ABSTRACT

PIPELINE DREAMS: LATINA/O COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS PUSHED OUT OF THE TRANSFER PATH

By

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Latinas/os represent the largest ethnic group in California and are under-represented in higher education. Latina/o student college completion rates are the lowest of any racial or ethnic group, including Whites. This study used a critical race theoretical lens to explore the experiences of 14 Latina/o community college students who were pushed out of the transfer path. Storytelling served as the foundation of this study to understand and give voice to Latina/o students' transfer path experiences. Interview data from all participants were analyzed to extract codes and develop themes within the stories. Demographic surveys were evaluated to identify student characteristics.

Findings revealed that Latina/o students were pushed out of the transfer path at four critical points: Students were pushed out as they found themselves on academic or progress probation, resulting in conditional financial aid suspensions. Some students became discouraged as they figured out the amount of courses necessary to become transfer ready. Other students attempted to transition to transferable coursework, but they were unable to pass developmental math courses. Students also reported being pushed

out as they learned about the immense amount of transfer requirements, program options, and costs, which created transfer information paralysis.

Latina/o students reported feeling emotional relief after being pushed out of the transfer pathway. Earning an associate's degree or certificate was an achievable goal and students felt a sense of academic accomplishment. Students also believed that an associate's degree was a "stepping stone" on their journey through the educational pipeline.

Students noted race, class, and gender stereotyped experiences that adversely affected their transfer path experiences. Negative perceptions about their race impacted their academic performance. Erratic and limited resources—including suspension from financial aid—proved harmful to their ability to remain on the transfer path. Gender role expectations obstructed Latina women and propelled Latino men on the transfer pathway.

The findings suggest that Latina/o students were disadvantaged by community college policies and procedures. Yet, they remained committed to their educational goals. Further investigation of Latina/o student community college experiences is necessary to develop policies, procedures, and practices that will serve to strengthen their educational pathways.

PIPELINE DREAMS: LATINA/O COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS PUSHED OUT OF THE TRANSFER PATH

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To all Latina/o children as you strive for academic excellence in a public education system that may not recognize this effort; this study is for you in anticipation that the U.S. public education system will be responsive to your college aspirations.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A significant increase in the Latina/o population living in the United States has positioned them as one of the largest racial groups in the country. Latinas/os represent multiple heritages and encompass several Hispanic groups. The term Latina/o is specific to people of "Mexican, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central American, and South American" ancestry (Nuñez, 2009, p. 43). The growth of the U.S. Latina/o population is projected to advance to 30% by 2050 (Aizenman, 2008). This growth is evident in several states, particularly in California.

Historically, the state of California has strived to educate its citizens. The California Master Plan for Higher Education was originally established in 1960 as a vision to educate all Californians. The Master Plan promised to provide education to capable students with minimal taxpayer dollars (California Department of Education, 1960; Rivas, Pérez, Alvarez, & Solórzano, 2007). A triple-level system of education was developed and included California community colleges (CCC), the California State University system (CSU), and the University of California system (UC). A plan for each level was articulated so as not to duplicate educational services (California Legislative Joint Committee to Develop a Master Plan for Education, 2002; Rivas et al., 2007). CCCs were charged with maintaining an open access admissions policy. CCCs offered

vocational education, educational and career training including degrees such as associate of art degrees, and transfer to 4-year universities. The CSU focused on admitting the top 33% of high school students, while the UC admitted the top 12% of high school graduates (Rivas et al., 2007).

In 1999, the California Legislature passed Senate Concurrent Resolution 29 that called for the revision of the Master Plan for Education including the K-12 system. The two main goals focused on (a) availing every family with educational information, services, and engagement for their children so that they could maintain the best possible life and (b) providing every public school, college, and university with the necessary resources to offer a rigorous and excellent education. Students of African American, Latina/o, and Native American ethnic backgrounds generally attend California schools that serve majority working-class neighborhoods. These schools disproportionately receive fewer of the resources needed to support a quality education, resulting in the undereducation of students and poor educational outcomes (California Legislative Joint Committee to Develop a Master Plan for Education, 2002; Melguizo, 2009).

Specifically, Latinas/os are one of the largest ethnic groups in California; yet, they are not equitably represented in higher education. Latina/o academic achievement in high school has recently improved with 14% high school dropouts in 2011, half the rate of 28% in 2000 (Fry & Taylor, 2013). Additionally, in 2012, Latina/o college enrollment levels grew to 69%, passing Whites by 2% (Fry & Taylor, 2013). However, Latina/o college completion rates trail behind all other racial and ethnic groups, particularly Whites (Arbona & Nora, 2007; Downs et al., 2008; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Melguizo, 2009). Latina/o low college completion outcomes are a consequence of

inadequate primary and secondary public education and result in undereducation (Melguizo, 2009).

Nevertheless, most Latina/o high school graduates want to obtain an undergraduate degree (Fry & Taylor, 2013). And, the majority of those students who do attend college begin postsecondary education in local community colleges with aspirations to transfer to 4-year institutions (Crisp & Nora, 2010). There are various reasons why Latinas/os attend community college, such as economics and the location of the colleges in close vicinity to home. Some researchers use deficit models to explain college choice and argue that Latina/o students and parents have minimal educational interests (Behnke, Piercy, & Diversi, 2004), and limited English language ability (McLaughlin, Liljestrom, Lim, & Meyers, 2002; Ortiz, Valerio, & Lopez, 2012). Yet, Chavez-Reyes (2010) found that many third-generation and later immigrant Latinas/os, particularly Chicanos, were often monolingual English speaking.

Additionally, critical scholars argue that race impacts academic preparation and college choice (Kurlaender, 2006). Gildersleeve and Ranero (2010) claimed that college information is disproportionately limited to undocumented students resulting in different college choice outcomes. It is not clear how Latinas/os are being pushed out of the transfer path (i.e., the school related factors that create an educational disconnection and discourage students from continuing education; Bradley & Renzulli, 2011; Jordan, Lara, & McPartland, 1996), therefore diminishing their college degree objective and keeping them marginally educated at vocational or certification levels. The push out theory is borrowed from Delbert S. Elliot's (1966) K-12 "push-out" model.

Elliot (1966), a sociologist, explored delinquency and high school dropouts and used push-out to describe high school students who were "pushed" from school due to disciplinary issues (p. 309). Other push-out theorists have argued that structural factors like discipline policies intersect with personal attributes and promote school departure (Bradley & Renzulli, 2011; Elliot, 1966; Jordan et al., 1996; Stearns & Glennie, 2006). In this study, the push-out concept will be used to critically explore Latina/o students who have had aspirations to transfer to a 4-year university but may leave the transfer path due to structural influences such as lack of knowledge about transfer requirements (Monroe, 2006) and limited counselor support (Brint &Karabel, 1989; Ornelas, 2002; Pérez Huber, Huidor, Malagón, Sánchez, & Solórzano, 2006).

Since Latinas/os are one of the largest and fastest growing ethnic groups in the United States, it is imperative for the entire society to take note of the educational neglect that has led to their marginal academic performance (Chávez-Reyes, 2010; Gándara & Contreras, 2009). One reason to take note is Latinas/os will impact the country's workforce and educational dilemma (Muñoz, 2010). Another reason to pay attention to the growth of Latinas/os is that over the next 20 years, it is predicted that there will be a 39% increase in jobs requiring educational certification (Camacho Liu, 2011). In addition, California has the sixth largest economy globally (Muñoz, 2010). In 2011, Latinas/os in California earned 21% of associate degrees or higher compared to 57% of Asians, 44% of Whites, and 30% of African Americans (Aud et al., 2011). The final reason to focus on Latina/o educational neglect is that knowledgeable citizens can sustain California's per capita income and economy (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Therefore, it is essential to attend to Latina/o academic achievement by strengthening their primary

and secondary schooling experiences to move them toward 4-year institutions. Advancing college instruction for Latinas/os can establish a majority-trained workforce able to manage highly technical careers, both locally and globally (California Legislature Joint Committee to Develop a Master Plan for Education, 2002; Handel, 2011; Orfield, Losen, Wald, & Swanson, 2004).

Both academically prepared and underprepared Latina/o students often begin their postsecondary education at a community college (Hurst, 2009) since these campuses are in close proximity to their home. Staying at home, Latina/o students also report having lower living expenses, and receiving guidance from family and community members regarding community college and 4-year university enrollment as well as such things as financial aid (Kurlaender, 2006). McDonough (1997) suggested that high school counselors shaped students' perceptions about college choice based on their socioeconomic status, which is connected to ethnicity. Kurlaender (2006) argued that race affects the type of college a student chooses because even wealthy Latinas/os often start at community college. Martinez and Fernandez (2004) noted that African American, Latino, and Native American students make up more than 60% of community college enrollees. Many Latinas/os are first-generation college students with limited cultural capital related to knowledge about college choice, the application process, and financial resources. Notably, Latinas/os have the lowest community college and 4-year university graduation rates of all ethnic populations (Nuñez & Crisp, 2012), which presents major challenges for educators, administrators, and policymakers.

Statement of Problem

While most Latina/o community college students plan to attend a 4-year public or private institution, few Latinas/os transfer from a community college to a 4-year university (Perez & Ceja, 2010). Little is known about the transfer aspirations and experiences of Latina/o community college students who do not transfer or move through the higher education pipeline to degree attainment. Moreover, the literature focuses on those who have transferred to a 4-year public or private college and obtained baccalaureate degrees. A study by Campa (2010) suggested that Mexican American students seemed motivated to strengthen their family and community social status by obtaining a college degree. The numbers in Figure 1 clearly indicate the need to focus on Latina/o community college student departure from the transfer path. According to the figure, 1 in 17 Chicana/o community college students, about 6%, transfer to a 4-year university (Yosso & Solórzano, 2006).

The cause of Latina/o low academic attainment in higher education is often identified in the literature using deficit perspectives that focus on low parent and student educational aspirations (Behnke et al., 2004), limited English proficiency (McLaughlin et al., 2002; Ortiz et al., 2012), and ethnic generational status (immigrant first-generation child of immigrant second-generation; Feliciano & Rumbaut, 2005; Ortiz et al., 2012; Portes & MacLead, 1996; Suarez- Orozco, 2001). Conversely, other studies identify assets, which indicate that most community college students have a desire to transfer to a 4-year university (Crisp & Nora, 2010; Pérez & Ceja, 2010). The objective of transferring is also apparent among Latina/o students, just as it is among most community college students (Crisp & Nora, 2010). Some research studies declare that about 71% of

Latinas/os (Solórzano, Rivas, & Velez, 2005) have an overwhelming desire to transfer to 4-year universities when they begin community college (Pérez Huber et al., 2006; Rivas et al., 2007; Solórzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005); however, very few (7% to 20%) actually transfer (Solórzano, Rivas, & Velez, 2005).

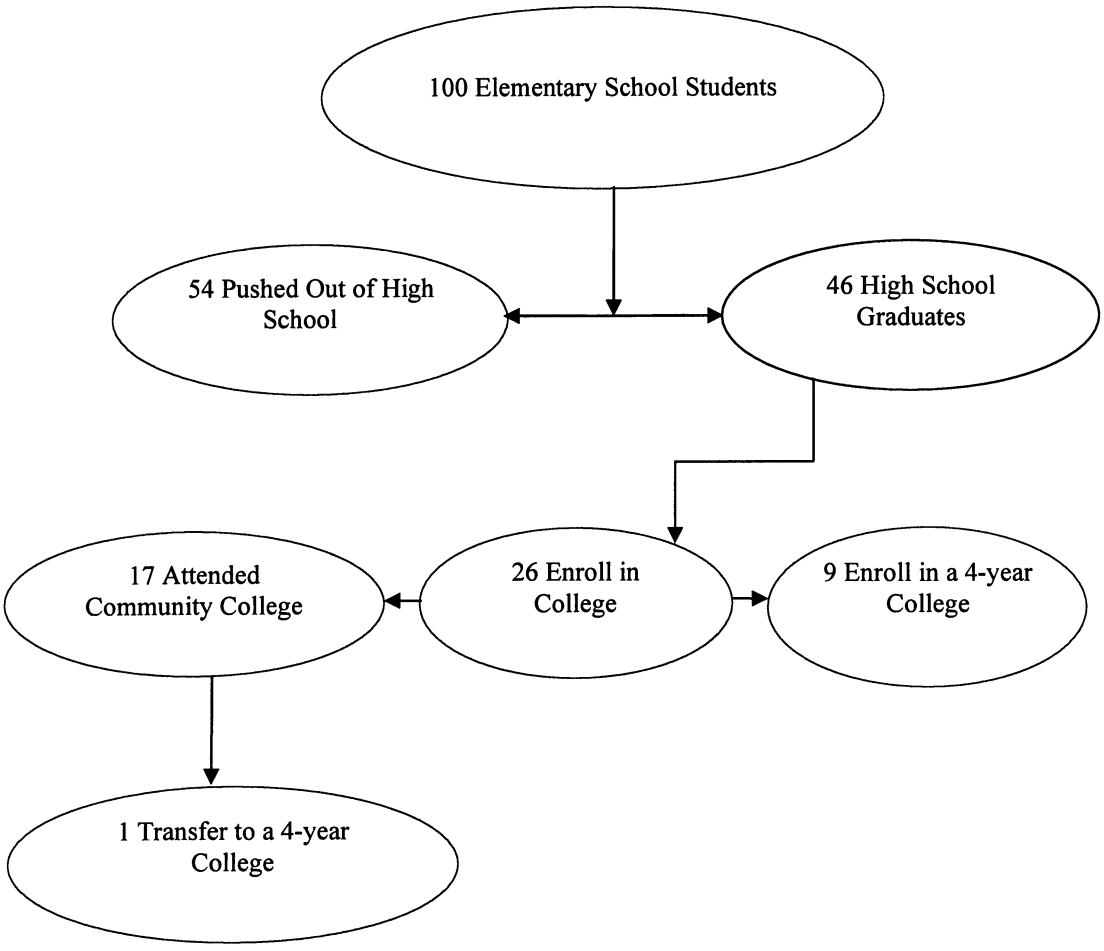

FIGURE 1. Latina/o transfer pipeline. Adapted from Yosso & Solórzano, 2006.

In order for one to understand their experiences, first exploring institutional factors that contribute to Latina/o students being pushed out of the transfer path is

imperative. It is also important to identify the critical points within the transfer process that contribute to Latina/o students being pushed out of the transfer path. Examining how Latina/o students respond to no longer being on the transfer path can give insight into their community college experiences and opportunities. It is necessary to study how these dynamics impact their transfer path experiences and departure from the CCC system without an undergraduate degree (Rivas et al., 2007).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the transfer aspirations and experiences of Latina/o community college students who have been pushed out of the transfer path, and describe how the intersections of race, class, and gender may influence this course. Latina/o students' counterstories may also expose critical points on the transfer path where they are pushed out and describe Latina/o students' responses to their experiences.

Research Questions

This study will explore three research questions to gain an understanding of the significant experiences that affect Latina/o community college students who have left the transfer path.

1. What are the critical points where Latina/o community college students are pushed out the transfer path?

2. How do Latina/o community college students respond to no longer being on the transfer path?

3. How do the intersections of race, class, and gender mediate the community college pathway experience?

Theoretical Framework

In the United States, Latina/o students are framed through the use of racial generalizations that characterize them via deficit theories. Some scholars believe that race and class construct college choice (Kurlaender, 2006; McDonough, 1997). Taggart and Crisp (2011) argued that Latina/o students are tracked to community college because they have discriminatory high school experiences that suppress their college aspirations. It is important to unmask the sociohistorical context that influences how Latina/o students experience education (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Therefore, a critical race theory (CRT) framework will be used to examine how inequities in public education push out Latina/o community college students who are on the transfer path. The five tenants of CRT will guide the analysis of California's public education system's pedagogical practices within the community college transfer process that thrust Latina/o student from the transfer path, resulting in dismal postsecondary educational outcomes (Fernández, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The five CRT themes include (a) the centrality of race and racism, (b) the legitimacy and use of people of color's experiential knowledge, (c) challenge of the dominant ideology through research that counters this discourse, (d) the use a multidisciplinary perspective to bring about social change and educational equity, and (e) a commitment to research that advances social justice (Fernández, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Critical Race Theory

Racial discrimination is deeply rooted in U.S. history, creating stratified social, economic, and educational systems between those who have power and those who do not

(Bell, 1977). The first U.S. Census of 1790 included questions related to race (Lee, 1993, p. 92). Since that time, race has been included in the population census, which perpetuates a racialized society (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Since the inception of the country, political and social structures have been developed that continue to maintain inequality. Therefore, race matters in U.S. culture (Parker & Lynn, 2002; Tate, 1997).

Racial definitions shifted during the civil rights movement when individual ethnic groups redefined themselves. Many ethnic communities formed coalitions and organizations to address unequal access to education, housing, employment, and health care systems—things that impacted their lives on a daily basis. New policies were enacted, such as affirmative action and fair housing that allowed for equal education and employment opportunities, and housing access. It appeared that the voices of these marginalized groups had been heard as change began to take shape with the enforcement of equal rights policies (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

As the country began to settle from the turbulence of the civil rights movement, CRT emerged from legal scholars of color in the mid-1970 to address the continued disregard of civil rights law (Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT proponents insisted that race was a social construct that structured people's existence and created subordination (Tate, 1997). Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman articulated a critical argument that civil rights approaches such as protests, marches, and support from interested citizens was not having an impact on race and social reform. CRT scholars believed that the United States was a racialized nation that used Whiteness as a standard through which to define and place its citizens. Whiteness had powerful meaning and value, which needed to be "deconstructed" to dismantle racist structures and beliefs, "reconstructed" to empower

individuals, and "constructed" to include civil rights and social equality. Education was recognized as a tool used to reproduce class and channel opportunity (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 9).

The informal tracking process used in the U.S. public primary and secondary education system has adversely impacted Latina/o educational advancement (Gonzalez, Stoner, & Jovel, 2003; Martinez, 2003; Oakes, 1983, 2005). Schools that serve primarily White middle-class and wealthy communities often have highly technical classrooms offering advanced placement curriculum and skilled teachers and provide knowledge about the college process (Hurst, 2009). Whereas, schools that serve primarily Latina/o students have unskilled teachers, emphasize vocational training, and offer limited or no college information (Hurst, 2009; Pérez Huber et al., 2006). These circumstances result in Latinas/os having limited to no college preparation (Hurst, 2009). CRT scholars have further declared that Whites have benefited greatly from civil rights legislation. In particular, White women have made significant advances in education as a result of civil rights law (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Racism continues to exist with a different appearance than in the past. Bonilla-Silva and Forman (2011) discussed changes in White racial discourse identified by current scholars, such as "I am not racist but . . ." as "discursive maneuvers" or "semantic moves" (p. 178). Further, 85% of respondents in their study of White college students still opposed affirmative action and denied that racial inequality was structural. Bonilla-Silva and Forman purported that post-civil rights racial beliefs by Whites have shifted minimally. While, some Latinas/os are attending higher education, most continue to receive insufficient education (Hurst, 2009), but are described as inadequate rather than

the system being labeled as incompetent. These deficit perspectives serve to place responsibility on individuals instead of the structures that were developed to oppress racial groups while maintaining Whites as the dominant race (Bell, 1977, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano, 1997; Solórzano & Solórzano, 1995; Tate, 1997).

Operational Definitions

Community college function – The community college mission, which includes transfer, vocational education, and developmental education (Bahr, 2013; Townsend & Wilson, 2006).

Critical points – Specific points identified by Latina/o students within the educational process that effect the advancement through the pipeline.

Latinas/os – People of Mexican, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central American, and South American ancestry who may be native-born, immigrants, undocumented, or have legal status (Nuñez, 2009).

Push out – The use of structural processes to create barriers for lower achieving students (e.g., assessment tests), which make it difficult or impossible to move through the higher education pipeline (Elliot, 1966; Orfield et al., 2004).

Tracking – Perceived educational ability by race and class (Oakes, 1983) resulting in grouping students into courses that create varied educational outcomes and intensify inequality (Moller & Stearns, 2012).

Transfer path – Educational pathways on which students begin community college and attempt to earn more than 10 credits toward a community college degree (Adelman, 2005).

Undereducation – The condition of inadequate teachers, pedagogy, school structures, resources, and state and federal policies that result in limiting knowledge and the creation of poor academic outcomes (González, & Portillos, 2007).

Assumptions, Limitations and Delimitations

Assumptions

Several assumptions can be made about this qualitative research study. First, the stories shared by Latina/o community college students will expose thick, rich data about their schooling experiences. Second, the data will reveal realities about the educational experiences of Latina/o community college students that are contrary to deficit models articulated by dominant ideology (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano, 1997). Third, the realities revealed will strengthen the voice of the Latina/o community students and build unity. Finally, the data can be used to inform community college administrators, faculty and staff, and educational policymakers.

Limitations and Delimitation

Limitations to consider include the reality that this qualitative study cannot be generalized to other CCC campuses or Latina/o students. The students enrolled in the specific community colleges studied will be unique to that community and the programs will reflect the exclusive creativity of campus administrators, faculty, and staff.

In addition, particular Latina/o subgroups have different educational outcomes. For instance, Cuban Americans have high educational outcomes while Mexican Americans/Chicanos have the lowest educational achievement of all Latina/o subgroups. However, it is somewhat difficult to determine subgroup results because research on Latinas/os is often not disaggregated. This makes it difficult to discuss which factors

impact specific subgroups as they attempt to move through the educational pipeline. Therefore, this study will not be able to report on a single subgroup.

Another limitation to consider in this study is that the findings are applicable only to students attending a CCC at this point in time. Thus, the conclusions may not apply to Latina/o students in the future. Finally, participants may not reflect Latina/o students on other CCC campuses due to demographic differences.

Delimitations include the selection of currently enrolled Latina/o community college students who have had aspirations to transfer, and have been pushed out the transfer path. Only those students who have articulated that they do not currently have a transfer goal will be asked to participate. Thus, this study will focus only on those Latina/o community college students who have been compelled not to transfer to a 4-year institution and are presently earning an associate's degree or certificate, not those who have transferred.

Significance

The significance of this dissertation is to give voice to Latina/o students who have had aspirations to transfer to 4-year universities but do not because their stories have not been heard. Rather, these students have been ignored and blamed for not moving through the educational pipeline successfully. Giving voice to this marginalized group may assist with providing insight about their community college experiences so that policymakers can develop effective policies. Consecutively, administrators, faculty, and staff can implement effective practices to advance Latina/o educational outcomes. The information learned could inform community colleges that are responsible for

implementing new legislation such as the Student Success Act[1] (AB 1456, 2012), which charged CCCs with assisting students with creating an educational foundation for success.

The Student Success Act requires CCCs that receive matriculation funds to provide student services such as an orientation, assessment and placement, academic counseling and intervention, and educational planning focused on the student's educational goals. Students are expected to declare a major after a designated time or accrual of units. Students are also required to meet a minimum academic average to receive the Board of Governors (BOG) Fee Waiver. Service evaluation is required and funding is connected to student outcomes. (CCC, 2012). Further, this research will narrow the gap in the current literature on Latina/o community college students' transfer path experiences.

Conclusion

Latinas/os are one of the largest ethnic groups in California, but they are the least represented in higher education. Many Latinas/os are undereducated, yet have a desire to seek higher education. For instance, recent research indicates that the high school dropout rates for Latinas/os are at an all-time low, and, Latina/o high school students enroll in college at greater rates than White students (Fry & Taylor, 2013). These recent statistics support educational improvement; however, Latina/o student educational enrollment and attainment continue to lag behind other ethnic groups and Whites

[1] Additional information about the Student Success Act can be found at the California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) at http://www.california community colleges.cccco.edu/PolicyInAction/StudentSuccessInitiativeaspx

(Arbona& Nora, 2007; Downs et al., 2008; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Melguizo, 2009). Therefore, it is important to understand what institutional factors deter Latina/o students from the transfer path. It is important to obtain stories from students to expose their realities (Delgado, 1989) and reduce stereotypes and deficit thinking (Valencia, 2010).

Much of the existing literature focuses on community college student transfer success (Flaga, 2006). Specifically, there is limited research that explores Latina/o community college student success (Suarez, 2003) and some research that identifies barriers to transfer for Latina/o community college students (Ornelas & Solórzano, 2004). Very limited research exists on the narratives of Latina/o community college students that are pushed from the transfer path (Bensimon & Dowd, 2009), which is the focus of this dissertation. The findings can reduce the gap in the transfer literature and give voice to Latina/o students who do not transfer to 4-year universities. Conclusions can also inform CCC administrators, educators, student service staff, educational policymakers and advocates.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This study will explore the existing literature related to community college students and the transfer path. The literature review will be organized into three major sections: college choice, community college function, and barriers to transfer that may encourage leaving college. Latina/o community college students will be examined as a specific racial group using a Critical Race Theory (CRT) lens. The five CRT tenets, intersectionality of race and racism, challenge of the dominant ideology, exposure of unjust educational experiences, the use of experiential knowledge of the participants, and an interdisciplinary application (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) of theory and methodology will be linked to the three sections of the literature review. Research related to the experiences of Latina/o community college students pushed out of the transfer path will be emphasized.

Much of the literature on Latina/o community college transfer students has focused on those who successfully transfer to 4-year universities. There is a significant gap in the literature about Latina/o students who do not transfer, which is about 75% of all Latinas/os who attend community college (Crisp & Nora, 2010). Further, Goldrick-Rab, Carter, and Wagner (2007) argued that the literature on college transitions contained extensive theoretical and methodological gaps related to race, gender, and class.

Most Latina/o students begin their postsecondary education at a community college. Rivas et al. (2007) discovered that 75 of every 100 first-time Latina/o college students in California enroll in community college. Of the 75 students, about seven will transfer to public 4-year universities in California. Zalaquett (2006) found that Latina/o students have a desire to succeed in higher education, the same as their Asian and White peers, who tend to be greatly represented in postsecondary education. Likewise, López (2009) noted that almost 89% of Latina/o young adults understand that a college degree leads to success.

Latina/o parents also understand the importance of a college degree (Martinez, 2008). Several researchers reported that Latina/o parents have a desire for their children to attend college, but many do not speak English and have a limited understanding of the educational system (Downs et al., 2008; González, 2012; Valencia & Black, 2002; Zalaquett, 2006). Likewise, Kiyama (2010) emphasized that a lack of information does not mean that parents are disinterested or do not value education. Additionally, Latino parents are not knowledgeable about the admissions processes of higher education, nor about educational programs and financial aid. Parents are willing to provide vital assistance to their college-going children, such as emotional support, encouragement, and the convenience of living at home, which students report to be helpful to their educational resiliency (Cabrera & Padilla, 2004; Ceja, 2004).

Despite the strong desire of both students (Taggart & Crisp, 2011) and parents (González, 2012; Kiyama, 2010; Valencia & Black, 2002; Zalaquett, 2006) for Latina/o students to advance through higher education, few transfer, and many depart from the educational system without a degree (Rivas et al., 2007). Little is known about

Latinas/os who are pushed out of the transfer path and do not transition to 4-year institutions. Investigating experiences of Latina/o community college students who do not transfer is critical to learning how these students negotiate the community college experience and discerning why they do not transfer. Specifically, what institutional features deter Latinas/os from transferring to 4-year universities, and how do students respond to no longer being on the transfer path.

College Choice

About, 45% of undergraduates in the United States begin postsecondary education at community colleges (American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), 2014). Compared with other racial/ethnic groups, Latinas/os are the least likely to attend higher education. If Latinas/os do attend postsecondary education, they usually enroll in community college. In 2000, of those Latinas/os who enrolled in college, 20% started at a community college and only 15% began at 4-year universities, whereas 68% of White students enrolled in higher education and 28% attended community college immediately after high school. Of the White college students, 40% went directly to a 4-year college or university, significantly higher than Latina/o students (Kurlaender, 2006). Therefore, Latinas/os are more likely to attend community college than White or African American students (Kurlaender, 2006).

Kurlaender (2006) pointed to the beliefs of some rational choice and human capital theorists that choice is related to "tastes, abilities, and resources" (p. 8). These theorists put forth the idea that all racial/ethnic groups are able to achieve various levels of educational outcomes and further purported that everyone has an "equal opportunity" to advance (Kurlaender, 2006, p. 8). Deficit models such as the rational choice model

and human capital theory are used to explain the failures of students of color placing blame on the students, parents, and the communities where they reside (Kurlaender, 2006; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Many educational achievement studies have been framed using the rational choice model, which promotes the idea that Latinas/os and other ethnic groups have inferior academic abilities, low motivation, and limited desire for education (Bell, 1977; Monk-Turner, 1998; Turner, 1960). Rational choice and human capital theorists do not seem to acknowledge the iniquities in the U.S. educational system around race, gender, and class (Leonardo, 2013).

Whereas, CRT theorists recognize that racial oppression is historically pervasive in the U.S. society and public education structures (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Leonardo, 2013; Solórzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005; Tate, 1997). CRT scholars expose educational structural practices that impact college choice for students of color by giving voice to their schooling experiences (Duncan, 2002, 2005; Fernández, 2002; Pérez Huber, 2009; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Similarly, current literature confirms that Latino parents want their children to attend higher education (González, 2012; Kiyama, 2010; Valencia & Black, 2002; Zalaquett, 2006), and most Latina/o community college students have aspirations to transfer (Taggart & Crisp, 2011). The literature supports several factors that affect college choice including social class, educational structures, the information gap, and chain migration.

Social Class

Social class can influence college choice. McDonough (1997) claimed, "Class-based patterns of aspiration are a joint product of family and school influences" (p. 152). She studied high school students and how social class and high school guidance affected

students' college opportunities. McDonough found that wealthy students felt entitled to attend prestigious colleges based on their family's socioeconomic background and high school environments. Poorer students felt less ambitious about choosing prominent universities. Students' college plans were influenced by their family and community values and personal assessments of suitable postsecondary college settings. For instance, wealthier parents seemed to know how to approach the school; they obtained college choice information, and knew when and why it was important to access the material (McDonough, 1997). And, some parents were able to offer their children financial support and advice to assist with their college choice. College information seems to be kept within wealthier White communities in order to reproduce educated members and maintain political power (Tate, 1997; Yosso, 2005).

O'Connor (2009) studied the association amid socioeconomic status (SES) on Latina/o community college enrollment. O'Connor found that a higher SES did not influence Latina/o enrollment in a 4-year institution as it did with African American and White students. It seems that Latinas/os do not have the same access to information about 4-year institutions; therefore, they do not experience the same outcomes of SES and are less likely to transfer to a university. The author stated that Latinas/os from higher SES "have not been taking advantage of the educational opportunities available to them" (p. 139). If college information is not being shared, Latina/o students remain oppressed and subordinated (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Yosso, 2005).

Kurlaender (2006) examined four areas that may affect the rates of community college choice by race, including socioeconomic background, goal to attend college, primary and secondary academic foundation, and educational structural differences

related to the socioeconomic status of the community in which the school is located. Kurlaender found that even wealthy Latinas/os chose to attend community college rather than 4-year universities. Staying close to home to maintain family relationships is vital to individual students well being as they receive caring support. Therefore, postsecondary institutions can do more to attract Latina/o students by creating welcoming, caring, and validating environments (Rendón, 1994).

Educational Structure

Other researchers point to community college as a choice related to the educational structure that binds educational preparation with the socioeconomic and educational contexts (Collins, 1979; Hallinan, 1988) of the student's family. CRT suggests that people of color are often characterized as inferior based on the White middle class imposing standards of normality (Fernández, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Leonardo, 2013; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Tate, 1997). Consequently, students of color, specifically, Latinas/os are not offered rigorous educational curriculum nor encouraged to attend college because of their race and class status, and the effect is they are relegated to community college (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Duncan, 2005; Kurlaender, 2006).

Few Latina/o students participate in rigorous academic programs and are often undereducated during the primary and secondary schooling process (González et al., 2003; Martinez, 2012). Latinas/os often attend schools with limited college coursework and focus (Delgado Bernal 2002; Martinez, 2012). Further, the high school curriculum is not providing Latinas/os information about the college application process, financial aid, and educational programs that may meet their academic interests (Kurlaender, 2006).

The outcomes of this study further support that knowledge is being kept from Latina/o students, which results in keeping them undereducated and dependent on the dominant culture (Yosso, 2005) therefore limiting college choice (Kurlaender, 2006)).

González, Stoner, and Jovel (2003) examined Latina/o female students at community college who suffered institutional abuse due to an inadequate primary and secondary school curriculum. González et al. claimed that institutional reluctance by its staff and faculty to prepare students and institutional acts that create obstacles could also limit or increase the "perceived and/or actual opportunities for college" students (p. 146). These students were unjustly placed into English as a Second Language (ESL) programs because they spoke Spanish. The students endured adverse interactions with teachers and with counselors or counselors sometimes had no contact at all with them, experiences that affected their college choice.

Yet, the data suggested that the Latina students' academic capability and potential were never barriers to move into higher education. The students did well in community college and persisted when they transferred to 4-year universities. Even though these Latina students experienced institutional neglect and abuse, they used their personal agency to propel them through the educational pipeline (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Fernández, 2002). Most students received emotional support from their parents, accumulating limited but useful social capital. This data challenges the dominant ideology that suggests that Latino parents do not care about education (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Valencia & Black, 2002). Though, these students needed more support from the transfer program staff and other knowledgeable individuals on campus, the findings imply that students who endure "institutional neglect and abuse" during their K–

12 schooling process restricted their college choice upon graduation from high school (González et al., 2003, p. 153). The educational injustices imposed on Latinas/os during K-12 seemed to have had lasting effects for many.

Several investigators proposed that Latina/o students who had considerably high academic achievement in high school would probably attend community college more so than African Americans and Whites with comparable achievement (Kurklaender, 2006; Pérez & McDonough, 2008). For example, eighth-grade math results increased the likelihood that White and African American students would attend a 4-year college. However, eighth-grade math scores did not have a positive influence on Latinas/os choosing to attend 4-year institutions (Kurklaender, 2006). Other researchers argued that Latina/o student college choice may have been influenced by receiving college and planning information, including assistance with the application process from family members, friends, and high-school counselors (Flores, Horn, & Crisp, 2006; Pérez & McDonough, 2008). Kurlaender asserted that community college remains a practical choice for Latina/o students who are more likely to enroll in a community college than are White or African American students.

Information Gap

The college choice literature identified underrepresented students as having limited college information outside and inside educational institutions. Social capital refers to "property that middle- and upper-middle class families transmit to their offspring, which substitutes for or supplements the transmission of economic capital as a means of maintaining class status and privilege across generations" (McDonough, 1997, p. 8). These students do not have access to the knowledge that can be gained through

informal networks available to those with the advantage of social capital (Stanton Salazar, 1997). Students who attended elite schools had been developing social capital through their relationships with teachers and counselors during primary and secondary school (McDonough, 1997; Stanton-Salazar, 1997)

González, Stoner, and Jovel (2003) also suggested that the lack of social capital restricts college choice. A college–student mismatch could have negative effects on students in the long run. Flores et al. (2006) found that Latina/o students obtained college information from high-school contacts, family members, and peers. Pérez and McDonough (2008) discovered that Latina/o students were deciding which college to attend based on the experiences of others without reflecting on how they personally felt. Having social contacts at a particular college was important for Latinas/os. Needing acquaintances seemed to restrict college choice, as Latinas/os indicated that they did not want to be alone in a different state or town (Pérez & McDonough). Latina/o parents sometimes narrowed the choice to local universities to keep their children close to home (Pérez & McDonough), and though the effect of family could be limiting, it could also be of great value. (Fernández, 2002).

Families play a key role in the college choice process and they are a vital source of support for Latinas/os during their college experience. Families provide emotional support, assist with keeping costs down, and serve to connect students to individual people on campus (Pérez & McDonough, 2008). Family members serve as important resources to heighten social capital and encourage persistence. A study by Flores and Obasi (2005) found that family members were significant role models (78%) for high-school students, while teachers were the second most important source of role models

identified. Mentors were characterized as helpful with providing career guidance, encouragement, role modeling, and personal support. Family mentors served as important to assist Latinas/os with career planning—leading by example, availability, and college choice (Flores & Obasi, 2005).

Likewise, Ceja (2006) examined the college choice process and the role of Latina/o parents and siblings as social capital. The findings suggested that the most valuable source of help that Latina/o parents could offer their college-going child was emotional and moral support. Siblings, especially those who had attended higher education, were helpful in assisting students with college. Further, Latina/o students felt compelled to share their knowledge about the college choice process with their parents to increase parent knowledge. Parents would then be able to assist the younger children with knowledge gained from older siblings regarding college preparation and choice. Latina/o family members played the role of "protective agents" by passing down important information to their siblings and other relatives (Ceja, 2006, p. 101).

Downs et al. (2008) found that a 6-week "college knowledge program" was effective in training Latina/o parents about the higher education process (p. 227). Those Latina/o parents in turn provided other Latina/o parents with college information. Most of the parents wanted their children to attend college, but did not understand the college admissions process, financial aid, or career options. Students also reported not receiving information about college admissions, entrance exams, and financial aid. One hundred percent of the children of Latina/o parents who participated in the program stated that they would more than likely attend college. One hundred percent of the Latina/o parents who participated in the program increased enthusiasm about sharing their knowledge

about the college process to other parents. The results of the Downs et al. study illustrates how knowledge is readily shared because of the Latina/o cultural value of reciprocity and emphasizes the presence of opulent community cultural wealth that can expand college choice (Martinez, 2012; Yosso, 2005).

The college choice process also includes the Latina/o community since members provide support to one another, which can increase the number of underrepresented college-going students (Pérez & McDonough, 2008). Martinez (2012) discussed community cultural wealth—"means by which communities of color possess and utilize" various skills, abilities, and knowledge to resist domination—as influential in choosing college (p. 11). Martinez's study focused on how schools and nonrelated individuals impacted college choice for a group of South Texan, Mexican American high school seniors. Findings revealed that students used aspirational capital and personal agency to oppose negative stereotypes from the dominant culture, moving them toward their educational goals (Fernández, 2002; Martinez, 2012).

Pérez and McDonough (2008) suggested creating "friendship groups" that serve to educate community members with college admissions and financial aid information (p. 261). Martinez (2012) suggested that partnering with local community centers, churches, and community members who have attended a university could assist college choice knowledge for Latina/o high-school students. Martinez's recommendation acknowledged the presence of varied levels of Latina/o community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005). Educating and training the whole community can increase accurate college information and equip a larger number of Latinas/os with the knowledge necessary to make informed decisions about college. The bottom line is that the college choice process for Latinas/os

is a family and community affair and the transmission of knowledge is shared through its members (Martinez, 2012; Pérez & McDonough, 2008).

A study by Flores et al. (2006), illustrated the college information gap inside an educational institution. Latina/o students stated that school counselors often ignored them. Counselors had vital information about college choice that they did not share (Flores et al.; González et al., 2003). Counselor hoarding of knowledge resulted in the subordination of Latina/o students (Yosso, 2005). Structuring social capital can be strengthened through school-based programs, such as honors and the Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) programs. GATE engages and informs participants and has assisted minority students with building social capital via knowledge of and support with the college admissions process (González et al., 2003).

Person and Rosenbaum (2006) also discovered that there are differences in the information gap for Latinas/os at various colleges. Latina/o students were more likely to use campus resources when enrolled in colleges with a large Latina/o student body. The data did not explain what influences Latinas/os to obtain and use campus resources. Possibly, more networks can be developed in an ethnically diverse campus where relevant support services are emphasized. For instance, some institutions that enroll a significant number of Latinas/os may employ Latino staff to reach out to and inform students about campus services. Additionally, 15% of Latinas/os in the study were members of specialized organizations that supported their particular needs (Person & Rosenbaum, 2006). It appears that Latina/o students understood the need to move toward other Latinas/os affecting college choice.

Chain Migration

Chain migration is a relevant concept that can be applied to Latina/o student college choice. Sociologists have described chain migration as a process by which immigrant groups migrate from their homeland to a particular place (MacDonald & MacDonald, 1964). MacDonald and MacDonald defined chain migration theory as a "movement in which prospective migrants learn of opportunities, are provided with transportation, and have initial accommodation and employment arranged by means of primary social relationships with previous migrants" (p. 253).

Person and Rosenbaum (2006) applied this concept to study Latina/o college choice among community college students. Person and Rosenbaum suggested that knowing someone in a particular college, applying with a friend, and connecting with particular people once on campus might influence Latina/o student college choice. Pérez and McDonough (2008) found that the extent to which Latinas/os relied on relatives and community members was astounding. Students often networked with and gained support from community members whom they had not met prior to entering college. Person and Rosenbaum also noted that students who depended on family and friends to provide them with college information limited institutional choice. Though, many Latinas/os choose to remain near home because they do not want to live away from their families maintaining the cultural value of relationships (Martinez, 2012; Yosso, 2005).

Moreover, the findings suggested that these students enrolled in specific universities via input from family and friends were not engaged on campus and did not use college services. The students in the study seem to have needed institutional support and guidance to succeed (Person & Rosenbaum, 2006). The data revealed that the White

students had more campus resource information than Latinas/os. This finding could imply that Whites may keep knowledge to themselves to reproduce privilege and power (Bell, 1992; Yosso, 2005).

Community College Function

The community college system's function was originally established to include 4-year college transfer, vocational and technical education, and general education. In 1987, Assembly Bill (AB) 1725 expanded the CCC's function to include "developmental education, English as a Second Language, basic skills, noncredit adult education, community services, and economic development" (Community College League of California, 2013, p. 1). Further, open access is a unique function of community colleges when compared to other higher education institutions (Cardenas & Warren, 1991; Martinez & Fernández, 2004).

Scholars have emphasized that community colleges are the initial conduit in the educational pipeline for many minority students (Jain, Herrera, Bernal, & Solórzano, 2011; Taggart & Crisp, 2011). About 70% of all undergraduates are enrolled in community colleges and 60% are students of color (African American, Latino, and Native American). Cardenas and Warren (1991) purported that community colleges reflect the inhabitants they serve, which are more urban, young, and economically disadvantaged students of color.

Many Latinas/os enroll in community college as a bridge to 4-year universities. Latinas/os have different educational trajectories from other ethnic and racial groups. Because of lack of knowledge about higher education admissions, strong family values, and limited financial backing, Latinas/os make distinct educational choices (Pérez &

McDonough, 2008). Yet, Taggart, & Crisp (2011) noted in their study that 60% of the Latina/o community college students had aspirations to transfer to 4-year institutions.

Transfer

In 1901, when Joliet Junior College was established in the United States, transfer to 4-year universities was the function of community colleges, vocational and technical education, and general education (Community College League of California, 2013). The focus was on creating an upward direction after completing an associate of arts (AA) degree. Six decades later, the California Master Plan for Higher Education reestablished the responsibility of community colleges as preparing students to transfer to 4-year universities. Transfer continues to be a dominant focus of community colleges, but a recent emphasis on vocational and developmental education, English as a Second Language, economic development, and basic skills has surfaced over the past 25 years.

The community college transfer function has notably decreased over the past 2-1/2 decades. Nationally, about 20-25% of community college students transfer to senior colleges–universities (Melguizo, 2009; Wassmer, Moore, & Shulock, 2004). There has been a significant debate about the change in the transfer function of community colleges. Workforce development seems to be taking an important foothold, which may be related to the passing of AB 1725 and an increasing need for a highly trained labor force in the United States. (Handel, 2011; Wassmer et al., 2004).

In the past, policymakers and educational leaders have been troubled by the limited transfer rates (Handel, 2007). To support transfer students, 4-year universities started to allocate more funding as transfer students transition to their campuses. In California, 4-year institutions and community colleges developed a relationship to assist

transfer student transitions. In 1997, the UCs, CSUs and CCCs signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which put forth a commitment to establish a transfer bridge to support community college students as they moved into senior colleges (Handel, 2011; Jain et al., 2011). As a consequence of the MOU, the number of underrepresented groups is the highest it has ever been. According to Handel (2011), the educational outcomes of transfer students are the same as students who begin at the UC. A systemic change, such as the MOU expanded educational opportunities in California emphasizing that transfer is a valuable function that can propel students of color through the educational pipeline.

Windham (2001) highlighted data from the 2000 National Transfer Study that concluded that transfer is an important function of community colleges. In some states, such as Florida, there are policies in place that support a transfer function and cohort tracking. In Florida, 71% of students, including Whites and those from major ethnic groups (African American, Asian, and Latinas/os), transferred in 1999. More males than females transferred and the younger rather than older students transitioned to senior universities. Since 2001, Florida has tracked community college students and the state has the highest number of associate of arts graduates who transfer to 4-year universities. Florida's successful transfer rates may signal that transfer can be an effective function of community colleges (Windham, 2001).

Townsend (2001) investigated the need for a reexamination of the community college transfer function. He described transfer patterns of community college students as follows: (a) transfer to a 4-year school before completing the 2-year college transfer degree, (b) transferring with non-liberal arts courses or programs, (c) transferring in a "swirling" pattern (moving from campus to campus), (d) transferring high-school dual-

credit courses offered by a community college, and (e) transferring summer courses (Townsend & Wilson, 2006, pp. 2-3). Transfer behaviors vary depending on the financial and academic circumstances of students. Still, most Latinas/os do not transfer to 4-year universities.

Latinas/os and transfer. Most Latina/o students have risk factors that may be barriers to transfer. For instance, there is much literature that indicates that students who delay enrollment into higher education are less likely to transfer to a 4-year university (Nora & Crisp, 2012). Parental education levels also influenced achievement for developmental students (Crisp & Nora, 2010). Students who work tend to have poorer transfer outcomes. Additionally, the more a student works, the more likely she/he will be pushed from college (Nora & Crisp, 2012).

There are some academic programs that have been established to provide support to students of color, particularly Latina/o students. For instance, the community college Puente Project is very successful with advancing participation in higher education (Rendón, 2002). One reason for the increase in transfer rates is that the Puente staff provides supportive validating experiences in all areas of the learning community. Puente challenges the factors that cause the undereducation of Latina/o students and increases the success of degree attainment (Rendón, 2002), which could mean the attainment of further degrees. Chicanas/os are more apt to complete a doctorate degree using the community college as an entry into higher education (Rivas et al., 2007).

The increase in Latina/o matriculation and transfer to the CSUs suggests that CCCs are assisting Latinas/os with upward mobility, though, during the late 1990s, only 13% of Latinas/os who enrolled in community colleges transferred (Shulock & Moore,

2007). The literature proposes that many Latinas/os are not able to transfer because they lack transfer information and do not understand the requirements necessary to transition to a 4-year university (Chapa & Schink, 2006; Monroe, 2006).

In a study by Zell (2010), the data revealed that Latina/o community college students experienced "hardship and distress"; however, students persisted based on how they understood their experiences (p. 182). Zell found that Latina/o students who were able to recover from stress were also able to forward their educational goals, and that these students found community college to be useful with learning how to successfully manage challenges because their identity as college students, self-worth, and confidence were strengthened.

Likewise, Campa (2010) noted that Latinas/os were successful when they had a purpose beyond themselves and received cultural support from family members who also served as role models (Flores & Obasi, 2005). Families contributed to the "critical resilience" (Campa, 2010, p. 429) of these students, overcoming barriers and realizing educational goals. The findings suggested that Latina/o students who engaged in critical resilience did not "abandon or reject" (Campa, 2010, p. 451) their family traditions.

Similarly, Latina/o students were empowered to effectively move between their cultures and the dominant culture by conjointly linking cultures. Data revealed that Latina/o students with a strong drive connected to supporting their families, communities, and society, were compelled to attain a college degree (Zell, 2010). Latina/o students seemed to focus on creating social elevation for their families, which advanced critical resilience (Campa, 2010). Additionally, this data challenges the dominant ideology that Latina/o culture adversely impacts educational outcomes because Latinas/os gained

strength and inspiration from their cultures, which resulted in successful transfer (Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002)

Nora and Rendón (1990) examined whether community college students had a predisposition to transfer. Findings indicated that students who were better integrated in college academically and socially had greater predispositions to transfer. These students were also more committed to the college and their educational goals. Nora and Rendón did not find any differences between White and Latina/o students regarding a mild or strong predisposition to transfer. Therefore, it is important to recognize how students are integrating into college life and strengthen this skill in transfer programs, which may increase the likelihood that Latinas/os may transfer.

Vocational and Technical Education

There is an established argument about whether community colleges redirect students to vocational education (Melguizo, 2009). Community colleges have been suspected of "cooling out" and "diverting" students away from senior colleges (Clark, 1960; Roksa, 2006, p. 499). The literature supports the findings that a vocational focus in community colleges decreases transfer rates to 4-year institutions (Armstrong & Mellissions, 1994; Brint & Karabel, 1989; Cohen & Ignash, 1994).

The vocational track offers students limited job skills that can be applied immediately upon completion of a brief certification, a process that can offer benefits to local communities. The goal is to quickly build a workforce while keeping students and businesses content (Clark, 1960; Roksa & Calcagno, 2010). Thus, pushing students to low-wage jobs may mask the community college open-access plan and reinforce the vocational education function (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Clark, 1960).

Oakes (1983) studied the relationship between social stratification and vocational education. Findings suggested that there are numerous differences in the socialization of children from racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. Non-Whites were more likely than White students to be directed to vocational education at the onset of middle school. Programs with primarily ethnic students were more likely to focus on job skills for low-level positions, such as clerical and manual labor. Schools that enrolled primarily White students focused on general education, which developed skills helpful in everyday living (Oakes, 1983).

Additionally, non-White student courses were usually taught in a different format than courses for White students. For instance, students of color often participated in classes off campus. The coursework was focused on developing vocational skills. These students were engaged in on-the-job training, occupying extensive time (Oakes, 1983). Given their busy schedules, students of color would not have opportunities for more rigorous coursework. Collins (1979) suggested that some employers would prefer nonvocational students because of their belief that nonvocational students are more trainable. In fact, employers perceived vocational students as having failed academically (Oakes, 1983). Although, the Oakes study is 30 years old, vocational education courses continue to be filled with many students of colors, specifically Latinas/os, who generally have not had rigorous high school coursework (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2007).

Roksa (2006) found that students who attended community colleges with a vocational focus maintained academic progress when associate's degrees and transfer programs were available. Actually, these students went on to get associate's degrees, transfer to senior colleges, and earned bachelor's degrees. But, when community

colleges had a strong emphasis on vocational and certification programs, student degree attainment was obstructed. Roksa (2006) believes that community colleges may be falsely accused of deterring students from moving through the educational pipeline because practices are influenced by state policies and student characteristics.

In a study by Bremer et al. (2013), outcomes revealed a 56% graduation rate for vocational education students, contrary to previous findings. Generally, vocational education students had lower persistence and graduation rates. Students in vocational education who received grants and loans generally had higher GPAs and were more likely to persist. Those students who used a tutor moved forward. It was not understood why tutoring supported positive outcomes. It may have been the tutoring support or the relationship that was established with the tutor (Bremer et al., 2013). As well, since these students were receiving financial assistance, they may not have had to work or worked fewer hours and may have had more time to devote to homework.

Latinas/os and vocational education. The move to vocational education may have grave consequences for Latinas/os who attend community colleges as an entry into higher education because most, 60%, plan to transfer (Taggart & Crisp, 2011). These students presume they will take transfer courses and obtain the assistance necessary to move through the educational pipeline to degree completion (Rendón, 1993). Community colleges serve to support students who would not otherwise have the opportunity to attend college (Rendón, 1993). Yet, these are the very students who seem to be the least served (Rendón, Justiz, & Resta, 1988; Weis, 1985).

There are profound implications for Latina/o students, who may be diverted into vocational education, said Melguizo (2009). His study revealed that Latina/o students

who participated in transfer programs or received counseling effectively transferred at higher rates than the 1980s. However, in the 1990s, only 13% of Latina/o students who enrolled in community college transferred to 4-year universities (Melguizo, 2009; Shulock & Moore, 2007). Students who were engaged in counseling and introductory college courses seemed to transfer at higher rates. Melguizo warned that Latina/o students should not be urged to attend community college because the national transfer rates are at 20% to 25%, even in states that have strong articulation agreements. Latina/o transfer rates continue to be low and impacted by state and federal policies (Melguizo, 2009). Thus, vocational education limits Latina/o student educational opportunity and impacts their economic status (Melguizo, 2009; Oakes, 1983).

Developmental Education

The third function of community college, developmental education, was determined when community colleges were established. Developmental coursework was originally part of the curriculum provided to students (Carroll, Kersh, Sullivan, & Fincher, 2012; Cohen & Brawer, 2003). As the community college system spread nationwide, the National Association of Developmental Education (NADE) was formed in 1976. Developmental education is defined by NADE as "a field of practice and research within higher education which promotes the cognitive and affective growth of all postsecondary learners" (NADE, 2008). This definition was created to encourage the support and promotion of higher education to all students at a 2-year institution. Carroll et al. purported that developmental educators have and continue to maintain criteria for best practices and institutional priority.

Salas, Portes, D'Amico, and Rios-Aguilar (2011) argued that there is ambiguity among educators about what developmental education is. For example, the Education Commission of the States (ECS) an interstate organization created in the mid-1960s to strengthen state-level educational policy, described the undereducation of students, using terms such as "remediation, learning support, developmental education, and basic-skills training" (ECS, 2013). The ECS defines developmental education as "coursework offered at a postsecondary institution that is below college-level work" (ECS, 2013). This definition makes it clear that developmental coursework is below college standards, which is contrary to NADE's definition and creates uncertainty about developmental education.

There is much debate as to whether developmental education helps or hinders students. Critics feel that developmental education has been socially constructed (Salas et al., 2011). The debate includes the use of assessment tests, considered by some to be a significant obstacle for community college students (Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2011; Parker, 2012), while proponents such as NADE believe that students can achieve cognitive growth and transfer to 4-year institutions if they so choose (Carroll et al., 2012). However, choosing an academic path, particularly for students of color, can be influenced by educational policies and procedures leading them to developmental coursework.

Bremer et al. (2013) examined community college students enrolled in developmental reading, English, or writing (DREW) courses. Bremer et al. found that students who enrolled in DREW classes during their first semester persisted to the second semester. These students attended classes during their 2nd year, but did not advance to

the 3rd year. During the process of the study, occupational, older, and White students persisted to graduation and had higher cumulative grade point averages (Bremer et al., 2013).

Roksa, Jenkins, Jaggars, Zeidenberg, and Woo-Cho (2009) reported findings from a cohort of students in the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) who enrolled in lower levels of developmental coursework. About half of the students were enrolled in one developmental reading, writing, or math class. Most students in the study completed the first developmental course suggested to them, but many students did not enroll in additional developmental classes needed to progress to college-level coursework (Roksa et al., 2009). The data suggested that students who began in lower levels of developmental courses did not do as well as students in higher-level developmental classes or students enrolled in college-level coursework (Roksa et al., 2009).

A report by the National Center for Postsecondary Research (2012; NCPR) suggested that one-semester learning community programs such as the Kingsborough Program did not necessarily increase the persistence of students in developmental education courses. These programs can be more effective being combined with other services, such as academic advising, financial support, and ongoing motivation to attend to classwork. The report's authors suggested that any type of one-semester program is not likely to have a lasting impact on student educational trajectories.

Barnes and Piland (2010) studied learning communities in developmental English courses. Findings revealed that learning community involvement improved retention for Latina/o students enrolled in developmental writing courses, but not developmental English courses. Specifically, both males and females had higher than anticipated

retention rates. Students who graduated from high school had higher retention rates whether or not they participated in a learning community. The data suggests that learning community participation improves retention. Latina/o students experienced stronger retention outcomes when participating in learning communities (Barnes & Piland, 2010).

There has been a recent shift from offering any developmental coursework at 4-year institutions. Now, almost all-developmental coursework is offered at the 2-year university level. In 1999, the City University of New York began eliminating all remedial coursework and moved classes to the community college level (Bettinger & Long, 2005). Similarly, in California, the CSU and UC systems encourage transfer students to complete developmental education classes at community colleges. Other states such as Arizona, Florida, Montana, North Carolina, and Virginia have passed policies that do not allow 4-year public institutions to offer developmental coursework (Bettinger & Long, 2005).

Melguizo, Hagehorn, and Cypers (2008) noted that community college could be expensive for students who are placed in remedial courses. Educational costs for students with tenuous academic foundations are higher because they take developmental courses that, though they prepare students for upper-level work, do not transfer (Melguizo et al., 2008). And, about one-third of students that take developmental education classes have aspirations to obtain a college degree (National Center for Postsecondary Research, 2012).

CSU's Early Assessment Program (EAP) gives high schools clarity about the CSU standards and focuses the senior year as a time for college preparation. A study of EAP by Howell, Kurlaender, and Grodsky (2010) suggested that high school student

participation reduces the necessity for developmental coursework in college. The findings also indicated that participants' need for developmental education decreased by 6 percentage points for reading and 4 percentage points for mathematics (Howell et al., 2010). Those who oppose developmental education argue that taxpayers pay double, in high school and community college, to provide community college students with remedial coursework. A program such as EAP may reduce costs to taxpayers and increase the likelihood that high school graduates are prepared for college coursework (Levin & Calcagno, 2008, in Nora & Crisp, 2012).

Latinas/os and developmental education. Crisp and Nora (2010) argued that there is little research to support the conclusion that being enrolled in developmental education influenced Latina/o students' persistence. However, Latinas/os are overrepresented in developmental education classes (Bettinger & Long 2005; Grimes & David, 1999; Penny, White, & William, 1998), a concern given that they are underrepresented in higher education.

Gutiérrez, Morales, and Martinez (2009) examined the diverse learning styles of students from nondominant cultures. They noted that these students are often viewed from a deficit perspective questioning their cognitive abilities and intellectual possibilities. Gutiérrez et al. (2009) criticized the literature on literacy for employing "one method" (p. 237) to evaluate knowledge and success, which limits the recognition of diverse learning styles. A limited focus on learning styles has serious implication for students of color who are overrepresented in developmental education. CCCs might need to reassess their function as outlined throughout U.S. history or they may perpetuate functions that serve to restrict educational success.

Informal Functions

Tracking. Primary and secondary school educational tracking is persistent in the United States (Ansalone, 2010). Tracking also seems to create educational chasms that affect individuals socially. According to Moller and Stearns (2012), the National Education Longitudinal Study data exposed tracking underpinnings as having lasting income disparities. Research on tracking also suggests that tracking separates students within racial and class backgrounds (Ansalone, 2010; Moller & Stearns, 2012; Stearns, 2010).

Contrarily, Ansalone (2010) identified research by Kirkland (1971), who purported that tracking should be encouraged because it helps to aid the teaching process by maintaining academic consistency. If tracking is not a part of a school's structure, teachers may informally practice it in the classroom. Some teachers group students based on academic similarities (Ansalone, 2010). However, British researchers found that students in nontracking schools had higher levels of self-efficacy (Barker-Lunn, 1970; Ireson & Hallam, 1999).

Gamoran (1992) looked at high school tracking to identify whether it dissuades or encourages students to apply to and enroll in higher education. Gamoran found that high school students who perceived that they made their own academic choices were more driven to move to higher education. It seems that tracking outcomes are a result of the structure of a program. Programs that have flexibility are inclined to have better outcomes, including higher math scores. The findings indicated that involvement in academic tracking promoted educational achievement in many schools, but it did not increase math scores in all schools (Gamoran, 1992).

Stearns (2010) found that academic assessments leading to tracking seemed to be connected to a student's race, socioeconomic status, and gender. The data suggested that gender disproportionality is more significant than racial disproportionality. However, the study revealed that Latinas/os have the least gender income gap. Latina women acquired 91% of Latino men's wages when they received general secondary education (Stearns, 2010). Teachers, parents, and students should be made aware of wage gaps created via the public education system due to the tracking of high school youths (Moller & Stearns, 2012).

Moller and Stearns (2012) indicated that educational tracking is linked to students of color feeling, rejected and diminished by teachers in higher-level coursework, which discourages students from enrolling in rigorous coursework. Ansolane (2010) noted that the content and amount of education shifts based on the track level and socioeconomic status. For instance, curriculum is often less adequate for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds while superior for wealthy students. Classroom materials including technology are generally superior and readily available for higher-income students who are often placed in higher-track coursework (Ansolane, 2010).

Nevertheless, bright students of color may not want to participate in more demanding coursework because these students felt that their voice would not be heard—their lack of participation being a form of resistance (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). Some students of color reported that their input was not respected in advanced courses and they were often omitted from class discussions. Many students of color engaged in resistance by refusing to be subjected to being ignored by teachers as a form of personal agency (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001).

Cooling-out. Five decades ago, Burton Clark (1960) proposed a classic critique on community college tracking and diverting student's transfer goal. A sociologist and scholar, Clark (1960) claimed that higher education created disparities in the public education system. He noted that the U.S. democratic society urged its citizens to obtain an education to be able to increase one's income and move up the social ladder. Brint and Karabel (2006) also suggested that America was known as the "land of opportunity" and individuals would obtain "their just reward" (p. 63) if they were skilled and worked diligently. The prospects were abundant for educated Americans upon completion of an undergraduate degree (Brint & Karabel, 2006).

Clark (1960) established characteristics for the community college cooling-out function as follows:

1, "Alternative achievement": Paths look similar and students are encouraged to a better-suited alternative, which pushes them away from transfer.

2. "Gradual disengagement": Students are directed to meet with an academic advisor for guidance. Meetings with advisors are scheduled over time, which hinders advancement. Students become paralyzed and can attempt to move forward with ongoing obstacles or surrender to the alternative options.

3. "Objective denial": The student is faced with examining her/his circumstances. The student's academic challenges are central to the problem, which deflects accountability away from the college. The institution has provided access to higher education, but the student has not been successful, as evidenced by a marginal grade point average.

4. "Agents of consolation": Academic advisors and faculty redirect student educational goals to vocational training, which supports a job with marginal income and transfer aspirations are cooled-out.

5. "Avoidance of standards": Standards are unclear and low performance is met with an intense response, with a goal of keeping standards ambiguous while redirecting students away from transfer (pp. 574–575).

Clark (1960) noted that the cooling-out function was masked to deflect public inquiry. Clark claimed that students themselves assist with keeping the cooling-out function concealed. If students became conscious of the cooling-out purpose, they would have to manage the insult imposed on them. Therefore, students remain focused on the alternative path to avoid stress and humiliation (Clark, 1960).

Conversely, Townsend and Wilson (2006) argued that students with an associate in applied science (AAS) degree did not experience a cooling-out process. They experienced a "heating-up" (p. 195) or enthusiasm to advance their educational goals. The data suggested that students with AAS degrees shifted their educational goals toward receiving a bachelor's degree. More than 25% of students in the study enrolled in a 4-year institution (Townsend & Wilson, 2006).

Additionally, Pascarella, Hagedorn, Edison, Terenzini, and Nora (1998) looked at whether community college impacted students' plans to transfer to a 4-year university to earn a degree. They sought to examine Clark's "cooling-out" premise that community colleges diverted students from educational advancement to senior colleges. Their findings suggested that 20% to 31% of students who planned to earn a bachelor's degree were more likely to lower their expectations as they completed 2 years of college. Those

students who planned to earn a master's degree, doctorate, or professional degree had not changed their plans at a 2-year college. Pascarella et al. (1998) concluded that enrolling in a community college might reduce educational plans developed in high school to earn a bachelor's degree. Findings further suggested that the "social-psychological" (p. 183) impact that community colleges had on students might encourage students to alter their educational goals. Therefore, the cool-out function that Clark purported might be mistaken for a process of clarifying one's college plans (Pascarella et al., 1998).

Democratization. The fundamental charge of American community colleges was to "democratize" higher education (Brint & Karabel, 2006, p. 67) by opening doors to a free 2-year college education. Easy access education encouraged enrollment of those who could not otherwise afford to attend higher education. This practice also created a highly stratified educational system (Brint & Karabel, 2006). Wealthy students could attend elite universities while working-class students would attend community colleges. The quality of education was structured based on one's socioeconomic class (Brint & Karabel, 2006; Clark, 1960; McDonough, 1997).

Brint and Karabel (2006) discussed the conflict between democratization and the existence of the American class structure. American political view insisted that equal access to higher education was missing and the common people needed to be educated or they would rebel.

However, there were not enough high-level positions to fill. There were actually more vocational jobs in which to place workers. Therefore, educational administrators had to vocationalize their 2-year colleges to shift educational and career objectives. This had to be done subtly in order to keep the people silent (Brint & Karabel, 2006). The

masses continued to resist vocationalization. But, the American Association of Junior Colleges was not deterred from its goal of maintaining vocational education (Brint & Karabel, 2006). CRT scholars argue that historically, educational leaders have maintained a system that favors Whites using fuzzy standards that actually create barriers for students of color (Bell, 1977; Jain et al., 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Leonardo, 2013; Tate, 1976).

Barriers to Transfer

Barriers to transfer are important to identify because most community college students have aspirations to earn a bachelor's degree (Ornelas, 2005; Ornelas & Solórzano, 2004; Pérez Huber et al., 2006). Zamani (2001) addressed barriers affecting community college transfer including limited financial aid, academic underpreparation, and a lack of a supportive campus culture and climate. Other scholars suggested that assessment tests, a lack of counseling support and faculty mentors, inaccurate transfer information, and long work hours, adversely impact transfer (Alexander, Garcia, Gonzalez, Grimes, & O'Brien, 2007). Additionally, community college students commute to campus and often have family responsibilities (Pérez Huber et al., 2006). The literature suggests that students who begin higher education at community colleges—predominantly Latinas/os and African Americans—are not as likely to transfer or attain a baccalaureate degree due to the stated barriers (Alexander et al., 2007; Campa, 2010; Martinez, 2012; Pérez Huber et al., 2006; Zamani, 2001). Latina/o student's needs are often overlooked, which can adversely affect their transfer process. Additionally, responsibilities such as family, work, and school, along with possible language and cultural issues, require consideration from the university. The low transfer rates of

Latina/o students indicate that community colleges are not providing them with sufficient readiness and support to transfer to 4-year universities (Pérez Huber et al., 2006).

Financial Aid

Recent state and federal policies have shifted the responsibility of college costs to students and their families. For instance, there has been a decrease in grant dollars offered, and an increase in loans required for students to remain enrolled in college (Zamani, 2001). Many students from low socioeconomic families are in need of financial assistance (Alexander et al., 2007). They are placed in a dilemma of whether to accept loans to cover the increasing cost of tuition, fees, and textbooks. Glenn (2004) found that lower-income students are sometimes deterred from college due to anxiety created by high fees. Thus, a growing number of students choose to leave college without a degree to fill positions that supply "on-the-job training" (Mullin, 2010, p. 156).

Mullin (2010) examined the financial earnings of community college students who left—"leavers" (p. 155)—to work. Many were African American and Latina/o students who were less prepared for college. Those students who remained either completed an A.A. or A.S. degree or transferred to a 4-year college. The leavers earned as much or more than students who obtained an A.A. or A.S. degree. However, leavers earned significantly less than those students who earned a baccalaureate degree. It appears that the undereducation of African Americans and Latinas/os results in a limited financial forecast.

In a case study by Ornelas and Solórzano (2004), findings revealed that Latina/o students had many misconceptions about the costs of education in a 4-year institution. Students also did not know how to access accurate information and did not have adequate

knowledge about how to apply for financial aid. Becerra (2010) found that Latina/o students identified the cost of college as a significant factor keeping them from applying to a 4-year university. Other literature reported that adult Latinas/os stated they might have attended college if they had knowledge about financial aid (Becerra, 2010; Marquez, 2006; Zarate & Pachon, 2006). If Latina/o students were aware of the availability of financial aid, their anxiety could have been relieved and they might have been more likely to enroll in 4-year institutions (Glenn, 2004).

Academic Underpreparation

There are a disproportionate number of children from low socioeconomic backgrounds that receive an inadequate public education (Alexander et al., 2007). Low socioeconomic status is a key indicator of poor academic preparation, resulting in the likelihood that these students will neither apply to nor attend college (McDonough, 1997; Titus, 2006). Many students from low-income families are discouraged from attending college as early as middle school (Cabrera, Burkum, & La Nasa, 2003). These children are often students of color (African American, Latina/o, and Native American). Latinas/os are the largest racial population in the country, yet are provided the least educational resources (Rios-Aguilar & Kiyama, 2012). Latinas/os are more likely to obtain vocational education in community colleges rather than pursue academic preparation for transfer (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2007).

The emphasis to push Latinas/os to vocational education maintains their status as the largest undereducated ethnic group in the United States. The cause of low Latina/o academic attainment in higher education is often identified in the literature using deficit models that focus on low parent and student educational aspirations (Behnke et al., 2004),

parental limited English proficiency (McLaughlin et al., 2002; Ortiz, Valerio, & López, 2012), and ethnic generational status, immigrant first-generation, child of immigrant second-generation (Ortiz et al., 2012). Conversely, Latinas/os are subjected to inadequate primary and secondary schooling that does not prepare them for college coursework (Bell, 1977; Leonardo, 2013; Perez Huber et al., 2006; Tate, 1997).

Campus Climate and Culture

The culture—"underlying values, beliefs, and meaning" (Peterson & Spencer, 1990; p. 3)—as rooted in an organization's philosophy and espoused by its members and the climate, an organization's common perceptions and attitudes that construct the atmosphere, (Peterson & Spenser) of an educational institution can have supportive or adverse influences on a student's educational outcomes. Latina/o students often have to navigate an unreceptive campus climate (Arbona & Nora, 2007; Clark, 1960).

In a study by Wassmer, Moore, and Shulock (2004), institutional data were used from 108 California community colleges to clarify whether there is a relationship between race–ethnicity and transfer rates. Findings identified institutional culture, student, and community impacts on transfer rates. Community college faculty, staff, and administrators tend to have particularly unfavorable perceptions and beliefs about their ethnic student body, which impacts transfer rates (Wassmer et al., 2004). Community colleges with the highest enrollment of Latina/o students had the lowest transfer rates.

A case study by Ornelas and Solórzano (2004) examined the transfer environment of a community college with high transfer rates. The study found that Latina/o students identified encouraging or discouraging transfer supports such as their parents and personal motivation that propelled them forward. The students also identified a lack of

an organizational commitment to student transfer and a lack of transfer information provided to them. Ornelas and Solórzano also reported on the transfer culture and identified necessary components to improve student achievement. The components included the inclusion of providing fundamental transfer information, mandated student meetings with a counselor to create a transfer plan, the development of required classes that provide accurate transfer information, the creation of strategies to distribute transfer information, and a bridge between high school and community college. The authors further suggested that Latina/o students be encouraged to take transferable coursework, and develop community outreach strategies to engage the Latina/o community to provide transfer information (Ornelas & Solórzano, 2004). Other findings suggested that Latina/o students are overcome with managing school and nonacademic responsibilities. However, Latinas/os have high aspirations of transferring to 4-year universities (Ornelas, 2002; Ornelas & Solórzano, 2004; Peréz Huber et al., 2006). Research indicates that a strong transfer culture, and an institutionalized commitment to support students who have a desire to transfer, can increase transfer rates (Jain et al., 2011; Ornelas, 2002; Peréz Huber et al., 2006).

Assessment Tests

Some scholars believe that one of the most significant barriers for community college students is that about 50% test into developmental mathematic, English, or reading coursework, which causes them to have to enroll in extra classes (Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2011; Parker, 2012). This places developmental education students behind their peers academically. A research summary by the Community College Research Center (CCRC; 2013) indicated that more than half (60%) of all current high-

school graduates in the United States who enter community college lack academic skills to move them through the educational pipeline. The literature indicates that women, older students, and first-generation students are more likely to test into remedial coursework (Chen & Carroll, 2005; Nora & Crisp, 2012).

Assessment tests such as ACCUPLACER or COMPASS, (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010; Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2011) serve the purpose of placing students into classes that assist with building college-level academic abilities, though community college placement standards and requirements differ between campuses. There is minimal evidence that class assignments made as a result of the test scores enhance academic outcomes (Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2011). The literature identified both desirable and undesirable consequences for students enrolled in developmental education.

Desirable outcomes. A study by Bettinger and Long (2005) examined students with similar characteristics who were enrolled in remedial classes or enrolled in college-level coursework. The findings suggested that there did not seem to be adverse outcomes for students taking remedial courses. It appeared that developmental mathematic classes improved certain students' grades (Bettinger & Long, 2005). Results suggested that remediation is helpful to those students who completed all their developmental coursework.

Research conducted by Cho and Karp (2013) studied the effects of student success courses for community college students enrolled in developmental education classes. Success courses provided students with information to assist them with gaining knowledge about institutional resources, academic and career planning, study techniques, money management, and personal development. The outcomes revealed favorable

associations between 1st-year enrollment in student success courses and persistence to the 2nd year. Students enrolled in lower-level mathematic courses experienced academic achievement in the form of earning course credits when enrolled in a student success course, whereas students enrolled in higher-level mathematics courses earned credits and transitioned to the 2nd year (Cho & Karp, 2013).

Another study investigating students taking developmental courses examined the relationship between role models and self-direction (Di Tommaso, 2011). The conclusions suggested that students who identified having a role-model association such as a parent, coach, professor, or sibling were more likely to have higher levels of self-awareness and confidence. These students were also more self-directed and were active in their learning and reported having rich experiences as a result of their role-model associations (Di Tommaso, 2011).

Undesirable outcomes. Even though findings such as role models increased the likelihood of favorable outcomes, the developmental education literature suggested that favorable outcomes are limited. Students enrolled in developmental education who did not describe having a role-model affiliation tended to place responsibility for poor academic progress on external influences, such as family members and teachers. These students stated that their parents or siblings forced them to enroll in community college. A few respondents credited others for being responsible for their participation in college and were likely to be passive learners. These students tended to fault their professors for their academic outcomes, whether favorable or not. Students felt that instructors needed to provide clearer feedback about their academic strengths and shortcomings (Di Tommaso, 2011).

Assessment tests may not accurately evaluate student's academic abilities as well as serve as a gatekeeping mechanism (Nora & Crisp, 2012). Course placements can result in misguided students assigned to classes that do not enhance academic skills. Because students are required to take developmental education classes to advance into college-level courses (Parker, 2012), assessment tests may redefine the community college open-access policy (Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2011).

Lack of Counselor Support

Counselors are key to disseminating academic knowledge to students. Their role is vital for students to obtain transfer information, preparation, and support. Poor experiences with counselors often begin in primary school. Martinez (2003) found that counselors and teachers had preconceived deficit ideas about Latina/o students, which resulted in limited support and guidance with college information. The literature also identified college counselors as often unwelcoming and sharing minimal or no academic information including support through the transfer process (Brint &Karabel, 1989; Ornelas, 2002; Pérez Huber et al., 2006).

In a report by Rivas et al. (2007), they identified "transfer institutional neglect" (p. 9) or failure of community college to provide transfer information and the receiving 4-year institutions to provide necessary services such as recruitment, outreach, and retention services to transfer students. The authors suggested that counselors should be trained to provide targeted services to first-generation college students. A case study by Ornelas and Solórzano (2004), found that the counselors at Esperanza Community College were pivotal in providing Latina/o students with transfer information. Though,

many Latina/o students reported also receiving transfer information from friends, family members, and university catalogs.

Lack of Faculty Mentors

The literature supports the benefits of Latina/o students' mentor relationships; however, a barrier that impacts many community college students' opportunity for mentor relationships is that they commute to and from campus and may not be as integrated into college life. An additional barrier specific to Latinas/os is the limited amount of Latina/o faculty that could potentially serve as mentors (Alexander et al., 2007). Also, Latinas/os are often part-time students who work long hours, and have family responsibilities, limiting their time on campus and engagement in activities (Alexander et al., 2007; Pérez Huber et al., 2006).

Nevertheless, mentoring has been identified as helpful to the college persistence of Latina/o students (Bordes-Edgar et al., 2011) and strongly linked to academic attainment (Arellano & Padilla, 1996; Ceballo, 2004; Gándara, 1995; Torres, 2006; Zalaquett & López, 2006). Students described their mentoring experiences as nurturing, and included advising and modeling (Zalaquette & López, 2006), which increased their social networks. Mentors assisted students by affirming their college experiences and provided the enthusiasm necessary for success (Torres, 2006).

Barnett (2011) found that faculty interactions with students, including non-Latina/o students, encouraged validating experiences that created integration and influenced their intent to persist. Latinas/os who perceived that they received more mentoring graduated from college more often. They also identified mentor relationships as powerful support to their educational attainment (Zalaquett & López, 2006). Ponjuan

(2011) maintained that Latina/o faculty seemed to have a direct impact on student learning outcomes. Latina/o faculty also served as informal mentors and socialized students who were traditionally more likely to leave these programs without a degree (González, 2006). Latina/o student engagement with Latina/o faculty may have increased their interest in graduate school (Ponjuan, 2011).

Inaccurate Transfer Information

Many students enroll in community college with the expectation that they will receive the academic information they need to move through their educational goals (Martinez, 2003; Réndon, 1994). What many low-income students actually received was limited services that did not assist them with completing coursework and preparation to transfer. In their study, Ornelas and Solórzano (2004) noted an "uneven commitment" (p. 239) from counselors, which suggested that students might experience inaccurate information resulting in a confusing transfer process.

In an ethnographic case study, Monroe (2006) examined the departure of nontraditional community college transfer students (e.g., transfer students, older adults, commuters, part-time students, and minorities) from a 4-year institution. The findings indicated that 2-year institutions are not providing the needed information to support the transition of nontraditional students to 4-year universities. One of the participants felt that correct and timely transfer information was not provided, resulting in a mismatch with the university, which influenced her decision to leave college (Monroe, 2006). Jain et al. (2011) indicated the success of the transfer process is the responsibility of both the community colleges or sending campuses and 4-year universities or receiving campuses.

Long Work Hours

Many community college students often work full-time and attend classes on a part-time basis (Alexander et al., 2007). Students are also balancing long work hours and personal responsibilities, such as childcare and managing a household (Nora & Crisp, 2012; Ornelas & Solórzano, 2004). The multiple tasks that students juggle often result in departing from higher education without a degree (Nora & Crisp, 2012).

Research findings suggest that employment impacts transfer and educational outcomes (Nora & Crisp, 2012; Ornelas & Solórzano, 2004). Mullin (2010) investigated the work activities of community college student "leavers" inside a 6-year period of college attendance as compared with student "completers," who earned certifications or degrees (p. 155). Findings indicated that completers earned more than leavers, who were overwhelmingly African American and Latina/o students working in the restaurant industry. The median income for completers surpassed leavers 5 years after high school graduation, which would have been about the time when leavers would have completed a bachelor's degree (Mullin, 2010). Work has an impact on academic success and other responsibilities such as family.

Family Responsibilities

Many Latina/o students are the first in their family to attend higher education (Ornelas & Solórzano, 2004). The unfamiliarity of academic responsibilities can pose a challenge given the cultural value of family relationships. Managing family responsibilities can serve as a barrier for a successful transfer for Latina/o students (Pérez Huber et al., 2006). Family responsibilities can result in specific expectations for students such as caring for family members and household tasks. Becerra (2010)

students choose to live with family rather than transfer to college. Still, Ornelas and Solórzano (2004) noted in their investigation of Latinas/os community college students that they were motivated by the realization that they could better assist their family with a college degree. Some students stated that being role models for younger siblings or their own children inspired them to attend college. Considering Latina/o students in the context of their family may encourage community college practices that better serve their academic needs.

Other Barriers Affecting Latina/o Students

Whether transfer barriers are real or perceived, perceptions have a significant impact on outcomes. A study by Becerra (2010) found that later-generation Latina/o students who were fluent in English, had higher socioeconomic status, and had stronger academic attainment were more likely to perceive more barriers to matriculation and graduation. These students may have more contact with the dominant culture due to their use of English; therefore, they may experience more discriminatory interactions. Third-generation Latinas/os were more likely to perceive that college was not necessary to be successful.

Alexander et al. (2007) identified barriers to transfer from the perspective of Latina/o immigrant students. Alexander et al. used ethnography to observe and interview Latina/o participants enrolled in a Latina/o culture class. The barriers students identified were: (a) limited knowledge and familiarity with higher education; (b) lack of college preparation; (c) limited English language competency; (d) limited involvement in transfer and academic programs; (e) limited finances to pay for college; (f) concerns about cultural and social differences; (g) concerns about failing; (h) feelings of being

unwelcome; (i) lack of connection with the curriculum and personal life experiences; (j) cultural traditions and gender expectations that discourage transfer; and (k) being undocumented and therefore not eligible for financial aid (pp. 178-181). Although the respondents in these studies noted these barriers to transfer, Latinas/os are not homogeneous. There are some Latina/o students who are bilingual and fluent English speakers and some who are monolingual English-speaking.

Additionally, it is imperative that Latina/o parents be knowledgeable about the higher education process, including financial aid and campus support services. Understanding institutional resources can assist parents and students with minimizing their fears and connecting them to the educational institution. It is important to provide information to both parents and students in their primary language so that information shared is completely comprehensible.

Alexander et al. (2007) also suggested that students be provided with more individualized attention to explain the transfer process and clarify student questions. Finally, it is important for academic advisors to maintain ongoing contact with Latina/o students to monitor their coursework and assist them with understanding the transfer requirements and policies.

Conclusion

College choice seems to be influenced by academic information such as the admissions process, academic programs, and financial aid, which most Latina/o students do not receive (Crisp & Nora, 2010). The literature also points to race and social class as narrowing college choice (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2007; Kurlaender, 2006). Additionally, many Latina/o students are not offered a rigorous academic foundation, and limited

financial assistance, and begin higher education in community college. These students often test into remedial coursework and are frequently driven to vocational education. Latina/o students may obtain certification and begin work in low-wage jobs replicating social class and limiting educational outcomes (Bell, 1977; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Tate; 1997). Although, most Latina/o community college students have aspirations to transfer to 4-year universities, most do not and leave college without a degree. The literature points to various institutional barriers and some personal barriers that may push them from the transfer path (Rivas et al., 2007; Zalaquette, 2006).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This qualitative study used open-ended, semistructured interview questions applying a biographical analysis to the experiences of Latina/o community college students who had been pushed out of the transfer path at three CCC campuses. Data collection included 14 participant interviews and a demographic survey completed by each respondent. Participants were selected from various majors and represented four different ethnic subgroups within the Latina/o racial group. Participants were those who self-identified that they had aspirations to transfer upon community college enrollment. Participants engaged in transfer behaviors such as involvement in a college preparation program like the Extended Opportunity Program and Services (EOPS) or were attempting to complete 10 or more transferable units (Adelman, 2005). This study examined structural barriers that pushed out Latinas/os from the transfer path and gave voice to their experiences via the use of counterstorytelling as a conceptual tool (Fernández, 2002).

Most studies that have examined community college students used quantitative methods that have been focused on the experiences of community college transfer students who had transitioned successfully to 4-year institutions (Bensimon & Dowd, 2009; Freeman, Conley, & Brooks, 2006). Few qualitative studies have been completed

on successful transfers but a small number of investigations focused on those students who did not transfer.

Some of the findings are framed using deficit thinking to explain why Latinas/os do not transfer (Valencia, 2010; Valencia & Black, 2002). Whereas, minimal attention has been placed on students, particularly Latina/o students, telling their stories about being pushed out of the transfer path and not transferring from community colleges to 4-year universities. Before the methodological approach is explained, it is important to clarify my positionality.

Positionality

While in high school, I understood the need for a college degree to further my educational goals, which were influenced by my parent's community involvement. I had a thirst for knowledge and enjoyed learning, particularly through reading. As a high-school student, I was driven to learn and obtained solid grades, but I was not encouraged to seek higher education. On the contrary, my high school counselor encouraged me to take business courses. I was enrolled in classes such as office machines and typing and thus, became a proficient typist. I was neither offered nor aware of college preparation coursework or engaged in a postsecondary planning program.

Upon graduating from high school, I applied to and was accepted by California State University, Long Beach (CSULB). I chose not to attend CSULB because I sensed that I did not have the academic foundation needed to be successful at a 4-year institution. Instead, I attended a local community college, with the goal of transferring, in the same manner as many Latinas/os who begin higher education (Crisp & Nora, 2010). As I began community college, I had no idea what I needed to do and what would be

required of me. I gravitated to what was familiar and necessary, a business class, along with remedial math and English courses. The educational trajectories of many Latina/o community college students are similar to mine. Once enrolled in classes, I had limited knowledge about the academic process and fumbled as I moved through the pipeline with marginal support from outside or inside the institution (Ornelas & Solórzano, 2004; Rendón & Valadez, 1993).

Many Latina/o students, like me, have other responsibilities, such as work and family (Pérez Huber et al., 2006). While in community college, I worked part-time as an office clerk at a local company. However, after strengthening my math and writing skills, I became disinterested in business courses and focused on general education classes. I enjoyed children, so I enrolled in a child development class, which I found to be rewarding. As a result, I eventually changed my major to child development.

Most community college students, particularly Latinas/os, will take 4-5 years to transfer (Melguizo, 2009). As I neared my 6th year in community college, I met with an academic counselor, who was an impressive Latina woman. While I sat with the counselor and she reviewed my transcripts, I explained my transfer goal. She then stated, "You need to transfer or you're gonna stay here forever." Her words occupied my thoughts for several weeks.

Similar to numerous Latina/o students, I had no understanding of the transfer process, so I scheduled a meeting with an academic counselor who had transfer knowledge (Chapa & Schink, 2006; Monroe, 2006). During the meeting, I explained to the tall White male counselor that I wanted to transfer to the UC system. He stated that I would be better off transferring to a CSU, where I would receive a "practical education."

He explained that his son had graduated from the UC system and was not employable. He urged me to attend a CSU and did not offer any information about the UC system transfer process. I left that meeting discouraged and frustrated, feeling misunderstood. However, my brother insisted that I apply to the UC system, which I did and thrived as I moved through my undergraduate program.

Learning about similar educational experiences faced by other Latina/o college students fueled my research interest in understanding former transfer students' educational experiences as my dissertation topic. As a class assignment I interviewed three Latinas/os who had graduate degrees. All of them stated that they did not receive support as they moved through the educational pipeline. I also conducted three pilot interviews with current and former Latina/o community college students. All three individuals stated that they did not receive information about the transfer process from the institution and were left to navigate the community college system on their own.

Upon completion of an associate of art degree in business, one individual stated that she did not know how to pursue a 4-year degree. She became employed and stated she would not return to college. Further, I have had various informal discussions with Latina/o community college students who have specified that they have received little or no information about the educational process from their institutions (Monroe, 2006). Having had experiences akin to these Latina/o students' poses an opportunity to challenge the deficit literature and encourage former transfer students to tell their stories (Bell, 1985; Delgado, 1989; Fernández, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Therefore, the goal of this research study was to give voice to Latina/o students who have been on the transfer path but do not transfer, which represents the majority

attending community college (Nuñez & Crisp, 2012). Poignantly, 30 years ago, I was almost pushed out of the transfer path, which may be the experience of some Latina/o community college students today (Orfield et al., 2004). Hence, it is essential to explore Latina/o students' educational experiences to better understand their perspectives about the institutional barriers they may face and what factors may be helpful in advancing them as they move through their academic trajectories and reach their educational goals.

This investigation identified the various differences within the Latina/o racial group, such as language, ethnic identity, and immigrant generational status. Further, this study recognized diversity in Latina/o gender, subgroup, and socio-economic status and examined their intersections with race and racism (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001) in the context of community college.

Methods

The methods will take a CRT methodological approach using an existing CRT method of counterstorytelling, which gives voice to people of color who do not have opportunities to tell their stories and challenge the dominant discourse. Many forms of CRT methodology, such as critical race *ethnography*[2] critical race *testimonio*[3], critical race *spatial analysis*[4], and critical race counterstorytelling (Bell, 1985; Delgado, 1989;

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[2] A cultural study of communities of color to give them voice and challenge the "normative" or "commonsense" (Duncan, 2002; 2005, p. 94) discourse used by the dominant narrative.

[3] Verbal descriptions of people of color who expose racial, class, gender, and nativist inequality to heal, encourage, and promote change (Pérez Huber, 2009).

[4] Linking the spatial aspects of lived experiences with classroom curriculum and activities to uncover unequal schooling practices for people of color (Pacheco & Velez, 2009).

Crenshaw, 1988; Fernández, 2002; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2006) have been used to challenge the dominant ideology that places blame on students of color for their poor educational outcomes. CRT methodology is a tool used to analyze racial inequality through the normalization of racism in American society, specifically, in the public education system (Duncan, 2005). Counterstorytelling not only challenges the dominant narrative, stories told can also stimulate an emancipatory and transformative experience (Delgado, 1989; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

This study used a CRT framework that posits that racial discrimination is profoundly embedded in U.S. history, and that this has created stratified, race-based social, economic, and educational systems that continue to be perpetuated (Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT is grounded in five tenets: (a) race and racism are the center of analysis; (b) dominant ideology is challenged by exposing deficit discourse and research models; (c) social justice research that leads to the removal of racism, sexism, and classism, and empowers people of color; (d) experiential knowledge of people of color is central to the research methodology and is viewed as essential to analyzing and understanding racial subordination; (e) examination of race and racism in historic and current contexts using interdisciplinary knowledge and methods (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Given the tenets of CRT—such as challenging the dominant ideology, and applying asset-based and interdisciplinary perspectives—this study used CRT (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), as a qualitative approach, to guide the data collection. A qualitative perspective leads to an understanding of the intersection of race,

class, and gender that facilitate the community college pathway. Qualitative interviews provided an extraordinary opportunity to enhance awareness of Latina/o students' educational experiences (Ortiz, 2003) in being pushed out of the transfer path. Since these students have had minimal opportunity to tell their personal stories, it is important to apply qualitative interviews so that participants could have the freedom to express themselves in an unstructured space (Fernández, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Counterstorytelling was used to expose realities that were grounded in the wisdom and experiences of participants (Delgado, 1989; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Counterstsorytelling was first introduced by legal scholars such as Derrick Bell (1985), Kimberlé Crenshaw (1995), and Richard Delgado, (1989), who confronted racial discrimination in law by using composite stories of people of color. In this study, counterstorytelling was used as a conceptual tool to give voice to the participants' personal stories and confront the dominant ideology. Counterstories can encourage healing and empowerment of people of color (Delgado, 1989). Counterstorytelling challenges research analysis from the dominant ideology that is often framed using deficit models (Fernández, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Counterstorytelling can also expose racist and unjust pedagogy and raise the individual and collective consciousness of Latinas/os. Participant awareness of oppressive educational practices may also inspire social movement (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Research Questions

The following research questions served to guide the data collection and analysis and bring voice to Latina/o community college transfer students' experiences:

1. What are the critical points where Latina/o community college students are pushed out of the transfer path?

2. How do Latina/o community college students respond to no longer being on the transfer path?

3. How do the intersections of race, class, and gender mediate the community college pathway experience?

Sites

The sites where the research data was collected were 2-year public community colleges that will be referred to using the pseudonyms Cove Community College, Ocean Community College, and Sky View Community College located in the metropolitan Los Angeles County area. The three community colleges offered similar students services and have a majority Latina/o student enrollment.

Cove Community College. Cove was located in the southern area of Los Angeles County. The college was established in 1947 and was strategically placed to serve the surrounding communities. Since the college's inception, its foundation has been firmly established by five presidents who have each remained in office for more than 2 decades. Each president has a solid commitment to excellence. The current president has led the college to a place of record growth and development[5].

Each semester, the college enrolled more than 25,000 diverse students between the main campus and several satellite locations. In the fall of 2012, the student racial composition was 45% Latino, 17% African American, 16% Asian, 16% White, 4% of

[5] All of the information was retrieved from the real community college website but because of the Institutional Review Board's (IRB) requirement for anonymity, I do not provide a citation for this information.

two or more races, 2.0% unknown, and less than 1% American Indian. The campus served primarily part-time students (69%); full-time students represented 31% of the student body. Most learners were continuing students (63%) enrolled in fewer than 6 units (30%). Approximately 40% of students were between the ages of 20-24 and 48% of enrolled students planned to transfer to 4-year universities.

A review of the faculty college website pages revealed limited ethnic diversity. There appears to be a White majority with a limited number of Asian colleagues. A limited ethnic minority faculty devalues the colleges' culture of acceptance and inclusion in the faculty context. Barnett (2011) reported that faculty validation (student value, caring instruction, appreciation for diversity, and mentoring) encouraged community college persistence. Further, the literature reveals that Latina/o faculty has positive influences on the learning outcomes of Latina/o students (Denson & Chang, 2009; Ponjuan, 2011). This college may not be fulfilling the needs of its majority Latina/o student body.

Ocean Community College. Located in the southern part of Los Angeles County, Ocean was established in 1949 with a technical program emphasis. Although transfer was a focus, Ocean offered several occupational training programs such as business and computer technology (California Community College Chancellor's Office, 2010).

Ocean enrolled about 9,000 diverse students each semester. Latinas/os represent 45% of the student body, which is the largest ethnic group on campus. African American and American Indian students each make up 14% of the student population while White students are 17% of enrollment. Eight percent of the students are Filipino and there are

7% of both Asian students and unknown/non-respondents. Only 2% of the students are of Pacific Islander ethnicity (California Community College Chancellor's Office, 2010).

The classified staff was more ethnically diverse than the faculty who were predominately White. An ethnically inclusive faculty is important to the educational experiences of students of color, who are the majority at Ocean (Ponjuan, 2011). The imbalance of faculty of color at Ocean may create unmet needs of the majority Latina/o student body.

Sky View Community College. Located in the eastern part of Los Angeles County, Sky View Community College began offering career and technical classes in 1963. Sky View had several career certifications, a transfer program, and a wealth of community service programs.

The enrollment at Sky View included about 20,000 students per semester. The student population was ethnically diverse with Latina/o students reflecting 72% of the attendees. Approximately, 5% of students are White, 3% Asian, 1% African American, and 18% Unknown. Students were offered many services on campus staffed by diverse individuals. The faculty at Sky View represented a White majority with very few Latina/o and instructor's of color. Although Sky View's mission specified that diversity and equity are valued, this was not reflected in the faculty, administration, and staff. Sky View also endorsed a student-centered emphasis promoting diversity to improve student retention, persistence, and success. This goal may be difficult to attain given the disproportionate number of non-White faculty, staff, and administrators. Faculty engagement is critical to student success and student learning outcomes (Denson & Chang, 2009; Ponjuan, 2011). When faculty of color support students of color this

influences persistence, which may not be realized at Sky View unless there is a shift in the current faculty structure (Denson & Chang, 2009; Ponjuan, 2011).

Data Sources

Sample size

Fourteen Latina/o community college students—who self-identified as former transfer students—were invited to participate in the study employing a purposeful and snowball sampling approach (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010). Respondents were sought who displayed transfer behaviors such as involvement in a support program like the Puente Project or were completing or planned to complete at least 10 transferable units (Adelman, 2005). Latina/o male and female students were encouraged to participate in the study, with no restrictions on immigration status. Students were between the ages of 18 to 41 years old and were associated with the Mexican, Salvadorian, Guatemalan, and Puerto Rican Latina/o ethnic subgroups. Students ranged from immigrants to third-generational status and attended Cove Community College, Ocean Community College, and Sky View Community College. It was understood that immigration and generational status were important aspects of Latina/o student experiences but these aspects were not a focus in the sampling procedures.

Data Collection

It was essential for the researcher to visit and become familiar with the research sites prior to beginning data collection (Ortiz, 2003). Several visits to Cove Community College, at various times during the day were made, which was where the majority of the participants attended college. A visit was also made to Ocean and Sky View Community Colleges. The researcher learned about the campuses history, culture, and climate, which

was important to the data analysis. The institutional culture refers to the "underlying values, beliefs, and meaning" rooted in an organization's philosophy and espoused by its members (Peterson & Spencer, 1990, p. 16). The climate refers to an organization's common perceptions and attitudes that construct the atmosphere (Peterson & Spencer, 1990). Increasing knowledge about the settings assisted the researcher with understanding the historical context that has influenced the culture and climate of the campuses (Ortiz, 2003). Having a sense of the sites' values, beliefs, and attitudes assisted with understanding Latina/o student experiences on the campuses.

Recruitment. Upon IRB approval, a few Cove Community College staff served as gatekeepers. They distributed to potential participants invitational fliers (see Appendix A) and emails (see Appendix B) with general information about the study and the researcher's contact information, email address, and cellular telephone number. They also assisted with identifying Latina/o students who were on the transfer path, but who currently were not transferring. The gatekeepers made announcements and distributed fliers at events, during program staff meetings, and in some classrooms.

The researcher was invited to recruit participants by attending workshops offered to students in the FYE and EOPS/CARE programs. The researcher attended approximately eight workshops and two related events. The researcher made a brief announcement at the beginning of each workshop and remained to connect with students as they departed. Cove Community College participants referred three respondents who attended local community colleges. One student attended Ocean Community College, a community college located in close proximity to Cove and two participants attended Sky View Community College located in the eastern part of Los Angeles County.

The interviews took place during the spring semester of 2014. Upon initial contact, via telephone, email, text, or in person, the researcher confirmed each participant's qualifications—Latina/o students between 18 to 60 years old, on the transfer path but no longer planning to transfer—and interested in participating in the study. Then, the researcher scheduled a 1-hour interview and mutually agreed upon a location, day, and time to meet. After each interview was arranged, the researcher provided each participant with a hard copy or an email copy of the consent form (see Appendix C) for review prior to his or her interview.

The researcher offered suggestions for meetings and all participants were given the opportunity to choose where they would like to meet for the interview. Most interviews were held on the Cove campus in a classroom, a conference room, an office, or the library study room. Participants who did not attend Cove requested to meet off campus in a private and quiet location such as a public library or a local coffee shop. The researcher had two hard copies of the consent form and began each meeting with a review of the consent. Each participant was asked if he or she had any questions, and obtained a signed consent as they agreed to move forward with the interview. The other consent form was given to participants for their records.

Participants were asked to choose a pseudonym that was meaningful to them. The pseudonym was used to protect respondent confidentiality during the interview and data analysis, and in the published dissertation. Each participant completed a brief demographic survey (see Appendix D). Then, the one-on-one interview (see Appendix E) was conducted with each participant for approximately 1 hour. Interviews were semistructured and explored the experiences of Latina/o students pushed out of the

transfer path. The interview questions included the exploration of the role and intersection of race, class, and gender in affecting college pathways, identifying the critical points where Latina/o students are pushed out of the transfer path, and how they responded to no longer being on the transfer path.

During each interview, the researcher obtained permission from all participants to use a digital recorder and take handwritten notes. The consent form also indicated that interviews would be recorded. But, it was made clear that the audio recording was not mandatory. Interviews were transcribed verbatim using a professional transcriber. Most participants were sent their transcribed interview and asked to review it for accuracy and instructed to inform the researcher if there was any information that might put them in any risk. However, participants were not allowed to review, edit, or erase their particular audio recording.

Instrumentation. A 17-question demographic survey and a 15-question interview protocol were the instruments that were used in this study. Both instruments were informed by the literature review, framework, and research questions. The demographic survey requested additional information from respondents that augmented the questions posed during the interview, such as their age range, Latina/o subgroup identity, and parental educational background. Asking participants to identify their parent's place of birth and type of employment provided clarity about their generational status and socioeconomic backgrounds. Participant stories could be better understood by the application of a demographic survey that was also used to obtain a baseline of comparable information from all participants. This information was used to further assist with interpreting circumstances that may have influenced the educational trajectories of

the respondents. The survey and questionnaire were analyzed to provide abundant data necessary to enhance an understanding of participant transfer experiences and challenge to the dominant ideology (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solózano & Yosso, 2002).

The interview protocol questions were established in conjunction with a review of the literature, the research questions, and the CRT framework. A protocol matrix was created in Table 1 (see Appendix F). The three interview questions were well thought-out and were divided into five sections of the protocol. The questions were created to progress from the least risk to the most risk questions (Ortiz, 2003). The first section began with warm-up questions used to develop rapport between the respondents and researcher. For example, the question, "When did you know you wanted to go to college?" was a low-risk question designed to develop a connection with respondents. The transition questions assisted with building a relationship between the participants and the researcher. The last three sections were linked to the three research questions. These sections included higher-risk questions, which lead to rich data and depth of inquiry. The final question invited participants to share any additional information that they deemed useful to convey their personal story, "Is there anything else that you have not stated that might be helpful to tell your story as a transfer/college student?" This question afforded participants an opportunity to choose what additional information might be useful empowering them to decide how they may respond.

Human subjects. The protection of human subjects was an ethical consideration that was critical to this research study. The safety of participants was planned prior to the collection of data (Ortiz, 2003). The researcher was required to adhere to the policies of the institution and those of the data sites. Respondents were given informed consent,

which consisted of a discussion about the research study and clarification that their participation was voluntary, that they could refuse to respond to a question, that they could end the interview at anytime and that they could withdraw their participation in the research with no consequences and have their data given to them (Ortiz, 2003). The participants were required to sign the consent form prior to data collection and the signed copy was kept in the researcher's confidential records.

Confidentiality and anonymity were other significant ethical considerations that ensured personal safety for the participants. Confidentiality was maintained by the use of a pseudonym chosen by each participant. Pseudonyms assured that real names were not used during the research study. Anonymity increased the likelihood that participants would not experience any personal consequences with their involvement in the research study. The researcher was also responsible for assisting the participants if sensitive issues addressed during the study created an unpleasant reaction. The researcher had counseling referrals (see Appendix G) available to provide to respondents as needed. Respondents were engaged with respect and treated as a valued member of the process. The researcher created an atmosphere of appreciation by formally thanking the participants for their contribution to the study via an email or letter. The researcher also provided each participant with a gift card to further express gratitude.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process began immediately upon the initial interview. An exclusive coding method specific to this study was developed requiring critical thinking, as each research analysis is unique (Saldaña, 2011). Notes were taken during each interview and a research journal was maintained to document the coding procedures and

choices. Journal notes were a creative process to record thoughts and experiences that were relevant, and not so relevant, to the research. Thinking through the process was important to maintain self-awareness and neutrality. Field notes also assisted with documenting feelings, "frustrations," "unanswered questions," and insights about the data that led to a deeper analysis (Saldaña, 2011, p. 33). All notes were used to assist with the coding process (Saldaña, 2011).

The first level of coding included first impressions—relating data to data and code to code (Saldaña, 2011) through the use of a CRT framework. For instance, the researcher analyzed the stories told by respondents using a CRT lens to identify the intersections of race, class, and gender experiences on the transfer path (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solózano & Yosso, 2002). A maximum of 35 to 40 codes were generated to manage the process. This procedure included dividing codes by the research questions. The codes emerged naturally from the data.

The first cycle of coding included an affective coding method, which incorporated descriptive, emotional/values, and versus coding. Descriptive coding included the descriptions participants expressed in relation to their transfer path experiences. Respondents identified various emotions about changes in their educational pathways. Values coding recognized the participant's values, attitudes, and personal beliefs related to their community college experiences. Respondents discussed their personal beliefs, attitudes, and values throughout the interview. Versus coding was used to identify differences between Latina/o female and male community college student experiences.

Descriptive coding was also used as codes and notes were categorized and written graphically so that readers could imagine they were speaking with and listening to the

participants; and in vivo coding, actual words of the participants gave voice to their experiences to inform the reader about what occurred. Simple descriptions were created related to the data collection location such as the city, streets, and the name of the college; structural coding employed numerous respondents, interview transcriptions, and demographic surveys (Saldaña, 2011).

The second level of coding solidified categories, themes, and concepts as they were reorganized from the first level of coding (Saldaña, 2011). This level of coding was easier since the first level was thorough. The data was recoded to include precise words and phrases that were not identified during the first level of coding. An advanced process with more specific categories was collapsed and themes were established.

Post-coding involved a review of individual codes prior to writing the findings. This process included assembling data with the use of an outline that listed themes. Major categories were used to create a list of exemplar quotes and passages (Saldaña, 2011). Quotes were taken from field notes and transcripts and served to illustrate the essence of each theme.

Trustworthiness

Establishing trustworthiness in this research is important since the use of naturalistic inquiry has been criticized for being "undisciplined" and "merely subjective" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 289). In order to develop a study that encourages others to pay attention to the findings, there should be specific elements that convey credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The moral integrity of the researcher is also important to establish findings that are trustworthy and valid. The researcher can further enhance trustworthiness by maintaining awareness of personal

reactions to the data as it is gathered and analyzed (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). The elements that have been identified previously were used in this study to strengthen trustworthiness and credibility, as described in the next section (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility/truth value. Truth-value refers to the development of confidence through the use of the findings that are true. In this study, the researcher does not declare a central truth about the data since each participant's story reveals his or her own individual truth (Bell, 1985; Crenshaw, 1988; Delgado, 1989; Duncan, 2005; Pérez Huber, 2009; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Initially building trust (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and rapport were essential to gathering in-depth information from respondents. The researcher was responsible for establishing truth through the use of credible procedures (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and legitimizing participant stories to seek understanding (Bell, 1985; Crenshaw, 1988; Delgado, 1989; Duncan, 2005; Pérez Huber, 2009; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). There were several ways that the research process created credibility, such as prolonged engagement and exposing the experiences of students of color. In this study, 1-hour interviews were facilitated with 14 Latina/o participants who may not otherwise have had the chance to talk about their experiences on the transfer path (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Credibility was also advanced by being immersed in the environment of the respondents to observe them and to become familiar with their college experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This was accomplished by visiting the colleges where respondents were enrolled and engaging with staff, faculty, and students. Spending time entrenched in the campus culture was important for the naturalist researcher to carefully understand and value the context. Having a presence in the setting established familiarity

and might have raised the level of respondent trust (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Heightened trust made it easier to obtain assistance from most participants to review their transcribed interview and demographic survey for accuracy.

Using a small sample size afforded an in-depth data collection, enhanced by note taking during the interviews to prompt other questions and expand the data (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). The use of a research log complemented the note taking, which enabled data to be cross-referenced. When no new information emerged, saturation was reached (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Maintaining self-awareness was managed by the use of journaling, which was reviewed periodically by the researcher. A multiple analysis process included the simultaneous detection of disconfirming data. The examination was continued until the data was confirmed and a negative case analysis could be completed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Transferability/applicability. As this study was developed, it was important to maintain applicability or transferability by offering rich descriptive data. It was possible to establish transferability because the researcher understood the receiving context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The investigator was responsible for creating thick, rich empirical evidence to solidify judgments grounded in the literature. Additionally, the interviews were piloted to examine the instruments and verify that the instruments maintained transferability.

When both the interview protocol and demographic surveys were piloted, helpful feedback was obtained from responders that enabled the researcher to reshape both protocols. Moving forward, as the updated instruments were applied, it was important to keep in mind the various milieu threats that could have impacted the data, such as

selection effects, setting effects, history effects, and construct effects (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982).

The naturalist argued that the threat of effects was actually natural to the investigation process. For instance, the selection effect created results specific to Latina/o community college students, which was the way the naturalist, would expect things to end. The experiences of Latina/o students were distinct to that group and specific to the colleges they attended. Setting effects might have influenced the findings, which the naturalist found as the normal result of having their own unique concepts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Historical threats were related to the exclusive history of the setting and should influence findings. For instance, Latinas/os have had a historical presence and educational experience in California and the United States that had ramifications to the conclusions. The naturalist looked to the uniqueness of the group studied and embraced the idiosyncrasies. Therefore, this study highlighted the distinct features of the Latina/o student participants, which further supported the validity of the investigation. The findings were connected to and validated by the literature to promote transferability.

Dependability. Dependability was protected by several components, including an auditor, peer debriefing, member checking, and triangulation. The researcher's dissertation chair served as the auditor. She reviewed procedures, including data gathering, analysis, and findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The chair also reviewed the research process for accuracy during the preliminary analysis and as the researcher moved into the final data analysis. Requesting a peer debriefing was another way to inspect the study process, and enhance dependability. The peer debriefing was also

chosen to review the reflective journal, memos, and in vivo notes for inaccurate analysis as related to personal bias or carelessness.

An assisting peer was chosen who was knowledgeable about qualitative research procedures and who was comfortable providing constructive feedback. This individual was someone who reviewed the coding scheme and offered challenging suggestions in a supportive manner. The reviewer also evaluated journal notes to confirm that biases had remained transparent and nonimposing. A member check enhanced dependability, which was the process of requesting respondents to review their transcribed interviews for accuracy.

Member checking was an important procedure to sustain an "investigative posture" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 303) and maintain dependability. Lincoln and Guba suggested that the researcher apply daily procedures to assist with moving beyond preconceived beliefs and ideas. Member checks were used as the investigator moved through her day-to-day routines. For instance, most respondents agreed to review their transcribed audio-recorded interview for content intentionality and accuracy. Reviewing the transcriptions stimulated memories that better reflected the respondent's experience (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), therefore, expanding individual truth while increasing trustworthiness. Additionally, participants provided verbal feedback regarding their demographic surveys.

Confirmability. The study included 14 participants. There were several procedures that were taken into consideration to maintain confirmability. First, detailed descriptions of the data were kept. Therefore, rich data was generated from the wealth of information obtained from the respondents. Second, a research log was used to capture

valuable information that was pulled as the raw data was reviewed. A research log was also used to reflect on the researcher's biases, questions, and reactions to the data as, codes were developed, categories were created, and themes identified.

A third procedure increased confirmability through the employment of peer debriefing. Probing by peers was useful during the initial review of the findings. The debriefing served to sharpen the data analysis by improving the data examination and critique. Lincoln and Guba (1985; p. 301) discussed the need to review "raw data" against the "multiple realities" of participants to test findings, given that interpretations are generated from one person to another. Additionally, the peer review process was significant to this study given that some of the researcher's personal experiences were similar to those of respondents, which had the potential to increase the researcher's bias about the topic.

Conclusion

A qualitative study using CRT methodology was used to explore the experiences of Latina/o community college students who were pushed out of the transfer path to a 4-year institution. Various ethnic groups within the Latina/o racial group were encouraged to participate in this investigation to stimulate an extensive range of data. Counterstorytellng was the methodological tool that was used to give voice to Latina/o students who usually would not have had an opportunity to tell their stories. Each participant's truth was exposed and legitimized by giving voice to their personal experiences creating an emancipatory process. The findings can be useful across comparable settings of Latina/o community college students.

CHAPTER 4

STUDY FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the aspirations and experiences of Latina/o community college students who have been pushed out of the transfer path and to give voice to their personal narratives. CRT was used as a method to distinguish critical points on the transfer path where Latina/o community college students were pushed out. The use of CRT was applied to identify students' responses about changes in their educational paths, and the influences of race, class, and gender experiences along the community college pathway. The three research questions that directed this study were:

1. What are the critical points where Latina/o community college students are pushed out of the transfer path?

2. How do Latina/o community college students respond to no longer being on the transfer path?

3. How do the intersections of race, class, and gender mediate the community college pathway experience?

This study used counterstorytelling as a methodological tool with a thematic approach. Both a purposeful and snowball sampling was used to obtain 14 Latina/o

community college student participants who were attending three community colleges in the Los Angeles County metropolitan area of southern California.

The researcher reviewed each participant's qualifications for the study and identified a quiet and private place to meet. The informed consent was explained, signed, and collected from each respondent before gathering any information. Participants chose a pseudonym as they completed the 17-question demographic survey. The survey was used to identify specific respondent characteristics, such as language(s) spoken at home, socioeconomic background, and age range. An open-ended questions interview protocol was designed by the researcher and organized to coincide with the three research questions, literature review, and CRT theoretical framework. The semistructured, audio-recorded interviews guided the exploration of participants' K-12 schooling and community college transfer pathway experiences. The researcher engaged in an affective coding method to analyze the data. Saldaña (2011) described this approach as a way to recognize and define individual experiences.

For each research question that guided the study, the researcher presents one major area of finding and related sub-themes. The first major area of finding, critical points, refers to specific points on the transfer path were community college students are pushed out due to institutional policies and practices. The sub-themes connected this finding included probation jeopardizes financial aid, figuring out course load; transition from developmental to transferable coursework; and transfer information paralysis.

The second main area of finding, responses to no longer being on the transfer path, concerned the reactions that students had as they were pushed out of the transfer

path. The sub-themes in this second finding relate to emotional relief, academic accomplishment, and the A.A./A.S. degree as a stepping-stone.

The third significant area of finding, race, class, and gender affects on transfer, refers to how students experienced stereotyped interactions with administrators, teachers, and staff. Students may not have been aware that these stereotyped interactions created internalized racism, classism, and sexism[6]. This finding also included how students managed school and their gender role expectations based on the Latina/o and the dominant cultures. The sub-themes that emerged from this finding were negative perceptions of race, erratic and limited resources, and fulfilling gender role expectations. Below are the studies research questions aligned with a major finding and associated sub-themes.

1. What are the critical points where Latina/o community college students are pushed out of the transfer path?

Critical points:

Probation jeopardizes financial aid; Figuring out course load; Transition from developmental to transferable coursework; and Transfer information paralysis

2. How do Latina/o community college students respond to no longer being on the transfer path?

Responses to no longer being on the transfer path:

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[6] The internalization of stereotyped racist, classist, and sexist reactions imposed by the dominate ideology. Latina/o cultural values are presented as the cause of their educational problems with values linked to actions (Valencia & Black, 2002).

Emotional relief; Academic accomplishment; and AA/AS degree as a stepping stone.

3. How do the intersections of race, class, and gender mediate the community college pathway experience?

Race, class, and gender affects on transfer:

Negative perceptions; Erratic and limited resources; and Fulfilling gender role expectations.

It is important to note that federal and state policies affect college policies and practices. For instance, the recent passing of the Student Success Act (AB1456, 2012) has articulated new policies across all California community colleges, which will influence students' educational pathways. The legislation requires CCCs to assist students with meeting their educational goals. Community colleges are expected to provide student services such as an orientation, assessment and placement, academic counseling and intervention, and educational planning focused on the student's educational goals. Students are required to declare a major after accrual of a specific number of units and meet a minimum 2.0 GPA to receive the BOG fee waiver. The change to a minimum GPA for fee waiver eligibility is a noteworthy modification that may affect about 4,000 students of color at Cove Community College. It is important to consider which students will benefit from this policy. Evaluation of services is expected and funding is connected to student's educational outcomes (CCC, 2012).

The findings also address the majoritarian stories about Latina/o students, which assert that they do not value education, are not focused, and are low achieving thus, may not have the intellectual capability to pursue a 4-year degree (Evans, 2009; Valencia,

TABLE 1. Participants' Demographics

PARTICIPANT	AGE RANGE	LATINA/O SUBGROUP	COLLEGE UNITS COMPLETED	IMMEDIATE EDUCATION GOAL	LONG-TERM EDUCATION GOAL
Alicia	27 – 35	Salvadorian	40+	AA, Psychology	Transfer, BS, Psychology
Ana	18 – 21	Salvadorian	13	AS, Nursing	Transfer, BS, Nursing
April	27 – 35	Mexican American/ Salvadorian	23	Certificate, Radiology Technology	Certificate, Cardiovascular Sonographer
Christine	22 – 26	Mexican American	20	Certificate, Cosmetology	AS, Cosmetology Transfer BA, Business
David	27 - 35	Chicano	120+	AS, Nursing (Has earned an AS, Psychology)	Transfer, BS, Nursing
Emilio	18 - 21	Mexican American	51.5	AS, Computer Information Systems	Internship, Computer Information Systems
Henry	22 - 26	Mexican American	6	AA, Psychology	Transfer, BA, Social Work
Irene	22 - 26	Mexican	50+	AS, Science	AS, Nursing Transfer, BS, Nursing
Isabella	18 – 21	Mexican American	12+	AA, English	Transfer BA, English
Jasmine	18 – 21	Mexican/ Puerto Rican	8	AA, Studio Art	Transfer, BA, Art Restoration
Kike	36 - 45	Salvadorian	60+	AS, Engineering Technology	Transfer, BS, Engineering
Marleny	27 – 35	Guatemalan	17	Certificate, Child Development	Transfer, BS, Teacher
Max	27 – 35	Mexican American	25	AA, Communication Studies	Transfer, BA, Communications
Pedro	27 – 35	Mexican American	90	AA, General Studies	Transfer, BA, Religious Studies

2010; Valencia & Black, 2002). This study provides counternarratives that tell us how 14 Latina/o students really experience community college. These students were juggling real life circumstances that pulled them away from academic work. Institutional policies and practices constantly pushed out Latina/o students from the transfer path.

Before the study findings are discussed, the researcher will provide a brief biographical description of each participant. The researcher provides this information to emphasize the diverse circumstances of each respondent that influenced their educational experiences. Table 1is based on the features gathered from the demographic survey.

Biographical Introductions

In order to provide the reader with a context for participants' stories the researcher offers biographical introductions based on information collected from the sample via demographic surveys and 1-hour face-to-face interviews. It is important to share respondent's specific K-12 schooling experiences related to their race, class, and gender to maintain distinct narratives. Participant stories informed how their background circumstances influenced their community college transfer pathway experiences.

Latina/o community college students in the sample presented multiple levels of diversity related to ages, racial subgroups[7], schooling experiences, and academic strengths. The sample included three students born in El Salvador. There were two students of mixed heritage. April described herself as a Latina/o of mixed subgroup,

[7] Latina/o subgroups have unique historic, political, sociocultural, and community experiences. For instance, Salvadorians and Guatemalans came to the US as refugees; Puerto Ricans are US citizens; and Mexican's have a long history of migration to the US including participation in work programs like the Bracero program. These differences have diverse influences on student experiences in community college.

Salvadoran/Mexican American ancestry. Also of mixed heritage, Jasmine, identified as being Mexican American/Puerto Rican. Eight students identified being within the Mexican American/Mexican subgroup. Of these students, two immigrated as young children with their families to the United States from Mexico. Marleny defined herself as a native Californian of Guatemalan ancestry.

All but one respondent were between the ages of 18-35 years old; Kike, a Salvadoran immigrant, was approximately 41 years old. Most respondents attended low-income public schools during their K-12 education. April attended private religious schools during K-8 grades and Alicia attended a private school in El Salvador through the 7th grade. April, Christine, and Pedro were the only respondents that attended public high schools in middle- or upper-income neighborhoods.

All respondents received limited to no college information in high school and were first-generation college students (Chapa & Schink, 2006; Monroe, 2006). Most participants were encouraged to attend higher education by their parents or another family member. All students entered higher education at a community college and received the BOG Fee Waiver, a state-funded enrollment fee waiver for low-income California residents attending community college. More than half of the respondents had been enrolled in one or more California Community College. Marleny had re-entered Cove Community College after just under a decade away.

Most of the participants had minimal connection to services on campus. Ana and Isabella were members of a First Year Experience (FYE) program and were very informed about their campus resources. Kike and Pedro received services at the disabled student services program. All but two participants had received state-funded EOPS.

Marleny and April were also members of the Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education (CARE) program. Marleny's two children were enrolled in the Cove campus childcare center where she was a leader in the parent group. Five other respondents had children and were receiving childcare services in their respective neighborhoods.

Individual Biographical Information

Alicia. Alicia started eighth grade in the United States and learned English quickly while earning good grades throughout her schooling experience. In high school, she enrolled in the Regional Occupation Program (ROP) and received certification as a medical assistant. Alicia also joined the Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC). She gave birth to her first daughter during her junior year of high school and immediately returned to the ROTC program. At high school graduation, she was awarded a military scholarship but was not eligible to receive it because she was an undocumented immigrant.

Alicia attended one semester at a local community college, failed her coursework, and left to seek employment. She worked as a medical assistant for a few doctors, in markets as a checker, and sometimes worked with her mother, who was a housekeeper in West Los Angeles. Alicia had two additional children and eventually became connected to the Los Angeles County, Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), which was a public child welfare agency.

Alicia appreciated the services and support that were given to her and her three children by DCFS. Alicia and her daughters were moved to the South Bay area of Los Angeles County and received assistance from DCFS to obtain a visa under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) due to a history of domestic violence. The VAWA

allowed an abused parent of a U.S. citizen to file for legal standing and receive permission to work and have access to public assistance. Alicia was receiving financial assistance to attend community college from the Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) program also known in California as CalWorks. She earned academic honors in psychology and would be participating in a scholastic award ceremony at the end of the semester.

Ana. Ana described herself as an average student during grades K-12, which led her to enroll in community college. She was also concerned about the high tuition fees at a 4-year university. Ana received encouragement and assistance for college from her cousins and best friend. She also obtained guidance from mentors in her neighborhood who advised her to choose a career that she would enjoy because the course would be life long.

Ana commuted 2 hours round-trip via public transportation several times a week to community college. She had recently changed her transfer plan and was working toward an associate degree in nursing. Ana was getting exposure to the medical profession by volunteering at a local public hospital a few days a week as her schedule permitted. She was honoring her parents' wishes by completing an A.S. degree. Ana stated, "I need to make my parents' struggles, . . . worth something."

April. April described herself as an A student during grades K-8. In high school, she was placed in a public school district located in a predominantly White middle-class community. April said she was made to feel that she did not belong in that high school, as she was one of the few non-White students. She frequently skipped classes and fell

behind in credits. Throughout her senior year of high school, April attended classes at a local community college to earn high school credits and was able to graduate on time.

April briefly attended a career college but did not receive certification. She had been enrolled in a community college for a few years after being away from school for about 9 years. A single parent, April reflected on the need to return to college so that her two sons (ages 4 years and 18 months old) would have a better future. She also reported being financially strapped. April received public assistance, used public transportation, and lived on a tight budget. April worked a few hours a week on campus and had an irregular part-time job as a focus group member. She would evaluate a commercial and provide feedback about her reaction to the advertisement. April was progressing toward certification as a radiologic technologist. Eventually, April wanted to work as a cardiovascular sonographer and obtain certification from the American Society of Radiologic Technologists, which would provide her with an increase in her annual income by $10,000 to $20,000.

Christine. Christine was a good student in K-12 and enrolled in high school advanced placement classes. She dropped the advanced coursework to focus on sports and joined the high school Business Academy. As part of the Business Academy course requirements, Christine took accounting and computer classes and earned college credits. She registered at a community college the semester after high school graduation.

Christine enrolled in community college due to the affordable fees paid for by her parents. She became pregnant and took a 2-year break from college to care for her child, work, and save for educational expenses. Christine returned to a different community college, with the support of her daughter's father and a paternal aunt. Over the course of

the next 3 years, Christine took college classes inconsistently due to transportation, childcare, and financial circumstances. Because Christine had withdrawn from several classes, she was placed on progress probation and her financial aid was temporarily suspended. During the previous semester, Christine was accepted into a cosmetology program and took a loan from a paternal aunt to pay for books and supplies. She planned to earn a certificate in cosmetology and than focus on an A.A. degree.

David. David described himself as an average student during K-12 and graduated from high school because of his parents' insistence. He had spoken with a military recruiter and joined the Navy a few months after high school graduation. While enlisted in the military, David received various medical certifications including pharmacy technician and earned high scores on exams. He took college coursework in psychology in a distance education program offered to military personnel. David successfully left the military after 8 years of service and gained employment at a local hospital as a pharmacy technician and settled back into civilian life with his wife and toddler.

After a 2-year hiatus from college, David registered at a community college and completed an A.A. degree in psychology a few years prior to our meeting. He had just heard from a community college nursing program. David had not been admitted to the nursing program because of his average grades in core science classes. Yet, he received impressively high marks on the Test of Essential Academic Skills (TEAS). David was encouraged by that community college to reapply to their nursing program upon completion of select courses. He was waiting to hear whether he had been admitted to a nursing program at another community college. David planned to earn an A.S. degree in nursing, which would be a second completed associate degree.

Emilio. Emilio described himself as an average student and was placed in a Resource Specialist Program (RSP) during K-12 because he had difficulty concentrating. Emilio explained that he was often pulled out of his regular education class for RSP and missed class lessons including cursive writing. He focused on socializing with classmates and was not serious about his class work.

During high school, Emilio was involved in sports with great skill and spent much time at the career–college center as a senior. He learned about different vocations and university admissions requirements. Emilio registered at community college because he felt that his high school grades were not strong enough to gain acceptance into a 4-year university. Emilio had planned to transfer but was now focused on obtaining an A.S. degree in computer information technology (CIT). Emilio had a plan to apply to a CIT internship upon completion of an associate's degree.

Henry. As a school-age child, Henry moved frequently with his mother and siblings and did not attend elementary school until the fifth grade, at the age of 10. Henry repeated fifth grade because he struggled with the coursework, particularly math. He was placed in foster care as he began middle school. He moved forward through middle school to high school without repeating another grade and earned average marks. Henry excelled in track and cross-country. He left high school without earning a diploma and aged out of the foster care system at the age of 18.

After a 5-year break from school, Henry enrolled in a community college. He was preparing to take the General Educational Development (GED) certificate and was pursuing an A.A. degree in psychology. Henry stated that he had had an interest in obtaining a bachelor's degree in social work but he was currently focused on obtaining an

associate's degree. He also thought that he might join the military after completing the A.A. degree.

Irene. Irene migrated from Mexico to the United States with her family at the age of 10, learned English quickly, and was placed in a regular English class by the eighth grade. In high school, she joined the Business Club and took classes in accounting and real estate. Irene was also taking Advanced Placement (AP) courses in English, history, and Spanish. She graduated from high school with honors and was accepted to two CSUs. She declined admissions because she was undocumented and did not qualify for financial aid.

A few years later, Irene enrolled in community college while caring for her infant daughter and working minimum wage jobs. Irene earned low grades and left college after two semesters. She remarried and had another child (her two children were ages 7 and 4 at the time of the interview). Irene re-entered a different community college, Cove, after a 2-year interruption from college. She took about nine units per semester over the next 3 years, and continued to pay out of pocket for educational fees and expenses. Irene had recently received Deferred Action of Childhood Arrival (DACA)[8], which provided her temporary relief. Undocumented students qualified for DACA if they immigrated to the United States as children and graduated from high school or received a GED having limited college financial assistance such as eligibility for the EOPS/CARE program.

Irene was now a member of EOPS and had received book vouchers, which covered the cost of required course books, which greatly assisted her financially. She had

[8] Further information about DACA can be found at the Customs and Immigration Services (CIS) website at http://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca

recently met with an academic counselor to obtain an education plan. Irene learned that she would earn an A.S. degree in science upon completion of the math class she was currently taking. Irene planned to apply to the nursing program at Cove Community College.

Isabella. Throughout her K-12 schooling experience, Isabella felt that she was given mixed messages about her academic performance. In primary school, Isabella was an honor student and excelled in English. She participated in a college readiness program; yet, she was given an annual English language assessment test to determine if she was proficient in English. The annual assessment test adversely affected Isabella's confidence as she explained, "[taking the assessment test] made me feel that the way I studied, the way I did my homework, the way I tested didn't matter. What mattered was my [ethnic] background."

Isabella's self-doubt about her academic ability remained during high school where she earned average grades and fell behind in credits. A high school counselor developed a plan for Isabella to earn the deficit credits. Isabella worked diligently to complete the credits and graduated from high school with her classmates. The following fall semester she registered at Cove Community College and enrolled in the FYE program. At the time of our interview, Isabella was completing an A.A. degree in English so that she could obtain employment to assist her extended family financially.

Jasmine. Jasmine identified herself as a very good student and received academic awards during grades K-7 but had conflict with her mother. This tense relationship resulted in fluctuating grades from eighth grade through the end of high school. While completing the 10th grade, Jasmine's mother asked her to leave the family home. Jasmine

stayed with friends and family members for limited periods of time and sometimes slept in local parks. Jasmine managed to remain in high school earning average to above average grades. She fell behind in credits and made them up with the encouragement of a psychology–English teacher. Jasmine graduated from high school and remained in unstable living conditions while working a minimum wage job.

Two years later, Jasmine entered Cove Community College and had difficulty proving her independent status to the financial aid representative. As Jasmine spoke with the financial aid staff she shed tears and was approved for financial aid. Midway through the first semester, Jasmine dropped a few classes. She also earned low grades due to entering classes late, difficulty managing coursework, and working three part-time jobs, while using public transportation. During her second semester at community college, Jasmine was placed on progress probation and suspended from financial aid. She received academic support and book vouchers from EOPS. She paid for her art class materials and was optimistic about progressing toward an A.A. degree in studio art. At the time of her participation in this study, Jasmine was enrolled in art courses and was earning above-average grades.

Kike. As the Salvadoran civil war escalated, Kike's family moved to the United States and initially settled in West Los Angeles. In El Salvador, Kike was an eager student with many friends, and he earned high marks. He lost interest in education for many years as he adjusted to life in the United States. Chicano classmates teased Kike because he could not speak English and spoke a Salvadoran dialect of Spanish, which was different from their Chicano Spanish dialect. He was able to establish friendships as he learned English. Kike was expelled from middle school because he was found with a

pack of cigarettes. He was eventually placed in juvenile hall where he attended school and enjoyed the coursework. He returned to public high school and quickly became disinterested in class work. His grades declined and he was placed in a self-study program. Kike was motivated to complete the coursework and received a GED. Kike admitted that at that time, education was not his priority. He was interested in earning money.

Kike worked minimum wage jobs as a dishwasher at a local restaurant and then as a service worker at McDonalds, and eventually returned to school. He enrolled at a local community college because he was offered financial aid to pursue education. Kike took a design class while working and dropped the class as he began having mental health difficulty. Several years later, he re-entered the same community college and took a few classes. He received low grades and did not return to that college. He registered at another community college and left after one semester as he struggled with mental health concerns. Kike enrolled in Cove Community College in 2011 after winning a small settlement with a large corporation. Kike did not receive financial aid but felt more focused and ready to pursue education. Eventually, Kike became qualified for financial aid and received a Pell grant, book vouchers from the EOPS program, and support services from the disabled student services. Kike had recently changed his focus to engineering and was enrolled in basic math classes.

Marleny. A mother of two children, Marleny excelled academically in elementary school and fell behind in high school. In middle school, she was placed in an English as a Second Language (ESL) class, which created boredom, misbehavior, and low grades. Throughout high school she struggled with the divorce of her parents but

managed to focus on class work and became involved in her high school's yearbook and journalism clubs. As a high school senior, Marleny met an older boy and fell behind in credits. A high school official informed her that she lacked 10 credits so she was not able to graduate. Marleny did not attend her high school graduation but was told by several friends that her name was called during the ceremony.

Marleny paid to take the GED exam before registering at Cove Community College in 2004. She remained at the college for a few semesters and left to pursue work at a drug store. Nearly a decade later, Marleny had re-entered Cove as a single mother receiving county assistance. She was pursuing a certificate in child development with the encouragement and support of her sister, who was a kindergarten teacher. Marleny was receiving services from the EOPS/CARE programs. Her children, ages 4 and 1 year, were enrolled in the campus childcare center, which was scheduled to close at the end of the semester. She had a leadership role in the childcare center's parent group.

Max. Max referred to himself as an excellent student during K-8 grades, earning A's and B's. He had academic difficulty as he moved through high school. Max joined the Business Academy during his sophomore year of high school. He took accounting courses and academically demanding English and math classes. In his senior year of high school, Max continued to struggle with coursework but graduated with his peers.

Max enrolled in two different community colleges at separate times and withdrew from both after one semester because he did not have guidance or a clear educational path. For about 8 years, Max lost interest in college and worked in a full-time job. He had recently been inspired by a Latina undergraduate student to reenter community college. Max had recently met with an academic counselor and received an education

plan. Max felt that he had clarity about his educational path and was working toward completing an A.A. degree in communications.

Pedro. A Mexican immigrant, Pedro and his family migrated to the United States when he was a toddler. He was physically disabled at birth and totally blind as a young child. Pedro attended a school for blind children from K-8 grades. He learned to read Braille and used a white cane. Pedro described himself as a good student who completed his homework on time and followed the school rules. Pedro attended a middle-income public high school. As Pedro prepared to graduate from high school a friend explained to him that he could begin higher education at a community college and transfer to a 4-year university. The following fall semester; Pedro registered at a community college.

When we met for the interview, Pedro had earned 90 units and was no longer eligible for financial aid or EOPS. He was also at risk of loosing the BOG fee waiver due to the significant number of completed units. Pedro had withdrawn from a math course three times and he could no longer take the class at that community college. He would need to take the math class at another community college or adult school and could not transfer until he passed that course.

Study Findings

This section presents a summary of the study findings using critical race theory as a lens to analyze stories about transfer path experiences told by Latina/o community college students. Latina/o community college student experiences exposed three findings including push out points, responses to no longer being on the transfer path, and intersections of race, class, and gender affects on transfer pathway experiences.

Participant accounts also revealed personal agency with recognition of immediate realities, thus, altering educational trajectories. All participants expressed optimism and displayed remarkable persistence toward pursuing their short-term educational goals. Transfer was not an immediate educational goal for respondents but most aspired to one day transfer to a 4-year university.

Four major sub-themes were uncovered that linked to the exploration of critical points where Latina/o students are pushed out of the transfer path in Research Question 1. These sub-themes includes (a) probation jeopardizes financial aid, (b) figuring out course load, (c) transition from developmental to college coursework, and (d) transfer information paralysis. Participants expressed frustration and sometimes dismay with the educational system as they experienced various critical points within the transfer process. Most participants re-created their educational pathways with the hope of someday moving forward. A few respondents believed that the immediate shift away from transfer might lead them permanently pushed out of the transfer pathway.

Research Question 2 examined participant responses about no longer being on the transfer path. Participant reactions to a shift in their educational pathways typically revealed optimism about their short-term educational goals to attain a certificate or an associate's degree. Most participants expressed hopefulness about no longer being on the transfer path, which revealed three sub-themes: (a) emotional relief, (b) academic accomplishment, and (c) A.A./A.S. degree as a stepping stone. It is important to note that a few respondents expressed despair about the move away from transfer exposing two effects: personal disappointment and confusion about the future. Latina/o students in the study sample also expressed various associations to race, class, and gender stereotypes

throughout their K-12 schooling and their community college transfer pathway experiences, which was the focus of Research Question 3.

Research Question 3 centered on race, class, and gender affects on transfer, which exposed three sub-themes including (a) negative perceptions of race, (b) erratic and limited resources, and (c) fulfilling gender role expectations. The intersections of race, class, and gender revealed unique challenges both for Latina and Latino students.

Critical Points

A summary of the study findings begins with the critical points that pushed out Latina/o students from the transfer pathway as related to Research Question 1. The critical points refer to specific points within the educational process that effected advancement through the pipeline. The critical points, (a) probation jeopardizes financial aid, (b) figuring out course load, (c) transition from developmental to transferable coursework, and (d) transfer information paralysis, were connected to the number of transferable and non-transferable units obtained and the impact of institutional policies and practices. The researcher distinguished units completed versus years in college because many of the students in the sample were enrolled in developmental education math and science classes. Developmental courses were not transferable and the number of transferable units completed did not necessarily correlate with the number of calendar years in college.

Several students in the study discussed being on academic or progress probation that included a conditional suspension of financial aid. Academic and progress probation are mandated by the institution and have slightly different requirements at each

community college. The practices that are guided by this example are from Cove Community College.

At Cove, academic probation refers to students who attempted at least 12 semester units and fall below a 2.0 GPA for the total number of units attempted at Cove. Progress probation means that a student who attempts at least 12 semester units and the percentage of all units attempted falls below 50% of graded units earned. In other words, if a student at Cove earned a withdrawal (W), incomplete (I), no pass (NP), or no credit (NC) in more than 50% of his or her overall attempted classes he or she would be placed on progress probation. Cove practitioners also abide by federal guidelines, which require students to meet a minimum academic standard in order to receive financial aid funding.

Probation Jeopardizes Financial Aid

Qualifying and disqualifying for financial aid was a challenge for many of the participants due to immigration status, housing instability, GPAs falling below the standard requirement, and withdrawal from college coursework. Some of the other participants were not receiving financial aid because they were on progress probation. A critical point that was revealed during interviews with students was managing withdrawals or low grades to avoid being placed on progress probation or academic probation and suspension from financial aid.

Christine was a bright student and a mother of a 4-year-old. She had taken a 2-year break from community college after giving birth to her daughter and yearned to return to college. Christine explained, "Being out of school was driving me insane . . . It was driving me nuts that I couldn't go back [to school] and it made me sad sometimes." Christine's story countered the dominant discourse that suggested that Latinas/os did not

care about education (Valencia, 2010; Valencia & Black, 2002). She remained steadfast and developed a plan with her boyfriend to return to college. Christine returned to community college but withdrew from some classes due to lack of money, unstable childcare, and unreliable transportation. She said:

> I haven't received financial aid because I tried so many years to go back to school but then I either didn't have childcare or transportation was a struggle for me, so I would have to withdraw. So, I got put on probation for financial aid . . . This year I'm not receiving any [financial aid] . . . I'm paying out of pocket.

Christine had no financial means to pay for books and other college costs. Her paternal aunt lent her money to cover the costs of her cosmetology books and supplies. Christine's placement on progress probation was a critical point that pushed her from transfer into a fast track cosmetology certificate. Christine's account illustrated the profound desire she had to persist in college, similar to Jasmine's narrative (Fernandez, 2002).

Jasmine's story revealed a distinct situation that created much difficulty for her to qualify for and maintain financial aid. A federal financial aid policy relating to students under age 24 made it difficult for Jasmine to receive financial assistance. The policy mandated that students under age 24 include their parent's income when completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which determined the amount of federal financial aid awarded to a student.

Jasmine had not had a steady place to sleep since age 16. She had a strained relationship with her mother and was estranged from her father who lived in a different part of the state. Since Jasmine was not able to receive income verification from her

parents, she was told at the Cove financial aid office that she would need to submit three letters attesting to her independent status. She said:

> I was really waiting for a couple of months for . . . somebody to write me a letter because I wrote my letter then I asked that [high school] teacher . . . my English teacher to write the letter . . . Finally, after a couple of months . . . somebody actually wrote it [the third letter] and then I got financial aid and started school.

Jasmine was eventually approved for financial aid after classes started, but she was placed in courses that were not related to general education or her art major. Jasmine had other circumstances that also affected her academic performance that semester. Specifically, she relied on public transportation while working three part-time jobs. The combination of these factors including struggling with depression impacted Jasmine's ability to complete class assignments. She ended the semester having more course units with W on her transcript than units with grades. She recalled:

> I'm not being able to get the work done. I don't have the money for the book or that kind of thing . . . I'm on academic probation one . . . Financial aid cut me off because I didn't complete, I think 37% of the units attempted.

Jasmine did not have an understanding of the community college's withdrawal policies. She chose to drop some classes to maintain a high GPA, which resulted in progress probation and financial aid suspension. Jasmine could not afford to purchase books, which interfered with her academic progress. The financial disruption due to progress probation negatively impacted her academic performance and pushed out Jasmine from the transfer path:

> I really don't want to transfer either because . . . if I'm not doing well here and it's really hard for me in a community college, how am I going to do [good] in a university? . . . That's what discourages me from wanting to transfer. I feel like I would never be able to get there [to a 4-year university] because of that [academic challenges impacted by financial aid suspension].

Jasmine's story illustrated how she was pushed out of the transfer path and uncovered critical resistance from being pushed out of community college (Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998). Jasmine remained determined to earn an associate's degree so that she could move from a minimum wage job and maintain consistent housing. Jasmine's educational persistence required adjusting her academic course load to maintain an adequate GPA.

Figuring Out Course Load

As the 1st year (completion of 24 transferable and nontransferable course units) of community college ended, respondents understood the importance of maintaining at least a 2.0 GPA to avoid academic probation. Some students had experienced the challenge of maintaining a majority of graded classes to prevent progress probation. As students in the sample moved through their 2nd year of community college (24-48 transferable and nontransferable units), many continued to take developmental English, math, and science classes or had begun to take prerequisite transferable college courses. Students realized that they would have to take many courses, which would take an additional 3 to 4 years just to be prepared for transferable classes; thus, they chose to obtain an associate's degree or certificate and were pushed out of the transfer pathway.

Emilio was a student who had considered the number of classes he would need to take to begin transferable coursework. Emilio had completed just over 50 units but many of those units were not transferable to a 4-year university. Although Emilio had aspirations to earn a bachelor's degree because it would assist him with being financially stable, he shifted his educational goal to an A.S. degree in CIT. Emilio calculated that he needed six more classes for his general education and about seven additional classes for

the A.S. degree in CIT. He projected that it would take him about 3 to 4 more years to earn an A.S. degree. Considering calendar years, Emilio would spend a total of 6 to 7 years at community college and leave with an A.S. degree:

> I noticed that I had to take at least five classes just to get to a 1A [transferable English course] . . . in math too. And I had a lot of those [prerequisites to take] because I'm starting from the bottom. So I have to work my way up. But I know that's too much work for me.

Emilio said that he became overwhelmed just thinking about the number of courses he needed to take to be able to transfer to a 4-year university. "It felt overwhelming," he said, "too much work . . . I already do too much schoolwork and just thinking about it [transferring] was too overwhelming."

Figuring out the course load requirements for transfer to a 4-year university discouraged and pushed out Emilio from the transfer path. He emphasized that it was difficult to get into prerequisite classes due to the reduction in classes offered caused by the state budget cuts to community colleges. Emilio also experienced the increase in student enrollment making it even more challenging to enroll in the appropriate classes.

Isabella was also quite overwhelmed with learning about the number of courses that she was required to take to transfer to a 4-year institution. She planned to move quickly through community college and transfer after 2 years. Her self-imposed pressure was due to her father's failing health and a desire to assist her family financially.

As Isabella figured out that it would take more than 2 years to transfer because some of the courses she needed may not be transferable, she felt betrayed by the community college system. Isabella explained,

> I thought . . . that I was going to be able to [transfer] in 2 years, but I think that's just a lie that community colleges say! . . . If you really count 12 units each semester, that would equal to 48 units in 2 years. You need 60 [units] to transfer out, so that means you would

have to take winter-summer [classes], winter-summer [classes] . . . But even then, where you get placed on your placement test . . . I got placed all the way down in math; the first pre-algebra math. That's not transferable so that does not qualify so technically the 12 units that I took my first semester would probably be only 9 [transferable] units because the 3 [units] for math did not [transfer]. So technically, 60 transferable units would probably be done in 3½ years instead of 2.

Isabella calculated the number of years it would take her to transfer and the reality of her father's health. She was pushed out of the transfer path upon figuring out that it would actually take her 3½ to 4 years instead of 2 years to transfer:

> He's [her father] had many heart attacks and strokes recently and it's really hard for me to think . . . [that] I can [transfer in] 4 years rather than 2 years . . . I want to get an A.A. and see if I can get a job, a good paying job maybe with [an A.A. degree].

Isabella's story highlighted a direct impact on the California Community College system's budget reductions, which changed policies and practices. Isabella would be in community college for many years before she could transfer and expressed frustration with this reality. Isabella figuring out her course load and was pushed from the transfer path. She decided to pursue an A.A. degree in English:

> It did bum me out because I want the college experience . . . I actually want to be able to go to a university and join a sorority club, you know, do stuff like that. So I want to . . . rush out of here [community college] as fast as I can. I want to see what I can do with an A.A. [degree] first.

Isabella used personal empowerment to change her educational path to fit her current needs. She used critical resistance by selecting her family needs over the policies and practices of the California community college system (Fernández, 2002).

Transition from Developmental to Transferable Coursework

A third sub-theme that appeared as a critical point for Latina/o participants on the transfer path occurred during the 3rd year of community college as students completed over 48 non-transferable and transferable units. Many of the interviewees discussed the

difficult task of moving through developmental math coursework. Some students such as Emilio had to take seven developmental math courses before qualifying for a transferable course.

Pedro's story demonstrated a transfer push out that was formed, because he was not able to pass a required math class. Pedro explained that if he completed the math class he would be able to transfer. Pedro attempted to get assistance from the student-disabled services program to obtain approval from the college to take a class substitution. He was told that he had to take the math course at another community college:

> I already took the math class three times. Unfortunately, due to some issues, I had to drop it or I didn't pass the class. They are no longer allowing me to take the math class I need . . . officially on this campus . . . I didn't realize that that was my third and last time.

Pedro remained optimistic that he could complete the math course, which he had attempted to do for several years. Pedro shared that his mother believed that he was discriminated against in high school because he was not given the proper academic foundation. Pedro felt that he did not experience discrimination and would attempt to take the math class elsewhere. Pedro thought that it was his responsibility to pass the math course though he had been unsuccessful at doing so.

Unlike Pedro, Kike was more critical of the public education system as he stated, "I found a lot of flaws in the system, within the education system and the books." Kike was currently taking basic math classes and had recently changed his major to engineering. He experienced the engineering transfer program as very intense and sometimes frustrating and discouraging:

> The [engineering] transfer program has been a program where I've been pushed to almost quitting school . . . I can do much more without breaking my head that way. What the program does with mathematics.

Kike felt that the engineering program requirements created discouragement for him and other students. Kike believed that the basic math coursework caused students to feel ignorant and irritated, which was a critical point for him. He said:

> Part of the school system . . . [creates frustration] because of the way it educates, [the way] they make you go through it . . . It's not a good thing to do because it discourages a lot of people from education.

Kike said that he had problems retaining information and had to re-read class material and book chapters. He was quite distressed with learning the material in the developmental math classes. Kike stated that it was difficult to remain focused and enthusiastic about remaining in college:

> I have periods when I said forget this; I want to quit. I don't want to do this. I slam the book in the wall. I toss it because I got frustrated. All they're doing is trying to break me.

Kike added that the assignments had an emotional effect on him. He felt that he might work after he earned an A.A. degree in engineering. Kike stated, "If I get a job before that [transfer] and I make more money then I might be okay." Kike implied that the transfer process was very intimidating for students. The researcher found that transfer information was also daunting for many of the respondents.

Transfer Information Paralysis

Transfer information paralysis was experienced when Latina/o students received an abundance of transfer information from an academic counselor or attendance at a transfer information workshop, which created fear and overwhelming reactions that pushed them out of the transfer pathway. Participants voiced concerns about the transfer information that they were provided by academic counselors. Many expressed feeling overwhelmed with transfer information like April who was interested in a career in the

medical profession. April explained that the academic counselors inundated her with information, which caused her to believe that it would take her 6 to 7 years to transfer:

> It was overwhelming [meeting with the counselor]. Because there's so many universities and so many options. I just came back to California so to have to consider an out-of-state college [fee] and have to be away from the little bit of family I have left, it's overwhelming. Thinking about it [transfer] gives me a headache.

April had planned on providing a better future for her two children by earning a bachelor's degree. Yet, transfer facts shared by academic counselors caused a transfer to appear far-reaching, resulting in transfer information paralysis, a critical point. The extensive amount of options, time, and costs that were associated with transfer pushed out April from the transfer path. She said:

> The regular counselors they just overwhelmed me with "These are all the classes you need to take. All of the 1,000 classes." I don't think I have that kind of time. I'm almost 30 [years old]. I have children who depend on me. It's not just me anymore.

April shifted her education goal to earn an A.S. degree in radiology. April planned to obtain national certification with the American Society of Radiologic Technologists (ASRT) to earn additional annual income. April believed that her educational focus was where she needed to be even though she felt disappointed with herself about no longer being on the transfer path. She had the intellectual ability to tackle the academic rigors of a 4-year university but was overwhelmed by the information about transfer.

Another student with a strong academic background, Irene, was frightened of the transfer process due to the information she received at an EOPS workshop. She had also recently met with an academic counselor and learned about transfer requirements. Irene discovered that she was eligible to receive an A.S. degree in science upon completion of

a math class she was currently taking. She would need to take four additional classes to be eligible to transfer to a CSU.

Irene and I spoke about the transfer information she had received from the workshop and an academic counselor. She expressed her fears and described being very overwhelmed with the requirements and associated costs:

> We went to the little workshop that we had last week on Saturday. And just the way they talk about it [transfer] and everything makes me scared. Because this is all new to me. None of my family has been to college or anything like that. It is very scary for me just to think about that I have to transfer.

Irene had recently changed her educational goal and would apply to the nursing program:

> I decided to start looking into the nursing [program]. . . . I feel like I do want to become a nurse. I feel like communicating with people and even helping them, reaching out, I think I like that.

Irene had been pushed out of the transfer pathway and expressed ambivalence about this change.

Responses to No Longer Being on Transfer Path

The second area of findings, responses to no longer being on the transfer path, are associated with Research Question 2 responses of Latina/o community college students no longer being on the transfer path. The sub-themes that emerged from the responses to no longer being on the transfer path are (a) emotional relief, (b) academic accomplishment, and (c) A.A./A.S. degree as a stepping stone. Participants in this study were generally pleased that they were obtaining an A.A./A.S. degree or certificate and experienced emotional relief after shifting away from the transfer path.

Emotional Relief

A common thread that connected participants with their shift away from transfer was their stress reduction. Most students on the transfer path described feeling worried and often overwhelmed with coursework, funds, and personal responsibilities. Thinking about and planning for transfer was an added pressure that respondents found difficult to manage.

Ana had met frequently with her FYE counselor and received much information about transfer requirements. The transfer material was helpful; yet, it was taxing for Ana to consider her personal academic issues connected to the transfer requirements. Ana had a fragile high school educational foundation so she was taking developmental English, math, and science coursework. Ana was successfully strengthening her academic skills to progress toward transferable college level classes, and she understood that transferable coursework would be more demanding. Each semester, she would be required to attend another community college to take additional courses to finish the units necessary to graduate by the May 2015 deadline. She expressed:

> I feel less stressed because when I had my mind set to transfer out, I knew that I needed to take more than four classes at a time, that I needed to go to more than one school to get those classes, so when I changed my mind of transferring, I knew that whole going from school to school would change.

Ana felt that working toward an A.S. degree in nursing was the best decision she could make at the moment due to her academic, financial, and transportation circumstances. She would not have to meet the strict course completion target date of spring 2015. Ana could move through the developmental courses and begin the transferable courses at her own pace. Ana felt positive about her decision not to transfer,

particularly to maintain her personal health. Ana explained, "I feel like it is something good in a way [not transferring], definitely good because having so much pressure is never healthy."

Emilio also expressed that it was best for him not to transfer because he felt very overwhelmed thinking about transfer requirements. Emilio stated that transfer was too challenging several times throughout the interview. He also lacked the confidence to move to a 4-year university, which may be related to internalized racism:

> It [transfer] was too hard from me. I don't think I would be able to do it. Seven, 6 years, maybe 8 [years]. I don't know though, to transfer. I guess I just wasn't high skilled in knowledge. I wasn't as smart as the requirements the UC needed.

Emilio shifted his transfer goal and focused on completing an A.A. degree in CIT. He felt that school was the only worthwhile endeavor in his life, a belief that countered the dominant discourse that Latina/o students did not value education (Valencia, 2010; Valencia & Black, 2002). Emilio wanted to get out of a fast food minimum wage job to a skilled CIT position where he felt more confident and emotional relief to focus his efforts. Emilio also felt that obtaining an A.A. degree in CIT would be an academic accomplishment given that he was the first person in his family to attend college.

Academic Accomplishment

Henry acknowledged that he needed to build his confidence and felt that working toward an associate's degree in psychology would be a sign of academic accomplishment. He said, "building up my confidence and seeing that I could do it and not giving up" would move him forward and provide personal fulfillment.

Max was also very focused on completing an A.A. degree in communication studies. He had received an educational plan and made school a priority rather than

socializing with friends. Max said he sacrificed his social life to spend time studying. He described himself as being much more mature and having more self-control and a clear educational path. These were features he did not have when he enrolled in community college 12 years ago.

Max felt that progressing toward a degree was more important than working a low skilled full-time job. He expressed that money was temporary but a college degree lasted a lifetime, which counters the dominant ideology that Latinas/os are not focused on education (Valencia, 2010; Valencia & Black, 2002). Max also felt that obtaining an associate's degree was important for him to make his parents proud since he was the only child. "I don't want to let my family down because . . . I am their only child," he said, "so if I do something like that, achieve that degree, I know that would really make them feel proud." Max felt self-pride and academic accomplishment in earning an A.A. degree in communications because he would be the first person in his family to complete a higher education degree.

Similarly, Marleny's mother had expected her to attend college. Marleny's two siblings' had achieved undergraduate degrees and some of her high school friends had completed higher education. Marleny was enthusiastic about completing a certificate in child development, which she felt was a significant academic accomplishment.

> The friends that I made in high school they've all . . . achieved a lot [educationally] and I'm like . . . that kind of encourages me too because . . . I'm getting there too you know. I mean, if they can do it, I think I can too.

The certification would prepare Marleny for employment in a childcare setting. She felt pressure to return to work because she was receiving county assistance while caring for her two young children, ages 4 and 1. Marleny's academic accomplishment

was also noted in her leadership ability as a parent volunteer. She was nominated to lead the parent group at her college childcare center, though it was scheduled to close at the end of the semester. Marleny's peers trusted her as their spokesperson and she graciously acquiesced to that responsibility.

A.A./A.S. Degree as a "Stepping Stone"

Many interviewees felt that reaching their immediate educational goal was a "stepping stone" on their educational pathway. Pedro, Max, and David's responses varied in relation to how they felt about their short-term educational goal. Most believed that obtaining an A.A./A.S. degree or certificate was a stepping stone on their educational trajectory.

Pedro was a student who felt that obtaining an A.A. degree in general studies was a step in the direction of transfer to a 4-year university. He had registered at community college after learning from a high school friend that it was a good place to begin higher education before transferring to a 4-year institution.

Pedro continued to have aspirations to transfer but could not do so unless he took a math course at another community college. Pedro had spent several semesters exploring the idea of taking the math course elsewhere. He discovered math course options at surrounding community colleges but he had not registered. Pedro remained optimistic about transfer but essentially stuck at community college due to his inability to pass a math course. "My [education] goal is an A.A. degree and transfer to a 4-year institution and do my actual major at a 4-year institution," Pedro said.

Max was inspired to return to community college by a first-generation Latina college student who was completing her final year of undergraduate coursework. Since

Max had attended two other community colleges without having a clear path, he was enthusiastic about having a solid education plan and an identified major in communication studies.

> I was looking at the different majors. . . . Then, I saw communications and I said, "What's this?" . . . It's totally my subject just being able to speak in front of people . . . It's just totally my personality. There are so many things you can do with communications.

Max had placed education as his top priority and spent more time studying during the past semester when he re-registered in community college. He felt that being enrolled at community college was a positive experience and was optimistic about his eventual transfer.

Max had spoken with a few friends about 4-year universities and narrowed his college choice down to two local CSUs. He felt that an A.A. degree was a progressive step toward a bachelor's degree:

> An A.A. is just kind of like okay, thank you very much now let's move on to the next one [degree]. I just really can't wait to transfer . . . Now it's just all I think about is to transfer out. I really want to get a bachelor's if anything and then move on from there.

David also felt that he did not want to end higher education at community college. He believed that a community college education provided the foundation to a 4-year university. "You know junior college always to my understanding was it's always a stepping stone to a university . . . I always thought that that was the direction you had to go," said David.

Once David received his A.A. in psychology, he learned that he could remain at a community college. David felt that he became more knowledgeable about transfer requirements upon receiving an admissions denial letter from a 4-year university. He

chose to strengthen his academic foundation. David had applied to several community college's nursing programs and planned to someday obtain a bachelor's degree in nursing.

Race, Class, and Gender Effects on Transfer

The third research question that guided this study investigated how the intersections of race, class, and gender mediate the community college pathway experience. The main finding of this research question, race, class, and gender effects on transfer, exposed three sub-themes, (a) negative perceptions of race, (b) erratic and limited resources, and (c) fulfilling gender role expectations.

Participants had varied involvement with race, class, and gender experiences that affected their transfer path experiences. Some students acknowledged stereotyped racial experiences that affected their transfer path experiences. The entire sample recognized class-specific challenges related to an erratic financial situation. Latina students described fulfilling gender role expectations on multiple levels including juggling caregiver responsibilities for extended family members or their own children while attending classes, and maintaining employment. In general, Latino participants denied that being a male was connected to their transfer pathway experiences. David and Max noted that they had observed the broad presence of Latinas on campus or college completion comments on social media, specifically Facebook.

Negative Perceptions of Race

Participants who described racial stereotyping K-12 schooling experiences also recognized discriminatory incidents at community colleges. The stereotyped incidents affected these student's confidence and transfer aspirations, thus shifting their education

goals. Students also discussed discriminatory incidents within the Latina/o community. Other students in the sample discussed race related incidents as indirect to their educational experiences.

April candidly discussed her K-12 schooling experiences as related to discrimination. In private primary and secondary school, April was academically successful and excelled in science. She entered public school during high school and traveled a distance from her home in South Los Angeles to a magnet high school, which was located in a predominantly White upper middle-class community. April described feeling alienated from her peers and made to feel unwanted. She said that she felt like a morsel of brown sugar surrounded by a mountain of white salt. April recalled that she would be removed from classes and suspended from school due to her disruptive behavior. Her grades plummeted and her intellectual confidence declined. "I just barely did what I needed to do to pass because I didn't want to go to that [high] school. I went from having A's and B's in ninth grade [to] having D's and fails," April stated.

April continued to maintain low grades and fell behind in high school credits. She attended a local community college to earn the necessary credits and graduated from high school on schedule. Eventually, April enrolled in a private career college and left as the coursework, specifically math, became more challenging.

Several years later, April enrolled in community college and she experienced stereotyped perceptions of her ethnicity. April said that staff were surprised that she was Latina and shocked that she did not speak Spanish fluently.

> When it comes to meeting staff members who are upper in a division or just management, when they hear how I speak . . . I always can read their facial

> expressions. "Oh, you don't speak Spanish fluently?" [I said], "No, I just took Spanish last semester."

Stereotyped opinions about April's ethnicity had an adverse impact on her academic performance. She felt that her class work began to align with instructor's negative views related to her appearance. Her academic performance would sometimes reflect their poor self-perceptions. April stated that these experiences had a great impact on her motivation.

> In some . . . classes my work says one thing and the way I look says another thing. So because they [professors] perceive me as the way I look then my work starts looking that way or [I] start not really giving it my all.

April's reflection exemplified the raced experiences that have had a negative influence on her ability to move through the higher education pipeline (Fernández, 2002).

Kike's story paralleled April's story in relation to racial stereotyped experiences and was different because he also felt discrimination within the Latina/o ethnic group. As a young immigrant student, Kike's peers teased him because he spoke a different dialect of Spanish than Chicano Spanish. Taunting from Chicano classmates was a result of internalized racism, which perpetuated majoritarian stereotypes. The Chicano children learned negative stereotypes about Latinas/os and acted them out onto one another as they did with Kike. As he learned English, he was mocked about his pronunciation of the English language. Kike's primary English teacher was the television. Kike said that he watched television regularly and was able to remember words and phrases. Kike felt that his English as a Second Language (ESL) class impacted his ability to learn English at a faster rate.

Kike's academic performance was also obstructed because he was expelled from the middle school district he attended in West Los Angeles. He was found with a pack of cigarettes in his pocket and was not able to return to middle school. Kike lost interest in schooling and spent time in the community with boys who were truant from school. Kike suffered emotionally and eventually was arrested and placed in juvenile hall where he reconnected with education. "I found that I could study when I was inside [juvenile hall]. I found some education while I was in there . . . I did some reading and learned and after that I got out from those misfortunate things," he said. Kike may have fallen into the school-to-prison-pipeline, which places students of color at risk for delinquency and involvement in the juvenile and criminal justice system (Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2005) due to being expelled from school (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Fenning & Rose, 2007; Tuzzolo & Hewitt, 2006).

Kike was released from juvenile hall and reregistered in public high school. Kike reestablished his interest in education though he was advanced to the next grade whether or not he completed class assignments. Educational motivation was soon lost and he was placed in a high school continuation program. He was given GED coursework packets and studied at home. Kike earned a GED and admitted that at that time education was not a priority. Immediately, he found minimum wage jobs as a dishwasher at a local restaurant and then a service worker at McDonald's.

Several years later, Kike enrolled in nearby community colleges and took various art classes. He earned low grades and left college to seek employment. A decade and a half later, Kike registered at Cove Community College's paralegal program because he

was involved in a legal dispute. He performed well and enjoyed school. He remained at Cove because he had not been successful at maintaining employment.

Kike felt that education could assist him with developing job skills so that he could maintain a stable position in the workforce. He had recently changed his major from drafting to engineering. Kike found that being in the engineering program was both academically and personally challenging. He experienced self-doubt and an external push against his efforts to do well as an engineering student. Kike explained that this push was something he had also experienced in the work world:

> I feel like the surrounding world around me is kind of pushing against me and saying, "No, you can't do it. You're not an engineer." I have to work through that and I have to go through it. I have to prove it. Not to them [the outside world nor] to anyone else but just me.

Kike's subtle and overt raced K-12 schooling experiences reappeared and overwhelmed him. He reacted by becoming verbally aggressive with an engineering instructor. This conduct was similar to his behavior as a young child. Consequently, Kike was removed and suspended from the class. He became connected to the campus Special Resource Center (SRC) and had developed more effective coping skills.

Kike continuously felt that the coursework was very difficult, which created frustration and depleted his confidence. Intellectual uncertainty led Kike to feel that he might not be smart enough to be academically successful. Contrary, during our meeting there were instances when Kike's confidence soared above his doubt. Kike articulated that he believed that he could be scholastically successful in a 4-year university. Kike's immediate concern was securing financial support to live while he concentrated on coursework to maintain a high GPA.

Erratic and Limited Resources

Most of the participants in this study came from low socioeconomic circumstances. All had some type of challenge with obtaining and maintaining financial aid during the course of their community college enrollment. During their initial college registration, Alicia and Irene had not qualified for financial assistance due to their immigration status. Both participants were receiving financial support from GAIN or EOPS. They were both uncertain if they could obtain financial aid in a 4-year university. Other respondents had experienced erratic financial aid assistance due to federal and state policy changes that reduced community college financial aid allocations.

Christine was a student who experienced unstable financial assistance, which resulted in inconsistent college registration. She was raising a 4-year-old with unstable transportation, unreliable childcare, and limited finances. Christine also received some financial support from her boyfriend who was her daughter's father. She required financial aid to maintain steady enrollment in courses and reach her educational goals.

Christine had always prioritized education but her basic survival needs and her daughter's well-being superseded college. When Christine was not enrolled in classes she worked and saved money for educational expenses. "I needed to work and go to school to help bring in the money. I was saving up [for school expenses] while I was working to do that [enroll in the cosmetology program]," she said.

Irene was a community college student for the past 7 years and would complete an A.S. degree in science at the end of the semester. She had paid for all of her educational expenses until recently when she received DACA. Irene now qualifies for

the BOG and the EOPS program and was very inspired to remain in school because she was receiving financial assistance from community college.

Irene planned to enroll in the nursing program because she was concerned that she could not pay for expenses at a 4-year university. Irene had the same financial dilemma 7 years prior, when she declined admissions to the CSU because she believed that she could not afford to pay for a university education. She explained:

> It's a lot of money. How am going to do it [transfer]? Especially because I'm not getting financial [aid] or anything like that. So I'm just keeping both of my doors open just to be on the safe side, just in case I do want to transfer . . . or do the nursing program here [at Cove Community College].

David had financial assistance from the Veterans Administration (VA) because he was a vet. At times, he chose not to register for classes due to his family's financial circumstances. David said, "If I see my family maybe not doing so well financially, I'll be like, I don't have time for school. I've got to take care of the kids." David felt the pull of being a good financial provider for his family and described this emphasis in fulfilling gender role expectations in relation to his race and class backgrounds.

Fulfilling Gender Role Expectations

Participants in the sample discussed fulfilling gender role expectations in various areas of their lives including child-rearing responsibilities, extended family obligations, and for some, eventual parenthood. Some students selected to break away from fulfilling gender role expectations, at least temporarily. Jasmine and Ana clarified that they had prioritized higher education and chose to wait for marriage and motherhood.

As Jasmine discussed with this researcher her history of half a decade of housing and financial insecurity, she remarked that many of her friends had at least one child.

She viewed motherhood within the context of her current life circumstances and felt it may be a future undertaking.

> Ninety percent of my friends have kids now and not going to school, not working and their boyfriends [are] just working . . . a minimum wage . . . job and they're living with their parents. I've always been very independent and I want to stay that way but there's always a time to have family and a husband.

Jasmine took a pragmatic approach to fulfilling gender role expectations. She was concerned about needing to be reliant on others due to childrearing responsibilities. Jasmine was avoiding being placed in a vulnerable position with unstable resources. Jasmine's current educational goals were important to move her from her current existence of survival to a life of stability.

Max exemplified a young Latino male who enjoyed life during his 20s. He lived with his parents and had limited responsibilities. Max worked a full-time job during the week and partied frequently. A decade earlier, Max had registered at two different community colleges but was not focused or serious about studying. He returned to college a decade later, more mature and interested in earning an associate's degree.

Max was aware that not many Latino males attended higher education and even fewer graduated. He referred to information that he heard about the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Max explained, "I just found out that UCLA doesn't have very many Hispanic students at all." Max internalized and perpetuated the majoritarian myth that Latino students do not receive encouragement from their families (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Max explained, "I don't know if it comes from the family not motivating or they don't have the money, but if they don't, there is financial aid."

Max had recently met a Latina student who had inspired him to reregister in community college. She was a first-generation college student completing her final semester at a local 4-year university. Max was hopeful that he would earn an A.A. degree and transfer to a university. He was now concerned about fulfilling gender role expectations.

> I see the bigger picture as far as earning a better salary because as males we want to be able to provide for a family, of course. So eventually if I ever meet my wife one day and have kids, I have a steady income to provide for them. It's a huge thing in my life that I'm thinking [about]. I'm thinking about that income for them [my family].

Max was planning for his future family's financial security and felt he would be able to financially care for a family by earning higher wages. A college degree would assist Max with fulfilling his gender role expectations.

Participants described their own stereotypical gender role behaviors—females as caretakers and males as financially responsible for their families. A few of the males students, Max and David, were clearly stumped by their personal observations that Latina females were attending and completing college at higher rates than Latino males. Max indicated, "I personally feel that the girls are smarter than men." He noticed that more girls on Facebook were posting their academic accolades. Max stated that he did not feel that more females enrolling in higher education impacted his educational pathway.

David felt that it was now harder for Latino males to care for their families because Latina females were becoming more independent. He believed that Latinas might have observed their mothers' dependence on their fathers. David alluded to the idea that financial dependency on males sometimes placed women in precarious situations.

David also believed that many Latinas/os learned how easy it was to receive financial aid and register in community college as a way to earn money. He felt that some male students would use financial aid awards to purchase vehicles and some girls departed when they met a boyfriend. David stated, "They [Latina students] pass the first semester and the second semester they're like, well you know, I've got my boyfriend now." He felt that many students did not plan for their future. David expressed that he was planning for his family's future and his retirement because he did not want to suffer a financial crisis as an older adult.

Conclusion

The focus of this qualitative research study provided an opportunity to give voice to students of color, which is scarcely represented in educational scholarship (Fernández, 2002). The Latina/o respondents were encouraged to share their educational experiences via the use of storytelling methodology with a thematic analysis. Participants' stories offered their perspective about their K-12 schooling and California community college transfer pathway experiences.

Brief biographical introductions of combined characteristics and individual information were provided for the reader to establish a context for participants' stories (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The researcher included nuanced information of participants to help the reader gain an appreciation for their uniqueness. The researcher opposes the dominant narrative that offers an incomplete understand of Latinas/os. Rather, a comprehensive and diverse representation of the sample was provided so that each respondent's story is characterized (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Four sub-themes emerged related to the major finding in Research Question 1, critical points, (a) probation jeopardizes financial aid, (b) figuring out course load, (c) transition from developmental to college coursework, and (d) transfer information paralysis. Participants discussed how they were coping and identified critical points along the transfer pathway. Students experienced one or more critical points at various intensities as they moved through their educational trajectories.

Research Question 2 responses to no longer being on the transfer pathway revealed three sub-themes, (a) emotional relief, (b) academic accomplishment, and (c) A.A./A.S. degree as a stepping stone. Overall, respondents felt emotional relief as they shifted away from the transfer pathway. Some students expressed the need to focus on an associate's degree or certificate to build employment skills so they could move out of minimum wage or low paying jobs. Many participants stated that they would feel a sense of academic accomplishment when they completed their educational goals at a community college. Most respondents stated that they felt that earning an associate's degree was a stepping stone to the next phase of their educational pipeline journey.

Latina/o students exposed various degrees of race, class, and gender experiences on the community college transfer pathway, which was the focus of Research Question 3. The students who identified race, class, and gender occurrences during their K-12 schooling experiences often discussed similar experiences in community college. Latina/o students in the sample mentioned that their economic status was an area that interfered with their ability to advance on the transfer pathway. Respondents who had children included their responsibilities as parents framed within their gender role expectations. The researcher will discuss her insights about the research findings,

implications, and recommendations for practice, policy and future research in Chapter 5 of this research study.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The final chapter of this qualitative research study will provide an overview of the research findings and recommendations for policy, practice, and future research. The researcher will review the purpose of the study and the problem presented as a result of a comprehensive literature review. A discussion about the methodology used in the investigation will be cited. The study's findings will be summarized and an analysis of the significance of the findings will be offered. A reflection of the researchers recommendations for future policy, practice, and research are considered.

Summary of Study

Latinas/os represent the largest ethnic group in California and are underrepresented in higher education. Conversely, Latina/o high school dropout rates have decreased by a half since 2000; their high school completion rates have increased; and their college enrollment rates have also grown and surpassed White students by 2% (Fry & Taylor, 2013). Yet, Latina/o student college completion rates are the lowest of any other racial or ethnic group, including Whites. Low college completion rates for Latina/o students may be a result of insufficient K–12 public education schooling practices and experiences (Melguizo, 2009).

According to Yosso and Solórzano (2006), 46 out of 100 Latina/o elementary school children will graduate from high school. Of the 46 Latinas/os who complete high school, 26 will attend college. About two-thirds of Latinas/os who enroll in college, 17, will register at a community college. One of the 17 Latina/o students who attend community college will transfer to a 4-year university (Yosso & Solórzano).

Studies support that although, most Latina/o community college students initially plan to attend a 4-year institution, few actually transfer from a community college to a 4-year university (Perez & Ceja, 2010). Little is known about the experiences of these Latina/o community college students who do not transfer or move through the higher education pipeline to degree attainment. The literature typically focuses on those Latina/o students who have successfully transferred to a 4-year institution and earned a bachelor's degree. Scholarship generally points to Latina/o students as responsible for their low educational outcomes (Valencia, 2010; Valencia & Black, 2002).

In order to understand how Latina/o students educational experiences were influenced by institutional factors, it was necessary to explore and identify the critical points on the transfer pathway where Latina/o students are pushed out. It was also important to examine how Latina/o students responded to being pushed out of the transfer pathway and how did race, class, and gender affect their transfer pathway aspirations and experiences.

The principal research questions that guided this study were:

1. What are the critical points where Latina/o community college students are pushed out of the transfer path?

2. How do Latina/o community college students respond to no longer being on the transfer path?

3. How do the intersections of race, class, and gender mediate the community college pathway experience?

The researcher used a qualitative inquiry to explore Latina/o community college student transfer pathway aspirations and experiences and narrow the gap in the literature related to these students. The research design included a counterstorytelling approach with a thematic analysis. Counterstorytelling was used to position student stories at the center of the research study and gave voice to their perspectives and experiences on the transfer pathway (Fernández, 2002). Counterstorytelling also gives students of color the opportunity to be heard and to validate their educational experiences (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Fernández, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Data was collected by the use of a demographic survey and 14 one-hour, face-to-face interviews. The demographic survey identified specific group characteristics of the sample, such as age range, ethnic sub-group, and languages spoken at home. The interview protocol was developed in conjunction with the research questions, literature review, and the CRT theoretical framework. The researcher piloted the demographic survey and interview protocol with several Latina/o community college students who were not participants in the actual study. These students offered the researcher feedback regarding the survey and protocol structure. Adjustments were made to the survey and protocol by the researcher to enhance the flow of the interviews and increase the depth of the data.

The respondents who were chosen to participate in the study were current Latina/o community college students attending three southern California community colleges. All respondents met the criteria for participation in the study, which included being a current self-identified Latina/o community college student between 18 and 60 years old, and no longer transferring to a 4-year institution. All participants were earning an associate's degree or certificate.

The researcher recruited participants primarily from Cove Community College (all college names, pseudonyms), located in the South Bay area of Los Angeles County. The Cove EOPS/CARE and FYE program directors served as gatekeepers that assisted with participant recruitment. Invitational fliers were distributed and 11 Cove students contacted the researcher via email, telephone, or text messaging. Three respondents were recruited via a snowball sampling. One respondent attended Ocean Community College located in the South Bay area of Los Angeles County. Two participants attended Sky View Community College located in the eastern part of Los Angeles County.

The sample consisted of 14 Latina/o community college students who were similar in several respects. Participants included 8 women and 6 men representing four Latina/o subgroups, Mexican–Mexican America, Salvadorian, Guatemalan, and Puerto Rican. One respondent was about 41 years old and the others were between the ages of 18 and 35 years old. More than half of the participants had attended two or more community colleges in Southern California. All respondents were from low-income backgrounds and first-generation college students who received little or no college information in high school (Chapa & Schink, 2006; Monroe, 2006).

The researcher used a professional transcriptionist to transcribe the 14 interviews. Upon receiving the transcribed verbatim interviews, the documents were reviewed for accuracy while listening to the audio-recorded interviews. The researcher reviewed each transcription 6 additional times to code, categorize, and identify themes using an iterative hand coding process. An affective coding method was used, which included emotional, values, and versus coding using a CRT lens (Saldaña, 2011). A handwritten codebook was created and organized in sections related to the three research questions and a sub-question. Pink colored tabs were used to classify codes for critical points, blue colored tabs were used to code barriers to transfer, lavender colored tabs were used to identify participant responses to no longer being on the transfer path, and green colored tabs were used to characterize codes related to race, class, and gender affects on the transfer pathway. Sub-themes began to surface via the use of this thematic analysis.

Findings

Summary of the Results

The researcher organized the study's findings by three major themes: critical points; responses to no longer being on the transfer path; and race, class, and gender affects on transfer. Sub-themes developed within each finding. The first major finding, critical points, exposed four sub-themes: probation jeopardizes financial aid, figuring out caseload, transition from developmental to college coursework, and transfer information paralysis. The second major finding, responses to no longer being on the transfer path, uncovered three sub-themes: emotional relief, academic accomplishment, and A.A./A.S. degree as a stepping stone. The third major finding, race, class, and gender affects on transfer revealed three sub-themes. The sub-themes were negative perceptions of race,

erratic and limited resources, and fulfilling gender role expectations. A summary of the study's three main findings is presented including sub-themes that emerged within each finding.

Critical Points

What are the critical points where Latina/o community college students are pushed out of the transfer path?

The study identified critical points as specific points on the educational journey that adversely affected advancement through the pipeline. The critical points finding distinguished four sub-themes on the transfer path that pushed out Latina/o community college students from the transfer path. The four sub-themes included probation jeopardizes financial aid, figuring out course load, transition from developmental to college coursework, and transfer information paralysis. Critical points were associated with units completed and the years in community college.

The critical points were connected to the number of transferable and nontransferable community college units' students had completed and were related to the number of calendar years in community college. The critical points were organized within the pipeline as units because Latina/o students were often placed in developmental education courses that were not transferable. For example, Emilio was a student who was currently enrolled in his 3rd year of community college. He had completed 50 community college units. Though, most of those units were not transferable. Emilio had recently figured out that it would take him 3 additional years to become transfer ready, which discouraged him and pushed him out of the transfer pathway.

The critical points were placed on a pipeline continuum where students who had completed up to 24 transferable and nontransferable course units were considered 1st year community college students. Students who had completed between 25-48 transferable and nontransferable course units were considered to be in the 2nd year of community college. Students who had completed 49-72 transferable and nontransferable course units were in their 3rd year of community college. And, students who had completed 73-96 transferable and nontransferable course units were in the 4th year of community college.

Sub-themes

Probation jeopardizes financial aid. As Latina/o students entered community college they did not have an understanding of the college policies that could jeopardize their financial aid awards. Specifically, several of the students were on progress probation because they had withdrawn from classes due to issues such as unreliable transportation, unstable childcare, and financial insecurity. Progress probation status resulted in a conditional financial aid suspension.

Jasmine and Christine dropped classes because they fell behind in course assignments. Jasmine had started the semester late, worked three jobs, and used public transportation. Christine had attended classes inconsistently due to unreliable transportation, lack of childcare, and financial instability. Both students were not able to catch up with course assignments so they felt that dropping a few classes was a better choice than obtaining poor grades, which would impact their GPA. Either a low GPA or too many withdrawals on their transcripts would lead these students to some form of probation and conditional suspension from financial aid.

Both students were placed on progress probation because the course withdrawals on their transcripts outnumbered the courses with letter grades. Consequently, both students changed their educational goals. Jasmine was taking classes toward an A.A. degree in studio art, and Christine was enrolled in a cosmetology certificate program. Being placed on progress probation interrupting financial aid payments resulting in Jasmine and Christine being pushed out of the transfer pathway.

Figuring out course load. Another critical point that arose from the data was the actuality of figuring out course load requirements. As Latina/o students entered community college, they believed that it would take them 2 years to complete college coursework and transfer. As they moved through their 2nd year of community college, defined as the completion of more than 24 transferable and nontransferable units, most students figured out that they would need to take a significant amount of nontransferable classes sometimes within the three core subject areas of math, science, and English. A few students explained that it would be necessary to take up to seven classes sometimes in more than one core area to be eligible for transferable coursework.

Other students figured out that if they took 12 units per semester, it would take 3 to 3½ years to transfer due to limited course offerings and taking classes that did not transfer. Once some students figured out course load demands and calculated the number of additional years they would need to be ready for transfer, they were pushed out of the transfer pathway.

Transition from developmental to transferable coursework. Many students had difficulty advancing from developmental coursework to transferable courses. Students in the sample made reference to math as a subject that they did not like and described

having much difficulty with math classes. Most participants had taken a developmental math class and several were not able to advance to transferable math coursework.

One respondent, Pedro, had lost the opportunity to take a transferable math class at a community college because he had three previous attempts at taking that class. Due to a policy stipulation in the Student Success Act, students were restricted to three attempts at a class in one specific community college. Pedro was required to take the math class at a different community college, which pushed him out of the transfer pathway.

Another student, Kike, stated that he had difficulty with developmental math coursework, which he was required to take to earn an A.S. degree in engineering. Kike described the challenges he had with developmental math classes, which created frustration and discouragement. Kike stated that he might not transfer if he could secure a good paying job with an A.S. degree. Several students experienced difficulty progressing from developmental classes to transferable coursework creating a critical point where they were pushed out of the transfer pathway.

Transfer information paralysis. The fourth sub-theme that appeared from the critical points finding was related to the abundance of knowledge gained from academic counselors that created a transfer information paralysis. Many students experienced the information learned from academic counselors as confusing and overwhelming. Students were given a lot of information related to transfer requirements from community colleges and universities, university program options, and college cost. Students sometimes agonized over the various choices, subtle program requirements, and uncertainties about

financial resources that may be offered by 4-year universities resulting in transfer information paralysis and a push out from the transfer pathway.

Responses to No Longer Being on Transfer Path

How do Latina/o community college students respond to no longer being on the transfer path?

The study's second major finding, responses to no longer being on the transfer path, included three sub-themes; emotional relief; academic accomplishment; and A.A./A.S. degree as a stepping stone. Students expressed various feelings about movement away from the transfer pathway.

Most of the Latina/o students in the sample were at ease about their shift in educational goals from transfer to an A.A./A.S. degree or certificate and were working toward a manageable educational goal. These students felt a sense of emotional relief as they experienced a reduction in stress. Some respondents expressed that they had been overwhelmed by the significant amount of personal and academic responsibilities. These students had been submerged with trying to understand transfer requirements, completing coursework, maintaining a high GPA, and comprehending the various program options offered at universities of interest. In addition to these tasks, many of the students worked part- or full-time jobs and some were caring for their children or had extended family responsibilities.

Many students believed that earning an associate's degree was an important academic achievement. These students had a considerably high level of duties and were first-generation college students who were very committed to staying in college. The majority of respondents was the first in their family to attend college and thought that

completing an associate's degree was a stepping stone to the next level of education. Respondents had mixed emotional reactions as they reconstructed their educational pathway.

Sub-themes

Emotional relief. Some participants expressed feeling emotional relief upon being pushed out of the transfer path. Respondents felt that learning about transfer requirements, difficulty being able to progress from developmental to college coursework, large course loads, many program options and university costs were overwhelming and frightening. Some students stated that they were better able to focus on their immediate education goals of earning an associate degree or certification and might consider transfer after their short-term educational goal was completed.

Academic accomplishment. Student's expressed feeling less stressed and felt a sense of academic accomplishment as they moved toward certification or an associate's degree. Most students referenced the fact that they were the first in their family to attend higher education. They felt a sense of individual, familial, and community success. Many students believed that their educational achievement at community college was a stepping stone to the next level of education.

A.A./A.S. degree as a stepping stone. Numerous students stated that earning an associate's degree or certificate was movement forward on their educational pathways. They stated that earning an A.A./A.S. degree was a stepping stone toward advancing to their subsequent academic goal. Taking smaller steps forward were more manageable for students then a leap toward transfer. Students also talked about being labeled in relation

to their race, class, and gender, which impacted their movement forward on the transfer pathway.

Race, Class, and Gender Affects on Transfer

How do the intersections of race, class, and gender mediate the community college transfer pathway experience?

Some of the respondents in the study discussed their experiences with race, class, and gender stereotypes. A few students recognized that because they were Latina, staff and faculty expected them to speak Spanish. These students described their confusion about the reactions that some of the staff expressed toward them, such as anger for not speaking Spanish. Several students stated that they were affected by the negative reactions that faculty had toward them in relation to their race, which caused them to perform poorly academically. Male and female students in the study had various experiences with gender role expectations primarily related to their cultural background and the dominant cultural beliefs. David and Max articulated their personal observations about the limited number of Latino male students in college versus the large number of Latina female students who earned degrees.

Sub-theme

Negative perceptions of race. Several respondents articulated their confusion and lack of confidence about some faculty and staff reactions toward their race. These students felt that some staff were appalled because they were not Spanish-speaking. Students reported receiving anger and sometimes humiliating remarks, which created bewilderment and caused them to feel inadequate. Students explained that these experiences were harmful to their academic performance.

Some students stated that they had to consciously manage self-doubt. One student, Kike, was removed from the classroom due to being verbally aggressive with an instructor. The negative perceptions of race weigh heavily on this student who was very sensitive to stereotypes and felt that the engineering major caused others to question his ability. The skepticism that others projected toward Kike caused him to have uncertainty about his intellectual capability. Class perceptions also created adverse occurrences.

Erratic and limited resources. All respondents discussed being impacted by their economic circumstances due to erratic and limited resources. Most students were dealing with personal financial challenges, which significantly affected their ability to enroll in courses each semester, purchase books, and attend classes regularly.

A few immigrant students explained that when they initially registered at community college, they received no financial aid due to their undocumented immigration status. These students were grateful for the financial assistance they were currently receiving but felt uncertain that in the future they would consistently receive financial aid, which created fear and anxiety. College policies impacted students' financial situations including progress probation, which resulted in a conditional financial aid suspension. Sometimes students did not have money to purchase course books or funds for transportation. Unstable financial conditions impacted student's ability to efficiently move through the transfer path.

Fulfilling gender role expectations. Female and male respondents discussed traditional and non-traditional gender role expectations. Female students without children questioned their gender role expectations of marriage and motherhood. These students discussed the pull away from motherhood and a focus on higher education.

Conversely, those Latinas who had children were concerned about the well being of their children's future. Their children were their highest priority and these students planned their school schedule around their children's childcare and school schedules. The mothers directly and indirectly expressed that their children influenced their movement forward on their educational pathway.

While, Latino males referenced their gender role expectations as a significant motivation for success in higher education. All male respondents considered education in relation to the need to obtain an elevated income to care for a wife and children or to purchase a home. David revealed that he would sometimes chose not to register for classes so that he could earn more money for his family's needs. Max was the only male student who seemed certain that someday he would transfer to a 4-year university. Other male participants had plans to obtain training in a specific vocational area. These students felt that the training would offer an array of employment options and financial security to care for a family or purchase a home.

Discussion

Critical Points

Probation jeopardizes financial aid. This sub-theme suggests that Latina/o community college students are pushed out of the transfer path because they enter college with little or no knowledge about higher education policies, procedures, and practices (Chapa & Schink, 2006; Monroe, 2006). Students often learned to navigate the community college system on their own and experienced significant opposing consequences as they learn about the rules and regulations. The participants in the study who were placed on academic or progress probation quickly learned that probation

jeopardized their financial aid award. Financial assistance was vital to these working class students who often could not enroll in courses without monetary support.

Cove's policies were informed by the Student Success Act, which placed these students in a no-win situation, because financial aid would not be accessible to them as a result of the policy regulations. For instance, students may need to drop a course in order to maintain a high GPA, which may result in progress probation because they may earn more attempted units with withdrawals rather than letter grades. Or, students may choose to remain in classes and receive low marks, which may cause their GPA to move below the 2.0 standard resulting in academic probation. Either choice would place these students on probation and suspension from financial aid. The framing of the Student Success Act as a policy that encourages student success is actually having an adverse affect on Latina/o students. Loosing financial assistance sometimes resulted in students not being able to enroll in classes because they did not have the personal funds to cover registration fees, books, and incidental costs.

Figuring out course load. Students also lacked knowledge about the number of courses they would need to transfer. As students figured out their course loads, they understood that it would take much more coursework and time than the expected 2 years to transfer. Students had planned their life and responsibilities around completing community college in 2 years. Some students had to reconsider their arrangements including finances. These students were compelled to choose to pursue an associate's degree or certificate so that they could secure employment promptly. This circumstance seems to be linked to Clark's (1960) cooling out theory. Clark (1960) claimed that public education created inequalities and diverted students' transfer goals. Students would

become paralyzed with obstacles and would be encouraged to redirect their educational goals to vocational training. Students in the sample felt the need to obtain employment upon completion of certification or an A.A./A.S. degree so that they could earn a higher wage job. Many believed that they could continue to pursue higher education at a 4-year university once they obtained experience and saved money for college expenses.

Transition from developmental to transferable coursework. Undereducation at the K-12 level may have resulted in some student's difficulty with moving out of developmental education (Alpert et al., 2002; Melguizo, 2009). Some students were in an educational crisis because they had difficulty transitioning from developmental to transferable coursework, which created a critical point that pushed them out of the transfer pathway.

Pedro was pushed out of the transfer path because of the Student Success Act repeatability policy. Pedro had made three attempts to complete a math class. He was now required to take the math class at a different community college and he seemed discouraged to do so. Pedro was no longer receiving financial aid and he was at risk for loosing the BOG fee waiver because he had completed 90 transferable and non-transferable units. He was essentially stuck at community college because he was not able to complete the required math coursework.

Math is a core subject that may keep many Latina/o students from transitioning to a 4-year university. Several students voiced that they did not like math and stated that this subject was quite difficulty for them. Students felt that if they could not transition to transferable coursework at a community college they did not have the intellectual capability to be successful at a 4-year university. Students also felt responsible for their

academic difficulty with transitioning from developmental to transferable coursework. Few Latina/o students understood that the K-12 public education system was a structure that provided inequitable schooling practices, thus, obstructing their educational outcomes (Valencia, 2010; Valencia & Black, 2002).

Latina/o students often placed the entire responsibility to be successful students on themselves. They became knowledgeable about the California community college public education system by learning about the policies and procedures through costly mistakes. Some students were discouraged by the extensive amount of coursework required and their attempts at transitioning to transferable coursework with fragile academic foundations. Other students such as Irene were overcome with transfer information causing paralysis with her transfer plans.

Transfer information paralysis. Receiving transfer information from college counselors was overwhelming for students. As students learned about the multitude of program options, specific transfer requirements from the community college and 4-year institutions, and university costs they became fearful and anxious. The realities of convoluted transfer procedures were additional processes to contend with and pushed out Latina/o students from the transfer pathway.

This finding might be connected to a few of Clark's (1960) cooling-out characteristics of avoidance of standards and agents of consolation. These attributes specified that standards are confusing, which sway students away from transfer to vocational education. Movement toward vocational education was evident for most participants. David and Irene were very close to being eligible for transfer, but were

enrolling in a community college nursing program, thus, pushed out of the transfer pathway.

Responses To No Longer Being On Transfer Path

Emotional relief. Many Latina/o students received emotional relief as a result of no longer being on the transfer path. These students had taken on an accountability attitude by attempting to keep themselves knowledgeable about the community college educational processes, maintaining motivation to earn high GPAs, and sustaining time management skills necessary to handle their employment and other personal tasks. Reducing their level of obligation was a liberating experience that resulted in developing a manageable education plan while remaining committed to family responsibilities (Fernández, 2002). Earning an associate's degree or certificate was experienced as an academic accomplishment to most participants.

Academic accomplishment. It may seem understandable that students would feel a sense of academic accomplishment, given the vast amount of campus policies and procedures that they learned as a consequence of violating them. The added stress related to being placed on academic or progress probation resulting in a conditional financial aid suspension might have heightened their appreciation of success. Students were also first-generation college students and most were the first person in their family to attend higher education. The combination of these factors may have produced personal pride and a sense of academic accomplishment.

The researcher would like to add a cautionary note to the reader regarding this sub-theme. Academic accomplishment may be interpreted to mean that because Latina/o students felt a sense of accomplishment that they were complacent with an A.A./A.S.

degree or certificate. Their personal recognition of achieving an academic accomplishment was just that, acknowledgment of an educational accomplishment as they moved through the pipeline.

The students in the sample did not communicate that they would be satisfied with reaching their short-term educational goals. The students articulated that they would like to obtain a bachelor's or a graduate degree but many had received mixed messages about their academic potential, which created insecurity. Students also felt uncertain that they would receive financial and academic resources, and appropriate information necessary to propel them to a 4-year university.

All the students in the sample had the academic potential and self-discipline to transfer but many did not feel assured that they would obtain support. Students can achieve higher educational goals when the expectations of those around them are greater. Challenging majoritarian stereotypes is important to enhance assist-based assistance. Specifically, most students felt that an A.A./A.S. degree was a step forward on their educational trajectory.

A.A./A.S. degree as a stepping stone. Most Latina/o students were able to link an A.A./A.S. degree as a stepping stone to the next phase on their educational pathways. Phases might have been more manageable and realistic for these students to conceptualize given the array of essential tasks necessary in their daily lives. If A.A./A.S. degrees continued to be disregarded as noteworthy for Latina/o community college students, opportunities may be missed to offer cement for additional stepping-stones along their educational pathways.

Race, Class, and Gender Affects on Transfer

Negative perceptions of race. During the interviews, students in the sample voiced stereotyped beliefs about Latinas/os perpetuating within group discrimination. For instance, David voiced internalized race, class, and gender stereotypes as he expressed his observations about Latina/o students using financial aid for personal gain. Max alluded to Latina/o males having limited intellectual ability to be successful in college. They were also maintaining majoritarian beliefs that they had learned as children via schooling relationships, the media portrayals of people of color, and interactive experiences in college (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Many students described some interactions with community college staff and faculty that influenced their difficulty with academic performance. Specifically, Alicia, April, David, Isabella, Jasmine, and Kike talked openly about their experiences on campus related to majoritarian stereotyped interactions with staff, faculty, and administrators. These students expressed having adverse reactions to these experiences that created self-doubt and declined academic achievement.

Jasmine and April discussed at length their inability to speak Spanish and others reactions to this reality. Jasmine stated that she was confused about why people would become so angry with her because she could not communicate in Spanish. She experienced others talking about her in Spanish and clarified to them that she understood the unfavorable remarks being made about her Spanish language deficit.

Jasmine also made reference to an instructor's remarks about her name, which created discomfort and an inability for her to focus on the class assignments. Jasmine

considered dropping the class but remained enrolled due to the withdrawal policy, which might affect her financial aid award.

Likewise, April discussed college staff reactions to her inability to speak Spanish. April also experienced misunderstandings from others about her ethnicity. She stated that some people thought that she was an African American woman. April explained that maybe her body shape or the way she spoke might have led others to believe that she was African American. Reiterating her ethnic background, Mexican American and Salvadoran, created frustration and alienation, which may have been similar to how April felt as a high school student. This experience was similar to feeling estrangement from high school peers, which directly impacted her ability to achieve academically in high school. April clearly stated that her academic performance at Cove was obstructed by the negative stereotypes attached to being Latina.

David, Kike, and Isabella made reference to other Latina/o students on campus having detrimentally educational outcomes by not receiving information about campus policies and procedures, challenging course material, and limited time allotted to meet with campus counselors. These students might have been talking about their concerns for other students because that particular situation could have been related to their personal educational experiences.

David mentioned that it might be helpful for newly enrolled students to be provided with a semester-long course that would orient them to the community college education system. He believed that the course could increase student's awareness about campus resources, policies, procedures and practices.

David explained that he learned how to navigate the community college system by himself. He came to understand various policies and procedures by not repeating mistakes made along his educational journey. He was conscious of the need to seek out information by asking questions and remaining visible to campus staff and faculty.

Several times, Kike referenced that other student's might feel "retarded" in their attempts at completing class assignments. Kike may have been concerned about his ability to understand the course material. He stated that he needed to re-read book chapters and class notes to understand the topic at hand. Kike described his need to spend a lot of time studying, which restricted his social life and created distance from his family. Family reactions to his educational needs were frustrating and created personal stress. Kike may have interpreted misunderstanding by family members who did not appreciate his commitment to studying via internalized majoritarian stereotypes, which pronounce that Latinas/os do not appreciate education (Valencia, 2010; Valencia & Black, 2002).

Similarly, Isabella stated that several of her high school friends who were enrolled in community college decided to leave because they felt unsupported by academic counselors. Isabella understood that academic counselors' appointment times were limited. She believed that students had to be very assertive and prepared with specific questions to ask when meeting with counselors. Isabella was quite skilled at requesting information and getting her academic needs met. She felt that staff on campus would be helpful if students reached out to them. Isabella attempted to comprehend counselors' interactions in relation to budget cuts, which limited campus resources offered to

students. Isabella was puzzled by and interested in learning about why Latina/o students were not attending 4-year universities and were overrepresented in community colleges.

Erratic and limited resources. Most of the Latina/o students in the study were quite dependent on the financial assistance they received from the BOG, Pell grants and EOPS book vouchers. Many of the students were acutely aware that they could not enroll in a 4-year university without financial assistance. These students talked about economic support with hopefulness about receiving financial aid at a 4-year university. They did not have specific knowledge about what type of funds were available to them at a 4-year institution.

Students who had not qualified for financial aid in the earlier part of their educational journey due to their immigration status were very grateful with the financial support they were receiving. These students, Alicia and Irene, appeared to be more fearful about not being able to afford the educational costs at a 4-year university. They had paid for college costs in the past and did not have a sense of security about being able to receive federal or state financial support in the future.

Fulfilling gender role expectations. Some Latina students discussed their awareness of challenging the Latina/o cultural norm by seeking educated before marriage and parenthood. These students mentioned that developing and maintaining their independence was an important personal goal. They believed that education was the best way to obtain this objective. These students happened to be the youngest female students in the study. They cited personal life challenges, such as homeless or their parent's difficulties as immigrants as motivating circumstances that encouraged their college persistence.

Irene was the only female student in the study that was married. She conveyed that she consciously created time to spend with her husband and daughters. Irene stated that her husband was very supportive of her educational goals. Irene emphasized that if she did not have children she would spend her time at the library studying and would have already earned a bachelor's degree.

Although not married, Christine was in a committed relationship with her daughter's father. She also stated that if she had not had a child she would have previously transferred to a 4-year university and completed an undergraduate degree. Christine and the other mothers in the study discussed their parental role necessitating adaptability to their children's school and childcare arrangements.

Latino males in the study referenced their gender role expectation throughout the interview. They expected to care for their family's financial needs and placed this obligation at the forefront of their educational goal. Latino men had a strong sense of gender role expectations and seemed to be pressured to fulfill that role. This may be related to both the dominant society and Latina/o cultural expectations of men as financial caretakers for their families. Latina/o men had an added financial responsibility to their extended family. A few male students mentioned that they could better assist their parents with a higher salary as a result of completing their educational goals.

Kike stated that he wanted to purchase a home so that he could live on his own. He did not mention family responsibilities but did indication that several years ago, he had made a commitment to himself to remain financially independent from family members. Kike discussed his conscious efforts to keep this personal pledge. He mentioned the meager annual financial aid award he lived on and described how he cared

for himself by purchased cheap clothes, inexpensive food and exercised regularly to maintain good health.

Unexpected Findings

It is interesting to note a juxtaposed perspective between Latina students who were parents and those who were not parents. The mothers believed that their children had a positive influence on their choice to remain in school. Mothers described taking time off from school to care for their infant children. They returned to college to ensure that their children had a better future. Marley, Alicia, and Irene discussed their desire to be good role models for their children. These students stated that they wanted their children to attend college immediately after high school, an expectation that they did not personally experience.

Marleny was very hopeful that her certificate in child development would assist her with future employment as a preschool teacher. Christine also felt fortunate to have been accepted into the cosmetology program, which took her 3 years to secure. She was interested in opening her own salon and thought that she might pursue a degree in business in the future.

The Latina students who did not have children discussed their need to complete their education prior to marriage or motherhood. These students either made undesirable references to girlfriends who had children or they made statements about not wanting to have a lot of children, thus not doing anything with their lives. These students talked about their need to be independent so that they could care for themselves. Isabella stated that her father encouraged her to earn a degree so that she could be in a position to leave her future husband if infidelity should arise in marriage.

Another unexpected finding that emerged while analyzing the data was related to students who were conscious about race, class, and gender instances in the public education system. Those students who articulated experiencing racial, class, and gender stereotyped incidents by K-12 administrators, teachers, and students also referenced labeling occurrences in community college.

April, David, Isabella, Jasmine, Kike, and Marleny described experiences as primary and secondary students that had a negative impact on their educational outcomes. April and Kike experienced alienation from students due to their ethnic subgroup backgrounds. Both students explained that these experiences caused them to lose interest in school and influenced their poor academic performance. Both students acknowledged that they continued to have personal challenges with academic confidence.

April described being expelled from school due to an incident that occurred with a staff person. After being expelled, April felt responsible for the incident, which continues to impact her ability to function at community college. She also has concerns about her children's well being, which distracts her from classwork and keeps her in close proximity to her children.

Kike also discussed being expelled from middle school because he had a pack of cigarettes in his pocket. Kike missed his entire 2 years of middle school and was eventually placed in juvenile hall. He returned to a public high school and earned a GED. He said that those schooling experiences created much personal adversity and continued to affect him.

Isabella stated that during primary school she was taken out of class annually to take an English language assessment test. Paradoxically, Isabella explained that she

actually excelled in English, which is why she passed the yearly language exam. Being pulled out of class annually impacted Isabella's self-confidence and academic performance, which was reflected in her poor grades.

Similarly, in elementary school Marleny was placed in an ESL class and experienced boredom and disengagement from classwork. Marleny explained that being placed in an ESL class was detrimental to her educational process, which resulted in missing her high school graduation because a high school counselor told her that she would not graduate. She did not know how to request her high school diploma so she paid to take a GED course and earned a GED certificate.

David and Jasmine discussed racial and gender stereotyped experiences as they attended public schools. They indirectly connected those experiences to their academic performance; both linked those instances to their emotional well being and self-confidence. They also clarified that they did not receive college information in high school. David and Jasmine believed that they would have attended higher education immediately after their high school graduation if they had received adequate college information during their senior year.

All six students talked openly about race, class, and gender stereotyped experiences at community college. Students believed that others questioned their academic performance, which caused them to doubt themselves. These students stated that they remained aware of the challenges of stereotypes and most were able to move forward in spite of them.

The final unexpected finding relates to the students immense enthusiasm to complete their short-term educational goals. Students in the study stated that academic

coursework was not their main obstacle. They identified other issues such as inconsistent finances, lack of information about college policies and procedures, limited course offerings, and transportation as significant barriers to transfer, which are factors identified in the literature. The students' persistence challenged the dominant ideology, which states that Latinas/os are not interested in education, and are not intellectually capable. This study breaks the myth that Latinas/os do not place importance on education (Valencia, 2010; Valencia & Black, 2002).

On the contrary, the students in this study were managing multiple areas in their personal lives including work while learning the complex policies, procedures, and practices of the California community college system. The students had determination and re-envisioned their educational path while aspiring to one-day enroll in a 4-year university.

Conclusions

Latinas/os are the largest ethnic group in the nation and the least educated (Nuńez & Crisp, 2012). Latinas/os continue to be under represented in higher education and remain considerably undereducated (Melguizo, 2009). As the Latina/o population continues to grow, the fundamental needs of this ethnic group will become evident. The public education system plays a significant role in providing schooling to this ethnic group. The funding disparity in public educational resources allocations to low socioeconomic communities reinforces inadequate educational outcomes for Latinas/os who generally attend schools in working-class neighborhoods (Alpert, et al., 2002; Melguizo, 2009).

The California Community College system is overrepresented with Latina/o students who frequently have aspirations to transfer to 4-year universities (Crisp & Nora, 2010; Pérez & Ceja, 2010). A limited number of these students actually transfer. There is a dearth in the literature that explores the experiences of Latina/o community college students who do not transfer.

The purpose of this study was to explore the aspirations and experiences of Latina/o community college students who were pushed out of the transfer path and consider how the intersections of race, class, and gender may influence their transfer path experiences. Latina/o students' stories were used as the cornerstone of this study using a CRT lens to expose critical points on the transfer path where students were pushed out and describe students' responses to no longer being on the transfer pathway.

This study found that Latina/o community college students experienced various critical points along the transfer pathway, which were associated with the number of calendar years students were in college—a college year was described as 24 completed semester transferable and nontransferable units. Latina/o students were relatively affected by the lack of knowledge they had about the California community college system policies and procedures. Sometimes students made decisions that resulted in being placed on academic or progress probation, which was linked to conditional financial aid suspensions.

The findings suggested that as Latina/o students increased their knowledge about the community college system they became familiar with the number of courses that were necessary to advance and gained an understanding about transfer program requirements.

Several students reported that the information was important yet left them feeling overwhelmed and fearful concerning the transfer process.

Other findings proposed that students were relieved to change their educational pathway and encouraged to modified education goals. Students believed that their altered academic goals were a step forward toward their educational trajectories. About half of the students understood that racial and gender stereotyped experiences had an adverse impact on their transfer path experiences. These students expressed their need to be aware of how these experiences influenced their academic achievement and personal well being.

It can be concluded that the undereducation of Latina/o students in the K-12 public education system has an adverse affect on their community college transfer pathway experiences (Melguizo, 2009). An inadequate educational foundation in the K-12 system impacts Latina/o student's ability to move rapidly and sometimes successfully through the community college system (Chávez-Reyes, 2010; Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Latina/o student's lack of knowledge about community college polices, procedures including financial aid, and academic and progress probation can affect student's financial status, thus act as a critical point that pushes them out of the transfer pathway (Monroe, 2006).

Educational leaders, scholars, faculty, and staff may view earning an associate's degree or certification as a minor educational achievement. As an expansive view of the circumstances of Latina/o student life across, race, class, and gender are considered; a strength-based perspective may be realized to reinforce their educational aspirations.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

The following recommendations for policy and practice were established in relation to the findings and conclusions of this qualitative research study:

1. Funding for new student orientations, EOPS/CARE, FYE, and Puente Programs should be expanded and increased to focus on the needs of non-traditional students.

2. Expand community college transfer programs to integrate specific support mechanisms for first-, second-, and third-year students informed by the critical points in this study Programs should calculate the number of transferable units completed when determining the number of years in community college since Latina/o students are often placed in developmental non-transferable courses.

3. Explore how transfer information is disseminated to determine best practices for community college counselors.

4. Inform administrators, counselors, and staff about the critical points finding in this research study.

5. Institutionalize diversity trainings for administrators, faculty, and staff. Facilitate ongoing diversity and bias trainings for campus leaders (Moreno Report, 2013).

6. Institutionalize a regular review of all California Community College campuses racial discrimination policies to develop and maintain a streamline complaint process for students, faculty, and staff of color (Moreno Report, 2013).

7. Create an "Introduction to Community College" course to increase knowledge about policies, procedures, and practices. Require this course for first time community college students and offer the class to returning students.

8. Establish an annual open house for potential community college students and parents offering campus tours, classes, financial aid and transfer workshops. The open house should be institutionalized and offered each summer at all California community college campuses.

9. Math courses should be offered with a mandatory math laboratory class so that students receive the assistance necessary to be successful in math courses.

10. Institutionalize Latino male student programs across the entire California community college system.

11. Increase and expand on-campus work opportunities for working-class students to assist with supplementing financial aid and personal resources.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following research recommendations are offered for future research and were informed by the findings and conclusions of this qualitative research study:

1. Facilitate a similar study with African American, Native American, and undereducated Asian American subgroups such as Cambodians and Hmong.

2. Facilitate a study to identify stressors related to the community college experience for nontraditional students.

3. Facilitate a study exploring the resiliency of Latina/o community college students.

4. Facilitate a study on the experiences of Latino males enrolled in community college.

5. Facilitate a study on the Student Success Act of 2012 to determine the policy affects on Latina/o community college students.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT FLIER

HAVE YOU CHANGED YOUR MIND ABOUT TRANSFERRING?

THERE ARE DIFFERENT EDUCATIONAL PATHS.

COME TALK WITH ME ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES IF YOU ARE:

- INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING IN A RESEARCH STUDY
- A CURRENT LATINA/O STUDENT NO LONGER TRANSFERRING
- BETWEEN THE AGES OF 18 AND 60 YEARS OLD
- ABLE TO COMPLETE A BRIEF DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY
- ABLE TO MEET FOR UP TO A ONE-HOUR AUDIO-RECORDED (OPTIONAL) INTERVIEW
- INTERESTED IN RECEIVING A $10 GIFT CARD FOR TARGET, ECC BOOKSTORE, OR iTUNES UPON COMPLETION OF THE INTERVIEW

I WOULD LIKE TO HEAR YOUR STORY!

CONTACT: SUSAN SALAS, doctoral student, 562) 743-8698 or SALAS.SUSAN4@GMAIL.COM

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT INVITATION EMAIL

Participant Invitation Email

Dear Student:

Thank you for reading this email about your possible participation in my dissertation study that focuses on the educational experiences of Latina/o community college students between the ages of 18 through 60 years old. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of Latina/o community college students who are no longer on the transfer path and how they feel about their experiences.

My higher educational experience began in community college just like many Latinas/os, and I was a transfer student. I am interested in hearing from Latina/o community college students about their transfer path experiences and how they make decisions to leave and/or earn a certificate or AA/AS degree. My objective is to give Latina/o students an opportunity to tell their stories and gain an understanding of transfer path experiences to improve educational outcomes and increase relevant support for Latina/o students on their educational journeys.

A $10 gift card to the campus bookstore, Target, or iTunes will be given to you upon completion of the interview. You will receive a copy of your transcribed interview. If interested, you may also be provided with the final report. If you choose to participate you will be involved in the following:

1) A brief demographic questionnaire that will consist of questions related to your age, languages spoken, and ethnicity.
2) A one-on-one audio recorded interview that will take place on a pre-arranged day, time, and location of your choice. The interview will be one hour and questions will consist of experiences on the transfer path that were helpful and barriers that posed as challenges to advancing.

The consent form is attached for your review. The consent provides you with a full description of the study, your rights and responsibilities, and safety measures that have been put in place, including confidentiality of all information you share with me. Your real identity will not be disclosed and any information you share with me will not affect your coursework grades, school standing, or services you receive. If you decide that you would like to participate in the study, please review and complete the consent form and return it to me when we meet for our interview.

Thank you for considering my request for your participation in this study. If you have further questions about the study or would like to participate, please contact me by my cell phone at 562-743-8698 or by email at salas.susan4@gmail.com.

Thank you,

Susan Salas

APPENDIX C

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Consent To Participate In Research

Latina/o Community College Students Pushed Off the Transfer Path

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by doctoral student Susan Salas, MSSW, from the Department of Educational Leadership at California State University, Long Beach. The results of this study will be contributed to a doctoral dissertation. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a Latina/o community college student who is no longer on the transfer path.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the aspirations and experiences of Latina/o community college students who are no longer on the transfer path and characterize how they feel about no longer transferring.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will do the following things:

1) Use a pseudonym to complete a demographic survey, which consists of general demographic questions related to your age, gender, and ethnic identification, which will take about 10 minutes to complete. The purpose of the demographic survey is to better understand your specific life circumstances in relation to your transfer path experiences.

2) Complete a one-on-one in-person up to one-hour interview with the researcher, Susan Salas, at the agreed upon date, time, and location. Your pseudonym will be used during the interview. The interview will be digitally recorded and transcribed. You may choose not to be recorded and the researcher will take handwritten notes during the interview. A copy of your transcribed interview will be provided to you for your information and further comments. A copy of your digital recorded and transcribed interview will be kept in a locked file cabinet at the residence of the researcher and will be destroyed after three years.

INTERVIEWS

The interviews will be conducted between the months of November 2013 through January 2014.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The risks that you may experience are minimal. The interview questions may cause uncomfortable memories that may elicit an emotional response. You may feel some

discomfort with sharing your personal stories. If you should become upset you can visit the counseling center on campus. The researcher, Susan Salas, will provide each participant with a list of low- cost counseling services in the local community.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

The potential benefits that participants may experience are the opportunity to discuss transfer path experiences. Participants may feel heard and validated by telling their stories. The information learned might assist with strengthening services for Latina/o community college students on the transfer path who are underrepresented in higher education. Other underrepresented groups many benefit from the findings and assist with program development.

State and federal legislation may also be influenced by the research data and outcomes.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Upon completion of the interview, participants will receive a $10 gift certificate to the campus bookstore, Target, or iTunes.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Participants will have access to review the tapes, which will remain the property of the researcher. The digital audiotapes and researcher's handwritten notes will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the residence of the investigator. The transcriptions, email addresses, and any other electronic information will be placed in a password-protected computer or an encrypted flashdrive and kept in the residence of the researcher for three years, after which they will be destroyed.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. Participation or non-participation will not affect your coursework grades, student status, campus employment or any other personal consideration or right you usually expect. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise, which in the opinion of the researcher, warrant doing so without consequences. The investigator may contact you after your interview to ask further questions. The contact will be specifically to obtain clarifying information. It will not be a second interview.

IDENTIFICATION OF RESEARCHERS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Susan Salas, Principal Investigator, via email at salas.susan4@gmail.com or by cell phone at 562-743-8698. You may choose to contact the researcher's Dissertation Chair, Dr. Lindsay Pérez Huber at 562- 985-2508.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact the Office of University Research, CSU Long Beach, 1250 Bellflower Blvd., Long Beach, CA 90840; Telephone: 562-985-5314 or email to irb@csulb.edu.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT (AND) OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I understand the procedures and conditions of my participation as described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____

Name of Subject

_____

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

_____ _____

Signature of Subject or Legal Representative Date

STATEMENT and SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER

In my judgment the subject is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

_____ _____

Signature of Researcher Date

APPENDIX D

DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Demographic Survey

1. Name (pseudonym): _____

2. Age Range: 18–21 □ 22-26 □ 27–35 □ 36–45 □ 46–55 □ 56–60 □

3. Gender: Female □ Male □

4. Sexual Orientation: Heterosexual □ Bisexual □ Gay □ other □

5. Language(s): What language did you speak in your home growing up?

_____

Please state your second or third language(s) below and place a check mark in the section(s)
that apply to your language ability.

Additional Language(s)	**Speak**	**Read**	**Write**

6. Where were your parents born? (Father) _____,
(Mother)_____

7. Parents highest level of education (Father) _____, (Mother)
_____

8. What are your parent's occupations? (Father)_____,
(Mother)_____

9. What is your ethnicity: Chicano □ Mexican American □ Mexican □ Columbian □
Guatemalan □ Puerto Rican □ Salvadorian □ Dominican □ Cuban □ other
_____

10. Do you have your own children? Yes □ No □

11. What high school did you attend?
_____

12. What was the highest level of math you took in high school?
_____

13. What was the highest level of English you took in high school?
_____

14. Are you the first in your family to attend college? Yes □ No □
If not, who else in your family has attended college?

_____

15. Where did you apply to college?

_____

16. Where did you get accepted to college?

_____

17. How many college units have you completed?

_____

APPENDIX E

INSTRUMENT PROTOCOL

Instrument Protocol

I. Warm-up Questions:

1. What type of student were you in grade school?

2. What were your career goals in high school?
   (Probe: How did college factor into your career goals?)

3. When did you know you wanted to go to college?
   a. Did anyone talk with you about college?
      (Probe: parents, teachers, counselor, and a neighbor)

II. Transition to college:

4. Why did you attend Cove Community College?

5. Do you or have you received financial aid?
   (Probe: Other financial support—scholarships, family?)

6. What else do you do besides school? (extracurricular activities, work, family)
   (Probe: How do you manage school and other activities?)

7. What are your current education and career goals?
   a. Do you have an orientation plan?
   b. Do you have an education plan?

III. What are the critical points that lead Latina/o community college students off the transfer path?

8. When you came to CCC, did you come in as a transfer student?
   a. If so, why? (Probe: Know others who attend CCC?)
   b. If not, how did you get interested in transferring?

9. Tell me what it has been like for you as a transfer student?
   a. What have been the important points on your educational path that were helpful to advancing? (Probe: Support received as a transfer student?)

10. At what point(s), if any, during your educational path did you thinking about not transferring?
    a. What happened?
    b. What role did staff, faculty, counselor, or family/friends play?
       (Probe: What support did you receive as you thought about not transferring?)

III a. What are the barriers for Latina/o community college students along the transfer path?

11. Were there any other barriers for you as a transfer student?
    a. What barriers did you experience that impacted your ability to advance toward yours transfer goal?
    (Probe: What barriers played a role in deciding not to transfer?)

IV. How do Latina/o community college students feel about no longer being on the transfer path?

12. What does it mean to you, if anything, to have chosen a path that does not include transferring?

13. What does it mean to you, if anything, to have chosen to pursue a certificate or AA/AS degree?

V. How do the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation mediate the community college pathway experience?

14. What ways, if any, do you think that your race, financial situation, gender, and sexual orientation are connected to your community college experiences?

15. Is there anything else that you have not stated that might be helpful to tell your story as a transfer/college student?

APPENDIX F

RESEARCH AND PROTOCOL QUESTIONS MATRIX

Research and Protocol Questions Matrix: Connecting Research Questions to Protocol Questions

Research Question	Related Interview Questions	Reference from Literature
I. Warm-up Questions	What type of student were you in grade school? What were your career goals in high school? When did you know you wanted to go to college?	Hesse-Biber & Levy, 2011; Ortiz, 2003
II. Transition to college	Why did you attend Cove community college? Do you or have you received financial aid? What else do you do besides school? What are your current education and career goals? a. Do you have an orientation plan? b. Do you have an education plan?	Goldrick-Rab, Carter, & Wagner, 2007
III. What are the critical points where Latina/o community college students are pushed out of the transfer path? **a. What are the barriers for Latina/o community college students along the transfer path?**	When you came to Cove community college, did you come in as a transfer student? Tell me what it has been like for you as a transfer student? At what point(s), if any, during your educational path did you think about not transferring? Were there any other barriers for you as a transfer student?	Fernández, 2002; Huber Pérez, Huidor, Malagon, Sanchez, & Solórzano, 2006 Alexander, Garcia, González, & O'Brien, 2007; Bahr, 2013; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002
IV. How do Latina/o community college students respond to no longer being on the transfer path?	What does it mean to you, if anything, to have chosen a path that does not include transferring? What does it mean to you, if anything, to have chosen to pursue a certificate or A.A/A.S degree?	Bernal Delgado, 1998; Ortiz, 2003;
V. How do the intersections of race, class, and gender mediate the community college pathway experiences?	What ways, if any, do you think that your race, financial situation, gender, and sexual orientation are connected to your community college experiences? Is there anything else that you have not shared that might be helpful to tell your story as a transfer/college student?	Bernal Delgado, 1998; Fernández, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002

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