *The Great Gatsby*. Even though she talked about how much she liked *Pride and Prejudice*, when I asked her which was her favorite book, she remarked, “I...*The Great Gatsby*. I really enjoyed it.” She continued, “We watched the movie first, but it wasn’t as interesting...as the book.” When prodded further about any other books she remembered reading in high school, she said, “I’m trying to remember, *Of Mice Of Men*.” [sic]; “*Of Mice and Men*?” I asked, “Yeah, I think that’s the book,” she responded. She could not recall any other books they may have read in high school.

Alexa expressed believing that they did more reading than writing in high school because in addition to the books, they also read articles. She stated that when they read books and articles in high school, which they summarized and analyzed, “It was so that we could write.” When asked about the school level where she did the most reading, Alexa confirmed, “It was probably, it was middle school. I wou...I, I really enjoyed reading. It was probably through seven and eighth grade.” However, when pressed, Alexa could not remember the titles of any books she read in middle school. She remembered the Junie B. Jones books from elementary school because those were her favorite. She also remembered books from her junior and senior years in high school because, “...that’s when I started reading more because of my essays and stuff like that.” Yet, Alexa recounted that she stopped reading in high school and she reported feeling that this contributed to her low score on the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) Assessment. When asked why she thought she scored low on the test, she stated, “I guess because [few seconds pause] high school was way different than what I expected.” Indeed, Alexa made a connection between her reading decline in high school, her score on the TSI, and the integrated reading and writing (developmental literacy) class, she wondered “...it’s like, ‘Oh, why did I stop reading?’ Because it just makes it difficult for me to keep reading. And more at a college level.” Alexa connected her reading regression to her decision to attend community college.

Community College is Not College—“*Getting a higher education, for a good future and a good job.*”

In the class survey form, Alexa wrote down two main reasons for deciding to attend community college, “Getting a higher education, for a good future and a good job.

[and] I would like to make my mom proud for being the first person in the family to attend college.” During our conversation Alexa stated that she thought beginning at community college was a good way to become accustomed to all the work she would be expected to do at university, including other expectations that would be placed on her, “Like the hours I have to study, and then, uh, advance to a higher level. For like a university where that’s, that’s like more hours, more classes.” Alexa had a good idea of the college she wanted to transfer to, but she also expressed wanting to remain two years at SWCC before transferring.

Readiness to Transfer—“*As of right now, I may not be like college level.*”

As regards Alexa’s perception of what she needed to be ready to transfer to a four-year institution, Alexa thought about it before declaring,

Hm, I need to get... Well, I need t get the knowl- like the knowledge, the college level I need, ‘cause right now, I’m still like in a high school level. That’s why I’m in that class [developmental literacy]. So, I need to understand, to know and understand what I’m reading, ‘cause sometimes I just read and I don’t- understand it.

She continued, “So. I want to like know what’s talking about [sic] and understand it. And also I have this experience. So, like I said, to get used to the work first-...and then advance to a higher level.” After some gentle pushing about what classes she thought she needed to take while at community college to be ready for transfer, Alexa offered that she would need to take classes in history, economics, English, and psychology because she wanted to study early childhood education. She allowed needing to take more classes at the community college and explained that “Hm, like I said, uh, they’re gonna give me,

ah...They're gonna get through, get higher in my education. As of right now, I may not be like in college level." Alexa anticipated that "it's gonna be a lot of reading," and explained that as her future job would include teaching kids to read and to understand what they read, then she would expect to first have a lot of reading to do when she transfers.

Reading Skills and Strategies

When discussing the work she was doing in her literacy class, Alexa began by explaining that they started with vocabulary words: "[the instructor] gave us a notebook where we had, so the end of the semester we need 400 words with the part of speech and the definition." In addition, Alexa explained that "we'd read a book and do a s- a summary and words we didn't understand." Given an opportunity to choose the books she wanted to read, Alexa chose to read the same books she read in high school: *The Great Gatsby*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Of Mice and Men*. She explained, "I chose that book [*The Great Gatsby*] because in high school I paid attention but not fully so I wanted to read it like correctly. Like all, like complete." She went further and said that "Yeah. Well we have to choose three books 'cause we were- ...we were supposed to read three books. Yeah. And that's where we got like all the words, the 400 words- ...the definitions, the part of the speech." In addition to the books she chose to read, the instructor provided various articles for the class to read.

Alexa's class lessons included vocabulary tests, and learning reading skills and strategies such as writing summaries of the sections of the books she read. As far as applying any reading strategies or reading skills that she learned in her literacy class in her other classes, Alexa explained, "Um, well right now I have math so they really don't,

um, they don't really, I mean I have to read obviously like the math, the word problems."

But, after mentioning that in literacy class she worked on annotating the articles, Alexa said, "When you see like a mistake. So, that whenever, I mean math we have to take notes so that kinda helps me." Alexa thus made some, if minimal, connection between what she was doing and learning in her literacy class and her work in math class.

Familial Involvement Matters—*"I can help my mom, 'cause we're like five kids. It's a lot."*

In addition to school, Alexa got up early to clean houses with her mother. She outlined her schedule:

It's from like 7:00 to 3:00. Then I get home and I help my siblings do their homework. Yeah, I have to help them. (She laughs here) They do math and reading so I read the stories and then they a- they answer the questions or I help them read 'cause I'm not supposed to read it and do it for them. So yeah, I help them do the, their homework and I have my wash, like wash dishes, clean my room and then that's where I start studying.

However, recently Alexa had started a second job. She explained, "But I, I got a second job in the afternoons so it's kind of difficult for me to- ...do everything now, yeah. I work at a food truck as well so that's at night." She reflected, "It's a little difficult for me to do, focus like on everything. But I still try to do everything on time." To use her time effectively, Alexa explained that she took schoolwork with her when working in the food truck, so that she could work on school assignments, such as journal entries, when time allowed.

When asked about her family's support of her education, Alexa admitted that her second job had been a source of concern for her mother, whom Alexa stated, "wants me to stay in school. She wants me to just focus." Nonetheless, Alexa wanted to do everything possible to keep her job because "I can help my mom, 'cause we're like five kids. It's a lot." Alexa talked with her mother about her education and her plans and when she told her mother that she wanted to be a teacher or a nurse, Alexa said, "And she's like, I feel like you fit more as a teacher 'cause you're, I'm, I'm really good with kids. I like kids." Alexa stated that her mother supports her in her education but cannot help because her mother does not speak or read English. Her mother did not go to college, but she understands that Alexa is now attending a two-year college; therefore, about transferring to a four-year university, Alexa commented about her mother, "Oh yeah. She, she supports that. She's like yeah you **have** [Alexa placed emphasis on this word] to, well yeah." Alexa reported that the idea of transferring is also difficult for her mother because it will mean Alexa will need to move out of the house and live on the college campus or close to the college. "She doesn't want me, like she's, she says, I know you have to go because it's your education, but I don't want you to leave." Alexa described that she would laugh and remind her mother that she has four other kids. Alexa revealed about her family,

My family, I mean, they're always there to support me whatever decision I make, so I think I'm okay with them. Yeah, they're always there. My mom was like, 'Whatever you decide, it's fine with me. Just stay in school and focus.'

Throughout the interviews, Alexa noted that focusing on school, her paid work, and completing her studies mattered.

Introducing Carmen

I met Carmen at one of the college's older and smaller campuses, where she attended classes. For our first meeting, we planned to talk outside as it was beautiful weather if a bit windy. One of my observation notes from our first meeting was my personal observation of Carmen's shyness. Because Carmen I had observed Carmen's reluctance to talk, once our first interview concluded, I expressed to Carmen my appreciation for her sharing her story with me and reminded her that she was free to stop participation at any point. She confirmed that she wanted to continue and would meet with me for the next interview as planned. It was via texting to plan our second meeting that she mentioned she would try to not be late, as for the first meeting, because she was dependent on the city bus schedule.

As with the other participants, I had offered to bring her a sandwich because I knew our meetings did not give her an opportunity to eat before class. However, where the other participants took me up on the offer, Carmen insisted that she did not want anything beyond the snacks I gave her at the beginning of each interview. Listening to Carmen's story and her insistence that she was not concerned with transferring or how prepared she would need to be to transfer because she was confident she could learn whatever she needed to learn to succeed, was an indication to me of her resilience and commitment to her education.

Carmen's Narrative

Carmen first learned to read in Spanish and was taught to read by her mother and father. Carmen enjoyed reading but found reading difficult when she began reading in English. She began reading in English in fifth grade. She attended a predominantly White

middle school and had to continue reading in English in that school. Carmen's reading skills improved by the time she was in high school because she had become accustomed to the English language. In high school she spoke both Spanish and English. Her favorite subjects in school were math and English. She explained that if she understands a subject, then she feels she can learn while in the class. Carmen reported enrolling in community college because she thought it was a good place to start before transferring to a four-year university. She expressed that community college was helping her get used to what it would be like to be in college; a big difference she found was that "teachers [in college] don't care as much as high school teachers."

Carmen reported feeling that the developmental literacy class was helping her figure out things like when to use what words and was improving her writing skills. The book assigned to the class was *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. Carmen noted that when she first began reading the book she did not think she would like it, but by the end she really liked the book because of, what she described, as the imagery used by the author. Carmen mentioned that she was writing a persuasive essay and was allowed to choose the topic; she was writing on the legalization of the drug marijuana. She researched the topic but reported that she did not think there was much reading involved in the research because, according to her, she could simply search for the headings that were relevant to her topic. In this way, she explained, she would only access the text that she needed to write her essay. Carmen stated that she did not think she used any of the reading skills she was learning in her developmental literacy class in her other class, which was math. However, she reflected that she could see where a skill

like annotating a text might be useful in a history class. Carmen's expressed that her family was supportive of her education goals and encouraged her to earn her degree.

Carmen disclosed that some of her friends who went straight to university told her they regretted their decision because they were struggling a bit. Carmen began her postsecondary education at community college because she had heard that it was easier to get her credits there and then transfer to a four-year university. She expressed that completing her college degree was important to her because it would show that she put effort into everything she did and would make her and her family proud. To Carmen, being college-ready meant that high school teachers should have special classes that prepare everyone for college because, she acknowledged, in high school she was not taught about college. She reported not being quite sure what reading-ready meant, but she suggested that it probably depends on the book you are reading. Carmen reported feeling that her reading class helped her understand reading better and also taught her how to write essays. She described feeling that others in her life needed to support what she was doing and not ignore that sometimes she struggles. Carmen explained that she thought support should come from friends, family, and even acquaintances.

Reading Development—“*It was like, it was really easy for me to catch in Spanish.*”

Carmen's brother and aunt attended SWCC; she mentioned that her brother was planning on transferring but instead was taking a break from school. She was uncertain of the age at which she started reading, but she expressed believing she was in first grade when she started reading, and it was in Spanish. Carmen recalled that she was taught to read by both her parents, “Like it wasn't all my mom taught me. No, it was both my parents.” Carmen had no difficulties reading in Spanish, “It was like, it was really easy

for me to catch in Spanish,” she exclaimed. Carmen continued, “I don’t know why. The more I read like the little books, I think it was in elementary, like it was crazy.” Carmen began to learn English in fifth grade and explained that “In middle school I went to like an all-White school, so like I had to learn English.” She recalled that early in her education, when she only read in Spanish, she received good grades, but stated that it changed when she had to learn to read in English. Later, in high school, things changed again. Carmen said,

My English classes were, I was, I did really good in my English in high school. I didn’t do as bad as middle school, I would say. I think ‘cause I got used to speaking English more. And like, I speak Spanish and English in my high school years, yeah.

She explained that she still spoke Spanish with her mother and she thought her reading in Spanish was still good even though she had stopped reading in Spanish, “...but I would say I’m still good at it cause I have to text my mom. Yeah.”

Reading Decline—“*But reading is like you’re just reading. There’s no like meaning to learn.*”

Even though her experience with reading in high school was better than it had been in middle school, she stated about the difference, “And then I guess when English started to come up in my language, it wasn’t as easy as I thought it was,” Carmen could not remember the last book she read in high school. She explained that “like we didn’t read by ourselves. It was more of like a class book that we had.” When pressed about books she read on her own, outside of school hours, Carmen stated, “I think only my freshman year, where like, like, I had to read books outside of class. But other than that,

no.” Carmen recalled that her favorite subject in high school switched back and forth between math and English, and, I noted in my journal observations that she demonstrated great self-awareness when she explained, “It was like depending on the class, if I understood it, and I did good on it, that was my favorite class.” She said that she did not necessarily like one subject over another, but rather, “It was more of like me if I understood it, like; If I, It’s like if you understand something, you like it.”

Comparatively speaking, Carmen felt that she did more reading in elementary school and middle school than in high school, “Because high school is more of like you’re reading problems, or like questions, but not like actual reading.” She reported feeling that there was a greater emphasis in reading than in writing in high school, but they did not really read books, she said, “or like you know those papers that they give you, like, long stories and they have questions? Yeah.” She stopped talking for a moment, then continued, “Yeah, but it wasn’t like a lot. It was like once in a while. No, it wasn’t like frequently.” Carmen explained, “but like I would say that writing is always like you have to have something specific. Like whatever the teacher wants it has to be specific. But reading is like you’re just reading. There’s no like meaning to learn.”

Community College is Not College—“*Well, everyone told me that SWCC was good to start with and then transfer to a four-year university.*”

Carmen explained that her main reasons for beginning her postsecondary education at community college were concerns over finances and “I was nervous to go to college.” She explained further:

Well, everyone told me that SWCC was good to start with and then transfer to a four-year university. So, I decided to stay here for a year or two. And I also talked

to my counselor and he said it was a good idea to start at SWCC. And when I met, like, by, I was nervous. It was just like, it's a different thing and it's like you're with adults, you're not with like teenagers anymore.

About her adjustment to college, Carmen said, "Well, It's not hard because, it's like you have to get used to it one way or another, and so I never found it hard to adjust to, like this." Further, Carmen explained, "like I started off in community college because from what I've heard it's easier to get your credits and then transfer to a good university." Carmen expressed confidence that being at the community college would help her prepare for transfer to a four-year university.

Readiness to Transfer—*"So, I feel like it's going to get easier either way."*

As far as preparation to transfer, Carmen reported noticing differences between high school and college teachers:

So, it's different. And then like teachers don't care as much as high school teachers. They would, like high school teachers would tell you, oh you're missing this and that, but like college teachers won't tell you anything. It's like it's your business, you're an adult, so you're supposed to know.

She explained further that in high school teachers would tell students what was happening every day, whereas in college, "They gave you a syllabus." About readiness to transfer Carmen stated,

Well, like I said before, like my elementary years, I started out just reading Spanish and then it went to English. It was hard at first, but then my high school years it got easier. So, I feel like it's going to get easier either way. So, I'm not

really that scared. I'm never scared of like reading or anything, even if I stutter, but that's learning."

Carmen expressed that her career goal is to be an orthodontist and she had determined that when she "should get like enough credits and then when I feel like it's good enough to transfer, I'll probably just transfer." She communicated seeing the value in the classes she is taking at the community college because, she reported thinking that they are helping prepare her for her advanced classes. To the question, on the class survey, asking why she registered for the developmental literacy class, Carmen wrote, "I was told I needed this class."

Reading Skills and Strategies

Interestingly, despite Carmen's belief that there is "no meaning to learn" about reading, she described making a connection between reading skills and strategies and the transfer of learning across the curriculum. Considering the amount of reading she will do in upper-level classes once she transfers, Carmen stated,

Well, right now I need a lot of reading I guess, like especially in social studies and like, right it's history? And like anything, it's like reading, even math is reading because there's word problems in there and like everything is reading. So, I feel like it's going to get harder, but I don't mind.

Carmen discussed what she saw as benefits in being a part of the developmental literacy class. She reported thinking that class activities, such as the Harkness, in which students sat in a circle for in-depth discussions of the reading and writing in her journal about the chapters of the book just read helped her improve her reading and writing skills. She stated, "Like this class did help me in a way because now when I text my friends it's

like different. I know it's different, like how my spelling is way better, my grammar is better." The class had to read Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, and she explained that when she started reading, "At first, I thought I wasn't going to like it but it has like, specific details that I like, like it gives me imagery a lot." Carmen separated the reading and the writing that she did in class. She talked about reading the book and when asked about the essays she had written, she said that for the book she wrote about what happened in the chapter she read in her journal, but the essays were based on what the teacher decided. For example, for her persuasive essay Carmen's chosen topic was legalizing marijuana, when asked if there was much reading because of research she had to do for the essay, she replied,

Not really 'cause you know every like, paragraph has a title on top and it tells you oh, this for example, why is marijuana illegal and then the other paragraph has its own like, title on the bottom and...

Carmen reported thinking there was not much reading involved with the writing of the essay because when she looked up information, she focused on the specific chunk of text that had a heading with information she could use for the essay. When asked if she felt more confident in her writing, Carmen disclosed, "It's not that I wasn't, think confident before, it was more like, now that I...probably cause, before I just wrote whatever and I ...I was right, but now I know I'm right."

Familial Involvement Matters—“*They just want me to succeed in life.*”

Carmen's described that her responsibilities included taking care of her young siblings. She often picked up her sister when she was dropped off by the school bus. Carmen rode the city bus to campus on class days and studied at home in the evenings.

She explained that her parents were supportive of her education, “They’re good with it. They just want me to succeed in life.” She continued, “Like, that’s the point of them working, they always tell me, um, the point of me working is for you to succeed.”

Carmen explained the support she wanted from family and friends:

I feel like when I feel of giving up on, like, my goals, I should have like, the support that’s telling me to keep going instead of, like ignoring that I’m struggling or being serious about it.

She went on, “I feel like if you have at least one person as a support, I’ll probably keep going. Be like, ‘Oh, well, this one believes in me, then I should believe in myself, too.’ And I feel like that’s a good thing.” Carmen concluded, “I feel like friends, family, like, even like friends that I barely talk to who I feel like, anybody can support me. Like, every, everyone should support each other.”

Introducing Concepción

Concepción and I met at one of the largest and newer college campuses for all three interviews. For identification purposes, I messaged her with a description of what I would be wearing and the “The New Yorker” bag I would be carrying. Concepción always responded to every text message I sent her, and to my description text she responded with her own saying she had short hair that is “barely growing out.” Unfortunately, her plans had changed, and we had to reschedule our first meeting, but only for the following day. We found a quiet corner in the main building to talk. In my observation notes, I wrote that Concepción has a “giving attitude, conscientious of others.”

Once Concepción found out I spoke Spanish, she spoke mainly in Spanish during interactions before and after our interviews, and sent messages mixing both languages. For example, when she was running late for our second meeting, she texted, “Ok ahorita llevo, voy a llegar un poco tarde bc I had to run an errand for my mom, is that ok? Just 10 min late or less” [broadly translated: I am on my way; I will arrive a bit late because I had to run an errand for my mom]. Similarly, the night before our third meeting, Concepción sent me a detailed text in a mix of Spanish and English explaining that a family situation may force her to arrive about 30 minutes late. Later on, that same evening she sent another text explaining that she had a different obligation she had forgotten about and requested rescheduling.

Concepción’s Narrative

Concepción’s first language is Spanish, and she first learned to read in Spanish. Both her parents taught her to read at a young age and she was reading at a high level when she entered elementary. Concepción kept reading both at home and in school during her elementary school years. She remembered liking scary books and would find books at the school library that she could read at home. Concepción began to read less when she transitioned to middle school and even though she was encouraged to read by her high school English teachers, she no longer checked out books from the library. Concepción did not vocalize why she stopped reading, but expressed feeling that as she grew older she became more of a rebel and by not reading she was also rebelling because she was not doing what was requested by authority figures. Concepción expressed that she always loved reading and still did. She reported that she would often begin books but

then not finish them; she was not sure why she did this. Concepción stated that she knew she would need to increase her reading skills to transfer to a four-year university.

During our second interview, Concepción talked about the work she was doing in her developmental literacy class. She was not reading a book in class, but rather the class had been divided into groups and each group read a series of articles. The group then discusses these articles during Harkness activities in class. Concepción was also working on her third essay for the class, which was a definition essay. For this essay, as with all the essays for the class, she chose a topic and followed the required structure for the essay assignment. Concepción conducted research for her topic, which involved reading as she looked for information to support her topic definitions. She stated learning strategies in this class that she used in other classes, such as using annotating with word problems in her math class. Concepción reported that her parents were supportive of her goals to transfer to a four-year university though they would miss her living at home. Concepción stated thinking that she needed to improve her social skills and expand her vocabulary before being ready to transfer.

Concepción reported that she thought transferring to a four-year university was important because it would help her have a better life than the one her parents have experienced. She expressed feeling that this generation of students were supposed to work harder to achieve their goals. She explained that for her completing her degree was important because she would have something to represent Latino people. She says having a degree will show others and make them think twice about Latinos. Concepción expressed that she thought college-ready was what should happen from elementary to high school; that time is to make you college-ready. Concepción explained that she

thought it meant that students will have reading and writing skills to be ready for college. About being reading ready, Concepción reported she thought it was about people who have been reading their entire lives and so they are at a higher level. Concepción also reported she felt she had not done anything to help prepare herself for transferring to a four-year university. One of the things she explained she thought she should have done was being more involved in extracurricular activities at community college, as she had been in high school. She explained she did not feel the same motivation in college as in high school, consequently, she missed classes and turned assignments in late. Concepción disclosed that she had very supportive friends and had built a great support system with them because she did not have as much communication with her parents who are not as involved as she would like. Her developmental literacy instructor was really understanding and Concepción reported that she felt it would help if there were more teachers like that in college who could guide her and other students and listen to students' concerns. Concepción expressed that she would like to see more Latinx in positions of authority because they may have a better understanding of what she, as a Latina, has experienced.

Reading Development—“*So, I would get two English books and I would read them at home.*”

Concepción stated that she has an older brother and younger sister. She explained that she was the first in her family to go to college as her brother began working directly after high school graduation and her parents never finished high school. She communicated that her father spoke both Spanish and English and her mother spoke only Spanish but understood English when others spoke it around her. Even though her first

language is Spanish, Concepción said that she learned to read in both English and Spanish at a young age. This put her at an advantage when she started school, she said, “And, um, once I got into school, you know, um, I started reading in a higher level than the whole class.” She continued,

So, uh, that was pretty cool, you know. They had to, uh, end up switching me classes, you know, ‘cause I guess I had a (she laughs) ...pretty level, high level, uh, reading. Um. Then after that, uh, I, uh, actually liked to read a lot more when I was in elementary school.

Concepción remembered being in a bilingual class and having a Spanish and an English version of the same book as a child. She remembered reading traditional Mexican stories books such as the one “with the song *De Colores*,” and from there moving on to English language books. She explained, “well even though it was bilingual I think we would mostly read English books.” Concepción reported that at home she would try to continue reading in Spanish. Concepción explained how it worked:

You know. Uh, but at home I would try to read Spanish books but you know how where we go to libraries over there, we would have to bring two books and I would, they would make us, not make us but I feel like they, uh, wanted us to get English books, you know what I mean? So, I would get two English books and I would read them at home. And then I, you know, that’s how I would mostly read English. But I would still obviously speak Spanish at home.

Concepción talked about reading Junie B. Jones books and the Scary Stories books [*Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark* series by Alvin Schwartz]. She talked about other books she said she loved, “But it’s the other ones, it was, I remember the author. I think it

was, um, Sylvester or s- Silverstein [Shel Silverstein books]; she continued, “Yeah. I love reading them books.”

She said she recalled that even though she had stopped reading by the time she started high school, one day she came across a box of her old books in the garage and she picked one up and started reading it. Concepción reported that she remembered then how much she used to love reading and re-reading the book, she said, “I was like geez, like some of these words are like hard for me to like now to pronounce, you know.” She explained that she stuck with it though, “And so I just started reading that book. I actually finished it and then I moved on to another book named, uh, I think it was W- Walking to the Moon, something like that.” Concepción mentioned several times how much she regreted no longer being a reader, “I feel like with me now, it’s harder for me to pick a book.” Concepción said she recalled doing a lot of reading in her history class:

I actually liked, uh, my junior year teacher. He was a really fun teacher. He would actually tell, talk to us about like all the history stuff and we’ll have to read a lot of stuff. And I remember I would always volunteer to read like, you know, the books and stuff.

Volunteering to read in class is something Concepción recalled and said she enjoyed since she was a kid. She explained that she liked her history teacher in high school and found that she wanted to read aloud in the class. Asked if she had read a book in the months since graduating high school, Concepción reported that “yes, I had read one on my phone actually.” Concepción reported that the title of the book was *Don’t Tell Meg* by Paul J. Teague. She continued, “It was a pretty interesting book. I just never finished it.”

Reading Decline—“*I remember reading only like packets. You know, it wasn’t like an actual book, book.*”

Concepción recalled that after being so far ahead of everyone else in reading in elementary school, it all began to change in middle school:

Um, then I got to, um, middle school, you know. I would still read here and there but, you know, going through puberty and all that stuff kinda made me little different, you know. I stopped reading for a little bit and, um, like my level of like, um reading was going a little low, you know. So, that happened.

She explained,

Um. And then, um, you know, I used to be, um, how do I say, I used to use more bigger words whenever I used to read and then now I feel like I have to always say like, like, like or, you know, you know, you know what I mean?

I hate that, you know, I wish I could, uh, read more in order for me to, you know, um, expand my vocabulary.

Concepción explained, “You know, I love reading. It’s just I gotten lazy to do it, you know. And I hate it, but...” She talked about when she was in middle school and the teacher would take the class to the library to check out books:

I would just decide not to check out books, you know what I mean? ‘Cause, uh, I was in that stage where I was like being the bad kid or whatever, you know. And I was like, no I’m not gonna read, you know. That’s for lame kids or whatever. But, you know, I was sometimes like secretly reading in my room and stuff or whatever.

Concepción recalled she was in a lower level English class as a sophomore in high school; she explained, “Yeah, I had like a side type of English class. It wasn’t like an actual class, class. It was like a help type of class.” Then, Concepción reported, she did not pass the state-mandated reading and writing test, which Concepción said meant that “during senior year I got a class where it, it was just the class to help you pass the TSI [Texas Success Initiative].” Concepción reported that she passed the writing and math portions of the TSI, but not the reading. She explained that she did not apply to a four-year university because of her grades and her TSI scores.

Community College is Not College—*“Yeah, to start here and then slowly, you know, build up my credits and my grades or whatever and then just transfer to a four year.”*

On her survey form, Concepción indicated that she decided to attend a community college to “Have a better life and get money. Also, to build my parents a home.” When asked about choosing to enroll at a community college rather than directly at a four-year institution, Concepción explained, “because I didn’t pass the TSI. So, I couldn’t like transfer to another year, like right away, you know, to a four year, I guess.” Concepción reported other reasons she did not apply to a four-year university:

Yeah. Um, well one other reasons was because, um, in high school, uh, I had like met new friends, right. And there were kind of like bad influences, you know?

Um, and so I started kind of like goofing off and stuff, you know, skipping class and everything, so my GPA went down, you know?

Concepción also reported that she began to improve her grades her senior year in high school and made new friends, so said she spoke with her advisors at the high school

about applying to a four-year university; however, she “just wasn’t confident,” but she went on to emphasize, “I actually do want to transfer to a four year.”

Readiness to Transfer—“*And, you know, ‘cause if I wanna transfer to a four year, I’ve just gotta be more professional.*”

Concepción reported that she aspired to transfer and talked with her advisor at the community college who provided her with information she needed about the transferring. She explained that when she talked with her advisor, she did not want to transfer, but after conversations with her advisor, he encouraged her to transfer to a four-year university. To be ready to transfer, Concepción said that

one of the things I actually need to do is to make school a priority because I’ve thought that I haven’t been making this a priority, you know? Um, I don’t know how I had a, uh, dropped a class. Um, I feel like if I were to make school my number one priority, I feel like I would have, I wouldn’t have done that.

Concepción reported that she dropped the college algebra class because she was not doing well in the class and her advisor suggested dropping the class and retaking later. Concepción explained that there were other things she felt she needed to do before transferring, including to “focus more on actually finishing my homework, coming to school every day, ...another thing is probably actually take advantage that we have tutors here.” She expressed also wanting to improve her social skills before being ready to transfer to a four-year institution. In our last meeting, Concepción reported she was worried that she was not be doing enough toward her goal of transferring. She stated,

Honestly, I’m gonna be honest. I haven’t really like, I feel like I haven’t really done anything to help me, um, prepare for a four, to transfer to a four-year. Um,

honestly, I feel, uh, like, uh, if I were to be able to turn time back, I would actually like join clubs, or like you know, the athletes stuff, or all of that stuff. I feel like, uh, with that I woulda kept up, that woulda helped me keep up with my grades with me coming here to study more.

So, I feel like I haven't really done anything in order for, to help myself prepare for a four-year.

Reading Skills and Strategies

Concepción compared reading skills she learned in high school and those she was learning in college and how she could use those skills in other classes:

I remember coming across with a, with that type of situation where, um, I was, uh, in my English class we would have to obviously the annotation in high school and college just sort of very different. But you know, we would, uh, annotate in English class and then I remember going to my math class, we had a to do this problem and you know, kind of read it and then explain to like, to the teacher like, Oh, well what to do, you know? And I feel like, yes, I have to use my English skills in order for me to like break it down, you know?

Concepción also discussed a variety of other skills and strategies she was learning and practicing in her developmental literacy class. These skills included analyzing readings verbally by discussing with classmates during Harkness activities related to the group reading, creating visual presentations based on readings, and writing an essay based on a researched topic. When asked about the amount of reading she would need to do to write the definition essay, Concepción explained,

I think I would, in order for me to, you know, be specific with my claims, you know, I would obviously have to go on at night and do a lot of reading. You know, like for example, like what could happen if, uh, your, uh, you know, um, like what, what do, what sentence this type of thing you get for that crime, you know, what would have happened?

Concepción explained that the developmental literacy class she was in did not read a book but rather a series of different articles over which they did all activities in class. She explained that for the essay she was writing, the students in class chose their own topic for which they had to find three different definitions.

Familial Involvement Matters—“*you know, you have some problems or whatever, but yeah, they’re involved.*”

Because Concepción had withdrawn from her math class, at the time of our meetings she was enrolled in one class, which was the developmental literacy class. She reported that her schedule included delivering food through a food order application but explained that she was in the process of looking for a more permanent part-time position, perhaps with Walmart. About her family’s knowledge of and involvement with her education, Concepción reported, “My, my parents are very involved. My brother is too. My sister, yeah. She doesn’t know anything about this, so, but she’s like, oh, how’s school? She asks me too, you know, yes. “ A couple of minutes later, however, she explained,

You know, but my mom knows what I’m studying. My dad, yeah. I mean I think he knows. ...I know he like talks to my mom about it and she tells me, you know, and I’m like well, it’s OK, you know, I know.

You know, I'm not, it's okay. Everything, you know, I'm doing good, you know, I'm doing this, you know, so, yeah, they're both involved, you know, even though we have, you know, you have some problems or whatever, but yeah, they're involved.

Concepción explained that she has a great support system of friends around her.

When asked about her family's support, she stated,

My parents on the other hand, uh, well, my mom's always working. So I rarely have time to talk to her to- about, like, what I'm doing in school. You know, sometimes she's like, 'Well, how's it do, like, how are you doing?' And I'm just, 'Oh, you know, good.' This and that, but, like, um, I wish that my parents were a little more involved in my school situation, you know?

Concepción's mood had visibly changed at this point in the conversation, but she looked at me and smiled when she said, "But I mean, other than that, uh, I'm glad that I have my friends there for me."

Introducing Natalia

At our first meeting, Natalia informed me that she would celebrate her birthday that evening as she had turned 21 the day before. We were meeting on Saturday afternoon at a large, quiet campus that was one of the college's expansions into surrounding communities. In my observation notes of Natalia, I wrote that my first impression was of a vibrant, talkative person with a ready smile. On the day we met she pointed out the hot Cheetos sweatshirt that she was wearing; she said she liked wearing it because she liked Cheetos. Natalia referred quite often to the "gap year" she took and how that contributed to the difficulties she had with college work. All our meetings took place on Saturdays

after her reading and writing class, and because the class ended at around 12:30, I would provide lunch, which we ate prior to beginning the interviews.

The campus was spread out, and quiet on the Saturdays we met. Nonetheless, after having our first meeting in a student congregation area, we were able to make use of a meeting room in the computer building for the following two meetings. This worked out well for a couple of reasons; for one, Natalia did not know this space was available for students to use and I was happy to make her aware of it because it allowed for the second reason, which was that after our meetings, Natalia would stay in the space to study for a few hours before heading back home. She appreciated learning about the various resources available to her from her discussions with the staff in the computer room and she was happy to make use of the study room for the time she was on campus.

Natalia differed from the other five participants in two specific ways: one difference was Natalia's age—she was two to three years older; and the second difference was that Natalia was very knowledgeable about what she wanted to study and why. Natalia's class was one of the first I visited when recruiting participants for the study. There was no way I would not notice her as soon as she walked into the classroom. She walked in with a smile and greeted the instructor, after my presentation she asked questions, and I had the impression that she was interested in participating. I wanted to hear her story, which was why I contacted her about participating even though she was the only participant who graduated in 2017 rather than 2019. Ultimately, Natalia's participation in the study provided added depth to the data through a point of view from someone who was a couple of years removed from her high school graduation.

Natalia's Narrative

Natalia first learned to read in English even though her home language was Spanish because, she explained later, her mother wanted her to learn to read in English. At a young age, Natalia's family moved from the United States to Mexico and there she had to quickly learn to read and communicate fully in Spanish. Natalia stayed in Mexico from 2nd to 8th grade, at which time she returned to the U.S. for high school. She reported this was a difficult transition and meant that she repeated a year in high school in the process of getting used to the American school system again. Natalia gave credit to her English teacher in high school for having her read books like *Metamorphosis*, *Animal Farm*, *Frankenstein*, *Lord of the Flies*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, and much more, including many of Shakespeare's plays. In these classes, Natalia explained, she learned about annotating texts, summarizing, analyzing, and formatting essays. Based on Natalia's recollection of her reading history, I noted in my journal that she had a well-rounded reading history. Natalia expressed that she valued all the work she had done in her high school English classes and still had her binder with all the work she did in these classes. Natalia began college the year she graduated high school but felt overwhelmed and left school a few weeks into her first semester to take what she called a "gap year."

Returning to college after her time away, Natalia stated that she had to take a college readiness assessment and based on the score she achieved on the exam, was placed into the integrated reading and writing class (INRW/ developmental literacy). She reported that in her developmental literacy class she was remembering again how to annotate and analyze texts and images. She was also learning how to be an active reader.

Natalia spoke about how in this class she was reading different types of texts, such as Laura Rendon's "Scholarship Girl" article, Keith Hjortshoj's *The Transition to College Writing*, and Sherman Alexie's *Part-Time Indian* book. Natalia attended community college, where she was enrolled in math and developmental literacy courses while working a 40-hour a week job as an assembly line employee. Her family (mother, father, and brother) were supportive of her goals to complete her degree. She lived with her boyfriend, far from her parents and brother, but she reported that her boyfriend and her supported each other in their goals. Natalia expressed seeing the value in what she was doing in her reading and writing class and stated that she noticed that she used skills and strategies that she learned in that class in her math class. Natalia reported that she believed she would use those skills in upper-level classes when she transferred to a four-year university.

Natalia explained that when she decided to take a gap year, her brother advised her against it and told her she would regret it because, he said, she would be caught up in a circle of poverty. Indeed, she reported that when she found herself working and going nowhere, she realized she needed to go to college to make progress. For her, transferring to a four-year university was important, she stated, because she wanted to grow and not be stuck in a circle and she wanted her kids to have a better future. Natalia reported that her parents came to the U.S. as immigrants without much money and she did not want her kids in the future to go through the struggles she went through as a child. She said she thought that transferring would mean she was achieving her goals and striving for something better.

Completing her degree was important to Natalia, she explained, because she had a goal and it would make her feel accomplished to reach that goal. Natalia stated that to her college ready meant being prepared for the four-year university and having teachers appreciate the work she did. Reading-ready, she said, meant not reading in a passive way, being a predator. She reported that one way her teachers at the community college could help her achieve her goals of transferring was by giving her more to read in her personal time, not for a grade. She expressed that her parents could help by telling her they believed in what she was doing, and she also explained that her friends could help by not making fun of her because she was in college and they should stop pushing her to do things like go hang out.

Reading Development—“*So, the teacher teach me how to read by small, small stories she got from the Internet.*”

Natalia explained that she was born in the U.S. where, at the time, she lived with her mother, father, and brother. When she was in second grade, however, she moved to Mexico with her mother and brother. She stayed in Mexico through eighth grade when her mother then sent her back to the U.S. to live with an aunt. Natalia explained,

So, basically, my first language was English because my mom didn’t really like teach me Spanish. She just teach me the basic words. But I was in school, so I learned more English than I did Spanish.

Natalia clarified that she attended second through eighth grades in Mexico, then when she returned to the U.S., she had to re-learn reading and writing in English. She explained that in Mexico by the time she was in fourth grade, she was caught up on her Spanish language skills. Natalia stated,

So, I caught up all the way to my fourth grade. I learned how to read and write in Spanish and I learned so many things all the way to my eighth grade. My mom sent me to live to America with my aunt, so my eighth grade ... No, my ninth grade, I started English, so my reading was very, very bad, my writing was horrible, but I could speak English, I could communicate with people, you know, but I had to really read books, keep up with my writing, I had to get tutors to write um sentences right because I had my past/present wrong, he/she was wrong, and I really had a hard time learning.

Natalia explained further that she first had to learn Spanish when she arrived in Mexico, “I learned how to read and write in Spanish because it was very, very enforced by the teachers. They were very strict with that.” She also had an English class when she started classes in Mexico, and that was no problem, she said,

because we also had English teachers there. An English teacher one class. I already knew how to ... my colors, I knew my numbers, I knew how to make sentences, like, ‘Oh, I love my hat. I love my cat.’ You know, like, I knew basic, basic stuff that kids know, you know?

Then, she said, “had to repeat, basically, a year in high school,” when she arrived back in the States, which she explained further,

By the time I was in ninth grade, there was, like I lived in Tamaulipas, Tampico, there was this thing going on from the cartel and it was getting really bad, so my mom got scared, so she sent me to live with my aunt to finish my school over here. She couldn’t come, you know. She just couldn’t come. So, it was kind of sad not having my mom here or my dad.

Natalia reported that this was a difficult time for her because not only was she leaving her close family behind, but she had to become accustomed to the English language again. Of the transition, she stated that “when I came back to America, I knew how to speak because my mom was a English teacher in Mexico. So, but I wasn’t really ... She didn’t really teach me how to write right, you know?” Natalia explained that initially when she started high school, she was placed in an ESL class, and she credited her ESL teacher with teaching her how to read in English again.

So, I was in ESL because they gave me a test, and based on the test, they would determine if I was ESL or not, but I was ESL because my writing was bad and when I read something, I didn’t really understand a couple of words. So, when it came to multiple choice, I had everything wrong and it was like, “What?” So, the teacher teach me how to read by small, small stories she got from the Internet.

Natalia expressed appreciation for all the teachers who were committed to her education: Ms. Johnson who taught her to read as a young child, Mr. Osvaldo in sixth grade who taught her not only academics but also about life, her ESL teacher who taught her to read in English when she returned to the U.S., and her 12th grade English teacher, Ms. Heil, who introduced her to literature and writing. Natalia said, “So, my reading history is my English teacher from high school. She taught us reading from Jane Austin, the history of English, she taught us Greek mythology, like fun readings...” Natalia demonstrated her pride of all the reading and work surrounding the readings that she had done her senior year in high school when she brought with her a thick binder, which she still saved, from that high school English class to our second meeting.

Reading Decline—“*I didn’t know how to write or read properly.*”

Natalia noted that when she returned to the U.S. to attend high school she was placed in an ESL class. She credited her high school ESL teacher with helping her get to college. She remarked that unlike her brother, who joined the Marines after high school, “I really want to go to college and aim for associate’s degree. So, I just had to research, ask a teacher. My ESL teacher was the one that helped me to get into college.”

She was lucky, she said that “at least I knew how to talk to the teacher” [in English] because, she stated that other kids in the class had no idea what the teacher was saying and Natalia would have to interpret the teacher’s speech. The difficulties for Natalia were different, she said,

I didn’t know how to write or read properly. My speech was different, like my pronunciation was different and I had my tenses wrong. So, there were kids that had no clue what she was saying, so they will ask me, “¿Qué está diciendo? ¿Qué hago?” You know?

Assisting the teacher helped Natalia because she said the teacher would “mostly teach me...specifically me” with writing and pronunciation,” She said that her main questions were still about pronunciation and word usage. She described a conversation with her developmental literacy instructor,

So then, like right now, I was asking my teacher on my writing, I was telling her, ‘How do you say educated?’ I don’t know. What was that word? It was the word ‘Taught.’ I told her ... I asked her a question and I told her, ‘How do you say ‘My teacher, Osvaldo, taught me how to read and how to ... My teacher, Osvaldo, taught me,’ or was it ‘Taught?’ ‘He taught me,’ or was it, ‘He taught me,’”

and she was like, ‘No. You say taught.’ Then, she was like, you don’t say ‘Ate,’
‘I ate,’ you know? You say, ‘I ate. I eat. I ate.’

Community College is Not College—*“So, starting here, uh, I think uh, it makes me feel confident...”*

Natalia was very specific about why she decided to attend community college. On her survey form she wrote, “To achieve my associate degree in Local Area Networks – Network Administration includes two certifications from Cisco.” Natalia explained, “My decision started because I wanna get my associates and, not just jump in for bachelors.”

Natalia also mentioned that the community college, “it’s less expensive,” and had many resources, such as computers for students to use. She was surprised to hear that these types of resources are also available at four-year universities. Though she knew she wanted to transfer to a four-year university, Natalia had not discussed this move with her advisor at the community college. About this she said,

Maybe I just need to go to my counselor and tell him... ‘Cause I haven’t, like, they send me emails about ‘hey, you should get prepared for your four year university transfer,’ and I haven’t even, like, started. I just know I wanna do it.

Readiness to Transfer—*“So, I, I still have to experience what it is to take a really hard class that it’s towards my degree.”*

As far as what she felt she needed to be ready to transfer to a four-year institution, Natalia reported that she was concerned with improving her testing skills. She stated,

I think m- mostly will be like, when you have an English test, and you have multiple choices, I think that’s- that’s what I really need to be focusing on. ‘Cause

I don't really have a problem tryna do a paper, or turning it in, you know. I think I have more trouble with, like, with the testing itself.

During our discussions, Natalia vacillated between how much reading she thought she would have to do to be ready for university or even how much she would need to do once she was there, between a lot and maybe not so much. She reported,

The teacher give us a lot of things to read, and from all those things, I pick one, the one that I like. But, no, I, I learned that you have to read multiple things in order to have a big scheme. Like my teacher said, "scheme." I didn't know what scheme was and my teacher told me, "Oh, scheme is like connections, things that you read in the past. It's like a big bubble. Then when you read something, you kind of add it to your schema." So, I think that we need to, I need to read a lot to be able to be successful in a four-year university.

In preparation for transfer, Natalia explained that she believed she still had to experience and learn a few things before being ready to move on. She stated, "So, I, I still have to experience what it is to take a really hard class that it's towards my degree." However, she said that "based on what I have taken now, ...uh, I think it's gonna be pretty challenging. In that I feel motivated and excited because the four-year university will expand my, my abilities." Natalia reported being sure she needed to prepare to do a lot of reading when she transferred; when asked how much reading she thought she would need to do, she said, "I think, from all the reading that I have read from all my life till now, I think times two because I wasn't really inclined to reading." However, when she thought about how much reading she would need to do to prepare for the job she wanted as a networks administrator at Cisco, she said, "It's more reading and also

understanding and remembering. Remembering. Most important thing is remembering the cables, the sequence, the numbers. Um, I think reading would be a lot, too.” As far as classes she would need to take at university to be ready for that job, she said,

For the university, I would take classes, like, I think more hands-on classes because it’s more like connecting things together and putting codes in the computer. So, I think reading, it is essential, but it’s more about knowing how to do it.

Natalia went on to compare the amount of reading she believed she needed to do for networking compared to if she were a lawyer, “...then a lawyer needs to read a bunch of laws and a bunch of cases compared to networking. It’s more about, I think, more hands-on finding a solution to make network work, to connect everything together.” Interestingly, she considered this matter further and at our second meeting said, “You know, in our first interview, I said maybe I might not read a lot, but now I changed my mind. I think I am gonna go through a lot of readings. A lot of breaking it down.” And she believed these are the types of reading skills she was learning in her developmental literacy class.

Reading Skills and Strategies

Talking about what she was learning in class, Natalia mentioned doing an analysis of her educational history, which included working on various reading skills, she said about this, “So, we have to, uh, graph pieces of information from the readings that we had to connect to make connections to our educational background, from, from all, from back in the years to the current journey.” She talked also of visual literacy:

And...she also- like today she also gave us a visual, an image of um, fire escape, and before she even explained what the image was about, she gave us a piece of paper to write down what we thought, you know, w-what we thought was happening, uh, what was intended to provoke, and like-

The instructor modeled what the students will be expected to do because Natalia went on to explain that the class had read Sherman Alexie's *The Diary of a Part-Time Indian*,

So, that book, uh, we're gonna pick a theme, and we're gonna, we're gonna write an essay about the theme. And we're gonna pick an image, and we're gonna make a slideshow- slide on Google, and we're gonna talk about what the image represents.

Natalia explained that the essay and the image must be related, so that with the slideshow they created they would talk about "the lights, effects, you know." She went on, "So, that's gonna be our next project, but she just gave us the ideas, so we start brainstorming right now." Other reading strategies she was learning was summarizing an article, "She'll [the instructor] give us, uh, a paper uh, an article or something and she'll make us, uh write down a quick summary;" this was a class time activity. Explaining other reading skills and strategies, Natalia said that "...as we read she makes us do annotations and uh, like, highlight..." Natalia said that these skills, highlighting and annotating, are ones that she could use in other classes. She also said she had learned, "...not to be a passive reader." When I asked her to tell me more about what that meant, she explained,

Sometimes we just grab a piece of paper and we just scan through the words. We don't actually make questions, so she really taught us that. Like, why am I reading this, what is the purpose? So, those are the themes that I'm really taking- soaking it in- into my brain.

Then, she talked about an article her instructor gave the class, "The Transition to College Writing" by Keith Hjortshoj, and what it meant to her to read this article.

That was so amazing, 'cause it made me think that we are young students, nobody likes to read, right? So, that really made me have a second thought about how we read things, how we approach a paper. Because if we have the, the first thought in our mind, "Oh, this is gonna be boring, this is gonna take forever to read, it's, it's a lot of things to read. That explains how we should approach a paper. You should be positive, you know."

Natalia said that strategies that would help her in other classes were,

...annotating, being a predatory reader, will help me in other classes as, uh, taking notes, reminding myself of things, and, uh, even if I don't have to do a research paper or anything, I can, uh, summarize what I'm learning in class.

Familial Involvement Matters—*"I call my mom sometimes, it's not like every day I talk to her. It's just sometimes I talk to her."*

In addition to attending classes, Natalia worked a full-time job from Monday to Friday, 7:00am to 3:30pm. She explained that she worked an assembly line at a factory soldering electronic components. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, she said, she had a class in the evenings; on Saturdays she had her developmental literacy class and on Mondays and

Wednesday she used the afternoons to study after work. Natalia reported that she lived with her boyfriend and that he and the rest of her family were supportive of her educational goals. She explained that her mother and brother knew what she was studying. However, her mother, she said, lived in Tampico, Mexico, and her father lived just across the border, also in Mexico. About her parents, she said, “I call my mom sometimes, it’s not like every day I talk to her. It’s just sometimes I talk to her. And then my dad, um I talk more to my dad.” She stated that she was close to her brother and talked with him often; he always gave her advice. She stated that she recalled both her mother and brother advised her against taking a gap year. Of her mother’s reaction to her stopping out, Natalia said, “Yeah, my mom she’s like ‘go, don’t quit, don’t get a gap year.’ She was the one that told me ‘you’re gonna regret it.’ The gap year, you know, it’s not good.” In hindsight, she stated she agreed with her mother.

Similarly, when she told her brother about taking time off before going to college, she explained,

I was like, ‘No, I’m just gonna have fun. Have a gap year. Save money.’ And then, that’s when he explained to me, ‘You’re going, you’re gonna regret it, ‘cause you’re gonna be stuck in a circle [her brother talked of the circle of poverty and how difficult it is to come out of that circle once you find yourself in the middle of it].

Natalia said, “then, as I lived through that. I realized, hey, I really gotta go back to school, ‘cause I, I just hate working all the time and not making progress. That’s when I came back to college and started again.”

Introducing Olympia

Olympia was a student in the very first class I visited to recruit participants for the study. She was prompt to respond to my text requesting a meeting and kept all appointments as planned. Our first two meetings were outside at one of the college's long-established campuses because it was beautiful autumn weather and, we agreed, it was nice to sit outside and talk. The day we met for the third interview there was a rainstorm and we found a place to sit indoors in the campus library. The first thing I observed about Olympia, and noted in my journal, was that she had a kind smile that lit up her face. She spoke freely and openly and was always polite. Meetings with Olympia happened a couple of hours prior to her developmental literacy class, so I brought her snacks—granola bars, small cracker and chip packets, and a water bottle. I offered to bring her food from a sandwich shop, but she told me her mother cooked a big meal early so that she could eat before leaving for school; therefore, she was not hungry before class. She was happy with the snacks and said she would save those for later.

Olympia's Narrative

Olympia's native language was Spanish, and she first learned to read in Spanish. She attended a bilingual elementary school. At that school in third grade, she learned to read and speak in English with the guidance of Ms. Olivarez, a teacher she still admired. Olympia would read in Spanish at home with her mother and in English with her cousins. Her mother was eager for her to learn English and would buy her chapter books that Olympia found too difficult to read, such as the Harry Potter books. However, in fifth grade one of her teachers, Ms. Aguilar, loved the Harry Potter books and Olympia read the books and participated in class activities related to the stories, which helped her learn

to like to read in English. Olympia remembered many of the books she read during her K-12 school years, including reading *The Handmaid's Tale* her senior year. She enjoyed reading fiction most because those books allowed her to “imagine more stuff than what is going on in real life.” Olympia was not accepted to the four-year university where she first applied after high school graduation and decided to attend community college to get the basic requirements and because it was not as expensive as a four-year university. She reported that she felt that being at community college would help her learn about herself more and in that way she would be more prepared to attend a four-year university.

In our second interview, we talked about what Olympia was doing in her developmental literacy class and about her schedule in general. Olympia said she was in the developmental literacy class because of the score she obtained in the college assessment, TSI. The semester we met she was reading *Part Time Indian* and short articles in her developmental literacy course. Olympia commented that she did not like the book when she first started reading it but continued reading and, at the time of our first meeting, really enjoyed the book and kept up the class reading and writing requirements. Olympia talked about how there were difficult moments, but she stated that she knew she needed to stay in school because at the time she had three different jobs. One of those jobs was helping her mother clean and that was not the kind of work she wanted to do in the future. She explained that by becoming a doctor or nurse, she would help her mother stop doing that type of work. Olympia's stepfather was very encouraging about her attending college and told her that she needed to stay in school and get a career. Her mother missed her when she was not home and would rather Olympia stayed close to

home, but both parents accepted that she may need to move out of the house when she went to a four-year university.

Olympia reported that transferring to a four-year university was important to her because it would prepare her for her future. Transferring would help her get her degree and would teach her a lot of what she wants to study. Completing her degree was important to her because she wanted to be independent when she grew up; she did not want to depend on a husband. She also wanted to help her parents and pay them back for everything they had done for her. For Olympia, being college-ready meant being more independent in college because it was different from high school and no one would hold her hand to carry her through. She said she thought it meant that she had to learn as she went and be ready for whatever happened. Reading-ready to Olympia meant understanding every single detail in a story and being able to explain it and that she could use the different skills in other classes, like in math. Olympia stated she thought that her family and friends could help her achieve her goals by being supportive of every step she was taking and by pushing her to get things done. She also wanted to experience more independence and for others to push her to do more than she thought she could do.

Reading Development—“*And I’d be like so interested like I wanted to keep reading even more.*”

Olympia explained that the first school she attended was a bilingual elementary school. Her mother would read with her in Spanish at home and for the English language books, she would visit her cousins’ home and they would help her read in English. Olympia credited the improvement of her reading in English to a teacher she had at the second school she attended. Olympia recalled,

Her name is Ms. Olivares and now she's really famous because she does a lot for the community and for the school. So, she gets like free stuff for the school like backpacks. For every single state, she got a shirt from a university. She's doing big things and until now I still thank her for what she did because I couldn't read in English or talk in English. Like you can still hear like sometimes that I don't speak well, but like she would like give me passages to read and I started reading in third grade. I was like around 11 or so, I believe, I'm not sure.

Olympia had been reading in Spanish, but, she said, Ms. Olivares helped her learn to read in English, and one of the ways she did this was by applying a reading strategy. She explained,

That's how I started reading English. I would read passages and I would annotate them on the side. Words I didn't know I would circle them and then the next day she would grade it and I would get some of them wrong because I didn't understand it. So, she would sit around with me and be like and go like paragraph to paragraph reading it.

Growing up, at home, Olympia had books in Spanish and books in English, about this she said,

I would have Spanish and English, but they would be different books, not the same books. So, I would read more in Spanish but then my mom was like, 'You need to learn English in order to be successful in this country.' She was like, 'You would get paid more because you're bilingual.' And so that's how I started.

Olympia's mother would bring English language books for Olympia to read; however, Olympia reported, these were not books she felt she was ready to read:

so, she started buying me like not the small books. She started buying me chapter books, like the Harry Potter ones, and I would be like, “I can’t even read this.” She’d be like, ‘You need to try.’ She was like, ‘If I try, you need to try. You were born here, and you need to learn how to speak English.’ But I would go my ways and I would go to school and get the smaller books and she wouldn’t, she’d get mad at me. She’d be like, ‘Ay Sammy, you need to try hard. Like you need to like go outside your box like so you can learn new things and do more.’

Olympia explained that she began reading these books in fifth grade; her teacher, Ms. Ageter, loved Harry Potter and she even divided the class into the different houses from the book. Olympia remembered, “So I would be Hufflepuff and I would like each read, we read all the, what’s it called, the novels from Harry Potter. So that’s when I started liking English chapter books.” These books “had big words so I wouldn’t understand it,” Olympia said, but she kept at it, and after a while, she explained, “I started gaining more confidence in reading in English and speaking in English.” She reported that she also enjoyed the fact that there were movies about the books, and after reading a book she could watch the movie and she could compare what she read in the book with what happened in the movie, Olympia stated, “And I’d be like so interested like I wanted to keep reading even more.” She reported that reading the Harry Potter books inspired her to keep reading, but she did not remember many of the books she read as a child. She expressed that she would rather read a book that is not part of a series, “I do not like series because I get bored of them. Like even if I watch TV shows, I get bored of them.”

Moving from elementary to middle school, Olympia reported she kept up with reading. She explained that she did this mainly because in elementary school students

could earn points for the amount of reading they did, and at 100 points, students would receive a prize. There was the same type of point system in middle school; Olympia explained further,

But we didn't receive any prizes. But I thought we did so I just kept on reading to see what we would get, but sometimes they would give us ice cream depending on the points we had. So, I kept on reading and writing more. I remember I started liking, I started to write in English more and I started liking it than to write in Spanish. I don't know why.

Olympia explained that the focus in high school was on writing, vocabulary and grammar, "and how to like structure the paragraphs, the body paragraphs, conclusion and all that."

Reading Decline—*"They try to prepare us for college, but they take the reading out of it."*

Olympia did not recall doing much reading in high school "I would read short stories or articles about what's going on in the world, like how immigration is supposedly affecting the world, stuff like that we would read." About reading less in high school, Olympia commented,

In high school, um...I didn't really have to read 'cause my English classes we would only write a lot. Like, they were like, they, how do I explain it? They try to prepare us for college, but they take the reading out of it. So, we write essays more than what we wrote.

There were two books that remembered from high school and, in addition to the writing assignments linked with the books, Olympia explained, they both culminated in

watching the movies based on the books. The first book Olympia mentioned was Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, which she said she read her senior year in English class. About the book, Olympia said, "Yeah, I liked it. I actually got really, what's it called, it caught my attention that I wanted to keep on watching the series, but I don't have Hulu, so I stopped watching after that." When I ask if she chose the book or if her teacher chose it, she said,

The teacher chose it for us because we were reading it as a class and watching the movie as a class. But after every single chapter, we had to write an essay, like trying to be like how do we relate to that? What could have they done better to make it a better paragraph or chapter, something like that.

As our discussion continued, Olympia talked about being in advanced placement English class during her junior year in high school, and in that class, she recalled, they read F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. About reading this book, Olympia stated,

Yeah, and we had to make a project out of it. Yeah, it wasn't as interesting as the Handmaid's, but it was interesting. Yeah, we watched the movie too. Yes. I liked the movie. I don't know why, but I like watching the movies better than reading. It gets my attention even more than the book.

Olympia reported being in the advanced placement English class only during her junior year because "it was hard for me, so I moved down to regular English."

Community College is Not College—*"And I've never thought I would actually go this far, like, I'm actually in college."*

Olympia reported that she was not accepted to the four-year university to which she now planned to transfer; her mother was also worried about the costs of a four-year

institution, and suggested Olympia begin at a community college and then transfer.

Olympia explained, “And I was like, ‘Okay.’ So, I’m still thinking about it and here I am in a community college. I’m going to try to get my associate’s degree and then I’m going to transfer to be a practitioner nurse.” Olympia reported that she was the first in her immediate family to go to college as neither one of her parents moved past an elementary education. She said that she did however have three cousins who had graduated college, and one was in the process of attaining a doctoral degree.

Olympia stated she was proud of how far she had come already, she reflected on her success so far:

Wow, I actually graduated top 25% of my high school and now I’m going to college with a 3.4 GPA. Right now, I’m passing all my classes with As and one of my top one [goals] was my first semester to pass with As.

She reported that growing up her dream was to become a pediatrician, but in high schools she participated in a program called “Ready, Set, Teach” for students interested in becoming teachers. Remembering the program, Olympia said, “They would take us to school, they would give us a class that we could teach and help. I actually got the class the one to teach how to read English.” So, when she arrived in college and was asked about her major, she continued, “I had said education because I wanted to be a first grade teacher.” She said that she was reconsidering this choice because one of her cousins told her there is not much money in teaching; Olympia stated, “actually two weeks ago I changed my major to health science so I can start getting into the nursing program and everything.”

Readiness to Transfer—“*So, I feel like it’s preparing me to go to a four-year university.*”

Regarding her enrollment in community college, Olympia said, “So, I feel like it’s preparing me to go to a four-year university.” Olympia reported she felt that to prepare for transfer, she needed to work on herself:

First, I need to get to learn myself more because I know I can do more than what I think I can do. So, I want to know what ... how to say it? I want to know what I can do other than what I know, because I know I have a big future ahead of me. I want to learn who I am, who I really am first, and I want to get to know what a college student does on a basis, so I can be prepared mentally and physically.

Olympia continued, “And speaking better English would help me because I still have a lisp. Is that what’s it called? An accent.” I admitted I could not hear her accent, and she insisted, “I still have an accent and I want to get better with that. I don’t know why. Because I get shy talking in English. I’m not comfortable because I hear the accent...” She explained that hearing the accent bothered her to the point of it affecting her performance in class:

Yeah, that’s why in class sometimes I don’t talk. I’m just sitting there, and I know the answer. I say it in in my mind and then a kid raises their hand and I’m like I was going to say that, but I didn’t say so I’m correct.

Olympia reported further that, “Some words I can’t pronounce them right so I’m like, ‘Oh God, how do you say this? How do you say that?’” Olympia went on to say that she thought there were also specific classes she would need to take, math and science, for which she could not yet sign up, she said, “because I didn’t’ pass my TSI in my reading

and math, so I had to get in the basic ones.” She explained that she was enrolled in developmental literacy coursework, elementary algebra, and a transition to college class. When asked what she thought she would learn in math and science that would help her with upper level classes, she responded,

The science, I feel like I’m going to get to know my body more, what kind of bones we have and what we need in order to have a healthy body and all that. Yes, I want to get to know my body more and math, I feel like math’s going to help me when it ever comes to numbers. I’m probably going to end up with recipes like how much you need to take and all of that.

Olympia reported that she believed she would need to work on her reading and writing skills in preparation for transfer; she said, “And I want to learn how to write more essays like grammarly wise, how to do it grammarly and everything.”

Reading Skills and Strategies

When asked how much reading she believed she would need to do in upper level classes, Olympia explained,

I feel like I’m going to do even more reading and writing because the classes get harder. So, I’m going to have to do more research and read papers and newspapers and stuff like that. So, I feel like I’m going to have to do even more than what I’m doing right now.

Olympia pulled out her class syllabus when we started talking about her developmental literacy class. She showed me that she kept close tabs on what she had done by checking off every assignment and in that way tried to not fall behind in her schoolwork. She talked about the essays she had written in her class, one had been about

personal goals, “And then the second one we talked, it was about, like we did a story ‘cause like when I was little my mom would always scare me like, ‘Oh, tienes que dormir o la Llorona te va a agarrar.’” The third was a compare and contrast essay, and she showed on her syllabus that it involved visual literacy. Olympia could choose two art pieces to describe, and the next essay, she said would be a persuasive essay. I asked Olympia about the reading she was doing in class, and she talked about Sherman Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, which she referred to as PTI, “we’re doing a book called, I just know the PTI is Part-Time Indian. That’s the book that we’re reading right now” Olympia explained the plot of the book and said she wrote in her journal about the chapters of the book, but the requirements were very specific she said, “There has to be two paragraphs of 150 words. And then we do the vocabulary that we didn’t understand. It was four words. And then three questions.” Olympia clarified that the journal was for the teacher, but they also wrote a blog, which was for the entire class. Another strategy used in class was the Harkness, which was the discussion circle, but Olympia explained,

We can’t, we can’t say like, “I don’t agree.” We have to be specific. Like, “Why don’t you agree?” “What’s the reason?” Give some back up like... Like why, why don’t you like it? So, whenever we’re done with that Harkness, we, she gives us 10 minutes or 20 minutes to write, um, a paper saying like what, what you’d liked about the Harkness or what we could do better.

This is reflective exercise and I wonder what she thinks about it, she replies,

I actually like doing it 'cause I get to, what's it called? I get to express myself.

What I feel about the book, not only in writing but like face to face other people.

At first, I'm shy but then once I get comfortable.

In fact, she reported that she felt so comfortable during these activities that she found ways to get others involved in the conversations because participation was graded.

'Cause like whenever I see that someone's not talking, 'cause she gives us, um, grade. ...So as the more we talk and the more we participate, the, the higher our grade is. So, I usually like whenever I see that people aren't talking that are shy to talk like that people interrupt them. Like, "Do you have a question?" or "What do you think about this?"

Olympia explained that she could relate to students who did not want to speak up in class, which was why she tried to help them, she stated that she learned from her high school coach, "that like the more you do for someone, the better you feel about yourself and like the better you'll go far later in life." She explained that in the beginning she did not like the book they were reading and had considered looking up the summary of the book online; however, she said, she knew that would not work when the instructor told them all the work that would be involved, so on her first blog, Olympia said she wrote, "I do not like this book. I don't even know why she is making us read it." However, she said she kept reading and soon, she stated, her reaction changed, "Like I couldn't stop reading it."

Olympia explained what she saw as the difference in learning skills in college compared to high school,

When I was in high school, I did not know, like I did know how to annotate. I did not know how like to find the main idea to be specific about it. Like I would just like, “Oh, it’s talking about this.” And like I would highlight it. But now that I, like I as I read, I’m like, “Oh my God. I was doing it wrong the whole time,” so like I actually understand it better.

Familial Involvement Matters—“*It doesn’t matter how much money it takes us for you to go to four-year college. We’re going to help you.*”

Olympia reported that she had three separate jobs; these included, cleaning houses with her mother, helping cook at a small food stand, and working at a supermarket. She said she used to work both Saturdays and Sundays at the supermarket, but had to ask off because, she explained, “like my stepdad went to a retreat, and he got closer to God. So, we, every Sunday we started going to church.” Olympia said this schedule change had worked out for her because she could dedicate this extra time that she was not working to studying. She explained that “the good thing about it is that I get to focus more on school. And do my homework.”

Olympia reported that she had support from both parents and she emphasized the support she received from her stepfather who, she said, continually encouraged her educational goals. Olympia explained,

‘cause I have my stepdad and he always tells me, because my cousins are showoffs because they have everything and I don’t. They’re like [her parents], ‘You show them what you can do.’ Like right now, I bought my car with my own money without my parents helping and the same week I bought my car with all my hard work, my cousin, her dad bought her her car and he [stepfather] was like,

‘Now this is your time to show them that you buy your car by yourself and that you can graduate college.’ And he’s like, ‘It doesn’t matter how much money it takes us for you to go to four-year college. We’re going to help you. We’re going to be there every step of the way.’

At the end of our first meeting, when I asked Olympia if there was anything else, she reported,

It was hard growing up with the Hispanic parents because you don’t really talk English at home. All you speak is Spanish and write in Spanish. And I remember like when we would have to go to the gas station or a store, she [Olympia’s mother] would always be like, ‘You know English, so you talk for me.’ And I’d be like, ‘But I can’t talk right. I can’t talk properly.’ She’d be like, ‘You need to learn,’ and this and that.

She described a couple of incidents of when the interpretations or translations did not go as planned and sometimes, she explained, she would ask her teacher to help her figure out the meanings of words. She stated,

So, the next day I would go, I’ll put it in my backpack [a flip phone where she could type the words she wanted to translate]. I’ll go to my teacher. I’ll be like, ‘Can you help me? What does this say?’ So, I would be writing it down.

Introducing Patricia

Patricia was quick to respond to my text messages and always ready to fit the interviews into her schedule. In my initial observation notes I wrote that she was “friendly, open, confident,” and, upon further interactions with her, I found all this to hold true. Because we were meeting after one of her classes, I offered to bring her a

sandwich as I had the other participants, but she declined because she did not like the place from where I offered to get the sandwich. When I asked if she would prefer something different, she requested chicken nuggets from McDonald's. In my notes, I remarked that I appreciated the directness and as this exchange happened before we ever met, I had an impression of a student who knew what she liked and did not like and was not afraid to express herself. Another thing I learned about Patricia shortly after meeting her was that she would easily transition from English to Spanish, if the words in English are insufficient, either because they escaped her at that moment or the meaning was clearer in Spanish.

During our conversations, Patricia expressed many times her disappointment at finding herself enrolled at a community college rather than at a four-year university. She reported that her parents were supportive of her educational goals and they would miss her when she transferred. The biggest issue, however, was that her father had made a mistake when completing his taxes and that had affected her application for the Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA), and, she explained, even though he did not make much money, the mistake he made meant that he had to pay money on his taxes and that she did not qualify for state financial aid. [The TASFA is an application available to Texas residents who do not have U.S. citizenship.] Added to the financial challenges of transferring to a four-year university, she explained, was that her advisor told her of the possibility that if she transferred after one year at community college, she would probably still be considered in her first year at the four-year institution. The prospect of adding what was potentially another year to her educational journey did not sit well with Patricia who reported wanting to complete her degree as soon as possible. Patricia explained that

one of the reasons she wanted to begin directly at a four-year university was that she would be at one school where she could do all the work and not have an opportunity to leave. Patricia believed that if she stayed two years at community college, she would not want to transfer to a four-year university and would simply leave the education system. She emphasized the point that she wanted very much to earn a degree, however she did not want to be at the community college another year and she also did not want to transfer as a first-year student. All of this had her very conflicted and debating her options.

Patricia's Narrative

Patricia first learned to read in Spanish, and when we met reported reading in both Spanish and English. She was the first in her family to go to college. Because she learned to read in Spanish at home, before beginning school, when she started first grade she decided to learn to read in English. One of the books she remembered reading was *When You Give a Mouse a Cookie*. She had the same book in Spanish and English. To teach herself English, she stated, she would compare the words on the pages of each book in the different languages. She remembered enjoying picture books in elementary school and still liking books with drawings in them when she was in middle school. In high school, she read a few books, including *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Poisonwood Bible*, and said that both of those made an impression on her.

Patricia reported that while in high school she never considered attending a community college. However, when the time came to apply for financial aid, Patricia completed the TASFA and it was at that time she found out that her father had made a mistake when completing the taxes, which meant to Patricia she would not be eligible for

financial aid. It was for this reason, Patricia stated, she decided to attend community college. Her goal was to transfer to a four-year university but was conflicted about when to transfer because she wanted to make sure that she was not wasting time and money by attending community college if her credits would not transfer. Patricia reported talking with her mother about her options and what would make sense for her. In her developmental literacy class, Patricia was working on writing a comparative essay. As far as reading in the class, she explained they read different articles and one short story online book titled *Dumpster Diving*. The class focus was more on the writing, she said but she also spent time reading the news and other text that she found online. Patricia looked forward to moving on to a four-year university because she reported feeling that would motivate her to do better in her classes and to stay in school until she received her degree.

Reading Development—“*And then well basically I taught myself English.*”

Patricia explained that she was the oldest of four; she had a sister in high school and two brothers in middle school. Her stepfather finished high school and her mother was trying to obtain a high school equivalency diploma. About learning to read in English, Patricia stated, “So, I was, I think in kindergarten. No, I was going to first grade when I, when I decided to learn how to read in English.” She went on to explain that she asked her stepfather to help her learn English, but when he was no longer available, she asked her aunts if they would help her. She stated that her aunts, “they wouldn’t help me. And so like, uh, basically I asked my teacher to like give me beginner’s book, uh, English beginners books. ...And then well basically I taught myself English.” Before teaching herself to read English in first grade, Patricia said that she was taught to read in Spanish

by her mother. She explained that her mother taught her with the book, *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* [*Si Le Das Una Galletita a un Ratón*]; Patricia remembered her mother would “literally put me on the table and until, until I finished the page,” and she would turn the page and continue reading. She said that her first-grade class was a bilingual class. Patricia also said she was jealous that other students could read in English and she could not, which was when she decided she would learn to read in English. To accomplish this, she found the same books in her classroom that she had in Spanish:

and then I went to the, to our little classroom library and then they had the English book. And so, I read it and I kind of, I kind of compare the, the words. And I saw some of them were the same as some of them, or not.

Indeed, this worked out so well, Patricia explained, that she was placed in advanced classes during her elementary years, “And so they would like, um, take me out of the class to go to, with higher students...to read.” She reported that her reading continued to improve in elementary school and she also remembered that she enjoyed fictional cartoon books best. By the time she arrived in high school, Patricia explained, there was a greater emphasis being placed in writing, “Yeah, ‘cause the AP test, the AP test, um lo que importaba mas era el writing. So, por eso me enfoqué mas en eso.”

Reading Decline—“*And so, and then my reading level went down, and I wouldn’t read a book so it would be surprising if I read.*”

In middle school, Patricia reported that her reading began to decline. She stated that, “In middle school I started to go down. Um, because well whenever they separated me from my family, um, I wouldn’t read a book so it would be surprising if I read.” She did remember reading the Junie B. Jones and Goosebumps series books. Then, in high

school, she said, she read *Esperanza Rising*, “I remember that one. I love that book.”

“And in high school my reading level went down. I, um for now like tambien in college.”

One of the ways she knew that her reading level had continued to go down, she explained, was that “Because when I was, when I was little, I could express myself more because I would read more. But now that I don’t read...it, it’s difficult for me to even talk or to even, um, express myself.”

When asked why she thought she did not read as much in high school, she explained, “Um. I guess because I was growing up. I just...didn’t pay attention to the books. Um, I didn’t find it interesting. Um, in high school I will [sic] goof off a lot.”

Patricia continued,

Um, I, my grades were really bad. They were really low and I regret it. I re- really regret it. Um. But I guess books never caught my attention when I was in high school. They never caught my attention.

About the book she liked so much, *Esperanza Rising*, well she said, she had forgotten to mention,

When I was in elementary, I read *Esperanza Rising* in fourth grade. But my teacher, Mr. Rodriguez, ...um, he gave it, ‘cause he was like this, he was like the best teacher in the whole school.

Um, so the, okay so Mr. Rodriguez, he gave us the book to everybody in the class and then we were reading it during class and then he’d let us have it some, for homework. And then he said whenever you go out, you have to go to college it’s going to be, be easier for y’all to read and understand. But I don’t know. And then I remembered. I got it in high school again.

During our first meeting Patricia remembered partial titles of a couple of other books she read in 12th grade. At the follow up meeting, she confirmed that the other books she read in high school were, *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Poisonwood Bible*. When I asked Patricia if she had a favorite subject in school, she said no, but when questioned her further, she expressed that she did like sports, soccer and cheerleading. In elementary school she liked science, she said, “Yeah, I was never good at math. And I liked reading. I liked reading in elementary,” but by the time she reached high school, she explained, she only liked the sports in which she participated.

Community College is Not College—“*So, okay. SWCC was never my choice.*”

By the time Patricia arrived at community college, she said she no longer had time to participate in sports either. One thing Patricia wanted to make clear was that enrolling at community college was not her first option. In fact, she explained,

Um. Never my choice. I never imagined myself go to SWCC, um, because my goal was to go to a four year college and my dad, um, oh, my dad, ...(she laughs).

We could afford, we he can’t afford to, for me to go to college. But the thing is, is, uh, he, in his taxes he messed up.

And so, like all of the colleges that I got accepted to, they told me that I was not, uh, I was able to go but only if my dad paid all of the amount out of pocket.

Patricia reported that she completed the Texas Application for Student Financial Aid (TASFA), but “I wasn’t able to get any financial help because supposedly my dad wen, um, like he earned, buen, ganó buen dinero, pero en realidad no.” Patricia said that she had applied to the local community college as a last resort, and then decided to attend the college “because I didn’t want to, I didn’t wanna have a break.” She said she decided

to go to the community college because if she took a break she would not return to school.

Because I know, I know that if I was gonna have a break, like during desde que e termino la escuela y luego tener un break y luego volver al colegio. That was not gonna happen because I know I wasn't gonna go to college again.

She reported being determined to transfer to a four-year college; however, she said she was discouraged to hear from her advisor that if she transferred after one year at the community college, she would be considered a freshman at her choice university.

Readiness to Transfer—“*But I like, de que me quiero mover, I wanna move.*”

The prospect of being a freshman again had created a dilemma for Patricia whose other option was to remain another year at the community college, and this she did not want to do. She debated the matter aloud during our discussion:

...I was thinking about, okay so I already talked to my advisor and everything y le dije que me quiero mover, me quiero um transfer, transferir a la escuela de [...] State University.

Pero la cosa es que voy a tener que aplicar como una high school student. And it's like, una, es como, yo siento que es como una pérdida de tiempo. O sea, yo estoy aquí teniendo los créditos, y los créditos que si voy para allá no sé, se van a pasar...

Patricia reported that she did not want to feel she would have wasted the time spent at the community college. Yet, she explained that she felt she needed be at a four-year university because, she said, this was a way to motivate herself to complete her degree. She expressed that she was reluctant to complete two years at the community

college because one thing she knew for sure, she stated, was that she did not want to spend extra time at school and she thought that,

Pero, yo por eso dije si yo estoy, si yo termino los dos años yo sé que yo ya no voy a querer volver a la escuela. Y yo quiero algo que me motive para que no me, no me deje salir. So, it won't let me, um, salirme de la escuela.

A sí vez que, um en un colegio cuatro años, you get your diploma y ya te puedes salir.

Beyond the big decision Patricia had to make, she explained that she believed there were things she had learned at community college that would help her be ready when she transferred to a four-year university.

Reading Skills and Strategies

Patricia reported that she thought she would need to be “very, very, very prepared” to do the work when she transferred to a university. She went on to say she also thought she would do better at university, “...’cause here I’m doing horrible. But I mean like better, better, I don’t know. I guess like look for more mistakes.” Other things, she stated she would do was “Um, turning in assignments. Um, actually paying attention to the reading. And annotating also. Hablar más, sobre la, sobre el article.” She said she expected that she would need to be very prepared,

for the reason that, um, that it will, like the, the reading assignments are not, are not easy. ...And so I need to be able to understand how to look for context clues- ...and what the reading is talking about.

In her developmental literacy class, Patricia explained, the students read together, “She [instructor] read it to us and we annotate.” One reading strategy Patricia said she disagreed with was,

You have to read it [any reading] three time to be able to understand it. ‘Cause I don’t know. I just think it’s like reading it three times, no. Yeah. But like I understand it the first and second time. Like if I skip through it and then I actually read it, then maybe I’ll understand.”

Patricia explained that what worked for her was “like I skim through it but I go all the way to the top and then I start reading it.” During that second read through, she said, was when Patricia made annotations. She went on to report,

...she taught us that, that whenever we’re reading, we’re basically not, uh, we’re, like so whenever we’re reading, if there’s like noise outside, you get easily distracted. And so ever since she taught us that, um, I’ve noticed like, que yo no pongo atención a los alrededores and I have to pay attention to what I’m reading.

Patricia explained that she would like to be a behavior analyst and she stated that “I get, and that does, that does involve reading but mostly communication and listening.” In class, Patricia stated, they read short articles and a short story; she explained that she felt that they read to write.

Familial Involvement Matters—“*They ask me if I’m, if I’m stressed or like, hm, if I finish my homework.*”

Patricia reported that she took classes in the afternoons and in the mornings she volunteered at a Catholic radio station. She said she was the youngest person at the station and had the responsibility of putting people on the air and on Facebook live.

Because she dropped her math class, Patricia stated, she now had more time to study in the afternoons after classes. On Saturdays and Sundays, she explained, she worked as a waitress, up to eight hours, and on Sundays she also went to church. Patricia reported that she had a busy schedule, but “I wanna have time for everything,” she said, and she appreciated that “something that I learned in community college would be time management, knowing, um, like knowing, being able to manage your time.”

Patricia’s family was supportive of her education, “Yes, they’re very, very into my education. Yeah. They’re like very into it. Hm. They ask me if I’m, if I’m stressed or like, hm, if I finish my homework.” She explained that she started working “Because I wanna be able to help. Because I don’t get financial help anywhere. And so, um, I wanna be able to help make money so I can go to school.” She reported that she could not apply for TASFA because her father did not have his taxes, and she also did not qualify for any type of federal financial assistance. She explained that she thought the best way her family could support her goal of transferring is by supporting her education decisions.

Summary of Within-Case Analysis

In this section each case was presented in a way that centers the participant’s voice and demonstrates the unique features of the case. This was done through an in-depth presentation of how each case answers the study’s research questions via their reading history as viewed through five categories. The first two categories were reading development and reading decline, followed by community college is not college, which included participants’ reasons for matriculation at community college, then, readiness to transfer, which was an analysis of what they think they need to transfer to a four-year institution, including reading skills and strategies, and finally the category familial

involvement matters. The next section is a presentation of the results of a cross-case analysis of participants' self-perceptions of readiness to transfer based on the research questions.

Cross-Case Analysis

Through the constant-comparative method of reviewing categories and data patterns in phase three of data analysis, seven themes became evident both because they highlighted similarities and identified differences among the six cases. These themes are presented here as they addressed the three main research questions of the study. The themes are first shown on a table with the research question they answered, followed by the definition, and the categories from which the cross-case themes were identified. Following the table, themes I identified are presented using participants' examples. The study's conceptual framework built on three pillars (discussed in Chapter 2) guided this cross-case analysis as it had guided the rest of this study at all points. This meant that in this section as in the previous, the Latinas' voices are centered, their unique identities are each represented, and the notion of their continued reading development is addressed in the questions.

The seven themes from the cross-case analysis of data are:

1. Participants' descriptions of why they began their postsecondary education at community college depended largely on how they perceived their goal of transferring to a four-year institution.
2. As students with aspirations to transfer, participants stated they need guidance, information, and resources to meet their educational goals. One participant talked about what the high schools could do different.

3. Participants discussed family as important but in different ways with conflicts sometimes influencing educational decisions.
4. Some participants discussed the need to have the right or proper vocabulary before transitioning to a four-year institution.
5. Participants wanted to transfer to a university to obtain a degree and achieve personal career goals and social advancement.
6. Participants were eager to show they could read, loved to read, and know how to read.
7. Some participants expressed a view that reading is either not so important for transfer or they would learn as they progress through college.

Theme #1 and theme #2 provided answers to the first research question as to why study participants reported beginning their postsecondary education at a community college instead of enrolling directly at a four-year institution. Theme #3, theme #4, and theme #5 provided answers to research question two regarding how participants perceived their readiness for transition to a four-year institution. Theme #6 and theme #7 provided answers to research question three which asked how participants perceived their reading readiness for a four-year institution. Themes are first shown on a table with the research question they answered, the definition of the theme, and the codes/categories from which I derived the themes. Following the table, the themes are presented with participants' discussions providing the supporting evidence for the themes.

The following presentation pertains to themes #1 and #2, illustrated in table 17, which provided answers to question number 1 and focused on why participants decided to begin

their postsecondary education at a community college, including answers that indicated what attending a community college signified to the participants.

Table 17

Cross-Case Themes 1 and 2 and Definition

Research Question	Theme	Definition	Codes/Categories
1. Why do Latina college students report beginning their postsecondary education at a community college instead of enrolling directly at a four-year institution?	#1 Participants' descriptions of why they began their postsecondary education at community college depended largely on how they perceived their goal of transferring to a four-year institution.	The overall descriptor for attending community college was that of the community college as a steppingstone to something bigger and better.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community college is not college • Community college as less than
	#2 As students with aspirations to transfer, participants stated they need guidance, information, and resources to meet their educational goals. One participant talked about what the high schools could do different.	Students seek and require institutional support and guidance once at the community college to meet educational requirements to be college-ready, transfer ready, and to complete a degree.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students Require Support/guidance • Unmet Institutional Expectations

Theme #1: Participants' descriptions of why they began their postsecondary education at community college depended largely on how they perceived their goal of transferring to a four-year institution.

A strong thread across all the cases was the belief that community college was *less than* a university. Therefore, beginning postsecondary education at a community college was a big disappointment, as it was for Patricia; or it could be the only option because she was not accepted at her four-year university, as it was for Olympia; or a place to go because she was afraid of rejection from a four-year university, as it was for Concepción. For Alexa, Carmen, and Natalia, community college was a place to start before moving up to university.

Patricia was deeply disappointed that she had to attend a community college. Patricia explained, “okay so I applied to SWCC just in case, just in case. But that was like last minute.” Patricia reported she felt she was not doing her best in college precisely because she was forced to begin her postsecondary education at a community college. She explained,

I feel like yes because since, I feel like I just haven't tried in here because, I don't know, 'cause I just been bummed out ... that I'm not into, I'm not in a four year college. And so, I just get sad. I don't know. I don't know how to explain it. Like I just get depressed because of that.

Patricia expressed believing this would change once she attended a four-year university. She stated, “But I know if I went to like a four-year college, I'm gonna be like happy. I don't know. Like I'll be happy, I'll be happy to do my college work.”

Even Olympia who was happy to be in college and talked about how she couldn't believe she made it this far, expressed her understanding that community college is not real college when she said, "And, like now that I'm in college, like I'm learning a little bit more. I'm learning day by day that's how a real college is going to be," and then said that community college was preparing her for a four-year university. She expressed her belief that taking classes at the community college would help her because, "I'm going to be a little bit more prepared for the big ones, an actual big college."

Concepción did not apply to a university because she did not think she would be accepted because of her low GPA in high school. She explained,

You know, so, um, obviously universities aren't going to want to, you know, accept people with low GPA's. So... Um, I didn't for, because of that reason, cause I was like, well, they're not going to accept me. So, might as well just start here and just, you know, get the GPA up.

Comparatively, Alexa explained that she was at the community college because "As of right now, I may not be like college level." She stated that "I feel like when I, when I got, got out of high school I wasn't prepared to go into like a higher education." Alexa believed that at the community college she could "take it slow so that's why I decided to come to SWCC so I can, like I have two classes or three classes to get used to the work." Alexa explained,

So, I feel like I st- I needed to start like slow, taking my time 'cause there's gonna be time for me to do everything. ...To, to know what's gonna happen and how it's gonna keep like moving on. And it's probably, it's gonna get harder and harder than what it is.

...You have to be prepared; you have to know. Not exactly have to know, but you have to have an idea of h- how different it's going to be 'cause college is not the same thing as high school. It's noth- it's nothing compared to it.

Carmen was glad she started at a community college because of the conversations she had with her friends who confirmed that a community college was a good place to start. Carmen explained,

And, I don't know, I feel like that is right because there's some, some of my friends that, they're already in the, a university and then they struggle a little bit more and then they wish they were in a, like a college ...They would tell me so many times, "I wish I started college first." So, I feel like ... Like everyone told me to always start with a college, so ...

Natalia was happy to be at a community college;the she explained how this would help her prepare for university.

...So, starting here, uh, I think uh, it makes me feel confident, 'cause it's not just really hard work, it's more like paced, take your time, you know. And I feel like university is gonna be like boom boom boom.

Further, Natalia said, "That's why I want to go to four-year college. To be prepared ...for the big school, which is a four-year university." She explained she did not feel she was not being challenged at the community college because, she stated, "so I, I still have to experience what it is to take a really hard class that ...it's towards my degree. In that, I feel motivated and excited because the four-year university expand ...my, my abilities."

Each participant, in her own way, described community college as a steppingstone to something bigger, something that is more than, or better than where they were at the time, and that something is the four-year university.

Theme #2: As students with aspirations to transfer, participants stated they need guidance, information, and resources to meet their educational goals. One participant talked about what the high schools could do different.

Participants had different needs of the educational institutions, but both at the high school and college level the support and guidance participants did and did not receive had an impact on the participants beginning their postsecondary education at a community college. Most participants spoke of how the college could support and guide them now that they were enrolled; Carmen expanded institutional expectations to the high schools:

Um, I feel like high school teachers should start having, like, special classes. Like, I know they have special classes, but they should make it for everyone because when I was in high school, they didn't teach me anything about college.

And they didn't tell me be, be serious sort of stuff or that, that's going to happen.

And I feel like high schools should start doing that instead of, like, teaching us, like other stuff ... that aren't a-, necessary.

Yeah. So I feel like high school didn't help at all with college stuff. Like the only thing we did with college stuff was like, the TSI and that's it. Like, that's not going to teach us anything. That's just telling us how college is going to look like, but it's not telling us spefi, specific details about it."

Olympia appreciated how at the community college, “They show us little by little how it’s going to be in a four year. I mean they, in the four year what’s it called? University” When she considered what the community college could do to help her meet her transfer goals, Alexa explained,

In the community college, I think that they should, in my point of view, or maybe I just, I’ve never heard about it, but do more like groups too, so they can show us what we need or how we can transfer to a university.

She explains further,

‘Cause I’m new at this and I don’t know what to do or where to go or like what’s gonna happen, so I would like a little bit like, a guidance- ...so to know what’s awa- wh- what’s waiting for us. (she laughs) And yeah, I think that’s all. Just a little help from them.

Alexa understood that college students were expected to do things on their own, “‘cause we are growing up, but just a little guidance of what to do or what to expect,” was what she expressed she would like to see more of from the college.

Concepción offered a clear description of what she would like to see from her community college teachers. She stated,

Um, just anything in general, you know, that they could understand. You know, I feel like that would be good for, well, any student, you know. So, you know, even, it doesn’t have to be just like for them to listen you about, like, what’s going on at home, just like about everything, you know. Just ideas, you know, they’ve been through some more stuff than we have. We’re barely starting, you know.

So I feel like that would be a great help if they could, like, we could have a, you know, more, uh, I wanna say, like a more, hmm, like if it was a brother and sister vibe. ‘Cause, you know, that’s, like, more trusting, but- ... like a cool type of teacher/student vibe- ... that they could understand, you know.

The participants addressed a need for institutional support and guidance once at the community college for them to meet educational requirements to be college-ready, transfer ready, and to complete a degree. The following presentation pertains to themes #3, #4, and #5, illustrated in table 18, which provided answers to question number 2 and focus on how participants perceived their readiness for transition to a four-year university.

Table 18

Cross-Case Themes 3, 4, and 5 and Definition

Research Question	Theme	Definition	Categories
2. How do Latina college students perceive their readiness for transition to a four-year institution?	#3 Participants discussed family as important but in different ways with conflicts sometimes influencing educational decisions.	Family matters to Latina students, but participants expressed and suggested varying reasons for the need to have family involvement in their education. Family was identified as sacrificing and family dynamics appear to have an influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family involvement matters • Readiness to Transfer
	#4 Some participants discussed the need	Vocabulary and grammar matter for college	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words=Educated • Words=Knowledge

to have the right or proper vocabulary before transitioning to a four-year institution.	success. Knowing the right words matters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition of self as deficit
#5 Participants wanted to transfer to a university to obtain a degree and achieve personal career goals and social advancement.	A university degree is one way to obtain social advancement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal goals motivate • Transfer self-awareness

Theme #3: Participants discussed family as important but in different ways with conflicts sometimes influencing educational decisions.

Carmen wanted to earn a college degree, she said, “Because it shows that I put effort in everything I did. And technically that’s making me proud and making, like, all my family proud. Especially because they’re doing everything right now for me to, like, get a degree.” Carmen talked about her family and the sacrifices her parents were making to put her through school. In contrast, Concepción’s relationship with her family remained an enigma throughout the course of our conversations. She talked about how both her parents supported her, but then also mentioned that she did not speak with her father, rather she heard about how he felt about things from her mother, even though they all lived in the same house. She said, “I mean, I don’t really talk to my dad that much, you know, but, um, yeah, they’re, they’re both supportive though, either way, you know?” However, as noted above, she expressed a desire for her mother to be more involved in her schooling.

Natalia explained that she often followed her brother's advice and she knew she wanted to transfer because she had her parents as an example of what she did not want to happen to her. She reported,

I don't want to like, like how my mom and my dad came here as immigrants. And they didn't have any money. The church helped them, you know, like get a house and get papers for us, when we were born. And, um, I don't know, I just, I, I just feel like kids shouldn't go through struggle. Their parents should be prepared so then their kids are prepared and have, like, they save time, you know, on not wastin' their time on doing things, you know, things such as they get distracted with drugs or they follow, uh, somebody that just won't give them any good. Won't do them any good. Make me think more logically and makes you more responsible and makes you feel like you did something.

Olympia expressed similarly thoughts about why she wanted an education and how much her family was involved in that process. First, she explained there was some conflict with her mother about transferring:

Um, but my mom doesn't want me to go to a four-year college. 'Cause she's like, "No, you're gonna leave me alone." She's like, "Why don't you go to [a private college in the city] or like places that are close to here so you can like be with us."

Olympia did not want this and told her mother, "And I'm like, "No," I was like, "I wanna go..." like not far but like I wanna like experience new things like go out of my house." This caused some conflicts because, Olympia stated, "They're like, "So like what are you doing?" 'Cause my family is like, they don't, how do you say it? They don't trust easily." For example, she said,

So, like they're like, 'Oh, like you just go to school or do you just say you go to school and don't go to school?' I'm like, 'No.' I'm like, 'I go to school.' And they're like, 'What are you studying?' And I first told them how I wanted to be a teacher, and they were like, 'Oh.' my mom was like, 'Yeah, so you can go, you can be a teacher in the...' 'cause we have a school in front of our house.

However, she was glad to have her stepfather who is supporting her goals. She says about his support,

like in my school, my education, he's the one that has been pushing me. Like my mom pushes me too. But he's the one that's like, he's like, 'Show the, show our family that like all the talk they talk about you like prove them wrong.' He's like, 'I want you to, I want you to be someone in life 'cause I don't want you cleaning restrooms.'

He is also the one who tells her to stop working:

And he always tells me, he's like, 'You need to stop working.' He's, 'I know you need money but, school comes first.' 'Cause sometimes I, like I argue... I don't fight with my mom. But I argue "Cause she's like don't go to school today, and help me clean houses,' 'Cause she's old. She's not old but she's like, she's tired- Like so she said, 'Go help,' and he, he, he gets mad at her 'cause he's like, 'You shouldn't be asking her to like skip, skip school. You should be telling her like Don't skip school. Like, Go to school.'

Olympia said about obtaining her degree, "I want to be independent when I grow up. I don't want to depend like, get married, depend on my husband too much."

Certainly, family matters to Latina students, but participants in the present study expressed and suggested varying reasons for the need to have family involvement in their education. Family was identified as sacrificing and family dynamics appear to have an influence in the education decisions.

Theme #4: Some participants discussed the need to have the right or proper vocabulary before transitioning to a four-year institution.

Words as important for postsecondary education came up several times, the participant with the strongest feelings on this matter was Concepción, who early on expressed regret for her lack of reading because she knew that was one way she could improve her vocabulary. She came back to the idea of words as equaling knowledge or education several times. For instance, during our first meeting when I inquired about what she thought she would need to do to prepare to transfer to a four-year university, Concepción responded,

I think I will probably get to, well I honestly wanna probably, now that we're talking about this, I probably will wanna set a goal to like I need to read, let's see like I don't know, maybe 50 books maybe, like this year. You know, at least maybe like prepare myself, especially with like the vocabulary and like, um, also in, using, you know, more words that, um, that maybe that we'll use, you know, in a business area. 'Cause I'm majoring in business management, you know.

She explained, "Yes. So, I actually did some, uh, research online saying that, you know, hey you know, you're gonna be using these big words and stuff like that."

Concepcion continued, "So, I would wanna actually, instead of go to, um, elaborate, you know, vocabulary, expand vocabulary, you know."

When I asked her again at our second meeting what she thought she needed to be ready to transfer to a four-year university, Concepción expounded on the idea of words usage mattering at a university. She stated,

Um, so I just feel like I just need to, like I had said, you know, expand my vocabulary, you know, in order for me to be a little more ready. I feel like everything's so professional over there, you know, like so big and using big words and really smart people. So I feel like in order for me to get in their level, I should learn those skills, you know what I mean? So I feel like any type of skills specifically help me, you know, transfer to, you know, to help me over there. Yeah.

The same sentiment of words as important before transferring to a university were held by her Latina peers in the study. For example, Alexa explained

Yeah. I know I need to read more. I need to read a lot more and to learn new words, not just a simple ... Like right now, like when I tal- like when I'm talking, I don't know what type, what kinda words to use. I don't wanna use the wrong words. I wanna use like, good educated words, I guess. And then I also need to learn how to use the words correctly, like in a sentence.

Similarly, Patricia reported that she was more eloquent when young, she stated, "Because when I was, when I was little I could express myself more because I would read more."

According to the study participants thus, vocabulary and grammar matter for college success. Knowing the right words matters as far as showing education level.

Participants' perceptions of readiness to transfer is directly related to how they perceive their reading readiness for transfer.

Theme #5: Participants wanted to transfer to a university to obtain a degree and achieve personal career goals and social advancement.

In various way, participants reported thinking that completing their degrees and graduating was important to them. For example, Alexa stated "I would really like to graduate. That's all I'm hoping for." About what it would mean for her generation of Latinas, Concepción stated,

It will help me in the future to have a better, uh, a better life and more better life than what my parents had. I feel like now in d- this new generation, I feel like we supposed to work harder- ... you know? To reach what we wanna do, our goals and everything.

Hmm, to at least have something to represent me as a, since the, you know, Latina people, they're always, uh, well, people always talk bad about us, that we don't finish anything, you know. We don't have a career or nothing. So I feel like having a degree will, you know, make me, make, uh, people think twice about- ... uh, our race-.

Natalia talked about what her brother had told her of the circle of poverty and stated, "I don't want to be stuck in the circle." She explained what it meant to her to obtain a degree, but similar to Concepción. Natalia considered what it meant beyond a benefit to her when she said,

And I also, I do it for myself and, and for my kids to have a better future. I don't want to like, like how my mom and my dad came here as immigrants. But

completing my degree will make me feel accomplished. So, completing my degree will make me feel more big, big.

Natalia knew exactly what career she wanted and where, Olympia, on the other hand, was a bit less certain; however, she had a pretty good idea of what she wanted to do. She had begun with the idea of becoming a teacher, but had changed her mind and stated, “I’m going to try to get my associate’s degree and then I’m going to transfer to be a practitioner nurse.” Olympia was determined and knew she wanted something different from her parents:

I do not wanna clean restrooms like-

Like I want to take her out of work. That’s why I’m like, “I need to go to college, and I’m gonna get a degree and be a doctor or a nurse,” so like I can like give my mom, my mom money.

Olympia had other reasons for wanting a college degree, she explained, “I want to be independent when I grow up. I don’t want to depend like, get married, depend on my husband too much.” As the other participants, she also expressed wanting to support her parents: “And I want to help my parents out like and stuff where I can and pay them, them back for everything they have done.”

When Patricia first mentioned what she wanted to study, she made an interesting gesture. She placed her right hand under her chin and tilted her head slightly to the right, and with a brief flutter of her eyes said, “Well when I grow up I wanna be a behavior analyst,” a bit as if she were a young girl trying to tell someone about her future dream job. For a second, I wondered if she thought I would laugh at her dream of being a behavior analyst. However, I could tell she was serious about the career she wanted and

she went on to explain that she would major in criminal justice. Patricia also expressed an obligation to be a role model for others. She explained that she wanted to obtain her degree “because I can prove people wrong. Also, because since I’m un-, uh, since I’m undocumented, I feel like I, it would be... I will be like a good, um, role model [short pause] for people that are undocumented.”

The participants in this study recognized that obtaining a college degree is how they can fulfill personal career goals and it is also one way to obtain social advancement in the U.S. The following presentation pertains to findings #6 and #7, illustrated in table 19, which provided answers to question number 3 and focused on how participants perceived their reading readiness for a four-year university.

Table 19

Cross-Case Themes 6 and 7 and Definition

Research Question	Theme	Definition	Categories
3. How do Latina college students perceive their reading readiness for a four-year institution?	#6 Participants were eager to show they could read, loved to read, and know how to read.	There was a self-awareness of lack of reading that led a couple of participants to offer the assurance that “I love to read.” With one exception all students regressed in reading (amount of reading reported) in high school and they talked of regretting no longer reading.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading development • Reading self-awareness • Readiness to Transfer
	#7 Some participants expressed a view that reading is either not so	Reading is inconsequential. Reading is not a big deal because there is not much to it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading is reading • Reading decline

important for transfer or they would learn as they progress through college.

and writing matters more.

- Reading skills & strategies help
- Writing emphasis

Theme #6: Participants were eager to show they could read, loved to read, and know how to read.

This particular theme stood out from the data because students will readily dismiss their own skills in math and writing, making statements to the effect that they cannot do math or do not know how to write, but with reading, students have been taught that they know how to read because they learned to read a long time ago. The participants in this study also wanted to give assurance that they know how to read and in fact, as expressed by Alexa, “I love to read.” About specific books she read in the past she stated, “I love them books.” Speaking about the last book she read in high school, she explained, “The last one I read was *Pride and Prejudice*. I really enjoyed that book. Now that I started reading in, in my class, it’s like, “Oh, why did I stop reading?” Concepción expressed similar sentiments.

Concepción explained that her reading skills were very advanced when she was young, and when she began elementary school, she said, “I started reading in a higher level than the whole class.” Various times during our meetings she reported how much she wished she had never stopped reading, and wanted to clarify, “it’s not that I don’t like reading. I guess I just gotten lazy to do it. But I love reading.” And she continued, “You know, I mean I love reading, you know.” She also explained that she had read a book on her phone, not too long ago, but simply did not finish it. Olympia, on the other hand, was

surprised that she enjoyed reading *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* as much as she eventually did, “I was like “Oh, my God.” Like I couldn’t stop reading it.” She had explained how much she did not want to read the book in the beginning and had considered ways to not read the book but still complete the assignments. Olympia also had an assignment that focused on visual literacy, and having chosen the images she would examine, she made a statement that illustrated how this is a legitimate type of reading. She explained, “but then I started paying more attention [examining one image], and like that’s the head, the hands and the body and the legs, and then this one- I started like reading more into it.”

Unlike with math and writing, there is a hesitancy from students to admit that they may lack reading skills. Participants in this study exhibited a self-awareness of lack of reading that some participants to lament not having continued reading or even an eagerness to offer that they do indeed enjoy and love reading even though they no longer read as much as in their younger years.

Theme #7: Some participants expressed a view that reading is either not so important for transfer or they would learn as they progress through college.

Having learned to read at a young age, and reporting that they knew how to read already even if they did not do so as much as previously, some participants did not consider reading so much a critical skill, but rather something they could address as needed in their education. The theme as reading not being too critical was expressed in participants discussions about reading readiness.

Alexa believed that reading ready was “to understand what you’re reading,” she explained further,

‘Cause when I don- when I don’t understand a word and I read it, it’s just like I n- I didn’t read it. In, do you know what I’m trying to say? Like, I read something and I don’t understand, and it’s like I just never read it.

Concepción took a minute or so before providing an answer, and began first regretting aloud that she had stopped reading when she stated, “I hate that I stopped reading. Ah.” She then went on to compare what she thought was my reading level to her reading level as a way of defining what reading-ready meant to her.

I guess, jeez. Being reading-ready. I feel like if, like, people that have been reading their whole life and they c- have never stop. You know, I feel like they’re more, like, if you were to compare me and you, you know? You’re more re-reading-ready than me, you know what I mean? You know, so I feel like I’m not that, um, I’m not at that higher level of, in reading. You know? So, I feel like you’re reading-ready and I’m still not. You know what I mean?

For Natalia, reading ready had a very practical definition. For her meant being an active reader, “To be always in a predator mode.” She explained in more details,

To not read in a passive way. And if you pick up a book and you read it, you need to read it three times, like Sherman Alexie said. First time, you just tryna scan through. Make sure what, what, what the, what the idea is about. And second time you read it, you’re actually looking for plots and what, what to find that you’d miss when you were reading it because you were so into the reading. So that now you’re actually analyzing the reading. And the third time you read it, you actually, like, make the whole picture of the reading. Yes. And to summarize, annotate. Reading ready.

Similarly, for Olympia, the term reading ready had a practical meaning, she explained it as follows,

So one of them is how to, whenever I'm reading, how to annotate and like, how to find the main point of the story. Like the main purpose in everything. In this story and uh... What's it called? In the paragraphs. Like to find it, like, not only the story but every single paragraph. Yeah and the details like, whatever they're trying to tell me. And what else... To like I can, they, how I told you earlier... that I don't, only use it in English, I use it in math and I felt it in my biology. And whenever I'm talking to someone, like... It helps me gets, like puts their point, you know it's my point of view. And like be able to explain it, like, what happened, what are the summary, and stuff like that.

Rather than define the term, Patricia explained, "I haven't read, like on my own I haven't read just 'cause, well not even the bible. Just like parts of the bible." With Patricia much came back to being at an institution where she did not really want to be; she stated, "Like to be honest, I do wanna read. But just like something tells me like, like why read? I don't know." She reported that she felt she would be more motivated to do everything she needed to do for school once she was at a four-year university.

Summary of Cross-Case Analysis

This section presented an analysis of data across the six cases. I identified seven themes from the cross-case analysis. Themes #1 and #2 provided answers to the first research question as to why study participants reported beginning their postsecondary education at a community college instead of enrolling directly at a four-year institution. Themes #3, #4, and #5 provided answers to research question two regarding how

participants perceived their readiness for transition to a four-year institution. Themes #6 and #7 provided answers to research question three which asked how participants perceived their reading readiness for a four-year institution.

The final part of this chapter is a presentation of the findings, which includes a clear delineation between themes and the study's four major findings.

Presentation of Findings

Final analysis of within-case and cross-case themes resulted in four major study findings. Finding 1 is that *participants considered community college as Less Than a four-year institution*; a finding which includes participants' views on why they matriculated at the community college, what they expect to learn while at the community college, and reasons for wanting to transfer; this was the third theme of the individual data analysis, but was expressed in various ways by the participants and also has significant implications for postsecondary institutions. Finding 2 is that *participants expressed clear motivation to succeed*; this finding includes the themes of participants' self-perceptions of readiness to transfer and their views and eagerness to develop proper vocabulary and grammar prior to transferring. Finding 3 is that *participants had expectations of support*; this finding includes participants' familial expectations and their evaluations of how institutions can help them to meet their transferring goals. Finding 4 is that *participants did not find reading challenging, offering a general view that reading is reading*; a finding which includes participants' beliefs of reading from when they learned to read to postsecondary matriculation and what this means for their transfer aspirations.

Development of Findings from Themes

Finding 1: Participants considered community college as Less Than a four-year institution.

The first two themes from the cross-case analysis provided answers to the first research question that inquired as to the reasons participants reported beginning their postsecondary education at a community college instead of enrolling directly at a four-year institution. The first theme was that 1) participants' descriptions of why they began their postsecondary education at community college depended largely on how they perceived their goal of transferring to a four-year institution. For this theme, I identified two most salient categories across the cases, and these were that community college is not college and community college is considered less important or impactful as a four-year institution. There was a general view of matriculation at a community college as preparation for something bigger. Community college was thus a steppingstone for something better. As such, Concepción spoke of not thinking she would qualify to begin at a four-year university and so she started at a community college. Patricia showed great disappointment in that she was forced to begin at a community college because of financial difficulties. Olympia, Carmen, and Alexa saw this as a good place to start but were looking forward to attending a big school. Based on this first theme, the answer to the first question is that community college is a convenient place, but not necessarily a desired place to begin postsecondary education.

The second theme in the cross-case analysis, 2) As students with aspirations to transfer, participants stated they need guidance, information, and resources to meet their educational goals, goes further in answering the first research question because it shows

that students seek and require institutional support and guidance both in high school as they prepare to transition into postsecondary education and at community college to attain individual educational goals. Participants spoke about needing guidance and support from high school counselors and community college advisors and faculty to have clarity on the many possibilities available to them as college students. Carmen, Olympia, and Concepción all talked about not receiving proper guidance at the high school about attending or what to expect after high school if wanting to attend a postsecondary institution. Natalia, who seemed to feel the most prepared after high school, stopped out after a couple of weeks of college classes because she felt overwhelmed and did not know what to do. Figure 4 is a graphic representation of cross-case themes 1 and 2 as the foundation for study finding one.

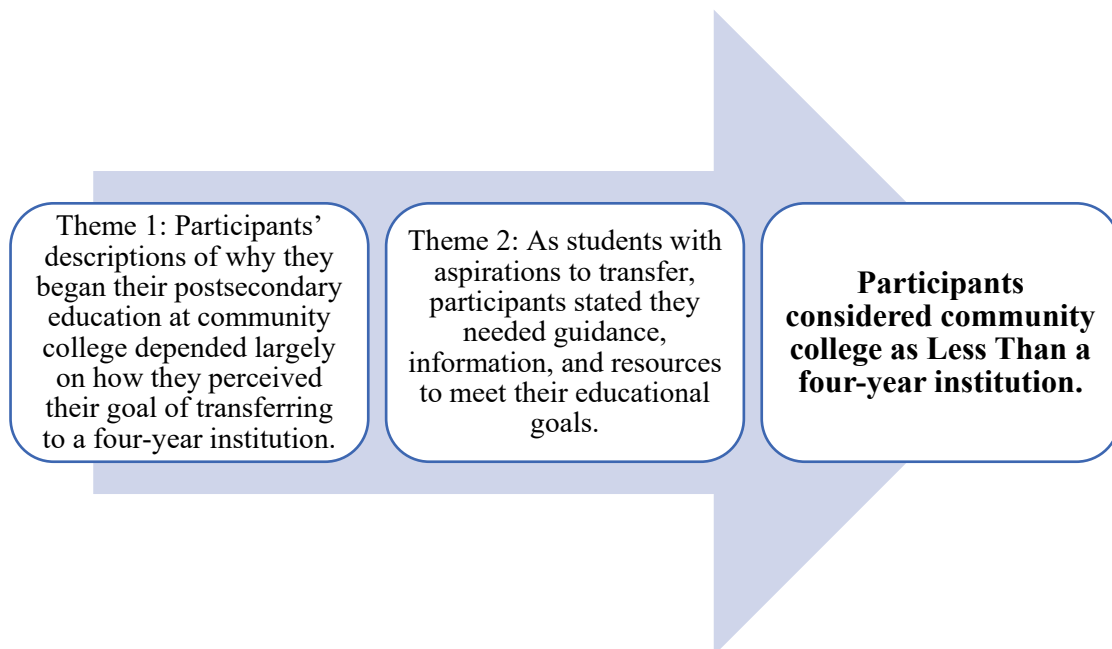


Figure 4. From Theme 1 and Theme 2 to Finding 1

The first two cross-case themes included data of participants' descriptions of why they began their postsecondary education at community college, the guidance and support

they expected once in college, and how choosing to begin at a community college affected their goal of transferring to a four-year institution, and thus became the foundation for the study's finding one. How I arrived at study finding 2 is discussed in the next section.

Finding 2: Participants expressed clear motivation to succeed.

Themes #3, #4, and #5 of the cross-case analyses became the foundation for finding 2 of this study. Theme #3 was a determination across the cases that showed participants discussed family as important but in different ways with conflicts sometimes influencing educational decisions. Two categories that were consistent throughout the different phases of analysis were that family involvement matters and family expectations as a source of motivation. All participants mentioned family involvement, though to varying degrees. Carmen's, Olympia's, Patricia's, and Alexa's families were very involved in each student's college education and encouraged their degree completion in different ways. Natalia's and Concepción's families were less directly involved, but both students noted that their family's support was important to them. Having begun their postsecondary education at a community college with aspirations to transfer to a four-year institution, participants suggested that familial involvement and encouragement mattered in their preparation to transfer.

The fourth cross-case theme offered another answer about participants' self-perceptions of readiness to transfer as it found that some participants discussed the need to have the right or proper vocabulary before transitioning to a four-year institution. Concepción, Alexa, and Olympia talked about the need to have a proper vocabulary and grammar before transitioning to a four-year university. The perception was that before

moving on to a four-year university, participants needed to develop the type of vocabulary that would show they were knowledgeable about a field and educated in general.

The fifth theme across the cases was that participants wanted to transfer to a university to obtain a degree and achieve personal career goals and social advancement. This theme is an essential element to the answer to the question of self-perception of readiness to transition because it addresses the reasons for wanting to transfer. In this sense, this theme completes the answer because it shows that students' self-perception of readiness to transfer depends quite heavily in their family's involvement with their educational goals, may be influenced by students' knowledge of what they perceive as the right vocabulary for postsecondary success, and is founded on students' career and social advancement aspirations. Alexa talked about being hopeful of completing school. Concepción felt that it was up to her generation to do better than their parents and serve as positive representation of the Latinx population. Similarly, Patricia felt an obligation to complete her education to serve as an example for students without proper documentation that they can achieve their goals. Natalia talked about what her brother called the circle of poverty and she did not want to remain in that circle and education was the way out. Olympia talked passionately about needing to go to college to achieve her dreams. Figure 5 is a graphic representation of cross-case themes 3, 4, and 5 being the foundation for the second study finding.

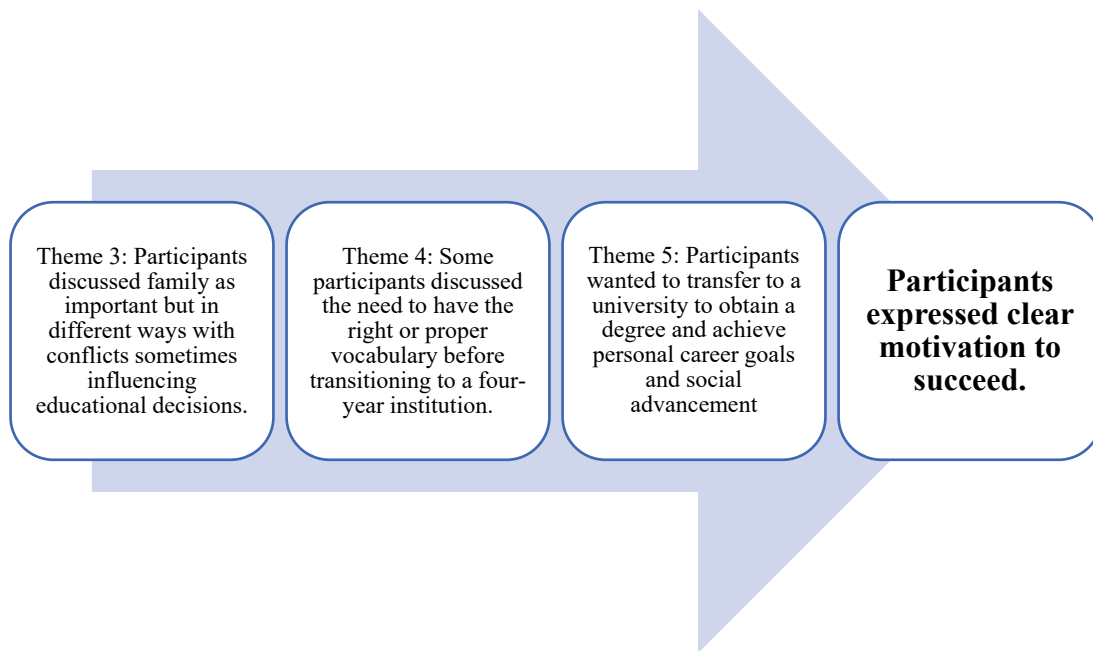


Figure 5. From Theme 3, Theme 4, and Theme 5 to Finding 2

Discussions with participants that helped develop the fifth cross-case theme were based on analysis of data that demonstrated participants' awareness that a university degree is one way to obtain social advancement, and the data from that theme was included in the study's finding two. How I arrived at study finding 3 is discussed in the next section.

Finding 3: Participants had expectations of support.

The third study finding was derived from the second and third cross-case themes, which were data that explained participants expectations of guidance and support from the community college, family, and friends. Family was included in this finding because family was shown as important to participants' progress; however, when there was a lack of family involvement, participants' sought support from friends and college faculty and staff. For example, Carmen and Olympia both talked of how their families expressed a willingness to help them achieve their educational goals, which provided them

encouragement to continue with their studies. This study finding also helps illuminate why participants chose to begin their postsecondary education at a community college and what they needed access to during their time at community college to help them attain the goal of transferring to a four-year institution. Figure 6 is a graphic representation of cross-case themes 2 and 3 being the foundation for the third study finding.

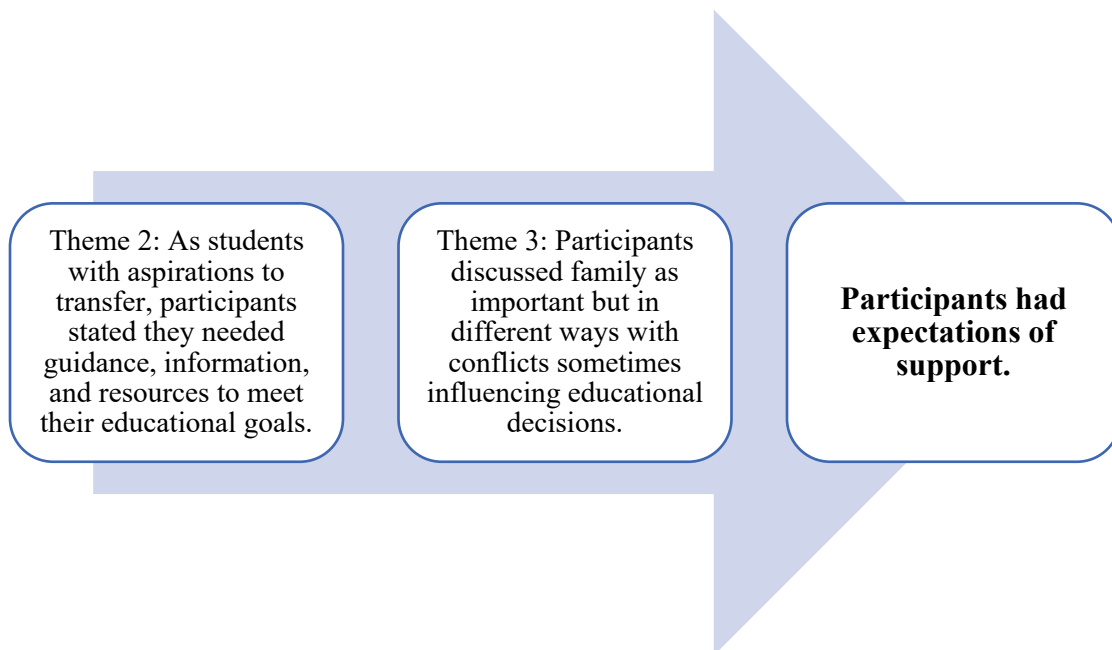


Figure 6. From Theme 2 and Theme 3 to Finding 3

Cross-case themes 2 and 3 thus became the basis for this study's finding 3 regarding participants expectations of support. How I arrived at study finding 4 is discussed in the next section.

Finding 4: Participants did not find reading challenging, offering a general view that reading is reading.

Based on the data, the final study finding is that participants did not find reading challenging, offering a general view that reading is reading. The finding is perhaps less

obvious than the other three, but one of significant importance to the present study; it was developed from analyzing cross-case themes six and seven, which both included data on participants' reading development and experiences. Participants outlined their reading histories, from learning to read to their enrollment in the developmental literacy course and their uncertainty that they would need to focus much on reading to achieve their goal of transferring from the community college to a four-year institution.

Examples of cross-case themes 6 and 7, which ultimately became the foundations for study finding 4, include Natalia's eagerness to share her experiences with reading in school. For our second interview, Natalia brought a binder she had kept from her senior year English class to show me all she had read and done in her class. Another was Alexa who talked of having a small library in her room when she was young. Similarly, Concepción and Patricia discussed having been in advanced classes in elementary school because of their advanced reading skills. The data indicated that reading of books and reading as a critical skill to be developed diminished significantly for all participants at different points in their educational trajectory. Figure 7 is a graphic representation of cross-case themes 6 and 7 being the foundation for the third study finding.

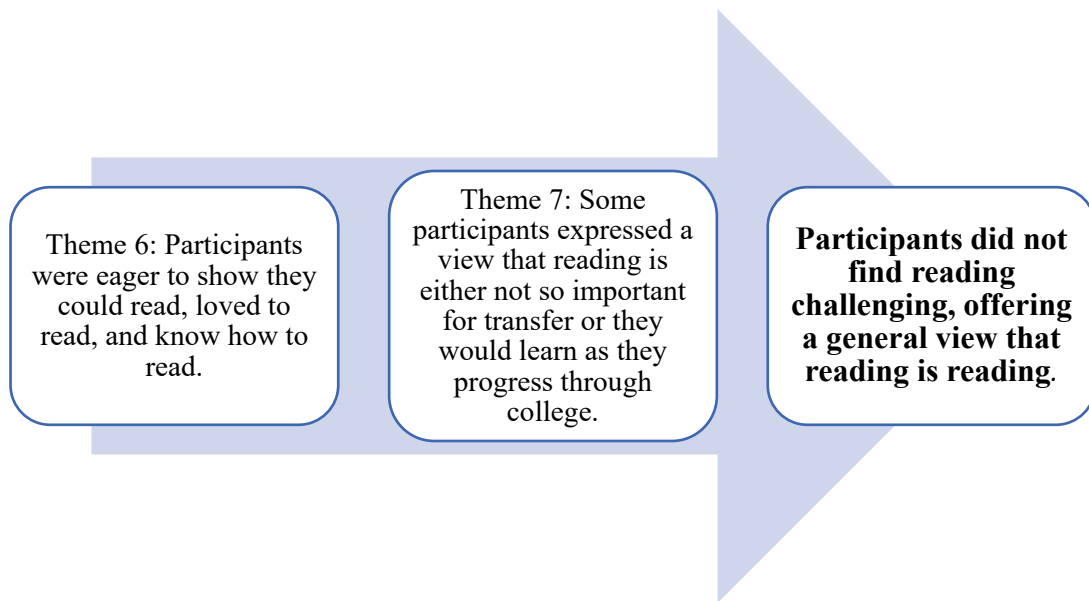


Figure 7. From Theme 6 and Theme 7 to Finding 4

Theme #6 included data that indicated participants were eager to show they could read, loved to read, and know how to read and #7 included data which showed that some participants expressed views that reading is either not so important for transfer or they would learn as they progress through college.

Summary of Chapter 4

This chapter presented six cases; all participants were Latina college students who matriculated at a community college with aspirations to transfer to a four-year institution. As this was a collective case study, each participant represented a separate case. Therefore, the first section of this chapter was a presentation of the results of the within-case analysis based on the five categories that resulted from the data analysis. The second part of the chapter was a presentation of the results of the cross-case analysis of data based on the seven themes. The third and final part of the chapter was a delineation between the study's cross-case themes and the study's four major findings.

V. DISCUSSION

The present study used a reading focus to explore self-perceptions of Latina students' readiness to transfer from a community college to a four-year institution. This dissertation study contributes to the extant literature in the fields of community college transfers and developmental literacy. Through constant comparative data analysis, the study provided answers to the questions of about students' readiness to transfer. After collecting data using the three-interview method (Seidman, 2013), data were analyzed in three separate phases. Appendix E provides an illustration of how the four major findings of the study developed. Findings, implications for community colleges and the field of developmental literacy, and recommendations for further research are discussed in this chapter.

Discussion of Findings

As presented in the previous chapter, the four major findings of this study are 1) participants considered community college as Less Than a four-year institution; 2) participants expressed clear motivation to succeed; 3) participants expressed expectations of support; and, 4) Participants did not find reading challenging, offering a general view that reading is reading. Figure 8 is a graphic representation of the alignment between findings and the study's research questions. Findings 1 and 3 provide answers to research question 1 and will be discussed together. Finding 2 provides answers for research question 2 and finding 4 provides answers to research question 3. In this section, findings are explored in alignment with the study's research questions and the current literature.

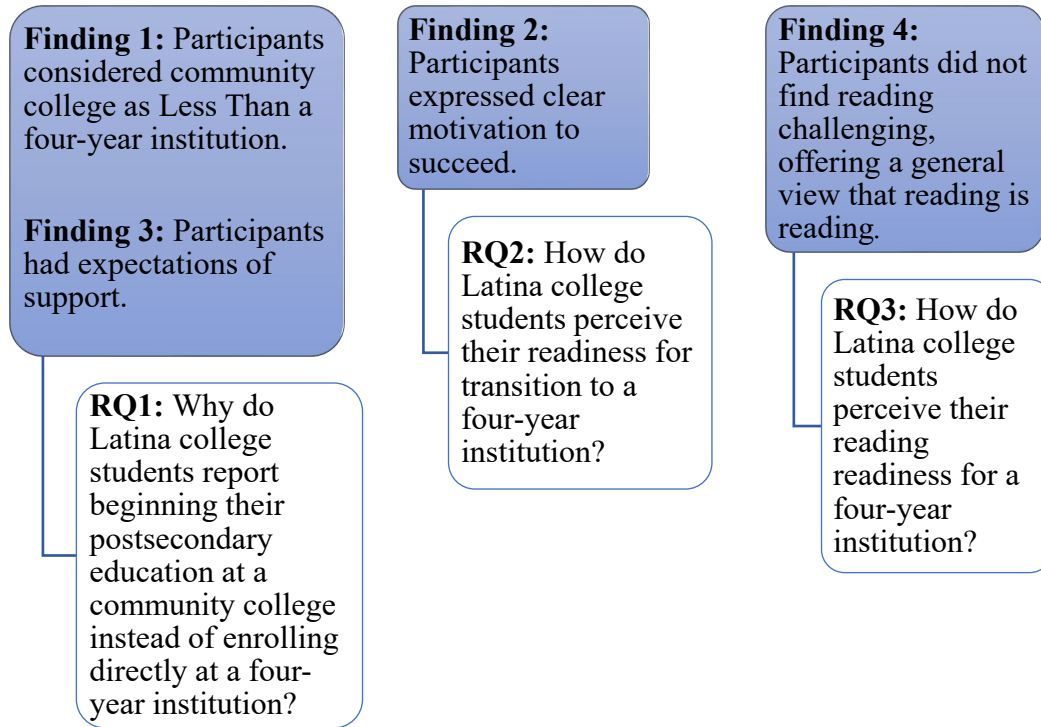


Figure 8. Alignment Between Findings and Research Questions

RQ1: Why do Latina college students report beginning their postsecondary education at a community college instead of enrolling directly at a four-year institution?

Answers to this research question are provided by finding 1, participants considered community college Less Than a four-year institution, and finding 3, participants had expectations of support. Among the studies these findings align with at different points are those by Budd and Stowers (2017), Cano and Castillo (2010), Gloria and Castellanos (2012), Harris (2017), Jabbar et al. (2019), Meléndez and Meléndez (2010), Sy and Romero (2008), and Viramontes and Urrieta (2018) as regards educational opportunities for Latinas and expectations of familial and institutional support from students.

Data related to this question led to the finding that though enrolled at a community college, participants tended to express themselves as if they were not yet attending a real college but felt they could gain what they needed at SWCC to apply to a four-year institution, and by doing so move to a real college. Viramontes and Urrieta (2018) contend that “conditions of inequality continue to deny equal educational opportunities to Latinx Tejanx students, often leading them into the community college system, rather than four-year universities” (p. 203). Though well-intentioned, literature that link matriculation at a community college with low performance, such as the study by Viramontes and Urrieta, play a role in expanding the narrative of community colleges as institutions that are less worthy than four-year colleges or universities as postsecondary institutions. Community colleges provide numerous opportunities for a broad range of students and most important for students who attend community college with intentions to transfer is, as discussed in chapter 2 of this study, a strong transfer culture at the community college (Budd & Stowers, 2015; Jabbar et al., 2019).

The first research question sought to flesh out participants’ conceptions of community college as a viable avenue for completing their educational goals and sought to get at a fundamental premise of the reason the population of students who identify as Latinas often begin their postsecondary education at a community college. Study participants gave various reasons for matriculating at community college rather than attending a four-year institution directly from high school. Participants’ stated reasons for attending community college align with the studies of Gloria and Castellanos (2012) that addressed the various stressors unique to Latina college students as they begin postsecondary education, such as wanting to stay closer to home or working to help out

parents with finances. Written answers to the question included, “I had financial problems” from Patricia; “Have a better life and get money. Also to build my parents a home [sic]” from Concepción; and, “It’s not as expensive and I was nervous to go to college” from Carmen.

Carmen thought the community college was a good starting off point because it would be less academically challenging, “But I felt like I started off in community college because from what I’ve heard it’s easier to get your credits and then transfer to a good university.” Yet, the finding that participants’ found community college to be Less Than a four-year institution should not be considered solely as a negative assessment for community colleges, but also shows a valuing of community colleges at a different level. Participants’ expressions of community college as a starting off point also encompasses an opportunity for beginning a gradual enculturation period. Chapter 2 reviewed Cano and Castillo’s (2010) study that found higher level of stress for Latinas who gave up too much of their cultural norms. SWCC is a Hispanic-serving institution and by beginning their postsecondary education at the community college, participants could hold on to their Latino culture while beginning the process of learning the values and norms of an American college.

The Expectations of Support and guidance from family and institutions is a finding that aligns with current literature on how to achieve successful transfers (Budd & Stowers, 2015; Gard et al., 2012; Harris, 2017; Jabbar et al., 2019; Peña & Rhoads, 2019; Umbach et al., 2019; Wood & Palmer, 2016). Both Gard et al., (2012) and Jabbar et al. (2019) identified familial support as key motivator for students aspiring to transfer from community colleges to four-year institutions. Alexa and Patricia spoke specifically of

their reliance on conversations with their mothers about educational goals which supports Mireles-Rios and Romo's (2014) findings of the importance of a Latina mother's educational expectations for her daughter. This familial support provides participants the enthusiasm they seek to reach their individual goals and aligns with Equally important to students' transfer success is guidance from community college advisors and support from college faculty (Budd & Stowers, 2015). In the present study Concepción spoke about her desire for more personal interaction with teachers at the college because teachers have experience with the struggles the students' face when they begin college.

RQ2: How do Latina college students perceive their readiness for transition to a four-year institution?

The second question allowed for discussions about educational experiences, matters of self-efficacy (self-awareness) and evaluations of participants' readiness to transition. Answers to this research question are provided by finding 2, that is that participants expressed clear motivation to succeed. This finding aligns with the literature on cultural expectations and the influence of family (Boswell, 2012; Gloria & Castellanos, 2012; Meléndez & Meléndez, 2010; Sy & Romero, 2008; Mireles-Ríos & Romo, 2014) as well as with the literature on successful transfers (Budd and Stowers, 2017; Gard et al., 2012; Harris, 2017; Jabbar et al., 2019).

This research question sought to investigate how participants perceive their readiness for transition to a four-year institution. Embedded in finding 2 is the data that addressed family as influencing educational decisions in various ways, which aligns with Gloria and Castellanos (2012) who found that Latinas felt invisible in the academy because their unique situations are not always acknowledged by the academy. Latinas

unique situations include high-level expectations to remain involved with the family, but this involvement with the family is also a source of strength for Latinas. This pull from the family in conjunction with wanting to remain close to the family was exemplified by Olympia in this study who was deeply appreciative of her step-father's support, but also longed for more independence. Olympia explained that her parents' strict rules often meant she had to justify being out late at the library because her family did not "trust easily." For Alexa, her incentive to succeed academically is a desire to help her mother who works to raise five children. Alexa has a couple of part-time jobs, but her mother keeps her focused on maintaining her academics as her number one concern, which aligns with Mireles-Ríos and Romo's (2014) study addressing the importance of maternal support as a basis for their daughters' academic success. Carmen, on the other hand, spoke about both parents being very supportive and making sacrifices so that she may succeed and achieve her own goals. Similar to Alexa, Carmen spoke of her parents' support being a motivator for succeeding by transferring to a four-year institution and obtaining her degree, a desire which aligns with the Meléndez & Meléndez (2010) study by suggesting that Alexa and Carmen will work to adjust to college expectations because of the high level of support being provided by their parents.

The data addressing participants' desire to succeed also aligns with the Gard et al. (2012) study that looked at what students want institutions to provide them in their quest to transfer, and with the Harris (2017) study that focused on those students who had transferred successfully from a community college to a Tier 1 institution. Both studies included the importance of family support as key to transfer success. and their determinations of the importance of family in Latina students' success, perhaps more

surprising is the fact that the theme of family as critical to success does not make up a larger part of the present study's results. In this study, this finding is described to show that *la familia* remains a driving force for Latina college students. What these individual cases show is that the Latinas relationships with their families are as diverse and unique as they are, and these must be highlighted as important to their transfer aspirations.

Equally embedded in this finding is the data indicating some participants' beliefs that they must be in possession of a proper vocabulary before they could apply to or transition to a four-year institution. This idea that one must possess a certain vocabulary and possess knowledge of certain words before attending a university harkens to elitist beliefs—such as those expressed by Hirsch (1987) regarding what every American needs to know—that must have somehow permeated the Latina college students' psyche. Participants' belief that they must possess a specific vocabulary to attend university is included in this finding because data from this study also showed a willingness from Latina college students to overcome perceived impediments to succeed and attain their goals. In this sense, my study adds a different view from Boswell's (2012) finding regarding academic entitlement and self-efficacy in that the participants in this study displayed a high-level of self-efficacy, did not demonstrate a sense of academic entitlement, were dealing with unique academic situations as Latinas in college, but also felt they could control their success by improving their vocabulary. Concepción, for example, had a plan to read 50 books related to her major, business, because she felt this would prepare her to tackle upper-level courses when she transitioned to the four-year institution. Whether a realistic goal or not, Concepción's perception that she could take

action to fulfill her goals speaks to her sense of agency in the situation. According to Williams (2018),

At some point, in a literacy situation, people take an action or they don't. Many factors are at work in shaping that decision, but they make meaning from their experiences, decide on actions based on that meaning, and come to some sense of feeling and meaning about the action after it is taken. (p. 10)

For Concepción, reading 50 books would help her achieve her goal of transferring to a four-year institution and obtain a bachelor's degree, so that she could move forward with other life goals.

RQ3: How do Latina college students perceive their reading readiness for a four-year institution?

The third question allowed for an evaluation of participants' perceptions to transfer via a reading lens. This third question was instrumental to gaining knowledge about participants' reading histories, reading status, and reading readiness for postsecondary education. Finding 4, participants did not find reading challenging, offering a general view that reading is reading, provided answers to research question 3 and aligned with the literature related to developmental education and matters of reading in postsecondary education (Anderson & Kim, 2011; Hall et al., 2014; Lei et al., 2010; Linderholm et al., 2014; Nora & Crisp. 2012).

The third research question asked how participants perceived their reading readiness for a four-year institution and included data about participants eagerness to show they could read, loved to read, and knew how to read as well as data in which participants expressed a view of reading as either not important for transfer or something

they could learn as they move through college. In this study, participants outlined their reading histories and displayed an introspective self-awareness as some noted that their enthusiasm for reading and interaction with reading diminished significantly from learning to read at a young age to high school graduation. In this way, this study supports the findings by Anderson and Kim (2011) that encouraged college faculty across the curriculum to take responsibility for college students' reading improvement and success.

Alexa, Concepción, and Olympia all expressed that even though they did not read as much as they used to when they were young children, there were instances as young adults when they read, enjoyed reading, and regretted that they no longer read as much. Such expressions of regret open possibilities for developmental literacy instructors to find different ways to influence students' reading comprehension, as suggested by Hall et al. (2014), including implementing students' lived experiences. In a similar vein, Natalia was eager to show how much she read in high school and her excitement about discussing her past reading accomplishment provides an opportunity, and supports Linderholm et al. (2014), for literacy instructors to experiment with different ways of influencing students' reading comprehension.

This study data showed that participants had a view of reading as inconsequential or not a big deal because they had been shown over the course of their educational history that what really mattered for academic success was learning to write a good essay. Certainly, from high school on it was difficult for participants to consider reading as separate from writing. Natalia, who shared her high school English class binder with me, talked about the essays she wrote for each book or book segment she read. Though in answer to what it meant to be reading ready, Natalia explained that to her it meant to not

be a passive reader. Comparatively, Patricia expressed that she did not feel it was so important to read and Carmen expressed a believe that she would learn what she needed to learn as she moved through the college curriculum. Carmen's expectations uphold Anderson and Kim's (2011) recommendation that teaching reading should be the responsibility of instructors across the curriculum. Realistically, however, Carmen's expectations are more likely to fall in line with and thus cause challenges with Lei et al.'s (2010) explanation that college instructors expect students to already possess college reading levels when these students enroll in their classes.

Conclusion

The data collected and analyzed in this study provides information that lends itself to answering the questions about participants' readiness to transfer. As with most matters of education research, there is not clear answer to this question. This study's unique angle of exploring Latina college students' perceptions of readiness to transfer supports Bandura's (1997) view that "People are proactive, aspiring organisms who have a hand in shaping their own lives and the social systems that organize, guide, and regulate the affairs of their society" (p. vii). To assure Latina college students that they are in control of their education, that they will receive the support they seek in achieving their education goals, and that who they are and what they bring to the educational exchange is valuable, is how we as developmental literacy instructors at community colleges can advance the success of marginalized student populations at the postsecondary level.

As developmental literacy instructors, we are the first ones to hear students' stories of literacy development and decline. As such, we must consider students like Concepción who did not even apply to a four-year university because she did not

perceive she what was required to be accepted. Whether she did or not, should not be considered because her perception was that she did not, and that self-perception dictated her actions. Concepción explained that she did not pass the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) test and therefore she did not apply to a four-year university, “Um, I didn’t for, because of that reason, cause I was like, well, they’re not going to accept me. So, might as well just start here and just, you know, get the GPA up.” As developmental literacy instructors, we work hard to rid students of defeatist attitudes and experiences (Valencia, 2010) that have been internalized. Williams ((2018) holds that “Our perceptions of what we can or cannot do are internal and embodied, even as they are engaged with the social context of the moment” (p. 9), and it is those perceptions, as exemplified in this study, of community college as an inferior institution or a slanged or accented vocabulary as unacceptable that developmental literacy instructors must continue to dispute and disband as a way of fighting for a more equitable postsecondary education system.

The next section is a discussion of implications and recommendations for community colleges and developmental literacy courses, based on the study data.

Implications and Recommendations

Based on the data, analysis of findings, and conclusions, this section outlines implications and recommendations for practitioners, scholars, and for further research.

Implications for Community Colleges

Data from the present that yielded the findings Community College is Less Than, Motivation to Succeed, Expectations of Support led to several conclusions that have implications for community colleges. First, it should be acknowledged that the burden of meeting the needs of students who aspire to transfer should not always be placed on

community colleges, four-year institutions have as much responsibility in this endeavor; however, addressing the responsibilities of four-year institutions is beyond the scope of this study. One conclusion arrived at from the data is that students matriculate at community colleges for various reasons, such as financial, location, and convenience. Community colleges must try to engage students not only in the classroom, but in the school community. One of the participants, Concepción, talked about how she wished she would have been more involved in school that semester because she felt it would have helped her with motivation to attend class.

Another conclusion, based on students' Motivation to Succeed, was that whatever their views on attending community college, matriculation at the institution is the first sign that students are motivated to succeed and want to achieve their goals, in this case a main goal for the students is transferring to a four-year institution. Programs should be put in place for incoming students to encourage their transfer goals. An occasional visit with an advisor, posters about transferring, and being told to think about it is not enough. Thirdly, based on the data that emphasized students' Expectations of Support, the conclusion was reached that students will feel welcomed and engage with a postsecondary institution that sees them and treats them as individuals. Latinas are a heterogeneous group and even when they all speak the same language and have the same national background, their experiences, beliefs, and way of being differ tremendously; therefore, the support they need from educational institutions will also differ.

Recommendations for Community Colleges

Even though community colleges are a convenient and, mostly, affordable place to begin college, community colleges as institutions of postsecondary learning must make

a greater effort to become immersed in students' educational life trajectories. What this means for community colleges is that they must promote themselves as a valuable part of a students' education, and not only a convenient part of that education. Community colleges are indeed embedded in a community, and location, along with lower cost of attendance, is often considered a key selling point to area students. The need for community colleges to show greater dedication to student success aligns with the conclusion made by Harris (2017) that the fact that students are paying less for a postsecondary education does not mean the community college has less of a buy-in in students' accomplishments. One way to counter the data presenting community colleges as less than is by emphasizing the academic benefits of attending a community college.

While the students are at the community college, it is critical for the faculty and staff of these institutions provide students enthusiastic support to meet their educational goals. All participants in the present study had met with an advisor at the community college to discuss their goal of transferring, but still they had questions and were uncertain of what was expected of them as they transitioned from the community college to the university. Participants in this study spoke of waiting until near the end of the semester to talk with an advisor about classes and next steps. Yet, the participants were also struggling to figure out what it meant to be a college student, how they could be more involved in the college, how they could learn more so that they would feel they could fit into a university environment. Gard et al.'s (2012) finding that students want informed and effective advising to help achieve their transfer goals, supports the data from this present study. The issues addressed by the participants in this study, are not issues that can be resolved with one or even two visits a semester. Rather, advising

professionals need to build relationships with students, especially students from underrepresented student populations to ensure that these students feel welcomed, accepted, and supported at the community college.

Advising professionals are committed to the service they provide to students and are usually have overloaded schedules. However, the data from this study lead to a recommendation for more focused advising of Latina students who, as described by the study's participants, often enter the college with unique needs based on cultural, familial, and gendered expectations. Establishing regular meetings, even 15 to 20 minutes, to catch up with students, to check-in and see how they are feeling about everything and anything, shows Latinas that the advising professional cares, and by extension that the community college cares, about their success and are available to help them adjust to what it means to now be a college student. Here I would caution, however, that unlike previous studies, such as Gard et al. (2012) and Jabbar et al., (2019) that uphold the benefit of family support, the findings from the present study indicate that as a homogeneous entity, Latinas' family dynamics are not all the same. Participants in this study all spoke positively about their families, further questioning resulted in admissions of some families being less involved than others, for various reasons. As with academic matters, offering equitable service to Latina students means focusing on what the student as an individual needs to succeed, which may or may not include greater familial involvement.

One way to emphasize the academic benefits of a community college is by finding ways to ensure students who begin college with aspirations to transfer will earn an associate's degree while at the college. Participants in this study either talked about wishing they would have engaged more with the college by participating in extra-

curricular activities, such as Concepción who wished she would have signed up for sports or some other activity, or they expressed a disconnect with the college either through explanations of being too busy outside of school or not knowing more about their campus than where their classroom was located. This data shows that community colleges must dedicate more resources to engaging students and one way to do this is that even for students who are uncertain of what they would like to study, setting the initial goal of an associate's degree will motivate students to engage in the community college's environment from their first day in attendance. Having a purpose and goal at the college will encourage students that attendance at this college is important, smart, and a necessary part of attaining their final goal of a baccalaureate or higher degree.

Implications for Developmental Literacy Coursework

The data in the present study indicates that Reading is Reading, meaning that there is nothing more to reading than saying the words on the page, which has implications for developmental literacy. The conclusion was reached that reading matters to postsecondary education. Reading at the postsecondary level must be emphasized by community colleges and four-year institutions. The fact is, however, that the only place in academia where postsecondary literacy is given its place as vital to holistic educational attainment is in the field of developmental education. Moving into a system where postsecondary reading courses form a part of the general community college and university curriculum will require time, patience, and tremendous amount of empirical research. For developmental literacy courses, the implications include becoming a louder presence in postsecondary institutions. This would mean not allowing developmental literacy coursework to be an annotation to other fields that are considered central to

students' academic development, but for developmental literacy professionals to find a way to become a primary force in the postsecondary curriculum.

Recommendations for Developmental Literacy Coursework

As an educator in the field of developmental education, I believe the mission of providing holistic support to all students, whether at the community college or the four-year university. Developmental education is an evolving field with a growing number of academics and professionals involved in researching and improving the courses and opportunities offered to the target population. The field of developmental education includes more than basic math, reading, and writing prior to attempting advanced and rigorous courses at the college and university level, it is a whole compendium of student services. There is continual development in the field, mainly because of legislative mandates. Open access to education is an attractive selling point for making community colleges the sole administrators of developmental education, but so far at least, public universities in Texas are continuing to offer developmental education classes and student services.

Further discussion on this matter is beyond the scope of this study, but the importance of the field for all students and the need to keep producing professionals in the field cannot be overstated. As an instructor who focuses on textual literacy, I believe that to work with college students so that they can learn to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate academic texts helps students develop skills they will apply across the university curriculum. Developmental education is a field dedicated to achieving success for underrepresented and underserved student populations, which makes it the type of field that must fight to remain in postsecondary institutions.

This study did have certain limitations, and these are addressed in the following section.

Limitations

The goals of the present study were met and self-perceptions of readiness to transfer for the six case studies were analyzed to provide information that can serve to further the efforts of postsecondary staff and faculty in assisting students. However, as with all empirical studies, the present study also encountered conditions that limited the scope of the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Locke et al., 2014) and should be considered in future research. One of the greater limitations was access to potential participants. Recruitment efforts were limited to both instructors' willingness to allow visits and to the timing of the visits. All instructors requested visits at the beginning of class, which meant that any late arrivals missed the presentation, which led to some presentations being given to less than five students. Generally, this situation would not cause great concern, however, another limitation, timeframe, meant that all class visits needed to happen within a strict timeframe and instructors who waited until later in the semester to agree to visits could not be included in the study. For future studies, it would be advantageous to conduct the study over the course of a full academic year as it would allow for a more flexible schedule for participants recruitment efforts. The strict timeframe also meant that interviews could not be spaced out to allow for longer contact with participants. Ideally, interviews would have occurred in the beginning, the middle, and end of the semester to obtain a more robust picture of participants' self-perceptions of reading readiness, to allow time to pass before asking the same questions and thus gauging of the answers vary in any way, and to ascertain whether conceptions of

readiness to transfer differed at any stage in the semester. These are all limitations that must be taken into account for future research on this important matter.

Recommendations for Future Research

The data from this study showed that students who begin community college with aspirations to transfer to a four-year institution hold perceptions of readiness to transfer that, unless addressed early in their academic journey, could keep them from making the transition. The implication here is that more research needs to be focused on students at the beginning of their community college journey as this will provide a broader picture of what families, institutions, advisors, and faculty should be doing to help students achieve their educational goals.

Participants of this study spoke with regret about having stopped reading and were ambivalent about the reading requirements for postsecondary institutions, both community colleges and four-year institutions. Yet, the participants of this study were excited, and nervous, about attending college and what this means for their goal of achieving a college degree. This means that there is not enough research that specifically focuses on postsecondary reading requirements, not about books that students should read before attending college, but rather about how much reading affects learning in college and degree attainment.

Based on the data presented in this study, there are two main areas of recommendation for future research. The first area is on the value of community colleges as institutions of learning. Findings indicated that more research is needed on students' perceptions that attending a community college is less than attending a four-year university. The suggestion from the study participants went beyond considering

community college a good place to begin postsecondary education but included the belief that matriculating at a community college was not something in which to take pride.

More research is needed to find out why high schools do not promote community colleges as incredible institutions of learning that provide opportunities for rigorous coursework in an open environment.

The second area of recommended research is in the field of postsecondary literacy, including students' beliefs that possession of a certain elitist vocabulary is necessary to attend a four-year university. This belief has not developed in a vacuum. In fact, Hirsch (1987) a fervent proponent of implementing standardized English, wrote, "Many Americans who have graduated from high school in the recent past have been deprived of the cultural vocabulary that was commonly possessed by educated persons in past generations" (pp. 107-108). This sentence alone could serve as the basis for a full dissertation study on the importance of equity, equality, and inclusion in postsecondary literacy studies. At this time, suffice it to say that this idea that there is a specific vocabulary, cultural or otherwise, that must be mastered before attending a postsecondary institution is detrimental and counterproductive to the goals of attaining an educated population. Research on reading, with a multilingual and multicultural focus, will help do away with the elitist sentiment that there is only one language that matters, English, and only one certain vocabulary that can bring success. Though the field of writing has a respected place in academia, as it should, there appears to be resistance to affording the same respect and space to the field of reading. It is certainly not that the field is under-researched, but rather a general understanding and acceptance that the field of reading can be subsumed within writing; therefore, it does not need its own rigorous field of

study. This belief is misinformed and can only be corrected through research that addresses the significance of reading to postsecondary education.

Summary

Community colleges are doing indisputably valuable work as they educate a large portion of the U.S. population. Community colleges have a long history of educating the masses and their mission and existence is uniquely American. As public institutions who serve the needs of so many, community colleges must seek to do what is in the interest of most of their student population. With a growing number Latinx students choosing to begin their postsecondary education at community colleges, it is imperative that these institutions find ways to meet the needs of this population so that they are truly offering equitable access to education. The best way to do this is to use the findings from empirical research such as this one that centers the voices of underrepresented and underserved student populations. In this study, the voices of Latinas are centered and, when we listen, we hear them express an eagerness to learn, to participate, and to be a part of the community college so that they may achieve their goals of transferring to a four-year institution to complete a bachelor's degree.

The Chicana/Latina Feminist theory formed a part of this study's conceptual framework because it includes an acknowledgment that Latinas are not a homogeneous group.

Latina feminists propose that difference is not a mask that can be put on or taken off; it forms the basis for who they are in the world, in their scholarship, and in their political practice. It is crucial, at this stage, to move beyond essentialism, which assumes a common Latina experience. Latinas must be placed in their

varied histories, illustrating their positions within intersecting systems of power.

(The Latina Feminist Group, 2001, p. 4)

Indeed, each of us is different, yet we share certain experiences that help us unite as Latinas. In that unity, we form part of the Latinx experience and can learn from and gain strength from each other through our differences. One of the experiences the Latinx population shares is postsecondary education in the U.S. As Latinas we need to share with other Latinas and Latinx students what we know about postsecondary education in the U.S. Beyond sharing what we know, we must do what is within our power to open the doors of academia for Latinas and other students of color.

Post-Script: Researcher Reflections

The researcher would be remiss to not acknowledge that the write up and finalizing of this study happened against the backdrop of tremendous social and economic challenges in the U.S. during the year 2020. I am privileged that I can watch the protests taking place across major cities in the U.S. against police injustices from the comfort of my living room. As an Afro-Latina, I am no stranger to racism and the negative consequences of implicit biases and micro-aggressions. When I was growing up my mother would always tell me that I must get an education, “Tú educación es algo que nadie te puede quitar.” I took that to heart and have always been eager to learn and improve my education in any way possible. Looking back, I believe it would have been very beneficial for me to attend a community college before moving on to a four-year university after high school graduation. Community colleges tend to have a more diverse student population than four-year institutions and I attended a Predominantly White Institution where I was usually both the token Latina and token Black girl everywhere I went, whether on campus or in town (this was the 80s in Texas). I am a firm believer that once a student is in college, then we as educators and college personnel must do everything in our power to keep that learner in school and help them achieve their goal of obtaining a degree. One of the ways we can do this is by changing the social narrative that positions community colleges as less than universities. Attending a community college after high school graduation should be considered as tremendous an accomplishment as attending a four-year university. I think that if we can begin to change the narrative of community colleges somehow not being worthy institutions, then students attending a community college will enter the college eager to learn, engage, and

participate in the college as a place where they can take ownership before moving on to their next educational challenge.

APPENDIX SECTION

APPENDIX A

Class Survey Instrument

Study Title: A CASE STUDY INVESTIGATION OF THE TRANSFER ASPIRATIONS OF LATINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS IN DEVELOPMENTAL LITERACY THROUGH A READING LENS

You are invited to participate in a research study to learn more about the self-perceptions of readiness to transfer from community college to a four-year institution.

I will use responses on this survey to select participants for the study.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please provide your contact information on the last page.

1. What is your gender?

- ☐ Female
☐ Male
☐ Other (specify): _____

2. Which category below includes your age?

- ☐ 17 or younger
☐ 18-20
☐ 21-29
☐ 30 or older

3. Which race/ethnicity best describes you? (Please choose only one.)

- ☐ American Indian or Alaskan Native
☐ Asian/ Pacific Islander
☐ Black or African American
☐ Hispanic/ Latina-o/ Spanish
☐ White/ Caucasian
☐ Multiple ethnicity/ Other (specify): _____

4. What month and year did you graduate from high school? _____

5. Is this your first semester in college?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No (specify number of semesters in college): _____

6. What is your main reason for deciding to attend a community college?

7. Are you the first in your family to go to college?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	No

8. Do you communicate in a language other than English? If so, what other languages do you,

- a. Speak _____
- b. Read _____
- c. Write _____

9. In which language did you first learn to read?

10. In which language(s) do you read now?

11. Why did you register for INRW this semester?

12. What are your educational goals?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Transfer to a four-year college or university for a bachelor's degree.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Transfer to a four-year college or university for a bachelor's degree, but first obtain an associate's degree at this community college.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not plan to transfer to a four-year college or university; I will stay at this community college to earn a certificate.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not plan to transfer to a four-year college or university; I will stay at this community college to earn an associate's degree.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have no plans to transfer but may change my mind in the future; right now, I want to earn college credits and not worry about deciding on whether to obtain a degree or certificate.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other plans (specify): _____

Thank you for completing this survey.

Contact Information

Study Title: A CASE STUDY INVESTIGATION OF THE TRANSFER ASPIRATIONS OF LATINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS IN DEVELOPMENTAL LITERACY THROUGH A READING LENS

Yes, I am willing to participate in your research study to learn more about the self-perceptions of readiness to transfer from community college to a four-year institution.

You may contact me to set up the first of three interviews.

Name :

Email :

Mobile #:

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocols

Interview 1

Study Title: A Case Study Investigation of the Transfer Aspirations of Latina Community College Students in Developmental Literacy Through a Reading Lens

Principal Investigator: Amarilis M. Castillo **Faculty Advisor:** Dr. Sonya L. Armstrong

Interview Guide

Participant's Pseudonym_____ *[Ask participant to choose a name]*

You have been invited to participate in a research study to learn more about the self-perceptions of readiness to transfer from community college to a four-year institution. The information gathered and study results will be used to complete my doctoral dissertation in developmental education at Texas State University, as well as in conference presentations, and possible publications. All data will be confidential, and pseudonyms will be used.

You are being asked to participate because you are a community college student enrolled in integrated reading and writing (developmental literacy) who identifies as Latina, aspires to transfer to a four-year institution, are a recent high school graduate, and may or may not be the first in your family to go to college. You do not have to respond to any questions that you feel uncomfortable about answering.

This is the first of three interviews.

I will audio record this interview. Is it OK with you if I record our conversation?

Do you have any questions before we begin?

First Interview

Level 1 questions asked of the interviewee (Yin, 2009)

1. Our conversation today will be about reading and your reading experiences, but if you would like, you can begin by telling me a little about yourself.
2. So now I would like to begin what I call your reading narrative, your reading story, think back to when you first learned to read and tell me everything you can about that experience.
 - a. How old were you?

- b. Who taught you to read?
 - c. In what language or languages did you first learn to read?
- 3. Talk about your education and your favorite subject in school.
 - a. How about reading at the different grade levels?
- 4. On the survey you completed in class, you said that your main reason for deciding to attend a community college is [...], can you tell me a bit more about that and about your decision to enroll at a community college after high school graduation?
- 5. What do you think you need to do or learn while at this community college to transfer to a four-year institution?
 - a. For example, what classes do you need to take while at community college?
 - b. What do you think you will learn in those classes that will help you in upper level college classes at a four-year university?
 - c. How do you think these classes will help you when you transfer and take upper-level courses?
- 6. Thinking again about your reading experiences so far, both in and out of school, how much reading do you think you will do when you enroll in upper-level college courses?
 - a. How prepared do you think you need to be for upper-level courses reading requirements when you transfer to a four-year university?
 - b. How prepared do you think you will be for upper-level courses reading requirements when you transfer to a four-year university?

Thank you so much for your time today. Is there anything you would like to add or ask before I turn off the recorder?

Second interview date and time_____

Interview 2

Study Title: A Case Study Investigation of the Transfer Aspirations of Latina Community College Students in Developmental Literacy Through a Reading Lens

Principal Investigator: Amarilis M. Castillo

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Sonya L. Armstrong

Interview Guide

Participant's Pseudonym_____

Thank you for meeting with me.

This is the second of three interviews.

I will audio record this interview. Is it OK with you if I record our conversation?

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Second Interview

Level 1 questions asked of the interviewee (Yin, 2009)

1. Tell everything you can me about the INRW class.
 - a. What are you working on now?
 - b. Are you using any reading strategies or skills from this class in your other classes?
2. Talk about what else you do besides school?
 - a. What is your schedule like including all your responsibilities and study time?
3. How involved is your family in your education?
 - a. Do your parents/ other family members know what you are studying and why?
 - b. Do your parents/ other family members know about your intentions to transfer to a four-year institution?

4. At our first meeting you said that you decided to enroll at a community college after high school graduation because (summarize what student said at first meeting regarding this point), would you tell me more about that decision?
5. Now that you are deeper into your classes and your college experience, tell me about what you think you need to be prepared to transfer and take upper-level classes at a four-year university.
6. What about reading readiness for upper-level college courses, tell me what you think you need to learn at the community college to be prepared to transfer to a four-year university?

Interview 3

Study Title: A Case Study Investigation of the Transfer Aspirations of Latina Community College Students in Developmental Literacy Through a Reading Lens

Principal Investigator: Amarilis M. Castillo

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Sonya L. Armstrong

Interview Protocol

Participant's Pseudonym_____

Third Interview

This is the third of three interviews.

I will audio record this interview. Is it OK with you if I record our conversation?

Before we begin the final interview, I would like to read to you a short summary of our first two interviews. Let me know if the summary makes sense and if it is a good representation of what we discussed.

Read the summary.

Is there anything I got wrong? Anything you would like to add?

Also, I am working through the interviews and analyzing what you have told me about your reading history, your experiences with reading currently, and your expectations about transferring to a four year university. Is it OK with you if I email you in a few weeks and ask what you think about some themes, or rather, phrases and words that come out of our discussions and that I think seem to describe what you have told me?

OK, so do you have any questions before we begin?

[Level 1 questions asked of the interviewee (Yin, 2009)]

1. In this interview, I would like you to think back to what we talked about in our first two meetings and complete the following sentences:
 - a. Transferring to a four-year university is important to me because...
 - b. Completing my degree is important to me because...
 - c. To me, being "college ready" means...

- d. And, being “reading ready” means...
2. As we near the end of the semester, tell me everything you can about what have you done this semester at community college that you think will help you be prepared to transfer to a four-year university?
3. What do you think others in your life, including at the community college, can do to help you achieve your goal of transferring to a four-year university?

Thank you so much for your time and for sharing your story with me. *[Hand over an envelope with a thank you card and a \$25 gift card]* This is a small token of my appreciation for sharing your time and story with me as part of my study.

Is there anything you would like to add to our conversation or ask before I turn off the recorder?

APPENDIX C

Class Visit Request Email Sent to Instructors

A Case Study Investigation of the Transfer Aspirations of Latina Community College Students in Developmental Literacy Through a Reading Lens

Email to Instructors Requesting Permission to Visit Class to Recruit Study Participants

Subject: Request to Visit Class to Recruit Study Participants

Dear [*instructor name*],

My name is Amarilis Castillo. I am a doctoral candidate at Texas State University working on my dissertation. In this study I am investigating the aspirations for transfer to a four-year institution for Latina community college students. I am especially interested in looking at this within the reading domain.

As I am interested in reading readiness, I have proposed interviewing students in INRW courses. Because you are an INRW instructor, the students in your class comprise the focal population of my study. I can best get at the reading aspect of my study by interviewing your students.

I am requesting an opportunity to come to your class briefly on a date that is convenient for you. Is there is any time within your lesson plan the week of _____ for me to speak to the students for 10-20 minutes, depending on what is workable within the context of your class? If not, is there another time that works with your schedule?

Within these 10-20 minutes I am in your class, I will explain inform consent, have students sign the consent forms, and invite students to complete a survey.

As a token of my appreciation for allowing me to come to your class and as a way of thanking students for listening to my recruitment speech, I will bring a small basket of candies for the class to share.

If you'd like more information on my study, please see the attached one-page summary. I am also attaching a copy of the letter of agreement from SWCC Institutional Research Review.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Amarilis M. Castillo
Doctoral Candidate
Graduate Program in Developmental Education

College of Education, Curriculum & Instruction
Texas State University
amarilisc@txstate.edu

APPENDIX D

These five categories addressed my study research questions and/or conceptual framework in varying ways and so were the focus of the data analysis for each individual case. Each case was unique, and their uniqueness was magnified in the responses as I have arranged them in the five categories. These categories were derived from the coding of interview transcripts and informed by the answers to the survey instrument used as a recruitment tool during data collection.

Category 1: Reading Development—Participants discussed when they learned to read, who taught them to read, in what language they first learned to read, and some mentioned favorite books, others could not recall any title or authors, and others remembered how much they enjoyed reading.

Category 2: Reading Decline—At some point, the amount of reading done by a participant or accessibility to books, or the desire to read diminished for each participant at different times in their lives and for varying reasons.

Category 3: Community College is Not College—Participants are all enrolled at a community college, whether the decision to begin there was a first choice or a necessary alternative to a four-year university, each participant has her own reason.

Category 4: Readiness to Transfer—Each participant has a different idea of when they will be ready to transfer to a four-year institution and what they need to do or learn before they are ready to make the transition.

Reading Skills and Strategies—Participants discussed the reading skills and strategies they want to or need to learn prior to transferring from community college to a four-year institution.

Category 5: Familial Involvement Matters—The family remains a driving force for Latina college students. What these individual cases show is that the participants' relationships with their families are as diverse and unique as the participants themselves, and relationships must be highlighted as a driving force to participants' transfer aspirations.

APPENDIX E

Questions Asked of Data Table

This table is an illustration of the thought process that produced the present study's conclusions. The table is adapted from Bloomberg and Volpe's (2019) if/then/therefore/thus matrix and their consistency of findings chart for arriving at dissertation conclusions and recommendations.

Major Finding	Questions asked of the Data	Interpretation	Conclusion
1. Community College as Less Than	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did participants speak of community college as not being real college? • What might be different if participants were excited about attending a community college directly from high school? • How can community colleges engage learners in being active members of the community college environment? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans to attend community college was not celebrated in high school. • Participants heard from friends and others in their environment that community college was a good place to start before going to "the big school." • Once at the community college, participants did not feel a part of the school because it was a commuter school, which gave them more of an impression that this was not real college. 	Students matriculate at community colleges for various reasons, such as financial, location, and convenience. Community colleges must make an effort to engage students not only in the classroom, but in the school community.
2. Motivation to Succeed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can institutions prepare to address the needs of all students who arrive eager for an education? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants have an idea of what they want to accomplish but have many questions that arise daily. 	Whatever their views on attending community college, matriculation at the institution is the first sign that students are

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What can community colleges do different from what they are currently doing to assure students meet their transfer goals? • What can postsecondary institutions do to encourage the personal career and education goals of Latinas college students? • Is the idea of “Familia” sometimes over-emphasized or over-played when discussing Latinx students? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both discouraging and encouraging interactions with family, friends, faculty, and staff will affect students’ motivation. • It’s a brand new world for students as they enter college and they can become overwhelmed by expectations from family, work, and school. • Family plays a large role, but students need a greater input from the college. 	<p>motivated to succeed and want to achieve their goals, in this case a main goal for the students is transferring to a four-year institution. Programs should be put in place for incoming students to encourage their transfer goals. An occasional visit with an advisor, posters about transferring, and being told to think about it is not enough.</p>
3. Expectations of Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do family dynamics influence a Latinas choice to enroll in college and then to complete college? • Keeping in mind a community college’s mission to provide equitable access to education for all students, what else can 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all participants had engaged parents and it is counterproductive to depend on the familism belief to encourage all Latinas to persist at attaining a postsecondary education. • Students must believe that they are viewed as individuals, and as part of a larger cultural group, at 	<p>Students will feel welcomed and engage with a postsecondary institution that sees them and treats them as individuals. Latinas are a heterogeneous group and even when they all speak the same language and have the same national background, their experiences, beliefs, and way of</p>

	<p>community colleges do to show they value the sacrifices their Latina student population are making to achieve their education?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can community colleges offer diverse students who aspire to transfer a culturally-relevant experience while at the same time ensuring these students have equitable access to educational opportunities? 	<p>their postsecondary institution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The support a student receives must be tailored to the students' needs for it to be equitable but should consider a students' culture for it to be inclusive. • For students' whose backgrounds diverge from what is considered the norm of a certain culture, it can be difficult to ask for support and assistance if the institution or from whom they seek assistance assume certain cultural beliefs and behaviors. 	<p>being differ tremendously; therefore, the support they need from educational institutions will also differ.</p>
4. Reading is Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why does the emphasis in reading seem to diminish from k-12 on to college? • Why do reading skills and strategies matter at the college level? • What if all college students possessed critical reading skills? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All participants learned to read at a young age and remembered enjoying reading. • Reading to learn was not encouraged in high school and not expected in college because in high school the teacher told students what they needed to learn, and the 	<p>Reading matters. Reading at the postsecondary level must be emphasized by community colleges and four-year institutions. Learners cannot be made to feel as if they are not worthy of a college education because they do not know the right words, or they</p>

- Why do participants believe that you need to be able to speak a certain way or command a certain vocabulary to go to a four-year institution?
 - Why is there not the same belief of necessary words knowledge for attending community college?
- expectation was the same for college.
- Reading skills and strategies were separated from critical thinking skills, so that annotating was about writing a word from the text and not about writing thoughts and critiques of the reading.
 - There was an expectation or belief that knowing the right words, having a good vocabulary meant having a good education and that a good vocabulary is needed to attend a four-year institution.
- have not read certain books.
-

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