California State University,

Fullerton

LATIN@ TRANSFER STUDENTS' IDENTITY NEGOTIATION AND
VISUALIZATION OF COMFORTABLE SPACES

A DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

In

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Community College Leadership

By

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2015

UMI Number: 3663397

UMI

Dissertation Publishing

UMI 3663397

ProQuest

ABSTRACT

Studies indicate that transfer is a daunting and culturally difficult process for Latin@ students which may explain the overwhelmingly low transfer rate in such population(Bradley, 2013; Campaign for College Opportunity, 2013; Fry, 2011). This is compounded by the fact that administrators and educators have failed to recognize Latin@ students' unique needs and barriers by amalgamating them into the overall student population (Rendón Linares & Muñoz, 2011). This study sought to address the aforementioned problems by investigating successful Latin@ transfer students' identity negotiation and visualization of comfortable spaces at universities before and after transfer. The study focused on students who participated in a community college educational services program and asked whether the program facilitated students' transfer to four-year institutions. Using identity negotiation theory as a framework, the findings revealed that Latin@ transfer students faced unpredictable environments, described the university as a whole new world, and experienced cultural shock. Additionally, they felt insecurity due to the professors, academics, peers, formal language, and their identity as Latin@s. The students reported feeling disconnected, especially from White staff and faculty and other students. However, students started feeling comfortable as they connected with other Latin@s and saw the university as a place for professional and academic positive identification and escape. After time, students felt included because they

connected with personalized counselors, felt validation from professors and counselors, and joined Latin@ or major-based clubs. Furthermore, the university provided comfortable spaces where students could connect with other Latin@s and people in their majors, and escape from their hectic worlds. The findings suggest that students who attended the educational services program and were actively involved in workshops and events that the programs provided were better prepared for transfer to four-year institutions. Recommendations are made to support the creation and enforcement of educational services programs. Other recommendations include the following: the promotion of culturally-specific educational services programs and professional relationship development and networking for Latin@ transfer students; advertisement of culturally-specific comfortable spaces where Latin@ students can meet other Latin@s, learn about their majors, and rest; and increasing cultural competency training for students, administrators, and educators.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Angel de mi guarda
Mi dulce compañía
No me desampares
Ni de noche ni de día
No me dejes sólo
Que me perdería.

I thank and dedicate this dissertation to the following:

To the woman who taught me that prayer, and would one day become my eternal guardian angel, my mother, who has protected me always as I've navigated into different spaces. May she rest in paz.

To the many other angels that were put on this Earth to guide me in my career, including Dr. Jon Bruschke, Dr. Freddi-Jo Bruschke, Mrs. Roberta Best, Cameron Ward, Sylvia Symonds, Dr. Adam Symonds, Toni Nielson, Dr. Amy Coplan, Dr. Ding-Jo Currie, Dr. Stella Ting-Toomey, Dr. John Reinard, and Dr. Jeanine Congalton.

To the many angels that offered me their friendship, warmth, and abrazos, including Brenda Montes, Miguel Rodriguez, Deven Cooper, the CSUF debate team, my colleagues in the Human Communication Studies department, Cohort 5, and amig@s outside of school.

To the angels that are mi familia, including my father, my little brother, my Mama Adela, my tios and tias, my prim@as, and those that are in my native Mexico that may be separated from me by physical borders but never in spirit.

To the Latin@ students in this study—thank you for your voices, for I gain strength and purpose from you and I hope others do, as well.

To the many other angels that I may have missed, including those in my past, present, and future. I welcome you with open arms.

Lastly, to the angel that crossed my path at the perfect time and in the right space—my partner. You mean the world to me and I appreciate your love, hugs, and unconditional apoyo. Gracias.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Latin@s[1] have become the fastest growing ethnic group

in the United States (Lopez, 2014), but Latin@ students are academically behind

non-Latin@ students, including African-American, Asian, and White students

(Gándara, 2008).For example, Fry (2011) estimated that approximately 1.8

million Latin@ students have enrolled in higher education institutions since 2010,

but they trail behind non-Latin@ students in degree attainment. This racial

achievement gap is not a recent phenomenon. Latin@ students have struggled in

the educational pipeline from kindergarten to 12th grade and in higher education

for decades (Camacho Liu, 2011). Bradley (2013) described attainment gaps in

relationship to "racial and ethnic lines" in higher education:

> Degree attainment rates among American adults (ages 25-64) in the U.S.
>
> are woefully lopsided, with 59.1 percent of Asians having a degree
>
> compared to 43.3 percent of whites, 27.1 percent of blacks, 23.0 of Native
>
> Americans and 19.3 of Hispanics. . . . The highest attainment rate for 25-
>
> to 29-year old Americans is among Asians at 65.6 percent, followed by

---

[1] The researcher adopted scholars' use of Latin@ as a gender-neutral or nonsexist language (Wallerstein, 2005).

non-Hispanic whites at 44.9 percent. But then, the gap grows

exponentially: young African-Americans have an attainment rate of 24.7

percent, Hispanics 17.9 percent and Native Americans 16.9 percent.

(para. 11-13)

While this alone is concerning, the crisis in Latin@ education will directly affect

the American economy because "Latinos represent the youngest and fastest-

growing population group in the U.S. with a median age of 27 compared to 41

for white non-Hispanics" and approximately half of all American workers will be

Latin@ by 2025 (Excelencia in Education & Single Stop USA, 2013, p. 3).

Moreover, Camacho Liu (2012) argued that addressing Latin@ attainment and

achievement gaps is vital to strengthen the national economy because 3.3 million

more Latin@s will require a degree by 2020 to meet the demands of the

workforce. In other words, Latin@s will need degrees beyond a high school

diploma to be competitive in the future workforce because jobs will require skills

and experience gained from receiving a higher education (Camacho Liu, 2012).

Addressing the racial gap is important for the national economy and for the well-

being and economic health of Latin@s in the United States (Camacho Liu, 2011).

Community colleges, nationally, are uniquely impacted by the racial

achievement gap (Berger & Malaney, 2003; Townsend & Wilson, 2006). More

than 58 percent of Latin@ students are enrolled in community colleges

nationwide because these institutions are affordable and accessible to low-

income and working students (Camacho Liu, 2011, p. 5). In addition, researchers

estimate that the Latin@ student population at community colleges will increase

by more than 28 percent in the next ten years (My Career Counts, 2013). However, although community colleges are "the gateway to higher education for most Latinos," only 20 percent of Latin@ students transferred from two-year public community colleges to four-year universities in 2010 (Leal Unmuth, 2012, para. 1). The Civil Rights Project (2012) characterized the "pathway to the baccalaureate as segregated" because Latin@ students are not successfully transferring to four-year universities in comparison to their White student peers (para. 1). Low transfer rates from community colleges to four-year universities exacerbate the issue of low degree attainment rates in Latin@ populations at the baccalaureate level.

The growth in Latin@ student enrollment and low student success rates plague the California Community College (CCC) system. The CCC system currently enrolls 2.4 million students (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2013). The CCC Chancellor's Office (2013) reported that Latin@ students constituted 43.35 percent of the total students enrolled in California community colleges as of fall 2012, while Asians represented 10 percent, and African Americans represented 7.99 percent of the total enrollment. Unfortunately, Latin@s also lag behind their peers in the CCC system because over 40 percent of them have enrolled in basic skills English and math courses (Student Success Task Force, 2012), which negatively affects their chances of completion or transfer due to the long, tedious remedial course sequences (Fain, 2013). Data from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office in 2011-12 revealed that "four out of 10 Latino degree-seeking students completed

an associate degree, certificate or transferred to a four-year institution after six years" and over 35 percent of Latin@ students were "unprepared" for college-level instruction (Campaign for College Opportunity, 2013, p. 13-14).In 2013, 33% of Latin@ students transferred to California State University institutions and 21%transferred to University of California institutions (Balassone, 2013).

Background of the Problem

Researchers explain that Latin@ students' low transfer rates in the United States and California are perhaps explained by the arduous cultural shifts that occur when students transfer from community colleges to four-year universities (Rendón Linares & Muñoz, 2011). Penfold Navarro (2011) asserted that Latin@ students report feeling unfamiliarity, discomfort, and a sense that they do not belong in four-year universities after they leave community colleges. Additional research found that Latin@ students frequently reported feeling alienated, stereotyped, or misunderstood in community colleges and eventually in four-year institutions, which negatively affected their well-being (Morillas & Randall Crosby, 2007; Valencia & Black, 2002). Valencia and Black (2002) noted that Latin@ students feared the threat of stereotypes and faced culture shock in unfamiliar educational settings. Latino males, in particular, departed from their educational trajectory more often and earlier than their peers (Tuttle & Musoba, 2013) because of fear of unknown territories, fear of stereotypes or rejection, and discomfort in the social or physical environments of their institutions (Salis Reyes & Nora, 2012). Hungerford-Kresser (2010) explained that Latin@s viewed the university as "hostile and alienating" because universities did not understand

their cultures and backgrounds (p. 4). Latin@ students confronted continual pressures to assimilate or fit into the White, mainstream university campuses, which contributed to the fear of entering four-year universities (Hungerford-Kresser, 2010).

Latin@ students' experiences are unique and different from other students and, unfortunately, educators in new environments do not pay close attention to these experiences (Rendón Linares & Muñoz, 2011). In their research, Rendón Linares and Muñoz (2011) explained that Latin@ students navigate a complex educational system that often misunderstands, rejects, and does not comprehend their experiences. Educational systems are failing Latin@ students because administrators and educators misunderstand Latin@ students' unique identities and lump them into the general, traditional student population (Rendón Linares & Muñoz, 2011). Similarly, Saenz and Ponjuan (2009) explicated that Latin@ students, particularly males, vanish from higher education because of a collective misunderstanding of the socio-cultural factors and barriers that they face. Latin@ students "confront the unique psychological challenges of continually negotiating between their college demands and their family and work obligations, and they are affected by how closely the actions of faculty, staff, and administrators reflect a commitment to the welfare of students" (Deil-Amen, 2011, p. 58). Latin@ students' identities are complex and they navigate, negotiate, and balance demands from multiple worlds in the process of entering new educational environments; unfortunately, institutions and educational leaders often misunderstand their journey.

Successful Latin@ transfer students report that positive reinforcement and affirmation, or validation, from family, faculty, peers, administrators, and institutions is a fundamental component of their successful journey from community colleges to four-year universities (Rendón, 1994; Rendón Linares & Muñoz, 2011). Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) purported that recurrent, positive validation is important because the journey from a community college to a four-year university is daunting. Positive reinforcement and validation boosts self-esteem and comfort in both physical and social spaces and, in turn, Latin@ students who successfully transfer and persist in higher education report consistentpositive engagement with peers, faculty, and administrators (Rendón Linares & Muñoz, 2011). A lack of positive validation results in students' discomfort, alienation, and vulnerability in unfamiliar educational systems (Rendón Linares & Muñoz, 2011).

Fortunately, in 2012, the CCC system responded to a failing educational system and low student success rates by establishing the Student Success Task Force (SSTF) to identify ways to better assist students, including Latin@s. The SSTF drafted a set of recommendations for best practices and goals for CCCs. The recommendations became foundational in the Student Success Act of 2012 (Student Success Task Force, 2012). The SSTF (2012) found that through 2012 an average of 43 percent of Latin@ degree-seeking students received a certificate, degree, or transfer preparation and that only 31 percent of Latin@ students transferred to four-year institutions. In light of the SSTF's findings, the overall goal of the SSTF's recommendations was to increase achievement

across all demographic lines to grow California's economy and to support students and their families in meeting their academic goals (Student Success Task Force, 2012, p. 6).

More specifically, the SSTF's (2012) primary recommendations included:(a) the creation of sustained services, (b) orientation services, (c) assessment, (d) counseling, (e) mentoring for student support, and (f) the tracking of transfer students. The SSTF recommended that community colleges establish coordinated support systems or programs for effective educational planning to assist Latin@ students in their journeysas they navigatethrough community colleges to four-year universities and that the educational services be continual (p. 43). The SSTF recommended that community colleges and four-year universities create educational services programs to ameliorate the low success and transfer rates of students in California community colleges. In addition, the SSTF recommended more mentoring and college readiness services for students, encouraging campuses to follow specific metrics to end the racial achievement gaps (Michalowski, n.d.). Unfortunately, the SSTF focused primarily on improving completion rates and defined "student success" in quantitative terms as the completion of a certificate, diploma, or transfer to a four-year university (California Teachers Association, 2012, para. 10). Community colleges were left to decide how to successfully provide student services and find funding sources for their planned programs. Missing from the SSTF recommendations was a way to understand the first-hand realities of Latin@s as

they navigate through the community college system and into four-year universities.

Nationally and in California, there is a need to investigate whether the current institutional changes and the creation of new programs and educational services positively influence Latin@ students' transfer into four-year universities. The SSTF's recommendations are promising, but researchers need to invest time and energy togain insights from students, particularly Latin@s, to determine whether new programs positively influence their mental and emotional well being and their transfer journeys from two-year colleges to four-year universities (Booth et al., 2013). Researchers have started to investigate the effectiveness of educational services and orientation programs for community college and four-year universities in the past decade due to national and state government demands to increase student success (Townsend & Wilson, 2006). However, most research about such programs focuses primarily on traditional students that are residential, white, or male (Astin, 1993; Braxton, Sullivan, & Johnson, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). As such, insufficient research exists acknowledging whether such programs positively influence Latin@ student success. As previous research noted, understanding Latin@ students' voices and identity is a precondition to positively validating their experiences, which is foundational to their well being during transfer and in education (Rendón Linares & Muñoz, 2011). Rendón Linares and Muñoz (2011) explained that understanding the educational landscape and environment is also important to

discovering whether students feel appreciated and comfortable to freely express themselves and their identities.

Problem Statement

The SSTF in California shed light on the failing educational system, particularly in responding to Latin@ students' needs and recommended further support, educational services, and continual counseling to ensure Latin@ student success, particularly in transferring from community colleges to four-year universities. Despite the SSTF's recommendations to increase educational services to students, research regarding Latin@ students' journeys and experiences in community college educational assistance programs established to help them transfer to four-year universities has remained surprisingly minimal. Further research is needed to explore whether newly established programs and educational services in California positively influence Latin@ students' success (Booth et al., 2013).

In addition, educators and administrators are fundamentally misunderstanding the needs, identities, and experiences of Latin@ students as they navigate the educational system (Rendón, 1994; Rendón Linares & Muñoz, 2011; Tuttle & Musoba, 2013). In their review of previous literature regarding Latin@ students' experiences in higher education, Castellanos and Gloria (2007) summarize:

> The literature on Latina/os in higher education is fraught with issues regarding students' needs to negotiate invalidating classroom curriculum and pedagogy, unsupportive and demeaning faculty interactions, and daily

campus events that discount, devalue, and negate their cultural identities, and fail to see them as contributing members of the university setting. (p. 382)

Latin@ students' voices and perceptions about the universities they attend and the physical surroundings are stifled in higher education (Fernández, 2002) because administrators group their experiences into the larger student body without recognizing their unique needs (Rendón Linares & Muñoz, 2011). Anzaldúa (2009) even goes so far as to claim that university and higher education settings are unsafe spaces for Latin@ students.

A lack of specific research about Latin@ students perpetuates the misunderstanding of their unique needs (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Several researchers have studied the transfer process and students' perspectives about adaptation, acculturation, and comfort once they enter four-year universities after community colleges in general, but their investigations were not specifically from the perspective of Latin@ students (Townsend & Wilson, 2006). Also, few studies have followed students who participated in educational service programs at community colleges and their experiences after transferring to four-year universities (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Townsend & Wilson, 2006). Furthermore, scant research exists about Latin@ students' perceptions of the physical educational environment and their comfort in educational institutions (Deil-Amen, 2011; Nora & Crisp, 2009). Thus, the problem that this study addresses is the lack of overall research, including a qualitative focus, about Latin@ students' identity development and sense of comfort as they transfer from

community colleges to four-year universities in light of recent institutional and educational developments to assist such populations.

Purpose Statement

To address the current problems surrounding the obfuscation of Latin@ transfer students' perceptions about their educational transfer journey, participation in educational services programs, and confrontation with university spaces, the purpose of this study was to investigate students' identity negotiation and visual perception of comfortable spaces before and after they transferred from a community college to a four-year university (a University of California or California State University institution). I focused on students' experience before and after transfer to investigate how students negotiated their identity as they prepared to leave the community college and how they persisted at a four-year university. I focused on students that participated in a recent educational services program at a community college to discover whether the program positively influenced Latin@ students' identity negotiation and comfort as they transferred to afour-year university. The focus on students' participation in a new, specific educational services program was unique and important. The educational services program provided community college student participants guaranteed acceptance into one specific University of California (UC) or California State University (CSU). The program provided orientation, financial aid, counseling, and social networking events for transfer-seeking students that participated in the program. The researcher investigated if the program's assistance, particularly after the SSTF's recommendations, positively influenced

Latino@ transfer students' identity negotiation and comfort as they journeyed into a four-year university.

The study's theoretical framework was Identity negotiation theory (Ting-Toomey, 2005). Identity negotiation theory (INT) can be used to understand the ways that individuals modify their identities as they adapt to new environments, including those that produce a culture shock (Ting-Toomey, 2005). Identity refers to "the reflective self-conception or self-image that we each derive from our family, gender, cultural, ethnic, and individual socialization process" and "our reflective views of ourselves and other perceptions of our self-images" (Ting-Toomey, 2005, p. 212). Identity negotiation is "a transactional interaction process whereby individuals in an intercultural situation attempt to assert, define, modify, challenge, and/or support their own and others' desired self-images" (Ting-Toomey, 2005, p. 217). According to Ting-Toomey (2005), individuals often negotiate their identities based on feelings of vulnerability, comfort, security, and familiarity in surrounding environments. The process of identity negotiation is complex and includes insight about individual's strategies to positively confront barriers, challenges, relationships, conflict, and discomfort in new environments (Ting-Toomey, 2005). Hence, INT was applicable to the journey from the community college to a four-year university because of the potential culture shock, modification of self-image, and new relationships that influenced students' identity negotiation processes.

Using INT as a foundation, I was interested in identifying comfortable spaces that may have positively influenced Latin@ students' identity negotiations

and survival strategies in new environments. Deil-Amen (2011) described

comfort in an educational setting as an

> integrative moment in which the *academic* influence is coupled with
>
> elements of *social* integration to provide needed support and enhance
>
> feelings of college belonging, college identity, and college competence.
>
> Such processes revolve around events, activities, interactions, and
>
> relationships reflecting "moments'" that combine academically and socially
>
> integrative elements. (p. 73)

Feeling comfortable necessitates identifying comfortable environments, such as

the classroom, library, or other places, where students openly integrate

themselves into social environments and feel connected with others (Deil-Amen,

2011). Students have described comfortable places at school as places where

they felt a sense of belonging and connectedness with others, including peers,

administrators, and faculty (Deil-Amen, 2011). Nora and Crisp (2012) reinforced

the belief that comfort positively influenced Latin@ student persistence and well

being in school. Therefore, in this study, a comfortable space was referred to as

a place at school that students identified as inviting, open, and welcoming to their

self-expressions, and academic and social well being. Because comfort,

familiarity, and security affect individuals' identity development and negotiation

(Ting-Toomey, 2005), identifying comfortable spaces at four-year universities

enhanced the scope of the INT and understanding of Latin@ students'

confrontation of new educational landscapes. Comfortable spaces ideally

contribute to positive identity negotiation strategies because of the social

relationships that occur within them that foster positive growth, self-affirmation, and a sense of interconnectedness (Ting-Toomey, 2005).

Research Questions

The questions that guided this research study were:

1. How do Latin@ students negotiate their identity when they transfer from a community college to a university?

2. What university spaces do Latin@ transfer students identify as visually comfortable?

3. How does participation in an educational services program influence Latin@ transfer students' identity negotiation and perception of visually comfortable spaces?

Four core dialectics (identity security-vulnerability, identity inclusion-differentiation, identity predictability-unpredictability, and identity connection-autonomy) in identity negotiation theory and visual photographic representations helped answer the following *specific* research questions:

1. Do Latin@ transfer students feel secure or vulnerable, included or excluded, and connected or autonomous when they transfer to a four-year university?

2. Do Latin@ transfer students report familiar or unfamiliar environments?

3. What strategies do Latin@ transfer students engage in to adapt to a university?

Significance

The study will inform higher education leadership and educators about Latin@ transfer students' identities, which is vital for appropriate social and physical validation and student success (Rendón, 1994; Rendón Linares & Muñoz, 2011). Research has shown that positive validation of students is important for persistence and the well being of Latin@ students at four-year universities (Rendón, 1994; Rendón Linares & Muñoz, 2011). Positive validation and affirmation of Latin@ students' identities is a fundamental way for administrators and educators to begin to address barriers and feelings of vulnerability, insecurity, discomfort, and alienation. To fully understand Latin@ students, researchers and administrators must fully delve into the students' perceptions of their surroundings, identify barriers, and hear students' voices (Fernández, 2002). This study upholds the spirit of the SSTF and legislative recommendations to investigate students' transition through the educational pipeline from community college to higher education.

This study will help administrators make informed decisions about program design, campus culture, and facility planning. Townsend and Wilson (2006) observed that "student affairs staff may need to lead the way in fulfilling four-year institutions' responsibility for integrating community college transfers into the fabric of the institution" (p. 1). Administrators and school officials will benefit from this study and can use the findings to mold their missions, services, and resources to help students feel comfortable in the premises and educational spaces at respective campuses. Because Latin@ students are the fastest

growing minority group in the United States (Gándara, 2008), administrators and educators must invest time and energy in knowing how students respond to the social and physical compositions of four-year universities after transfer (Hungerford-Kresser, 2010). More than simply comprehending their experiences, this study will be useful in determininghow students feel about or perceive themselves in relation to the physical environments of four-year universities.

Lastly, this study will inform future Latin@ transfer students about similar experiences and transfer survival strategies. Future students will be able to hear the voices of students who have succeeded in the transfer process. Specifically, students will learn about other similar students' experiences in an educational services program, as well as strategies that successful transfer students deployed to effectively navigate the journey into a university.

Scope of the Study

This study focused on Latin@ students that participated in an educational services program at a community college and transferred to two very specific four-year universities (a UC or CSU). Identity negotiation theory was applied to understand the students' navigation and journey from the community college to the four-year institutions in Southern California. Although the scope of the study was limited to this geographical location and student group, these students' experiences can uniquely inform administrators and educators across the nation in their efforts to better suit and fulfill Latin@ students' needs.

This study expanded the scope of identity negotiation theory (Ting-Toomey, 2005) by applying photographic elicitation methodology to understand the identity negotiation process and identification of *visually* comfortable spaces. The current identity negotiation theory was helpful in comprehending how individuals negotiate their identity in new unfamiliar environments. The theory also described how individuals perceive themselves in surrounding environments and as they construct relationships or deal with feelings of vulnerability, insecurity, or alienation. Photographic elicitation methodology captured visual perceptions of students' physical environments to identify where they physically felt comfortable, welcome, and safe in relation to their surroundings. Expanding the scope of identity negotiation theory created a deeper social and environmental understanding of Latin@ students' identity and survival.

The scope of the study referred to the parameters under which the study operated. Thus, the following section outlines the assumptions, chosen delimitations, as well as the limitations of the proposed study.

Assumptions of the Study

The participants in this study were primarily post-traditional students. Unlike traditional students, Latin@ students are post-traditional students because they represent an evolving and changing group of students (Dervarics, 2013). Post-traditional students often live at home, work full-time, take care of family, and participate in extracurricular activities. Post-traditional students balance multiple tasks beyond the academic space. Prior to the study, it was assumed that the Latin@ student participants would likely be post-traditional students.

Therefore, the researcher assumed that most of the students in this study would be commuters that navigated multiple extracurricular worlds, including home, work, and other spaces.

Additionally, the label Latin@ encompasses a wide-ranging spectrum of nationalities and ethnicities from Latin America. Loosely, Latin@ mainly refers to Spanish-speaking individuals. Ornstein, Levine, and Gutek (2011) explain:

> Latino Americans comprise the fastest-growing ethnic group in the United States. Latino, a collective term, identifies Spanish-speaking people whose ethnic groups originated in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, or other Latin American countries. Although Latino Americans may speak Spanish as a common language and share many Spanish traditions, each group has its own distinctive culture. (p. 154)

The researcher assumed that Latin@ students would self-identify with the broad "Latin@" category or with specific Latin American nationalities and ethnicities.

The study was largely based on students' self-reports during qualitative interviews and their visual representations of comfortable spaces at school. The researcher sought students to share photographs of comfortable spaces and describe why those places were welcoming. The researcher assumed that students would openly describe their experiences and willingly share visual photographs of comfortable spaces at their respective educational institutions. The researcher sought to understand the students' perceptions and voices and, therefore, assumed that students would openly share their viewpoints regarding the social and physical spaces.

Study Delimitations

The study did not investigate the identity negotiation of other non-Latin@ groups at other campuses beyond this study. The study deployed qualitative methodology, including interviews and photographic elicitation methodology and did not use quantitative measures to assess student success. The singular qualitative focus on Latin@ was intentional because of the unique opportunity to follow students who participated in a specially designed educational services program and their journey into higher education.

Study Limitations

There were three primary limitations to this study. First, Latin@ students' identity negotiation likely differed based on the different institutional campus cultures. Therefore, the findings were limited to the reality of the geographical and environmental context of the institutions selected for this study. Secondly, because the findings in this study described the unique experiences of the Latin@ students in the specific geographical and educational environments, the findings cannot be generalized to the identity negotiation of other Latin@ transfer students or groups. Thirdly, this was not a longitudinal study and focused on one group of transfer students that joined the educational services program in 2011. The study was limited in the qualitative understanding of students in the 2011 cohort of the program. Lastly, previous studies noted that Latin@ students were often skeptical of participating in research studies similar to this one (Hoppe Nagao, Lowe, Magallon Garcia, & Medrano, 2013). Because of distrust, Latin@

students may not have fully described their experiences and may have shared limited knowledge about their transfer experience, identity, and comfort.

Definitions of Key Terms

For the purpose of this study, these terms are used and defined as follow:

Comfortable space. Comfortable space is a specific location that combines academic and social integrative elements, such as feelings of belonging, college identity, and competence (Deil-Amen, 2011). A comfortable space includes academic and social dimensions of interconnectedness with others.

Educational services program. This term refers to a program or organization that provides services to students to increase student success and transfer rates (SSTF, 2012). The educational services program in this study refers to a cohort-modeled program designed to provide educational services, including transfer preparation, mentoring, counseling, orientation workshops, advisement, and course scheduling information, at a community college.

Identity. Identity is "the reflective self-conception or self-image that we each derive from our family, gender, cultural, ethnic, and individual socialization process" and "our reflective views of ourselves and other perceptions of our self-images" (Ting-Toomey, 2005, p. 212).

Identity negotiation. Identity negotiation is defined as "a transactional interaction process whereby individuals in an intercultural situation attempt to assert, define, modify, challenge, and/or support their own and others' desired

self-images. Identity negotiation is, at the minimum, a mutual communication activity" (Ting-Toomey, 2005, p. 217).

Photographic elicitation methodology. This term refers to a research method that utilizes photographs to display persons' environments (Harper, 2002).

Transfer. Transfer refers to the educational transition from a community college to a four-year university, typically after completing a certificate, degree, or prerequisites for a Bachelor's degree (SSTF, 2012).

Organization of the Dissertation

In this study, I qualitatively assessed students' identity negotiation and visual perception of comfortable spaces after they transferred from a community college to a four-year university (either a UC or CSU institution). The researcher utilized identity negotiation theory to describe students' perceptions, identity negotiation, and visual representations. This study was important in helping to understand how Latin@ transfer students confront and strategically respond to the four-year university environment. The study also investigated whether participation in an educational services program provided by a community college positively influenced transition into a university.

This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 provided the introduction to the study including its purpose, significance, research questions, scope and definitions of terms. Chapter 2 reviews literature pertinent to this study. Chapter 3 provides a description of the research design, qualitative methodology, the interpretive paradigm, setting, sample, data collection and

management, and data analysis. Chapter 4 provides the most important results, separated to answer each of the research questions. Chapter 5 provides an interpretation of the results, implications for policy, practice, and theory, and recommendations for educational leadership and educators.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The experiences and identities of Latin@ transfer students are unique from those of other students. However, research has found that higher education leaders lack knowledge regarding the distinctive differences in Latin@ students' experiences when transferring from a two-year community college to a four-year university (Rendón Linares & Muñoz, 2011). When educational systems fail to comprehend the identities of Latin@ students, administrators and educators amalgamate Latin@ students into the general, traditional student population (Rendón Linares & Muñoz, 2011). Understanding Latin@ students' needs and validating their experiences is foundational to their comfort and persistence in a university setting, especially after transfer (Rendón, 1994; Torres, 2006). This study investigated how Latin@ students negotiated their identity and visually perceived new educational spaces before and after they transferred from a community college to a four-year university. I sought to understand if participation in an educational services program at a community college positively influenced Latin@ students' identity negotiation in the new four-year environment. Identity is "viewed as reflective self-images constructed, experienced, and communicated by the individuals within a culture and in a particular interaction situation" and identity negotiation is "a transactional interaction process whereby individuals in an intercultural situation attempt to

assert, define, modify, challenge, and/or support their own and others' desired self-images" (Ting-Toomey, 2005, p. 217). The study utilized qualitative interviews to understand students' perceptions of their environments and how they negotiated their identity in relation to their surroundings. Students were asked to share visual photographic images of comfortable places on their respective campuses. A comfortable space is a specific location that combines academic and social integrative elements, such as feelings of belonging, college identity, and competence (Deil-Amen, 2011). Identity negotiation theory (Ting-Toomey, 2005) was utilized to analyze students' responses and visual photographic images to uncover the ways that students confronted the distinct social and physical educational environments.

This chapter describes the major research and literature regarding the main components of this study. In this review, I married research from the field of education and human communication studies. Ting-Toomey's (2005) identity negotiation theory (INT) is primarily studied in the field of human communication studies, but it is important and applicable to the field of education. Although the primary goal of this study was not to extend research regarding college student development theory, the findings may be potentially useful to such theoretical fields. This chapter provides a brief literature review on Latin@ education, transfer, orientation and educational services programs, college student development theory, and physical campus ecology, prior to explaining INT as the primary theoretical framework. The chapter ends with an in-depth analysis of

INT. This analysis isprimarily comprised of Ting-Toomey's (1999, 2005) research and practical applications of the theory to educational contexts.

Latin@ Education

Literature regarding Latin@ student education is vast. This section briefly explains research regarding the current state of Latin@ students' educational barriers, needs, and recommendations to better assist them in successfully completing their academic endeavors.

Latin@s are the fastest growing minority group in the United States. Researchers estimate that the Latin@ population will be approximately 132.8 million by 2050, which will constitute 30 percent of the nation (United States Census, 2008). Along with the groups' growth, Latin@ students are becoming the fastest growing student population (Lumina Foundation, 2013). In fact, researchers predict that one in four students will be Latin@ by 2021 (Gándara, 2010). Furthermore, the growing Latin@ population is important to the American economy because by 2025, "half of all U.S. workers will be of Latino descent" (Excelencia in Education & Single Stop USA, 2013, p. 3). Thus, addressing Latin@ student educational issues is vital for the future of California and assisting Latin@ students is not just a matter of helping them achieve academic success; Latin@ students are also an important component of the national economy.

Unfortunately, numerous studies show that Latin@ students face obstacles in their educational careers. Fernández (2002) stated that "among issues affecting Latina/Latino students are segregated schools, inequities in school finance, lack of bilingual education programs, and tracking into vocational

and special education classes, to name just a few" (p. 47). Similarly, Camacho

Liu (2011) noted that financial problems, obligations to family, long work hours,

and cultural adaptation to new educational environments present obstacles to

Latin@ students' educational careers. These findings echoed research by

Abrego (2006) which found that Latin@ students often confront and personally

disclose financial problems, family expectations, lack of preparation, and work

obligations as the principal barriers to their education. Moreover, Fry (2002)

asserted that the obstacles previously mentioned provide an explanation of why

Latin@ students lag behind other minority and White students in educational

settings and, therefore, need exclusive attention to succeed.

Researchers explain that higher education institutions must adapt to

Latin@ student needs to ensure the success of this population of students

(Hungerford-Kresser, 2010). Tatum, Hayward, and Monzon (2006) stressed that

institutions must train faculty to be more involved and culturally aware if they

want to increase Latin@ student transfer rates. Chang (2005) emphasized that

"faculty members play important roles in minority students' social networks" (p.

772) and fostering continuous faculty-student interaction at community colleges

is a precondition to Latin@ students' success. In addition, research by Torres

(2006) demonstrated that Latin@ students often reference mentors, assistance

programs, and faculty as important sources of motivation for their persistence

and commitment to school. More recently, McWhirter, Luginbuhl, and Brown

(2014) found that Latin@ students succeed when institutions offer "more

motivational support, structured programs, and clubs that engage Latino students

within their schools and communities, academic assistance support, [and] information related to financial aid, college, and careers" (p. 1). Similarly, Bensimon et al. (2012) highly recommended that administrators and faculty be culturally sensitive and involved in Latin@ students' careers. In essence, if educators and administrators create favorable environments and validate Latin@ students' educational progress, then Latin@ students are more likely to be confident, motivated, and prepared when entering new institutions. Cooper (2001) concurred that educators and administrators must fully immerse themselves into Latin@ youths' backgrounds and culture to create successful bridges between their communities and higher education.

Furthermore, institutions, including community colleges and universities, must recognize that Latin@ students do not integrate into campus life like their White counterparts (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Townsend & Wilson, 2006). Deil-Amen (2011) warned that Latin@ students do not fit the traditional student social integration process; rather, Latin@ students integrate themselves into universities differently than traditional students because they seek culturally sensitive community-based networking or culturally specific groups. Culturally sensitive group advising and specialized counseling is beneficial in helping Latin@ students to succeed and maintain high grades across educational institutions (Hungerford-Kresser, 2010).

Transfer

Transfer is the educational transition from a community college to a four-year university, typically after completing a certificate, degree, or prerequisites for

a bachelor's degree (SSTF, 2012). The research and literature regarding

transfer from community colleges to four-year universities has grown in the last

decade (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Generally, most students, regardless of

ethnicity or race, face difficulties adapting after transfer (Pascarella & Terenzini,

2005). Cohen and Brawer (2003) noted that transfer students consistently face

"transfer shock," which affects their student success, including grade point

averages (p. 64). Cohen and Brawer (2003) also stated that despite growing

enrollment at community colleges across the nation, the transfer rates across

student groups remain low. Townsend and Wilson (2006) concurred, "Findings

indicate that community college transfer students may need more assistance

initially than they are given, partly because of the large size of the university" (p.

439). Similarly, Dougherty (1992, 2001) explained that community college

students consistently face difficulty in transfer because of the cultural and social

differences between two-year and four-year institutions. Negative stereotypes

about community college students, including the faulty assumption that

community college education is easier and less rigorous than four-year university

education, combined with bureaucratic and administrative differences can make

transition into four-year universities difficult (Dougherty, 2001). Lastly, students

face organizational struggles when course units at community colleges do not

transfer or are not consistent with course unit requirements at four-year

universities (Wirt et al., 2004). It is not uncommon that the lack of consistency

and alignment in course units contribute to transfer difficulties for students.

Several studies explain students' subjective perceptions of the transfer process. Townsend (1995) found that students viewed four-year universities as unfamiliar and unprepared to assist students. In the same study, many perceived their transfer process from a two-year community college to a four-year university as a struggle for survival. Davies and Casey (1998) also concluded from students' self-reports that four-year university employees frequently lack useful information, appropriate orientation, and misunderstand the community college background. Moreover, four-year universities fail at providing guidance for transfer students as well as adequate tracking of community college transfer units (Davies & Casey, 1998). Not surprisingly, students report their experiences and interactions with school administrators at community colleges more positively than their experiences and interactions with administrators at four-year universities (Bauer & Bauer, 1994; Davies & Casey, 1998).

While there is ample research available concerning the college transfer process, literature specifically regarding Latin@ student transfer from community colleges to four-year universities is minimal. Deil-Amen (2011) affirmed that most research about student transfer and integration does not account for the distinct ways that Latin@ students navigate multiple environments, including home and extracurricular spaces, which make their transfer uniquely difficult. Torres (2006) specified that most literature regarding Latin@ student transfer is dangerously inadequate because these students experience education differently than non-Latin@ students and the research available does not account for their varying social, cultural, and environmental contexts. Wawrzynski and Sedlacek

(2003) further explained that the complex backgrounds of Latin@ students, including financial problems, parental education, socioeconomic status, race, and cultural context deeply affect their successful transfer. Fundamentally, Latin@ student transfer literature is minimal because less than a quarter of Latin@ community college students actually transfer to four-year universities (Fry, 2004; Crisp & Nora, 2010). Alexander, García, González, Grimes, and O'Brien (2007) detailed that Latin@ students are "less likely than their White counterparts . . . to complete an associate's degree, transfer to a 4-year institution, and—among those who do transfer—obtain a bachelor's degree," which perhaps explains the limited knowledge about their unique transfer experiences (p. 174-175). Moreover, Crisp and Nora (2010) concluded that research regarding Latin@ student transfer from community colleges to four-year universities is "in its infancy stage" and "there is no one comprehensive theory to explain the specific factors influencing the success of this unique group of students" after transfer (p. 177).

Educational Services and Orientation Programs

An educational services program is defined in this study as a program available at both community colleges and four-year universities that is designed to provide different types of educational services such as transfer preparation, mentoring, counseling, orientation workshops, advisement, and course scheduling information (SSTF, 2012). The research regarding educational services programs is not new and commonly encompasses services referred to as orientation. Hall (2007) explained that "orientation programs" is an umbrella

phrase that loosely refers to educational services programs that provide counseling, course information, and campus support to new students. Orientation programs are also sometimes referred to as first-year programs and often sustain student support across several semesters. Hall (2007) studied freshmen programs and noted that many provide sustained assistance to first-year students throughout the first year of the students' careers.

Research regarding educational services and orientation programs for community college and four-year universities has received increased attention in the past decade due to national and state government demands for accountability regarding institutions' policies to increase student success (Townsend & Wilson, 2006). Tinto (2006) acknowledged that since the 1960s and 1970s,

> much of our early practice focused on the first year of college, especially the transition to college, and the nature of student contact with faculty, most notably outside the classroom. We rushed into service a range of programs to enrich the freshman year experience ranging from expanded and extended orientation, freshman seminars, and a variety of extracurricular programs. (p. 3)

More recently, the popularity of orientation and academic success programs at community colleges and four-year universities is growing (Townsend & Wilson, 2006). As Townsend and Wilson (2006) illustrated,

> Institutional leaders have supported the development of institutional practices such as learning communities and first-year seminars, practices

that enable entering students and faculty to know one another more fully

than in large lecture halls. The underlying assumption behind each of

these practices is that the more students are involved in or integrated into

college life, the greater the likelihood they will stay in college and attain

their degree. (p. 439)

However, most research regarding educational services programs overly focuses

on traditional students who could be classified as primarily residential, white,

male students (Astin, 1993; Braxton, Sullivan, & Johnson, 1997; Pascarella &

Terenzini, 2005). Insufficient research exists regarding orientation and first-year

experience programs and their influence on Latin@ student success.

In reviewing the available research, numerous studies of educational

services and orientation programs showed positive outcomes for first year

students (Mayhew, Vanderlinden, & Kim, 2010). A few studies also identified

positive benefits from orientation or first-year programs. Mayhew, Vanderlinden

and Kim (2010) assessed the impact of student orientation and educational

services programs on students' academic and social adaptation/networking on

campus at 35 public and private universities. The authors found that White

students were more likely to attribute their academic preparation to such

programs, in comparison to Hispanic or Asian American students. However, the

authors noted that Hispanic students viewed educational services programs as

important to their social networking learning. Mayhew, Stipeck, and Dorow

(2007) concurred that Hispanic students view these types of programs as

important places to socialize with other students and find friends.

While these studies were conducted at the university level, educational services and orientation programs are also important for community college student success. The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (2012) found that educational services and orientation program courses are linked to student success variables. The study asserted that students who participate in orientation courses persist and succeed at higher rates than students who do not participate in orientation courses. Specifically, the study stated that, "community college students also benefit from services targeted to assist them with academic and career planning, academic skill development, and other areas that may affect learning and retention" (para. 1). Likewise, Hall (2007) found that students in a first-year orientation program at a community college were more likely to persist, or continue in school into a second semester when compared to students who did not participate in orientation. Hall's study did not find a correlation between participation in orientation and high GPAs but instead showed important findings regarding positive retention. Ellis-O'Quinn (2012) acknowledged that more research is needed to understand the ways that orientation programs at community colleges assist students.

Wortham (2013) maintained that administrators should plan and continuously update programs to address diverse needs and multicultural students. More specifically, Wortham recommended that university educational leaders connect with students prior to their entrance into the university. The author draws his recommendations from students' personal experiences in using digital media and electronic advisement to achieve student comfort on campus.

He purports that university administrators should focus on institutional capacity to successfully assist students after transfer. Most importantly, universities should ameliorate the transition into the four-year university cultures and campuses. In addition, student affairs specialists should seek balance and appropriate administrative changes to orient, advice, and provide support services to such students, as well as to work to ensure students' academic success by providing opportunities for the academic and social integration deemed necessary for persistence.

College Student Development Theory

There are dozens of models that explain student development in college, especially in relationship to positive student success outcomes, development, satisfaction, persistence, social engagement, and integration in the field of education (Evans et al., 2010; Trowler, 2010). Tinto (2006) summarized that student development related to integration and persistence in school is a field of study that researchers have widely studied since the 1960s and 1970s. Student development theory helps explain the backdrop for students' experiences in higher education and the ways that students navigate educational pipelines. Although student development theory has been customarily used in research onstudent integration and persistence in college, this study was not grounded in traditional or popular student development theories. This study was grounded in identity negotiation theory (Ting-Toomey, 2005), which is understudied in the field of education. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) supported that researchers should expand research about underrepresented students, especially from the

community college system, from multiple disciplinary perspectives. Hence, this section provides a brief description of key theories in student development theory that are relevant and related to this study. Limitations in current research are explained throughout the analysis of student development theory.

Chickering

Chickering (1969) applied development and identity theory to the educational context by explaining that students experience distinct physical, mental, and emotional processes as they grow academically. Chickering proposed seven vectors as the core of a student's identity and personal development. Chickering's vectors are: (a) developing a purpose; (b) achieving competence; (c) managing emotions; (d) developing autonomy and independence; (e) establishing identity; (f) developing integrity; and (g) forming interpersonal relationships (Evans et al., 2010). The seven factors mutually reinforce or enhance each other. Students do not experience the distinct changes highlighted by the vector categories in chronological fashion; students undergo development in their academic careers that include different permutations of the vector categories. Hence, students grow as they develop their own identity, competence, and intellectual, interpersonal, and emotional maturity. Chickering (1993) extended his original research on identity and expanded his work regarding institutions' influence on student learning and development. For example, Chickering (1993) illustrated that physical environments and institutional types directly affect student development. Chickering's (1993) research also maintained that the size of campuses, the

policies, programs, climate, interactions, and classroom curriculum affect student involvement, success, comfort, and academic and social development. Chickering's (1993) study was foundational in understanding orientation or other student support programs' influence on student success.

Astin

Astin's (1973, 1984) theory of student development focuses on the relationship between student learning and development and the level of student engagement on campus. According to Astin (1984), students are likely to persist if they invest enough time on campus, create relationships that increase student interests and commitment, and engage in involved learning. Involvement is considered authentic engagement and participation that can be qualitatively and quantitatively assessed (Kuh & Pike, 2005). Astin's theory describes distinct levels of student engagement that influence student success. The researcher upheld that students who do not actively engage in campus activities will not be committed to school. This theory was applied to college student life and the correlation between academic success and extracurricular involvement (Hu & McCormick, 2012). A weakness in Astin's theory according to Tinto (2006) is that he does not provide practical recommendations for institutions to help students, such as Latin@ students, better engage in social and educational environments.

Tinto

Tint o (1975) studied student development by assessing student integration on campus. Tinto's theory is centered on the notion that students

persist or leave school depending on their academic or social integration on campus. In his research, academic integration refers to student-faculty interactions, intellectual growth, and grade performance. Social integration refers to the peer-to-peer interactions, involvement in clubs and programs, and out-of-classroom student-faculty interactions. According to Tinto (1975), academic and social integration influence students' level of commitment to their academics, programs, and institutions. Moreover, students' commitment to the campus and programs impacts retention and influences attrition. Tinto also professed that persistence, or the sustained dedication to academics, can be determined by the students' commitment to the academic and educational environment.

Tinto (1993) also studied the significant reasons for student departure from education. Tinto (1993) illustrated that students may not persist in school if they do not form clear educational goals, are overwhelmed by academics, confront difficulty in academics, or, as previously noted, are unable to become integrated into the social and academic educational spheres. Therefore, Tinto (1993) recommended certain "cures" to alleviate student departure. He explains that institutions must be transparent about their expectations when they recruit students. More specifically, colleges must provide orientation and programs that facilitate student integration into universities, and institutions must adequately identify student needs by sustaining counseling, advising, and placement assessments.

However, Tinto's models for student development have been criticized repeatedly. Tinto (2006) himself admitted that his studies of student retention

lacked a specific understanding of nontraditional students. Most of his work emphasized quantitative analyses, focused on samples at residential campuses, and did not account for diverse genders, races, incomes, and orientations. Borglum and Kubala (2000) indicated that Tinto's work did not appropriately address two-year institutions. The authors asserted that student retention is increasingly complex at community colleges because of the non-residential pressures external to the campuses. Torres (2003) emphasized that Tinto's model for student integration or involvement did not account for Latin@s specifically, as Latin@s are often nontraditional and commuter students. Similarly, Hurtado and Carter (1996) concur that traditional integration models do not fully take into account the experiences of Latin@ students. Specifically, research by Hurtado and Carter (1996) found that Latin@ students approach school from the perspective of "belonging" and they are likely to persist if they perceive a welcoming community environment on campus.

Bean and Metzner

Finally, Bean and Metzner (1985) studied attrition, or the decreased commitment to school, in nontraditional students. According to the authors, "the need for additional research about the attrition of older, part-time, and commuter undergraduate students enrolled in courses for college credit has been well documented," and "little research has been devoted exclusively to these nontraditional students beyond a simple tabulation of the dropout rate" (p. 485). Their study assessed outcomes beyond dropout rate, including satisfaction, stress, commitment, personal goals, and GPA variations. Bean and Metzner

explained that nontraditional students are not fully understood by the traditional educational models, including Tinto's integration model (1975). Similar to Chickering's theory, Bean and Metzner affirmed that the environment affects nontraditional students, including the environment outside of the educational setting. They identified the factors that repeatedly affect nontraditional students' attrition as family pressures, finance, employment, and other barriers to their educational careers. Additionally, nontraditional community college students are affected by the transfer process intricacies.

Physical Campus Ecology

The study of how physical space influences student development is known as physical campus ecology (Banning, 1978). According to Banning and Bryner (2001) the campus ecology framework emerged heavily during the 1970's, and in the past four decades, extensive scholarship regarding physical environment surfaced in the fields of education, counseling, psychology, and environmental planning. Campus ecology "incorporates the influence of environments on students and students on environments. The focus of concern is not solely on student characteristics or environmental characteristics but on the transactional relationship between students and their environment" (Banning, 1978, p. 5). Campus ecology considers the ways that students navigate their environment in a transactional process that enhances students' development in college. Banning's (1978, 1989a, 1991) work on campus ecology, or the physical campus, is extensive and generally supports the view that campus environments are fundamental to positive student development.

Banning and Bryner (2001) provided a comprehensive literature review of over one hundred books and articles regarding campus ecology and the importance of educational space. According to Banning and Bryner (2001), Lewin's (1936) formula, B=f(P,E), is used to explain human behavior (B) as a result of person-environment interactions. Lewin's person-environment theory is a foundational theory that introduced the importance of physical environment to person's development. The formula recognized that a person's psychological and behavioral development does not occur in isolation from the social and physical environment. On the contrary, the physical and environmental dimensions surrounding the person's growth influence the person. Lewin's formula spearheaded the ecological psychology perspective and framework, which views social ecological surroundings as pivotal influences on a person's behavioral and psychological growth. Countless authors extended Lewin's initial person-environment theory to higher education and school campuses (Stern, 1970; Walsh, 1978; Witt & Handal, 1984). Astin (1968) claimed that the campus environment is one major influence on students' involvement; students are more likely to participate in campus culture if the environment is conducive to positive relationship building. Furthermore, researchers note that the campus ecology theory has been useful in positively helping students through admissions programs (Williams, 1986), college student unions (Banning, 2000), counseling centers (Banning, 1989b; Conyne et al., 1979), and university or college residence halls and housing (Banning, 1995b; Clemons, McKelfresh, & Banning, 2005). Researchers also explained the importance of building productive

campus ecologies to positively affect student retention (Banning, 1984), student success outcomes (Baird, 1976), involvement (Kuh & Schuch, 1991), and first-year students' experience (Banning, 1989c).

The previously mentioned studies illustrate that the physical space of a campus influences the type of culture and students' performance and behavior. Deal and Peterson (1999) contended that for the surrounding communities, the schools' physical environment is an important reflection of the institutions' beliefs, mission, and meanings. Therefore, the physical space translates into the mission and beliefs that potentially encourage employees and students to form positive relationships and an atmosphere of community. Earthman and Lemasters (1996) found a positive correlation between students' high test scores on academic proficiency exams and above-standard building conditions. In fact, Earthman and Lemasters (1996) provided a comprehensive literature review that supports a strong positive relationship between student achievement and high quality environmental conditions. Similarly, O'Neill and Oates (2001) found that students are more likely to perform well in schools that have high building and environmental quality standards. O'Neill and Oates (2001) concluded that higher quality physical environments positively contribute to students' success and the overall learning environment, and facilitate a community-building culture.

Undoubtedly, a school's physical space significantly influences a student's identity, well-being, and comfort (Kenney, Dumont, & Kenney, 2005). Physical space refers to "the campus and its environs—what we refer to as place" (p. 3). Placemaking is the creation of a culture that is welcoming and becomes a home

for students and people on campus. Physical space and positive placemaking is important for students because the environment contributes to a sense of comfort and belonging. A poorly designed physical space can make students feel unwelcome or uncomfortable (Banning, Middleton, & Deniston, 2008). Westberry, McNaughton, Billot, and Gaeta (2013) explained that physical space is "not a neutral background for activity" (p. 503). Physical space influences spatial and temporal orientations. Spatial and temporal orientations affect individuals' development and behavior and may prompt individuals to often feel lost (Westberry et al., 2013). In addition, space contains the narratives of a campus and reflects its culture, epistemologies, and priorities (Temple, 2008a). As such, educational leaders have a responsibility to "reflect the geography of the heart" to create a sense of community for students and the surrounding populations of a campus (Kenney et al., 2005, p. 47).

Physical Campus Ecology and Learning Spaces

Studies in physical campus ecology illustrate that certain learning spaces are fundamental to positive student development and success (Temple, 2007). In a comprehensive literature review of physical learning spaces, Temple (2007) describedthat "space" is largely understood as "the campus; the university in the city; a community; individual buildings; spaces intended for teaching and learning; and other spaces" (p. 5). Recently, scholars have increased attention to the ways that physical space influences the learning of students (Temple, 2007). However, the literature that refers to "space" or "environment" has overly focused on "space, planning, or as part of campus master-planning and architecture,

rather than being seen as a resource to be managed as an integral part of teaching and learning, and research activities" (Temple, 2008b, p. 229). The goal of higher education leadership should be to create physical spaces that become comfortable places; place is a physical space that creates the sense of community and belonging (Temple, 2008a). Simply, the concept of the "learning space" within physical space is largely under-researched in higher education (Temple, 2008b), despite findings that show that physical learning spaces are important for the positive, effective growth of students (Temple, 2007).

Temple's (2007) comprehensive literature review regarding learning spaces lists several ways in which the physical learning space can positively contribute to students' development. First, the physical learning space is the environment where teaching, learning, and research intersect. Higher education systems are the physical nexus where teachers can craft suitable and effective pedagogical methods to enhance student learning and promote self-discovery through research. Second, the physical campus design promotes and demonstrates a campus's mission, and is essential in inspiring educators and students. Third, learning spaces are important details that spark community building and networking to promote student involvement. Fourth, the aesthetics of a campus contribute to "psychological security and support feelings of belonging, and thus commitment to learning" (Temple, 2007, p. 6). Students are more likely to engage and become involved on campus if they feel important, a sense of community, and accepted. As such, Temple (2007, 2008b)

recommended that administrators and educators promote safe, effective, interconnected, flexible, and evolving physical learning spaces.

In other research, Banning, Clemons, Mickelfresh, and Giffs (2010) viewed physical campus spaces as important for student well-being and health. In a study of 158 campuses, the authors found that certain campus spaces serve as third places, or restorative spaces, and spaces of growth for students. Third places are spaces where students form community beyond their rote academic routines. Restorative places are places where students relax, feel comfortable, and "offset the effects of mental fatigue" (Banning, Clemons, et al., 2010, p. 907). Surprisingly, approximately ninety-eight percent of students described their third place and socializing, comfortable places as being off campus. For some students, restorative places on campus were identified in natural landscapes, including grassy areas, bodies of water, and parks. Such restorative places are important for student health as they are utilized to reduce pressure created by stress. This research illustrates that educators, administrators, and institutions' leaders must critically consider the importance of physical campus spaces for students' well-being, comfort, and positive development.

Although physical learning spaces can enhance student learning, educators and higher education leadership must be cautious of exclusionary characteristics of certain spaces on campus. Temple (2008b) drew from Whisnant (1971) to explain, "Campuses are, in effect, designed to exacerbate 'division, tension, alienation and strife'" (p. 230). Campuses often overlook students' needs and create divisions on campus, especially by creating barriers

between departments, separating university affairs from local communities, and separating students from administrative matters. In areas and campuses of conflict, students often escape or avoid such environments, which negatively affects their comfort levels. In all, physical learning spaces are often in need of creating "a better sense of community" (Temple, 2008b, p. 230).

Visualizing the Physical Campus Ecology

A unique way to investigate the importance of campus ecology and physical space is through a photographic elicitation methodology. Banning (1992a, 1992b) proclaimed that photographic visuals allowed researchers to explore the buildings, signs, and symbols on campuses to expose the cultural values and nonverbal messages. Visual photography is helpful in understanding the physical realities, nonverbal communication, and positive or negative messages on school grounds. Moreover, Banning, Middleton, and Deniston (2008) explained that photographs and visuals are artifacts "in educational environments [that] can be evaluated for messages that promote or are detrimental to the spirit of equity" (p. 45). Through visuals, researchers can uncover places on campus that support community building, effective transformation, or inequities. Images and photography of campus allow researchers to decode positive or negative views of different student groups, as well.

Banning and Luna (1992) studied photographs from different campuses that contained messages about Latin@ culture on campus. Banning and Luna (1992) personally photographed artwork, murals, and graffiti on campuses. The

authors found that one university used Spanish in informational signs to appropriately cater to Latin@ students. The use of Spanish, according to the authors, showed intent to communicate and celebrate Latin@s on campus. One institution showed a painting in a library that positively displayed Latin@s in a unified, interconnected, and lively sense. The authors interpreted this painting as a celebration of interconnectedness and cultural empowerment in the Latin@ culture. Unfortunately, several institutions displayed paintings with negative connotations or stereotypes. One painting showed Latin@s as farmworkers and laborers. Another painting placed an Indian and Latin@ person standing alongside and smaller than a central White man. The authors found graffiti in one institution that negatively spoke about minorities and displayed a "white power!" sign. Banning and Luna (1992) concluded, "Many programmatic efforts and public messages of support are damaged by the presence of these non-verbal messages" (p. 5-6). The negative images about Latin@s exposed the institutions' disregard for the ways that students may internalize such views. In a similar study, Banning (1992a, 1992b) found that messages of sexism negatively affected women's views of themselves in relation to their male counterparts. Images also illustrated prejudice against gays and lesbians (Banning, 1995a). The existence of positive and negative messages in symbols, images, and graffiti illustrates how physical campuses are important components of the culture and expression of minority groups, including Latin@s. However, a limitation of the previous studies was that photographic visualization from the students' perspective was not included.

On the other hand, Douglas (1998) studied African American students' perceptions of their campus at a predominantly White campus. She asked students to share photographs, also known as a photographic elicitation interview process, to help them describe their experiences, feelings, or impressions of their school environments. Douglas (1998) found the following recurrent visual themes in the photographs: appreciation for campus beauty, consciousness of being black, prevalence of Greek organizations, separation of races and cultures, and preparation for students' futures. These findings aligned with a previous photographic elicitation study involving African American students that reported positive interactions with faculty, involvement in campus organizations, high satisfaction with Afro-American courses, and comfort in residence halls (Douglas, 1997). However, Douglas (1997) also reported negative factors, including under representation of blacks on campus and a lack of attention to African-American student needs in students' visual photographs. Douglas (1998) concluded that photographic elicitation positively motivated students to participate in the study and allowed them to deeply reflect about their experiences at school. The greatest limitation in Douglas' (1998) study was the small sample size, which consisted of ten African-American students.

Lambert (2010) conducted a visual ethnography study with 17 ninth graders from a rural community in Colorado to explore the visual images associated with the students' aspirations at home, school, and community and to identify support networks or hindrances to students' educational experiences. The students used a disposable camera to take photographs of their surrounding

environments, identifying support networks or hindrances at school, home, and the community. Students' photographs showed that home, school, and community settings were important support systems. Most of the photographs displayed objects, including bedrooms, awards, or the American flag. Many photographs included parents. The students also provided photographs of "hindrances," which included video games, television, and computers at the school, girls, and Wal-Mart. In all, the author concluded that, "student photographs successfully captured social relationships within the cultural, political-economic, socio-political and spatial context of a rural community" (p. 60).

Theoretical Framework: Identity Negotiation Theory (INT)

Identity negotiation theory (INT) is a theoretical framework that allows researchers to investigate specific relational instances when distinct cultures and identities interact and often clash (Jackson, 2002a). INT begins with the idea that "we are constantly exchanging codes of personhood, worldview, indeed our identities" (Jackson, 2002a, p. 359). INT generally seeks to understand the processes of individuals' identity construction in new, unfamiliar environments and as individuals interact with their social environments. According to Orbe (2008), "an unfamiliar environment triggers stress in the individual psyche fueled by a need to change and yet remain the same" (p. 83). Entrance into new unfamiliar environments necessitates negotiation as one balances one's identity with others' expectations, views, and beliefs, as well as barriers. Ethier and Deaux (1994) explained that identity negotiation is an inevitable occurrence when

individuals transition and adapt to new changes in their respective environments. Identity negotiation is a "working consensus" regarding "the identities that each person should assume" (Swann, Milton, & Polzner, 2000, p. 238) in an interactive encounter. Moreover, identity negotiation is the "'thread' that holds the fabric of social interaction together" (Swann et al., 2000, p. 238). INT is important in understanding how individuals or groups reach conscious or unconscious agreements regarding each other's identities.

INT is useful when attempting to understand conflict with others as people enter new environments. Interaction often causes conflict, especially when individuals perceive themselves as different "coupled with the inability to blend in with either the dominant cultural group or her or his ethnic heritage group" (Ting-Toomey, 2005, p. 211). Conflict arises in relationships when individuals or groups dishonor or breach the expectations or desires of others. Furthermore, conflict arises when distinct groups seek respect from each other, and they are unable to effectively communicate each other's expectations or needs. It is important to note that conflict does not always result in dangerous interaction. INT views conflict positively as it is a necessary means to create productive interactions. As such, INT is useful in understanding how people form their identity in relation to others and their social environments.

Ting-Toomey's INT

Ting-Toomey's INT comes from the field of intercultural communication. Ting-Toomey (1999) conducted extensive research and work in INT in the field of intercultural communication and is credited for the theory (Jackson, 2002a).

Identity and identity negotiation are the core concepts in Ting-Toomey's theory.

Ting-Toomey (2005) defined identity as

> the reflective self-conception or self-image that we each derive from our
>
> family, gender, cultural, ethnic, and individual socialization process.
>
> Identity basically refers to our reflective views of ourselves and other
>
> perceptions of our self-images—at both the social identity and the
>
> personal identity levels. (p. 212)

Social identity refers to the cultural, ethnic, gender, sexuality, age, disability,

professional, and other identities that influence an individuals' perception of self.

Personal identity refers to the individual, unique attributes that persons associate

with themselves in direct comparison to others. The combination of social and

personal identity deeply influences individual's behaviors and is repeatedly part

of the socialization process of identity and identity negotiation.

More specifically, Ting-Toomey (1999) described identity negotiation as a

transactional process in which individuals define, form, modify, challenge, and

confront others' self-images and personal self-images. The process of identity

negotiation includes the way in which individuals form their groups and personal

identities as well as the way in which they relate to others' self-perceptions and

identity construction. This theory is dependent on a dyadic relationship between

self and others because one's construction of identity is influenced by

interactions with others. Identity negotiation is, therefore, a dualistic process that

includes mutual communication between individuals and others. The

transactional process is complex because individuals inherently carry distinct

backgrounds, orientations, ethnicities, and experiences that influence how they view themselves and view or relate to others.

Identity formation is influenced by the negotiation of distinct socialization spheres, including family, gender, culture, and ethnicity. Identity formation includes the negotiation of distinct identity characteristics, including sexuality, religion, age, and class. Family is a recurrent, ever-present system for individuals across cultures (Ting-Toomey, 2005). These networks help individuals learn distinct roles, boundaries, and scripts from an early age. Families influence the identity formation of individuals as they internalize the rules, roles, and scripts as modeled by their kinship environment. For example, individuals learn distinct gender identity scripts, which, in turn, influence identity negotiation. Gender identity is "the meanings and interpretations we hold concerning our self-images and expected other-images of 'femaleness' and 'maleness'" (Ting-Toomey, 2005, p. 213). Some cultures create strict dichotomies across gender lines. Many cultures view women as nurturing, passive, and the primary caretakers. Males are typically perceived as aggressive, competitive, emotionless, and responsible for the financial workings of the household. Ting-Toomey (2005) disclosed, "In the United States, feminine-based tendencies such as interdependence, cooperation, and verbal relatedness are often rewarded in girls, whereas masculine-based tendencies such as independence, competition, and verbal assertiveness are often promoted in boys" (p. 213). The latter behaviors are rewarded in girls and boys in

different environments, including schools and homes. Consequently, these scripts also help individuals form their gender identity.

Additionally, identity formation is influenced by culture and ethnicity scripts. Cultural identity is learned from an early age and is "the emotional significance we attach to our sense of belonging or affiliation with the larger culture" (Ting-Toomey, 2005, p. 214). Cultural identity is influenced by "physical appearance, racial traits, skin color, language usage, self-appraisal, and other-perception factors" (Ting-Toomey, 2005, p. 214). The latter influences are taught and influenced in the home, through communication with familiar and unknown others, and communication media. Cultural identity is best understood by analyzing the "value content" or the expectations and standards that people in cultural groups hold for each other, (p. 214), and "cultural identity salience," or "the strength of affiliation we have with our larger culture" (p. 215). In other words, cultural identity includes the values, such as individualistic and collectivism, which guide decision-making, as well as the commitment and preservation of one's culture in relationship to the larger social environment or other groups. Salience includes a weak or strong preservation of one's culture and is communicated by individuals.

Ethnic identity is different than cultural identity and also influences identity formation. Alba (1990) argued that ethnic identity is "inherently a matter of ancestry, of beliefs about the origins of one's forebears" (as cited in Ting-Toomey, 2005, p. 215). Ethnicity includes nationality, race, religion, and linguistic practices. Similar to cultural identity, ethnic identity can best be understood

through "ethnic value content," which refers to the values associated with the identified ethnic group, and "ethnic identity salience," which includes the creation of boundaries to maintain allegiance and loyalty to the ethnic group (Ting-Toomey, 2005, p. 215). Ting-Toomey (2005) stated that strong ethnic identity salience creates in-group/out-group separation and weak salience creates "rootlessness" in individuals who frequently question their ethnicity. Individuals face identity crises if they struggle in defining their ethnic identities. Fortunately, individuals positively confront struggle to recreate their identities or create a double consciousness to navigate and bridge multiple ethnic identities.

Core assumptions of Ting-Toomey's INT. Individuals form their identity as they navigate different spaces and are impacted by social scripts, particularly those in family, gender, culture, and ethnicity. To fully understand Ting-Toomey's INT, it is important to be familiar with the theory's assumptions.

Assumption one. Personal identity and group membership is created by symbolic communication with individuals. This assumption is based on the idea that individuals create their self-image based on the values, norms, and symbols in their groups, including cultural and ethnic groups. Depending on content and salience, individuals form their emotions, communication, and thinking patterns based on their interaction with others.

Assumption two. When forming personal and group identity, persons, cultures, and ethnic groups are driven and motivated by "needs for identity security, inclusion, predictability, connection, and consistency" (Ting-Toomey, 2005, p. 218). Strict personal and group security results in exclusion of others

and ethnocentrism, whereas intense insecurity results in vulnerability and anxiety in relationship to others. This assumption is based on the idea that identity security or perceived safety and emotional vulnerability or the degree of anxiety is directly impacted by the familiarity or unfamiliarity in ones' environment.

Assumption three. Emotional security occurs in familiar environments and vulnerability occurs in unfamiliar environments. This assumption is based on the same idea as in assumption two, which postulates that emotional insecurity and vulnerability arise in unfamiliar environments. Without security, individuals feel vulnerable and, hence, do not feel comfortable navigating their environments (Hotta & Ting-Toomey, 2013). Hotta and Ting-Toomey (2013) argued that identity security and vulnerability are an essential dialectic in human existence (p. 552).

Assumption four. Persons feel included when their personal or group identities are positively affirmed or feel excluded when they face hostility, stigma, or negative perceptions from others. This assumption explains that individuals form in-group and out-group boundaries to create identity or group inclusion or exclusion. Similarly, identity differentiation occurs based on the "degree of remoteness" (Ting-Toomey, 2005, p. 218) or perceived distance between the self and others. Within this assumption, an individual might overly differentiate oneself from others or decide to join other, more favorable groups.

Assumption five. Predictable interaction occurs when people communicate in familiar environments, which often results in trusting relationships. On the contrary, unpredictability in one's environment results in

distrusting relationships. This assumption is based on the idea that uncertainty increases salience or affiliation related to one's identity or group. Unexpected behaviors from others in unfamiliar territories directly affect how one forms identity in relationship to others. The perception of unpredictable, indeterminate behavior in others results in distrust and estrangement, which, in turn, creates uncomfortable interaction.

Assumption six. Persons seek meaningful, close interpersonal relationships, and they experience identity autonomy if they feel separation from others. Positive meaningful relationships contribute to identity security and trustworthy interactions. This assumption is based on the idea that individuals choose to be autonomous or immediately connect with others due to the cultural values that are exchanged in an interaction. Boundaries are heightened if individuals choose autonomy over connection. Individualistic communities often maintain autonomy whereas collectivistic communities often maintain interrelated connections. Ethier and Deaux (1994) noted that if social identity is supported by surrounding relationship networks, then drastic environmental changes will not affect a person's identity and relationships. Furthermore, the authors explained that the perception of threat often forces individuals to display lower self-esteem regarding their identity or desire to leave their group, depending on their level of affiliation and commitment to the group.

Assumption seven. Consistency in personal identity occurs in familiar environments when individuals engage in cultural routines, whereas constant change occurs in unfamiliar environments. Extreme change or unfamiliarity

results in "identity chaos" (Ting-Toomey, 2005, p. 218). This assumption is based on the idea that identity might remain static based on the repeatability of rituals, routines, and customs, or will shift based on intercultural contacts and disruption of identity rituals in different environments. Also, positive identity change is likely when a person embodies comfortable identity security, inclusion, predictability, and consistency in their environments. Ting-Toomey (2005) provided the example of immigrants' acculturation that occurs when they integrate themselves in the values and norms of a new culture over a long-term period. Immigrants positively changed identity if the surrounding environment was welcoming. Productive interaction in crossing boundaries occurred when hosts were receptive to the immigrants' identities and immigrants were willing to learn from others in the new environments.

Assumption eight. Variance in cultures, persons, and situations affect the meaning, interpretation, and evaluation of the latter identity-formation themes. This assumption is based on the idea that differences in cultures, personal upbringing, and situational contexts directly influence how individuals perceive their identities, the identities of others, and the perceived interactions. The situational and contextual norms, rules, systems, and scripts that individuals learn affect the ways they interact with others, form their identity, and behave in different environments. Depending on the environment and context, individuals' interactions or identity formation are stifled or enhanced. Lastly, personality preferences and types also affect the level of "tolerance for ambiguity, personal

flexibility, openness to experience, and construal of self" (Ting-Toomey, 2005, p. 222).

   Assumption nine. Competent identity formation requires effective communication practices with "culturally dissimilar others," including the integration of "intercultural identity-based knowledge, mindfulness, and interaction skills" (Ting-Toomey, 2005, p. 218). This assumption rests on the idea that individuals mindfully integrate knowledge and positive attitudes in "everyday intercultural interactions" (p. 226). Identity based knowledge requires that individuals consciously understand the identity salience of others, including their values and customs, to positively interact and affirm them. Individuals can learn from others based on observations, experiences, and consideration of others' identities. Mindfulness refers to an individual's "readiness to shift one's frame of reference, the motivation to use new categories to understand cultural or ethnic differences" in contrast to mindlessness or "the heavy reliance on familiar frames of reference, old routinized designs or categories, and customary ways of doing things" (p. 226). Identity negotiation skills refer to the ability to adapt, clarify, observe, exercise empathy, feel sensitivity, support, collaborate, and mediate conflict when interacting with others. In all, the combination of productive identity knowledge, mindfulness, and interaction skills can positively create negotiation and interaction with others. Furthermore, competent identity formation necessitates a conscious affirmation of self- and other-identities (Dao, 2009). Ting-Toomey (1999, 2005) argued that productive identity negotiation requires

intercultural competence whereby an individual mindfully and consciously reflects on their self-image and relates to others.

Assumption ten. Identity negotiation is successful when individuals feel "understood, respected, and affirmatively valued" (Ting-Toomey, 2005, p. 218). This assumption is based on the idea that groups and individuals are mutually satisfied when they perceive respect, courtesy, understanding, and positive affirmation of each other's identities. Insult and misunderstanding reduces identity satisfaction in groups and individuals. Mindfulness and productive interaction skills are useful here to show respect and affirmation of others. The end goal of productive identity negotiation is to communicate properly and minimize anxiety, conflict, or misunderstandings.

Ting-Toomey's dialectics. Ting-Toomey (1999, 2005) described five dialectics that inform identity negotiation processes: identity security-vulnerability, identity inclusion-differentiation, identity predictability-unpredictability, identity connection-autonomy, and identity consistency-change. Ting-Toomey (2005) listed the identity dialectics to show the practicality and applicability of INT as well as to summarize the core components and assumptions of the negotiation process. Dialectics are intended to show continual shifts in person's identity; as such, dialectics show shifting characteristics of individuals' identities and should not to be taken as rigid categories that predetermine people's identities (Ting-Toomey, 2005).

Identity security-vulnerability. Under the first dialectic spectrum, individuals may shift between a state of security or vulnerability in a given

environment. This is the most common and fundamental dialectic in human relationships.

Identity inclusion-differentiation. Under the second dialectic spectrum, individuals may shift between feeling included or differentiated/excluded in a given environment. Inclusion and differentiation is important for feelings of isolation or connectedness.

Identity predictability-unpredictability. Under the third dialectic spectrum, individuals view the environment as predictable or unpredictable, which is important to form strong relationships and communicate comfortably with others. Predictability is important for individuals to adapt to new environments.

Identity connection-autonomy. Under the fourth dialectic spectrum, individuals connect with others or maintain autonomy in a given environment. Connection and autonomy helps individuals form strong relationships with surrounding groups and people.

Identity consistency-change. Under the fifth dialectic spectrum, individuals view their identity as consistent or changing in a given environment. Individuals may undergo processes in which they conceal different parts of their identity in new environments.

The latter dialectics simplify the processes that people engage in to negotiate their identity, as consistently explained in the core assumptions. The identity negotiation dialectics are recurrent through the explanations in the theoretical assumptions. INT is about understanding a person's journey in

negotiating their identities while crossing distinct cultural boundaries and constantly communicating with others (Ting-Toomey, 2005). Interaction with others is an inevitable, important process in identity construction, and individuals continuously navigate between the following identity dialectics: security-vulnerability, inclusion-differentiation, predictability-unpredictability, connection autonomy, and consistency-change in identity. Interaction with social and physical spaces happens on a regular, daily basis and this is how individuals form "meanings, values, norms, and styles of communicating" (p. 211) as well as their identity salience and content. Jackson (2002a) explains, "Ting-Toomey (1986) proposed that future research examine the relational dilemmas and paradoxes that arise from members of two cultures 'as they attempt to reach out and hold back at the same time, to seek for mutual validation, and yet at the same time to protect their own vulnerability'" (p. 360).

INT in Education

Researchers have applied INT to understand the shifting identity of different groups in educational settings (Hendrix, Jackson, & Warren, 2003; Jackson, 2002a; Morita, 2004; Orbe, 2008). Ethier and Deaux (1994) studied the effect of change on maintenance of identity, group identification, and perceived threats to self-esteem and identity in first-year Hispanic [sic] students at primarily White universities. Ethier and Deaux were interested in understanding students' identity negotiation upon immediate entrance into their environmental contexts. Their research "concerns the effects on social identity of a complete change of environment, where the former supports of an identity

(e.g., contact with group members) no longer exist as the person has known

them" (p. 244). The authors interviewed 45 students during their first year at two

Ivy League schools. The authors used a combination of qualitative and

quantitative measurement tools to assess identity affiliation, self-esteem

regarding group membership, and the perceptions of threats to their identity.

The researchers identified two ways that students negotiate their ethnic identity

when facing a new educational environment. The students who initially displayed

a strong ethnic identity intensified their commitment to their identity, despite

involvement in other cultural groups and activities. These students maintained a

stable sense of ethnic identity through a process of "remooring," or "linking their

identity to people and activities on campus that were consistent with a Hispanic

[sic] identity" (p. 249). Students who reported weaker identification with their

ethnic identity perceived their environment as more threatening and,

consequently, reported decreased self-esteem and further lack of identification

with their ethnic identity.

Hungerford-Kresser (2010) studied the identity negotiation of five Latin@

students who enrolled in a predominantly White university after their high school

graduation. Hungerford-Kresserfocused on the ways that these students

perceived and adapted to the academic literacies of the university environments.

The author found surprising perceptions. Students adapted into their classrooms

by appropriating the academic terms and concepts to articulate their own

thoughts. The students also developed critical awareness and expressed that

university faculty continuously positioned them as "other." In addition, certain

students described negative institutional discourses, including remarks such as "You'll drop out by the end of the semester" (Hungerford-Kresser, 2010, p. 8). Students explained that faculty often negatively compared Latin@s to other groups on campus. More specifically, some faculty compared Latin@s to "blonde-haired and blue-eyed" students, perpetuating a deficit perspective about Latin@ students (Hungerford-Kresser, 2010, p. 8). The deficit perspective entrenches the view that Latin@ students lack intelligence, motivation, or academic aptitude, in comparison to their peers. The author concluded that higher education leadership must pay close attention to the identity negotiations of Latin@ students to learn about the barriers, difficulties, and agency of such individuals. Latin@ students' identity negotiation is a matter of survival as they adapt to new environments, especially places that are culturally alienating and threatening.

In other research, Peña-Talamantes (2013) investigated how six lesbian or gay Latin@ students negotiated their identities at home and in college. The participants attended a predominantly White university and reported that they were Mexican or Mexican-American. The primary finding in this study was that the students saw their home and college worlds as conflicting. The expectations at home were different than the expectations at school. The home environment was particularly threatening to the lesbian or gay identity of the participants. The participants reported a constant vigilance of negating lesbian or gay mannerisms to avoid persecution or stigma at home. On the other hand, the academic world allowed students to negotiate their identities in different ways, despite

heterosexism in classrooms. Students reported comfort in attending the LGBTQ center at the university. In all, "the types of responses from the participants pointed to the great need for validation and support of their sense of self within the college figured world" (Peña-Talamantes, 2013, p. 274). The conflicting worlds of the home and campus forced students to negotiate their identities constantly. This negotiation of identities demonstrates how students navigate complex worlds as they navigate across and in-between such environments.

Peña-Talamantes (2013) described three emergent themes, which were consistent with Ting-Toomey's (2005) INT: the sense of freedom, the sense of security, and the sense of belonging. The sense of freedom refers to the lesbian or gay Latin@ students' desire to escape persecution and oppressive norms in society or school. The sense of freedom includes the sense of being open and empowered in their identity. Freedom includes open spaces where individuals feel validated. The sense of security refers to self-confidence, beyond feeling safe in an environment. A sense of security includes self-nourishment to reflect on and resolve inner-conflicts. Finally, the sense of belonging refers to a sense of empowering community. Participants reported a sense of belonging in "a defined peer support system, the existence of a significant other, and of course, a continued attachment to the family" (Peña-Talamantes, 2013, p. 276). The sense of freedom, security, and belonging are interrelated and contribute to an individual's self-authorship and self-definition.

Hotta and Ting-Toomey (2013) qualitatively explored the "identity change process of international students" (by looking at identity challenges, self-efficacy,

competence, and the role of friendship in their identity negotiation (p. 551). The authors sought to understand how international students constructed their identities, described identity-related adjustment, and described potential feelings of vulnerability in American society. Twenty international students (15 graduate students and 5 undergraduate students) from various countries and in a public four-year university participated in this study. The authors used a 20-item questionnaire, qualitative interview, and one researcher who "provided participants with a graph and asked them to sketch a diagram representing their satisfaction with their adjustment to living in the U.S." (p. 554). The x-axis in the graph represented the length of time and the y-axis represented the extent of satisfaction in adjusting to American society. First, the participants reported a need to adjust, change their identity, and form new, practically useful friendships. Consistently, the participants explained the need to communicate differently. Secondly, participants reported the importance of time and duration of friendships as vital to their experiences in adjusting to American culture. The students often compared their newly established friendships in the United States as less "close" than their friendships at home. Last, the most consistent theme was that of a cultural shock and emotional challenges that resulted from cultural adaptation. The cultural shock theme included the description that although their physical appearance made them visibly different, they internally felt excluded from American circles and society. Participants described not fitting into the groups and circles in their classrooms and in the United States. Moreover, the students reported that they felt alienated, as opposed to "treated like a guest"

(Hotta & Ting-Toomey, 2013, p. 560). Fortunately, most students reported that the negative emotions and experiences occurred upon their initial entrance into the United States, but they gradually felt more comfortable and adjusted positively.

Swann et al. (2000) investigated identity negotiation in small group environments at school. The primary purpose of the study was to investigate whether self-verification (creating a personalized niche) or self-categorization (falling in line with the groups' wishes) during identity negotiation in small groups bolstered group connectedness. The study's sample included 423 first year MBA students who were separated into 83 study groups. The groups worked on group projects for four months. The researchers collected self-report data using quantitative scales regarding the group members' initial interactions and appraisals of each other at the beginning of the semester, after 9 weeks, after 15 weeks, and at the end of the semester. The authors found that the identity negotiation processes of self-verification and self-views shaped the performance of small group projects. Individual self-verification in the group improved performance because individuals felt more connected when the group affirmed their self-images. In other words, individuals felt more satisfied with the group when others saw them as they saw themselves. Furthermore, self-categorization was minimally helpful to the performance of the group because positive appraisals encouraged certain members to facilitate productivity and tasks.

Swann et al.'s (2000) study supports Ting-Toomey's assumptions regarding positive affirmation and meaningful relations. In the context of small

group interactions, individuals simultaneously sought a balance of self-verification and self-categorization in relationship to their working partners. Self-verification positively contributed to the group's work, as individuals felt connected to their group members. The authors concluded, "In the process of identity negotiation . . . the self is both a product of social reality and an active architect of that reality" (p. 248). The authors recommended that researchers focus on women and members of minority groups in future studies related to small group interactions at school (p. 248).

Gaps in the Literature

This study did not seek to review the broad extent of literature and study regarding student development. I briefly summarized major and foundational student development theories that are related to this study. Importantly, this study addressed certain limitations that are highlighted in this section. Namely, this study enhanced thecomprehension of Latin@ students' identity specifically by applying identity negotiation theory (2005) to the students' transfer experience, participation in an educational services program, and visual perceptions of comfortable spaces on campus. Chickering's (1969, 1993) theory did not fully account for the identity development of Latin@ students. Astin's (1973, 1984) and Tinto's (2006) theories do not fully account for the Latin@ students' navigation, integration, or development from the community college to the four-year university. This study was an in depth analysis of the way that Latin@ transfer students navigate the changes from the community college to four-year university environments, which addresses the gaps in earlier student

development models, including Tinto's (1975, 1993, 2006) theories. This study also enhanced Bean and Metzner's (1985) analysis of nontraditional students and responded to multiple authors' recommendations to focus on the Latin@ student experience and persistence in community colleges, transfer, and university campuses (Attinasi, 1989; Bennett & Okinaka, 1990; Hernandez, 2000; Hurtado & Carter, 1996; Padilla & Pavel, 1986;). Moreover, this study enhanced the scope of physical campus ecology and learning space theories as applied to Latin@ transfer students, which are minimally studied in current research.

Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed important research regarding Latin@ education, transfer, orientation and educational services programs, student development theory, and physical campus ecology. Additionally, the focus on INT, which is grounded in the field of human communication studies, allowed the researcher to investigate Latin@ student journeys from a specific community college to four-year universities. The study applied the theoretical framework of INT, most commonly used in the field of intercultural communication, as the framework for understanding a phenomenon in education. The researcher sought to investigate how Latin@ transfer students negotiate their identity across distinct educational environments by applying INT, including the following dialectics to Latin@ students' identity negotiation: identity security-identity vulnerability, identity inclusion-identity differentiation, identity connection-identity autonomy, and identity consistency-identity change. Previous research supports Ting-Toomey's (2004) INT assumptions and this framework was applied to the unique

instance of Latin@ student identity formation. INT has been minimally applied to

educational contexts. The study responded to previous recommendations to

extend research regarding the identity negotiation of minority groups in education

(Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Hotta & Ting-Toomey, 2013; Swann et al., 2000).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Researchers, educators, and administrators continuously misunderstand the experiences of Latin@ students as they travel between worlds in the educational system (Rendón, 1994; Rendón Linares & Muñoz, 2011; Tuttle & Musoba, 2013). The lack of Latin@ students' voices and perceptions about their surroundings has contributedto a misunderstanding of their needs and identity (Fernández, 2002) because administrators group Latin@s with other students and into the larger student body (Rendón Linares & Muñoz, 2011). The lack of understanding stifles the validation necessary for Latin@ transfer student success (Rendón, 1994; Torres, 2006).

The purpose of this study was to investigate how Latin@ students negotiated their identity and visually perceived new educational spaces as they transferred from a community college to a four-year university. I sought to understand if participation in an educational services program at a community college positively influenced Latin@ students' identity negotiation as they transferred into a four-year university. The general research questions that guided this study were:

1. How do Latin@ students negotiate their identity when they transfer from a community college to a university?

2. What university spaces do Latin@ transfer students identify as visually comfortable?

3. How does participation in an educational services program influence Latin@ transfer students' identity negotiation and perception of visually comfortable spaces?

Additionally, Iutilized four out of the five core dialectics of identity Negotiation theory (identity security-identity vulnerability, identity inclusion-differentiation, identity predictability-unpredictability, and identity connection-autonomy,) and visual photographic representations to respond to the following specific research questions:

1. Do Latin@ transfer students feel secure or vulnerable, included or excluded, and connected or autonomous when they transfer to a four-year university?

2. Do Latin@ transfer students report familiar or unfamiliar environments?

3. What strategies do Latin@ transfer students engage in to adapt to a university?

This chapter explains the theoretical justification and foundation for qualitative methodology and data collection for this study. I also describe the interpretative paradigm design for this research, which is fully consistent with identity negotiation theory, and the theoretical defense of research in such a framework. Finally, the sampling, data collection and analysis, interpretation, and myrole will be explained.

Qualitative Methods Research and the Interpretive Paradigm Design

According to Fernández (2002), educational research about Latin@ students is dominated by "quantitative indicators" and, despite the growth in qualitative research, students' perspectives are not discussed substantially (p. 45). Most education research today is devoid of students' perspectives, particularly in their confrontation of different educational institutions' environments (Fernández, 2002, p. 47). Similarly, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) noted, "the positivist, quantitative paradigm still dominates the total body of [student advancement] research, with true experiments, quasi experiments, and correlational designs with statistical controls for salient confounding variables being the methodological tools of choice" (p. 4). Therefore, to address the gap in research, this study was grounded in qualitative research and the interpretative paradigm design.

Marshall and Rossman (2011) viewed qualitative research as uniquely important for immersingoneself in the culture of others. A researcher is fully able to comprehend distinct elements of a culture, including how they view themselves, their surroundings, and their beliefs. Unlike quantitative studies that rely on numerical and statistical interpretations of behavior, qualitative research looks for in-depth description and motives behind behaviors (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative methodology and research is designed to gain in-depth responses from small groups to uncover beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions (Creswell, 2011, p. 247). Researchers look at the constructed realities of participants and can provide useful tools to confront marginalization.

Lindlof and Taylor (2002) described the interpretive paradigm design as an ontologically and epistemologically driven paradigm that uncovers "actions, motives, and feelings" as well as the subjective experiences and knowledge of participants (p. 11). The design focuses on the subjective explanations of reality throughthe inclusionof the socially constructed meanings, symbols, and communication ofindividuals in their social contexts. The interpretive tradition places participants' viewpoints at the forefront; the goal is to interpret others' voices in relationship to their context, setting, and beliefs. Researchers often investigate emotions, expressions, language, signs, symbols, and linguistic patterns to comprehend the experiences of individuals.

The interpretive paradigm is distinct from functionalist and postpositivist views, which understand society as orderly, objective, predictable, and regulatory. The design focuses on discovering, synthesizing, and interpreting the meanings and communication of participants in their environments (Putnam, 1982, p. 194). Burrell and Morgan (1979) clarified that the interpretive paradigm "tends to be nominalist, antipositivist, and ideographic" (p. 28). Nominalism refers to the idea that reality is constructed by the symbols, names, and concepts that individuals create in their environments; such names or concepts are culturally and symbolically created by the people that negotiate meanings and descriptions in their social, relative surroundings (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 4). Unlike postpositivism, which seeks to find laws, regularities, predictions, and objective facts, antipositivist research is concerned with participants' first-hand knowledge and subjective experiences that are not quantifiable. The antipositivist view

recognizes that truth is not universally bound to predictive laws in nature; rather,

humans relatively create their own meanings and truths on a daily basis.

Although researchers criticize antipositivism as a relativist denial and

abandonment of any objective truth, Burrell and Morgan (1979) asserted that the

interpretive paradigm is useful in uncovering overlooked or dismissed social

viewpoints from marginalized perspectives.

Research Methods

I used one-on-one qualitative interviews with informal, open-ended

questions, and photographic elicitation methodology. This section explains the

specific methods, setting, sample, data collection, data interpretation, and

reliability and validity, and trustworthiness.

Interviews

Qualitative interviews with semi-structured, open-ended questions were

ideal for this study. Hotta and Ting-Toomey (2013) noted that semi-structured

interviews with open-ended questions are vital ininterviewing students and

creatinga relaxed environment. Students are willing to engage in productive

conversation and share their experiences if the open-ended questions are

accessible. Furthermore, open-ended questions were important for this study

because students' perceptions were best understood in their own voices

(Fernández, 2002). Fernández (2002) explainedthat qualitative Latin@

narratives may help administrators understand direct perceptions and barriers to

student success. Specifically, "these methodologies can make public what many

already know but have not spoken out loud: There are futures and lives at stake in the process we call education" (Fernández, 2002, p. 59-60).

This study employed qualitative interviews to analyze the voices of students. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) defined qualitative interviews as a method that looks at the personal anecdotes, parables, tales, and life experiences of participants. Marshall and Rossman (2011) justifiedqualitative interviews as being important to the understandingof the socially oriented, natural environment of participants in their own words. Individual interviews help researchers understand the subjective experiences and understandings of participants in depth, particularly because they uncover the "participants' expression of their views through the creation of a supportive environment" (p. 149). The qualitative interview is consistent with the interpretive paradigm design because "interviews capture the 'whole story'" of people's experiences (p. 179). Individuals' perceptions and explanations can help a researcher capture an almost "whole story" of persons' lives. A qualitative interview "is the vehicle for generating story data," "performances" and interactions (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 180). The method allows researchers to understand "art, spirituality, community, and a sense of self, and thus encodes human desire at the deepest levels" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 180).

Qualitative interviews help researchers understand the self-identities, actions, and perceptions of participants (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, pp. 180-181). A researcher can understand the personal explicatory dimensions of humans "infusing their actions" and subjective identity formations with meanings that

foretell how humans "make sense and get by" in their social locations (p. 5). Researchers can look at the meanings and communication of participants to discover how persons view themselves in relationship to their environments, the actions they take on a daily basis, and perceptions about their place in different contexts.

According to Hotta and Ting-Toomey (2013), qualitative interviewsareimportant inunderstanding the identity negotiation process based on individuals' actions and responses to their surroundings. The authors explain that qualitative interviews can capture narratives and participant's experiences as they make-sense of unfamiliar environments or cultures (Hotta & Ting-Toomey, 2013, p. 551). Individuals' own voices, lived experiences, and descriptions of their surroundings are vital to understand identity negotiation. Furthermore, researchers can obtain in-depth understanding of students' intercultural adjustment, especially when they enter new environments (Hotta & Ting-Toomey, 2013).As such, a researcher can explore how people, including students, describe or negotiate their identity through qualitative interviews.

Photographic Elicitation and Visual Methodology

This study utilized photographic elicitation, or visual methodology. The use of visuals, including photography, is a useful methodology to understand people's experiences and perceptions of their environment. The approach enhances researchers' understandings of people's experiences in different environments. Harper (2002) summarizedthe fundamental advantage of using photographic elicitation methodology:

Photographic elicitation is based on the simple idea of inserting a

photograph into a research interview. The difference between interviews

using images and text, and interviews using words alone lies in the ways

we respond to these two forms of symbolic representation. . . .Images

evoke deeper elements of human consciousness than do words;

exchanges based on words alone utilize less of the brain's capacity than

do exchanges in which the brain is processing images as well as words.

These may be some of the reasons the photographic elicitation interview

seems like not simply an interview process that elicits more information,

but rather one that evokes a different kind of information. (p. 13)

Awan (2007) arguedthat this approach is a way to fill in the gaps in other

traditional research methods. Unlike quantitative surveys and methods, visuals

provide a glimpse into the physical and social experiences that cannot be

reduced to mere statistics or numbers. Bridger (2013) viewedphotographic and

visual elicitation as a way to challenge the dominant focus on language and to

give "participants different forms of expression, [encouraging] them to 'take the

reins' and steer the direction of the research interview" (p. 107). Hill (2013)

viewed visual methodology as a medium in which participants, especially

students and youth, can openly describe their realities and challenge traditional

research power relations. McCarthy (2013) similarly supportedthe use of visual

methodology to encourage students to comfortably express their experiences at

home and Robinson (2013) arguedthat photographic imagery uncovers spaces of

social inclusion/exclusion. Moreover, Awan (2008) explainedthat empirical

studies, including personal and focus group interviews, are often dominated by verbal or written participant responses and "do not engage sufficiently with the role of media texts in *actual* lived experience" (p. 52). Awan (2008) challengedresearchers to be creative and expand research in more creative ways, beyond traditional qualitative or empirical research.

Visual methodology is useful to understand identity construction and cultural environments. In her study of young people's identity construction, Awan (2007) used visual collages combined with unstructured qualitative interviews to understand young children notions of themselves, their identities, and creativity. Awan found that the use of collages allowed children to express their identity freely and in different ways. Students expressed themselves openly through photography and the methodology allowed participants to set up their own agenda and terms to engage in the research. The use of visuals was useful to comprehend students' experiences and perceptions of their cultural environment. Rose (2007) justifiedthe use of visual methodology as a means of understanding the cultural dimensions of distinct environments:

> The visual is central to the cultural construction of social life in contemporary Western societies. It is now often suggested that much meaning is conveyed by visual images. . . .Images offer views of the world; they render the world in visual terms. (p.2)

Therefore, visual photography allows researchers to immerse themselves into understanding the ways that individuals view and experience their identity and cultural surroundings.

Visual methodology is useful in studies about youth, especially as they negotiate their identities in new environments. Hill (2013) explained, "Part of living embodied in society . . . involves negotiating the world visually, and images are constantly present in culture and society. Experiences in school may be informed by engagements with physical and visual cultures" (p. 133). Bridger (2013) explainedthat photographic elicitation methodology exposes interdependencies that young people create in their social environment. Photographs show a physical representation of the places that young people navigate. Bridger (2013) arguedthat visual methodology is helpful inunderstanding the complexity, diversity, and changing environmental elements as young people transition into different places or adulthood. Hill (2013) and McCarthy (2013) similarly described visual methodology as a participatory research approach. Robinson (2013) suggestedthat photography allows researchers and participants to locate socially inclusive environments and Faber, Moller, and Nielson (2013) illustrated that visual methodologies help participants reflect on their sense of mobility, group affiliation, and belongingness in different environments (p. 43). In educational research, visual photographic methodology is helpful to "map a learning environment" to help educators focus attention on inviting campus environments (American College Personnel Association, 1996; Borrego, 2006, p. 11).

Disadvantages to Methods

Researchers have warnedthat there arecertain disadvantages to using qualitative interviewsandvisual methodology. Marshall and Rossman (2011)

warned that qualitative interviews can be lengthy. In-depth conversations and equal participation require extensive scheduling and planning. Scheduling is also an issue because of participants' busy lives. Arranging interviews is often difficult because of variables and factors that prevent individuals from participating in the research. Appropriate management, control, and continuous preparation for interviews is important. The greatest disadvantage to visual methodology is that researchers might deploy "selective interpretation," which, on face, creates bias (Awan, 2007, p. 53). Researchers' interpretations of visuals run the risk of misinterpretation. Therefore, researchers have a responsibility to verify their interpretations by constant communication with participants.

Setting

There were three institutions involved in this study: a community college, a University of California (UC) institution, and a California State University (CSU) institution. This study was implemented only at the different, public four-year universities in southern California, the UC institution and the CSU institution. The Latin@ transfer students at the UC and CSU came from a local community college, which is in a unique location: the surrounding city is primarily populated by Latin@ communities and the community college is a Hispanic serving institution. The community college, UC, and CSU are part of a partnership designed to help Latin@ students transfer to a four-year institution. In light of the partnership, the community college created the educational services program in 2011 to increase orientation, counseling, and support to Latin@ students. More specifically, the educational services program helps students receive guaranteed

admission into the specifically designated UC or CSU to increase Latin@ transfer rates. The program actively includes community and parental involvement in workshops, events, and campus visitation days.

The partnership between the community college, the UC, and CSU institutions created the educational services program in 2011. The program provides services and opportunities for students to go to the community college and eventually transfer to the UC or CSU. Students sign a pledge to participate in the program and, consequently, receive mentoring, tutoring, counseling, and financial assistance. The program also provides field trips, workshops, and information for students to prepare for transfer. Additionally, the program works with parents to familiarize them about the college, universities, and higher education.

It is important to recognize that the UC and CSU institutions in this study are notably distinct. The UC is a public research institution. Approximately 21 percent of the undergraduate student population at the UC is Hispanic/Latin@, 2 percent Black/African-American, 50.4 Asian, and 19.3 white (College Data, 2013b). The CSU is a public institution. Approximately 37 percent of the undergraduate student population is Hispanic/Latin@, 2.5 percent Black/African-American, 22.5 percent Asian, and 28.7 percent White (College Data, 2013a). In addition, the CSU is a Hispanic-serving institution.

Sample

The study used purposeful sampling for the qualitative interviews. Purposeful sampling looks for participants that fulfill specific requirements to

partake in the study (Reinard, 2008). Purposeful sampling was best for this study because I looked for Latin@ transfer students at the UC and CSU institutions that participated in the community college educational services program. The students were in their first year at the university. Based on a previous similar study (Hoppe-Nagao, Magallon Garcia, Medrano, & Lowe, 2014), students were expected to be over the age of 18.

There were two sampling groups: Latin@ transfer students who participated in the community college educational services program that successfully transferred to the UC as well as those who participated in the program and successfully transferred to the CSU. From the program's first 2011 cohort, approximately 18 students from the program transferred to the UC and 15 program participating students transferred to the CSU. I sought a minimum of ten students who transferred to each institution. The final sample consisted of 13 students from the UC and 7 students from the CSU (see Table 1). All participants were between 18 to 22 years old.

Data Collection and Management

Upon receiving IRB approval, contact information for all Latin@ students at the UC and CSU was obtained from administrators at the four-year universities who worked with the students. Afterreceiving students' contact information, students were contacted through email and asked to participate in a one-on-one interview. Based on previous recommendations (Hoppe-Nagao et al., 2014), interviews were scheduled based on participants' available times. Due to constant scheduling conflicts present in similar populations, flexible days and

times to meet students were considered. If participants were too busy to attend a one-on-one interview, the researcher asked the participants to participate in a telephone interview; telephone interviews were recommended as alternative options when conducting similar studies (Hoppe-Nagao et al., 2014). Eighteen interviews were conducted over the phone and two interviews occurred at the CSU. Telephone interviews were scheduled according to the students' availability. The interviews lasted between 40-60 minutes and audio recording devices were used to capture the in-depth discussions.

Table 1

Participants & Characteristics

Pseudonym	School	Gender
Diana	CSU	Female
Guadalupe	CSU	Female
Luz	CSU	Female
Adela	CSU	Female
Gloria	CSU	Female
Ivan	CSU	Male
Hector	CSU	Male
Daniela	UC	Female
Alejandra	UC	Female
Luisa	UC	Female
Ignacia	UC	Female
Maria	UC	Female

Rocio	UC	Female
Blanca	UC	Female
Hortencia	UC	Female
Abigail	UC	Female
Francisca	UC	Female
Rodrigo	UC	Male
Marcos	UC	Male
Angel	UC	Male

Note. Additional demographic information was not consistently provided by every student.

Instrumentation. The researcher used a semi-structured interview protocol with open-ended questions for the one-on-one telephone interviews (see Appendix). Semi-structured interview protocols typically include some questions with a limited set of responses and some open-ended questions (Creswell, 2011). The first part of the protocol included structured questions to identify key demographics in the sample; participants disclosed their age, ethnicity/race, and gender to provide demographic information about the sample. The demographics section was adapted from a previous study working with a similar population (Hoppe Nagao, et al., 2014). A second section included open-ended questions. Follow-up or probe questions were used for clarity, further elaboration, or confirmation of responses for each question. The questions in the second section were adapted from a previously established protocol designed to tap into students' identity negotiation (Hotta & Ting-Toomey, 2013) and included questions about visual perceptions of comfortable spaces on their respective

campuses. Participants were informed that a comfortable space at their respective campuses could be a socially or academically welcoming place for the students (Deil-Amen, 2011). As part of the second section of the protocol, after the verbal discussion of comfortable spaces, students were asked to email, text, or share a visual photograph of the comfortable space at their campus whenever that was convenient after the interview. The researcher informed the students that they would receive a $10 Target gift card to strongly encourage the students to follow-up with a photograph of the comfortable space. The visual photograph provided a visual representation and validation of the campus spaces that students verbally described during the interview.

Human subjects. The personal contact information and true identity of the participants was not reported in the final product of the study. Only I was knowledgeable about the true identity of the participants. Informed consent forms were gathered prior to the interviews. Participants were informed that their identities and responses would be strictly confidential and the use of pseudonyms would be used to shield their true identities.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Upon completing the interviews, the researcher transcribed the responses to interpret how students negotiated their identity or visually perceived comfortable spaces at school after transfer. This study focused on the interpretation of themes within students' accounts and visual representations. Owen (1984) definedthemes as "patterns of feelings, motives, fantasies and conventionalized understandings grouped about some locus of concern which

has a particular form in the personalities of the individual members'" (p. 274).

Themes include the range of interpretations that constitute relationships across narratives and texts. The criteria used to characterize interpretive themes included: (a) recurrence, (b) repetition, and (c) forcefulness (p. 275). Recurrence refers to the parts of narratives that share similar meanings (p. 275). Repetition refers to the recurrence of key words, sentences, and phrases within and across narrative texts. Unlike recurrence, repetition emphasizes the explicit use of the exact same words as opposed to similar meanings that are uttered through different discourses. Forcefulness refers to a vocal inflection, volume, or verbal accentuation to stress specific parts of the participants' narratives. The thematic approach provides a mechanism to appropriately categorize linguistic data according to shared meanings and articulations across varying narratives (Reinard, 2008).

I utilized thematic analyze to find common themes and motifsin the qualitative interview data and visual photographic images. Thematic analysis functions as a type of coding that seeks categories based on repeated and recurrent meanings (Creswell, 2011). Qualitative data, especially from interviews and focus groups, is dense and large (Creswell, 2011). However, the in-depth responses are helpful to fully grasp individuals' experiences and to capture underlying beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions (Creswell, 2011, p. 247). The thematic analysis approach is helpful in creating recurrent categories, which are useful in the findings and discussion sections (Creswell, 2011). Lastly, qualitative thematic analysis helps researchers find major areas of consensus

and opinions. The qualitative coding method helps researchers find major areas of agreement and recurrent opinions regarding the experiences of persons. Therefore, this study reported common themes, repetitions, and recurrent patterns in students' experiences. Eventually the researcher created motifs to organize themes (as presented in Chapter 5).

Qualitative interviews. The researcher followed Hotta and Ting-Toomey's (2013) application of Owen's (1984) thematic analysis combined with the theoretical application of identity negotiation theory (Ting-Toomey, 2005). As a theoretical filter, I used identity negotiation theory's assumptions and dialectics to identify common themes, explanations, or consistent descriptions (Ting-Toomey, 2005). I identified themes that described students' identity negotiation and navigation through the four dialectics that were directly pertinent to the general and specific research questions.

Photographic elicitation and visual methodology. I similarly looked for visual cues in photographs that displayed consistent themes in environments or physical spaces relevant to Identity Negotiation theory. Because the students described the physical and actual location of the comfortable space during the interviews, visual images validated and verified their verbal descriptions. The participants' prior verbal explanation of the comfortable space in their campus served as a type of member check (Bloor, 1997) to ensure that I adequately categorized the photographs into different categories of comfortable spaces. The latter type of categorization is referred to as "mapping the terrain" based on repetitive visual cues in photographs that describe physical environments

(Harper, 2002). Interpretation of visuals and categorization of common spaces as illustrated in photographs is useful inunderstanding socially inclusive spaces (Robinson, 2013). I collected and organized the images as soon as students delivered them. Every photograph was emailed or texted to the researcher.

Procedures to ensure reliability and validity. This study was qualitative in nature; reliability and validity in qualitative research is concerned with appropriate interpretation and thematization of raw data as opposed to statistical reliability (Creswell, 2011). To ensure reliability and validity of findings in this study, I established an analytical method that was true to participants' voices, descriptions, and perceptions (Faber, Moeller, & Nielson, 2013; Robinson, 2013). Overall, the combination of qualitative interviews, visual methodology, previously utilized protocols, and the matching of verbal and photographic descriptions established appropriate triangulation. Guion, Diehl, and McDonald (2011) explained that triangulation "is a method used by qualitative researchers to check and establish validity in their studies by analyzing a research question from multiple perspectives" (para. 1). Triangulation includes seeking consistencies and inconsistencies in respondents' explanations via the use of various methodological and interpretive tools (Guion et al., 2011).

*Interview data.*I identified common perceptions and themes from the educational services program's students who transferred to the UC and CSU. Because the two groups were not the same size, the researcher ensured reliability and validity by finding common patterns in students' experiences despite their attendance at different institutions. The two groups were

comparative groups that described similar experiences. Typically, having distinct but similar sample groups help researchers increase the validity of findings in qualitative studies (Creswell, 2011).

*Photographic elicitation and visual methodology.*I asked students to verbally explain comfortable spaces on their respective campuses prior to providing images that visually represented such spaces. Matching the verbal and visual descriptions helped me verify reliable and valid conclusions regarding visually photographed comfortable spaces.

Trustworthiness. There are several ways that this study ensured trustworthiness of the methodology and the interpretation of findings. Trustworthiness is primarily established through triangulation (Creswell, 2013), which was explained briefly earlier. The combination of qualitative interviews, visual methodology, previously utilized protocols, and the matching of verbal and photographic descriptions established appropriate triangulation. I used an interview protocol modified from a previously used INT interview protocol (Hotta & Ting-Toomey, 2013) in the qualitative interviews, and I used visual photography that verified students' verbal descriptions of comfortable spaces. The goal was to find cohesion and parallels in the verbal and visual findings. I also consulted a third party researcher, Dr. Stella Ting-Toomey, to verify if the interpretations and themes in the findings were reasonable according to the INT. According to Creswell (2013), an expert reader can act as a consultant in the interpretation process to increase trustworthiness (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, I reflected on potential researcher biases to avoid misinterpreting or

mischaracterizing the participants' responses (Creswell, 2013). I sought to categorize and thematize responses based on similarities found in the raw data as opposed to forcefully imposing personal biases or opinions on the findings. To do so, I used Owen's (1984) thematic analysis criteria of recurrence, repetition, and emphasis to code themes in the transcriptions.

Role of the researcher. Theoretically, myrole in this study was to ethically report findings consistent with previous theory (INT) and do justice to students' voices. I recognized mysubjective role, largely explained within the interpretive paradigm, and the commitment to leave behind personal predispositions, beliefs, or mindset. I acknowledged that subjectivity includes the preconceived beliefs, biases, experiences, and attitudes that might enhance or potentially taint the interpretation of qualitative data. In light of such potential limitations, I confirmed the final findings with an expert researcher, the creator of identity negotiation theory to determine if the findings were consistent with the main assumptions or dialectics of the framework. Consulting an external researcher to validate and verify findings is commonly used in qualitative research (Fink, 2000). The ultimate goal in this study was to do justice to Latin@ students' voices.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate how Latin@ students negotiated their identity and visually perceived new educational spaces as they transferred from a community college to a four-year university. I sought to understand if participation in an educational services program at a community college positively influenced Latin@ students' identity negotiation as they

transferred into a four-year university. This chapter discussed qualitative methodology, the interpretive paradigm design, and qualitative research methods pertinent to this study.

The study is timely. Currently, research, educators, and administrators do not fully understand Latin@ students' experiences in the unique transition from community college to a four-year university. Educators and administrators simply amalgamate Latin@ students' voices and experiences into the overall student body. Therefore, the goal of this research was to understand Latin@ students by using qualitative interviews and visual photographic methodology to understand their identity negotiation in their journey through distinct educational environments.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to investigate participants' identity negotiation and visual perception of comfortable spaces before and after they transferred from a community college to a four-year university (a UC or CSU institution). I focused on participants who participated in an educational services program at a community college to discover whether the program positively influenced Latin@ participants' identity negotiation and comfort as they transferred to a four-year university. I utilized four core dialectics of identity negotiation theory (INT; identity predictability-unpredictability, security-vulnerability, connection-autonomy, and inclusion-differentiation) as a theoretical framework. The study was grounded in the interpretive paradigm design within qualitative research and utilized qualitative interviews and photographic elicitation methodology. I interviewed 20 participants and collected over 20 photographic images from participants to respond to the general and specific research questions.

This chapter is separated into three main sections that present results pertaining to the three research questions. Each section identifies recurrent and repeated themes that emerged from participants' voices that distinctly show identity negotiation and adjustment patterns after participants' transfer to the

university. The first section includes two parts (see Table 2 and Table 3). The two parts are divided into the experiences prior to and after transfer, following the organization of the interview protocol (Appendix A). The first part identifies three main themes related to participants' experiences prior to transfer. The second part is about participants' entry into the university. In the second part, I identified fifteen themes that are separated into four main clusters pertinent to the four core dialectics of INT (see Table 4). The second section presents three main categories that identify participants' visually comfortable spaces. The third section lists eight themes that are separated into four main clusters pertinent to the four core dialectics of INT (see Table 5).

First Research Question

The first research question was: How do Latin@ participants negotiate their identity when they transfer from a community college to a university? The data collected focused on understanding whether Latin@ transfer participants adjust their self-image or self-concept when confronting new academic environments and, if so, how they negotiate their identity. There are two major parts to this section. In the first part, I describe participants' perceptions of the community college and educational services program prior to transfer to understand the cognitive process of leaving a familiar environment (see Table 2). In the second part, I identified major themes from participants' voices that reflect the four dialectics in INT: predictability-unpredictability, security-vulnerability, connection-autonomy, and inclusion-differentiation (see Table 3).

Table 2

Research Question 1: Part 1

Experiences Prior to Transfer

Comfort at the Community College

Preparing to Leave the Comfort Zone

Mixed Mental and Emotional States

Note. Experiences prior to transfer reflect participants' perceptions of the community college and educational services program.

Experiences Prior to Transfer

This section explains participants' experiences prior to transfer. The main themes that emerged from the interviews werecomfort at the community college, preparing to leave the comfort zone, and mixed mental and emotional states.

Comfort at the community college. The data collected through interviews showed the community college to be a place of comfort for the participants prior to transfer. Diana explained,

> [Leaving the community college] was tough because I was used to the atmosphere of help and support. Also because the people surrounding me were [from the program]. [The CSU] was a whole new world. New mentors and people that supported me. It's not that I left [the program]. I have their values and teachings that made me a better person. So a part of me left them but a part of them came with me.

Participants identified the community college as a place where they saw familiar faces, developed strong relationships, and knew the environment. The location of the community college was particularly comforting because the institution was in the city where most participants had grown up. Hence, participants' friends from middle and high school attended the community college. The participants also reported that they liked being close to home and their family while going to college. The sense of proximity was important because participants did not have to leave the comfort of their homes, as well. As such, participants felt connected, comfortable, and familiar with the community college environment.

Moreover, participants claimed that they felt comfortable in the community college after high school because of the specific educational services program offered at the institution. More specifically, the community college participated in high school outreach and introduced participants to the educational services program to assist with their transition to the college environment. One of the program's goals was to recruit participants to the community college from an early age (as early as middle school). As such, counselors visit middle and high schools to inform participants about the community college. Participants learned how to effectively and comfortably navigate the college environment through the networking with counselors in the program. Consistently, participants reported that early exposure to the counselors helped them feel comfortable going to the community college. In addition, the program uniquely created a comfortable zone at the community college because of the numerous resources made

available for the participants involved, including information about classes,

financial aid, and personalized counseling. As Hortencia explained,

> [The program] was very helpful to me from day one, the workshops and
>
> help they offered was always beneficial and knowledgeable in regards to
>
> taking the right steps to transfer. Also, all the counselors I encounter
>
> where caring, respectful, supportive and helpful to me at all times. Not a
>
> lot of students know about [the educational services program]. They
>
> probably have heard about it but do not understand fully what the
>
> programs are all about. At least that was my case the first year I attended
>
> [the community college]. Only after I became more involved with the
>
> [program] I found out about all the great opportunities, programs and
>
> scholarships the campus actually offers.

Moreover, participants explained that the program positively and effectively

provided them with a sense of community. The community environment allowed

participants to collaborate with each other and eventually work together toward

transfer.

Preparing to leave the comfort zone. All participants in the study

reported that they planned ahead and prepared for transfer. Participants'

preparation strategies were diverse. All participants had to fulfill institutional

requirements to transfer successfully. Hence, participants explained that they

took all required course units to transfer, filled out all applications, and, as

Daniela explained, made themselves "competitive enough" for college.

According to all participants in this study, the educational services program at the

community college played a key role in their academic scheduling and transfer preparation. The counselors and mentors in the program reminded participants about deadlines and provided support in filling out transfer applications. As Luz explained,

> The guidance that the program is able to offer to those that take the time to participate in it is incredible. I honestly don't think I would have transferred so quickly had it not been for the counseling appointments, mentors, and encouragement I received through the program.

Luisa expressed that the program "didn't seem much of anything" when she first joined, but the services became foundational to her successful transfer to the university. Hortenica described,

> I have to give credit and thanks to [the administration and counselors] at the transferring center and [educational services program], . . . for encouraging me and believing in me. It was truly more important than any program, class or grade I ever received [at the college]. To have someone believe in your dreams and goals is the most beautiful and valuable compliment you can ever receive.

The services program assisted participants in fulfilling specific unit requirements and completing paperwork for transfer to the UC or CSU.

Mixed mental and emotional states. Unfortunately, the prospect of leaving the community college and the educational services program produced mixed emotions and mental states in the participants. Several participants explained that they were ready to leave the community college and the

educational services program. They were excited and happy to start studying at the university and ready to encounter a new educational journey. For those participants who were excited about transfer, the transfer to a new environment was exhilarating and outweighed any anxiety or fear of getting lost on a new campus. Furthermore, the entry into the university was described as a rite of passage and an "appropriate time" to move on. As Diana explained, she was motivated to continue studying because she wanted to make her counselors and family proud of her. Unsurprisingly, the participants who were motivated and happy about transfer later emphasized that they received early exposure to programs, professors, and major-related departments at the UC and CSU. Guadalupe shared that she mentally prepared herself by "coming to [the CSU] with a purpose." Her emphasis on "purpose" indicated that she adopted a mental state of staying on task and establishing specific goals in order to transfer and succeed in school. Daniela also asserted that she faced the eventual need to transfer by reminding herself that this was just "another step in the ladder." Hector expressed that he knew transfer was inevitable, especially if he wanted to have a better future. Guadalupe, Daniela, and Hector later clarified that they had previously visited the UC and CSU campuses. Early exposure to the university and programs inspired participants to feel excited and comfortable about the upcoming transition into the university.

While the prospects of leaving the community college produced excitement in some participants, it unfortunately created anxiety and depression in others. Several participants explained that their preparation to leave was

difficult because this meant that they would leave behind meaningful

relationships and their "comfort zone." Daniela stated,

> I had to start mentally and emotionally just because it was going to be a
>
> drastic change not just because of location but because I didn't know
>
> many people. The people I knew, their schedules were not in synch with
>
> mine.

The community college and the educational services program was a comfort

zone because of the familiar faces, relationships, and location of the community

college within the city in which they grew up. These participants reported fear of

the large UC and CSU campuses and starting fresh relationships. As Diana

suggested, she was anxious thinking "that the classes would be larger,

professors without enough time to meet with participants, that you would be

mostly on your own and that many classes would be harder and more homework

[sic]." The thought of starting new relationships, connecting with new counselors,

and a fear of the unknown culminated in anxiety and extreme nervousness in

some of the participants.

Moreover, these participants reported feeling scared of losing the help

from the educational services program. They described a fear of losing the

academic and emotional support provided by the educational services program,

especially in the mentor and counseling center. Undoubtedly, counselors in the

program provided wide-ranging support to participants, ranging from financial

and course scheduling to psychological advice. Losing such support was

daunting. The program also fostered great social and academic relationships.

Several participants reported that the program allowed them to connect with participants with similar backgrounds. For example, Daniela described that the program made Latin@ participants feel welcomed, including Latin@ undocumented participants. As an AB 540 student, Daniela was able to discuss being an undocumented student in the educational services program and felt at ease expressing the difficulties of such status. An AB 540 student is recognized by the State of California and higher education institutions as a student that is undocumented, but may pay in-state tuition fees, instead of international student fees. AB 540 students are eligible for state financial support. Leaving the program initiated a sense of insecurity in Daniela because of her undocumented status. Overall, leaving the comfort zone was stressful for participants, despite the few participants who reported excitement about transfer. Participants viewed the program as a place where their anxieties about school were lessened.

Table 3

Research Question 1: Part 2

Entry into the University	
Predictable-Unpredictable	A whole new world.
	The "common" obstacles.
	Culture shock in an unfamiliar world.
Security – Vulnerability	Insecurity due to the professors, academics, and peers.
	Insecurity about big words.
	Insecurity about being Latin@.
Connectedness – Autonomy	Disconnected and lonely.
	Living in multiple worlds.
	Disconnected from White and other students.
	Connecting with other Latin@s.
	The university as positive identification and escape.
Inclusion – differentiation	Time to feel included.
	Personalized counselors/mentors for the educational services program participants.
	Validation from professors, counselors, and mentors.
	Joining clubs and programs.

Note. The first column represents the clusters pertinent to the four dialectics in identity negotiation theory (INT) and the second column represents the themes that emerged from participants' voices.

Entry into the University

This section presents results regarding the following specific questions:

1. Do Latin@ transfer participants report familiar or unfamiliar environments?

2. Do Latin@ participants feel secure or vulnerable, connected or autonomous and included or excluded when they transfer to a four-year university?

3. What strategies do Latin@ transfer participants engage in to adapt to a university?

From the interviews, several interpretive themes were identified that fit into clusters pertinent to four core dialectics of the INT. The clusters are arranged accordingly to organize themes that answer the specific research questions listed above and to show the mental and emotional processes of participants as they dealt with unpredictable environments, a sense of security or vulnerability, connectedness or autonomy, and inclusion or differentiation.

Predictable-unpredictable environments. In general, participants reported unpredictable, or unfamiliar, environments at the UC and CSU. Familiarity and unfamiliarity ultimately influenced whether individuals meaningfully connected with others. The following themes described participants' confrontation with the unfamiliar academic environments.

A whole new world. As Diana expressed, the university was "a whole new world." Diana's characterization of the CSU was similar to other participants' description of both university campuses. Hector stated,

It was definitely different from the community college to the university because at the college I was comfortable and there were friends from high school. . . .Once I transferred to CSUF, there was no one I knew. I had to go out and talk to people and expand with other people outside my city.

Although some participants were familiar with the UC and CSU prior to transfer, most participants encountered an entirely unfamiliar, unknown, and daunting world in the university. Locating the buildings, counseling services, and making new friends all accumulated to make the university a new world for participants.

The "common" obstacles. Undeniably, every participant in this study admitted that the transfer process was difficult because of the unfamiliarity of the new campuses and life adjustments necessary to survive the transition. As Gloria expressed, "The difficulties that I faced are the very common known ones such as getting lost, figuring out timing for parking and traffic, learning and remembering where all the resources are, and finding food." Participants explained that they had to adjust their transportation routines, housing, and employment. Most participants also described difficulties in scheduling, looking for classes, and familiarizing themselves with the buildings of the new environments. Daniela expressed a common difficulty faced by participants: "I had to balance school and work and extracurricular activities."

Moreover, participants reported that the nature of courses at the UC and CSU was unfamiliar to them. The UC and CSU course sections were bigger than those at the community college, especially lecture course sections held in auditoriums. In addition, the UC and CSU campuses themselves were bigger

than the community college, which also required participants to actively search and move around campus to attend their courses. Participants at the UC also had to adjust to a quarter system, as opposed to the semester system at the community college. Consistently, participants described the quarter system as rushed, overwhelming, and difficult to adjust to after being used to a semester system. On a positive note, participants appreciated that there were more course options and a wide variety of classes. Additionally, participants reported that they now had the opportunity to take courses solely in their major in comparison to general education or transfer requirements at the community college. Overall, the new campuses required participants to make adjustments in their routines to become familiar with the new territories and courses.

Culture shock in an unfamiliar world. The difficulty in transfer was magnified by the cultural shock that participants faced at the UC and CSU. Foundationally, participants faced culture shock because the UC and CSU environments were unfamiliar to participants and the academic cultures were different than that at the community college. Participants, such as Rodrigo and Daniela, explicitly described their transfer as a "culture shock." This culture shock made the transfer process fundamentally difficult because participants had to mentally and emotionally adapt to unfamiliar cultures.

Major cultural differences existed at the UC and CSU that participants were not familiar with. For example, according to Maria, she found "the same support system that [she] had at [the community college], . . . but it wasn't as community based." Although Maria found support at the university (counseling

and financial aid), she had to look for it on her own at her unexpectedly large campus. Unlike the community college educational program that actively advertised help for participants, Maria had to search for the support services at the university. Culturally, the university services also promoted individualism because participants, like Maria, had to learn how to make decisions on their own, select classes, and find support services. The educational services program at the community college was highly focused on networking and student collaboration as participants planned ahead for transfer; the university starkly emphasized independence in career and future planning. Similar to Maria, several participants reported that they needed to become autonomous upon transfer. Moreover, participants repeatedly discussed thehuge contrast between collective interactions that occurred between professors and participants at the community college as compared to the individualism that they found at the university. The cultures of the community college and the universities forced participants to cognitively adjust to unforeseen academic cultures. Daniela simply stated, "[The environment] feels different. It's like two worlds."

Additionally, participants reported that their campuses were unfamiliar because of cultural differences in terms of the ethnic diversity. Daniela explained that she was shocked to see a primarily "Asian population and White" student body at the UC. Similarly, several other UC participants explained that they were surprised to see a primarily White student population in their courses. UC participants reported that they could only find other Latin@ participants in very specific places, such as the transfer student center. Participants at the CSU

reported a wider diversity of ethnicities beyond Asian and White participants on the CSU campus. The diversity at the CSU was described as a positive opportunity to learn about different cultural perspectives. Luz was the only CSU student who said she was "really scared of the diversity of the participants [sic]" at the CSU. She feared the diversity on her campus because she had a continuous "fear of being mocked" for being Latin@. Participants described the community college as predominantly Latin@, whereas the UC and CSU campuses were ethnically diverse, which made the campuses unfamiliar.

Security – vulnerability. The UC and CSU represented "a whole new world" and the participants interviewed asserted that they faced many obstacles and culture shock upon first attending the university. The unfamiliarity of the UC and CSU further prompted adjustment patterns in these participants based on feelings of insecurity and vulnerability. Generally, the unfamiliarity of the UC and CSU campuses contributed to negative emotions in the participants, including insecurity and vulnerability.

Insecurity due to professors, academics, and peers. The participants interviewed reported insecurity in adapting to professors' expectations, academic expectations, and coursework at the university. They explained that the professors were often aloof, extremely intelligent, and too demanding. Diana expressed that "professors were aloof" and if participants needed assistance they had to actively pursue their professors outside of the classroom and in office hours. Furthermore, participants explained that the university was simply "harder" and participants in general did not ask many questions. Alejandra

explained that she felt insecure because "teachers can be a little tough." She was

not ready for the academic rigor and the intensity of instructors at the

university.Recurrently, participants felt uncomfortable asking professors for

assistance and expressed intimidation due to professors' authoritative nature in

the classroom. Luz explained that she questioned her own abilities and being in

the class, major, and at the university because her professor often used

language that was difficult for her to understand. Diana had to attend extra

tutoring sessions to be "on the same page" as her professors. Participants

described that professors were easier and seemed more readily available to talk

at the community college. Only two participants expressed comfort in talking to

professors, but only after familiarizing themselves with the institution and

overcoming the fear of approaching professors.

Furthermore, the interviewed transfer participants indicated that they felt

academically insecure compared to their perceptions of the university students.

Hector noted that he felt insecure in his ability to balance the large workload from

his classes and his "ability in doing well" because of the challenging nature to the

assignments. Similarly, Diana explained that she had to study a lot more than

she did at the community college to be on the same level as the other

studentsand to meet the expectations of the professors at the university. Ivan

described the classes at the community college as hard, but also stated that the

professors at the university had higher expectations for students and wanted

them to read more and "participate better" in class. According to Ivan, the

participation in class was "more in-depth" and not reading made him feel uneasy.

Daniela expressed a similar insecurity in comparison to other, non-transferstudentswho already "knew their writing, thinking, and expectations from the system itself." Luisa perceived her university peers as more comfortable, particularly in "asking questions and talking to the instructor." Daniela and Luisa viewed non-transfer university students as having an academic advantage because most were familiar with the academic expectations of the university. Participants like Daniela and Luisa perceived themselves as academically behind non-transfer students at the university solely because their university peers had been attending the university longer.

Insecurity about big words. Several participants interviewed explained that they felt insecure because of the "bigger words and descriptive language" of the non-transfer university participants and professors. Hector explained that the community college, his "comfort zone," "[used] a toned down language" that was different from the "more advanced vocabulary" of studentsand professors at the university. He specified, "There is definitely a language adaptation" and later clarified that professors and studentsat the community college did not feel the need to use "advanced vocabulary" because everyone knew each other and did not have to be formal. Other participants reported a difference between the ways that studentsand professors communicated at the university in comparison to the community college academic settings. For example, at the university participants had to be formal when asking questions in the classroom. As a result, participants often kept to themselves and did not ask questions. Alejandra reported that she did not want to participate in class because of the fear that her

peers would negatively perceive her communication. She stated that she was self-conscious and embarrassed of her Spanish-Mexican accent. She explained, "I am more confident talking in Spanish." Likewise, Daniela stated that she "didn't feel eloquent" in her speaking. As such, Latin@ transfer participants viewed other participants and professors at the university as speaking in more formal and advanced ways. Participants were immediately faced with drastic communication differences and reported feeling insecure and vulnerable.

The awareness of communication differences thus influenced these participants' identity adjustment. They explained the need to change their communication style and language by studying more. Several participants in this study reported that they had to speak more eloquently at the university than at home and the community college to appear prepared and to feel like they "fit in." Most participants indicated that they spent significant amounts of time learning the language, vocabulary, and advanced expressions commonly used at the university. They actively tried to learn advanced vocabulary words to match the speaking styles of other participants and instructors. This adjustment in language was perceived as vital to feeling comfortable in the university academic classrooms.

Insecurity about being Latin@. Participants reported feeling insecure because of their Latin@ identity with the most recurrent reason being the fear of stereotypes. Hector explained that being a Latino at the university presented certain difficulties "because people carry stereotypes about Latin@s such as that we're lazy." He described an incident where he felt that studentsin his class

underestimated his presentation skills on a project because of his Latin@

identity. Similarly, Luz disclosed that she feared people's negative assumptions

and stereotypical mindsets about Latin@s on campus. Daniela also reported

that she felt that administrators, including those at the financial aid office, often

changed their demeanor around her and acted in a condescending manner

toward her which she attributed to her being Latina. Daniela specified that she

felt administrators viewed her as unintelligent. Hortencia pointed out that the

mere lack of Latin@ students made her feel out of place at the university.

Participants like Marcos and Rocio indicated that they did not see familiar Latin@

faces, which they saw as "definitely bad."

Participants interviewed repeatedly described insecurity about their

Latin@ identity in the classroom. As Daniela pointed out, "My classes [were]

predominantly White and a few Asians. Latin@s are only a few. Three is like,

'Whoa!' That made me feel insecure." Daniela expressed that she felt insecure in

the classroom because she felt that her comments were not taken with as much

credibility as other participants "from different races." Additionally, Luisa

explicated that being a Latin@ was difficult in her classes because professors

spoke negatively about her religion, her beliefs at home, and her background. In

particular, Luisa mentioned that she felt uncomfortable speaking about her

Latin@ identity in her philosophy classes. The insecurity of Latin@ identity in the

classroom resulted in overwhelming discomfort. Sadly, Maria described,

> You know, I loved [the community college]. I would go back if I could. I
>
> felt so much more comfortable. I think it has a lot to do with me being

Latin@. I don't know if professors didn't care, but it was better at [the community college].

As such, participants feared the negative stereotypes associated with being Latin@ in the university, felt discomfort because they rarely found other Latin@ participants, and described feelings of insecurity in the classroom.

Connectedness – autonomy. The unfamiliarity of the UC and CSU campuses made participants feel insecure and vulnerable, which, consequently, negatively impacted how participants interacted with other students. For example, UC participants reported that they did not connect with the predominantly Asian and White studentson campus and in their classes. In Blanca's case specifically, she did not connect with White studentsor faculty, which made her feel reclusive and vulnerable. Blanca explained,

> At [the community college] I felt more open about who I was as a student and was able to connect easier with staff, while at [the UC] I feel a bit more reclusive to disclose any information of who I am and connecting with staff is a bit harder.

At the CSU, participants faced a more diverse student body, but, as in the case with Luz, the diversity was still strikingly different from the homogenous Latin@ culture of the community college. Latin@ transfer participants' recurrent sentiments about isolation and a lack of connectedness at the UC and CSU influenced further adjustment patterns.

Disconnected and lonely. Generally, participants reported that they did not feel connected to others when they transferred to the university. For

example, participants described themselves as "the new kid in town" (Hortencia),

disoriented (Hortencia), lonely (Alejandra), "like an outsider" (Rocio), "not really

included" (Blanca), not a "part of the institution (Rodrigo), and different (Daniela).

Hector illustrated that "it [didn't] feel like people [were] approachable." Gloria

explained that she "didn't feel as part of the school because although I had been

accepted . . . and I [was] ecstatic about that I didn't feel a sense of pride." In

extreme cases, leaving the comfort of the community college resulted in

overwhelming depression and loneliness because participants no longer

connected with others in their immediate surroundings. Adela strongly

emphasized that she felt "alone, *literally alone*" when she started school at CSU.

Unfortunately, some participants, including Adela, indicated that they felt like an

outsider a whole year after transfer into the UC or CSU. Two participants, Adela

included, explained that they eventually left the four-year university because of

the extreme isolation and loneliness.

    Living in multiple worlds. In interviews, participants described feeling

like they lived in multiple worlds. As such, navigating between worlds meant that

they did not feel fully connected to the social environment of the UC or CSU.

Subsequently, participants mindfully adapted to fit the expectations of the

different worlds, including their communication, self-expressions, and identity. As

Guadalupe mentioned, "I [felt] weird because I am kinda switching." Switching

was a cognitive strategy that participants like Guadalupe engaged in to adapt to

the university. For example, Diana explained,

The university is very different from the world I have at home. At home, I only speak Spanish because my parents don't speak English. In school, I talk in English mostly. . . .At school there are so many cultures and you have to work with them. When you come home, you are Hispanic [sic].

Diana's world at home seemed to clash with the world at school because of the linguistic differences and expectations. Living in multiple worlds resulted in a markedly different cultural lifestyle. She described that the language differences presented a stark distinction between her worlds and she emphasized that she embodied being Hispanic [sic] at home as opposed to at school. Being home she was cognitively "Hispanic" in comparison to the university environment. In Diana's case, she explained that traveling between and balancing her home and school life was traumatic because she was going through difficulties at home that prevented her from focusing on school. Her father was ill;she worked to take care of her family;she was undocumented, and had to pay for school. She expressed that the "shocking moments [at home] were not favorable to how [she] developed in school." All in all, participants, like Diana, cognitively switched, or shifted, between cultures and from being a Spanish-speaker at home to an English-speaker at school.

Several participants were also mindful that living between very distinct worlds at home and at school resulted in negative disconnectedness and isolation from the resident students. Daniela illustrated,

I stand out because I am already a transfer student. I am not a traditional student. I have all these different beliefs that make me different. You can

tell at this university those that are higher incomes. And then you have

your nontraditional participants that are only there to learn. You can tell

your contrast. Some of them are there because mom and dad are paying

for their education. . . . I come from a different background. My Spanish is

different. That came to my mind sometimes. Maybe they have more

privilege. They started as freshmen. Here I am trying to balance an

internship, a job, school, and extracurricular activities.

Daniela was aware that she embodied the identity of a transfer student.

Unfortunately, she described her identity as a transfer student negatively

because it represented a lower socioeconomic status in comparison to her peers.

Being a "nontraditional" transfer student signified an underprivileged status

because Daniela was not wealthy enough to live on campus and she held beliefs

at home that marked her as different from other participants. Daniela later

described that her home neighborhood was also dangerous unlike the "ideal

suburban neighborhood" surrounding the university. Awareness about the

neighborhood differences made Daniela feel embarrassed and disconnected

from the wealthy participants at her school. Moreover, she explained that unlike

other traditional participants she had to mentally shift between "street smarts

from book smarts" when traveling between the academic and home worlds.

Relatedly, Rodrigo jokingly asserted that his city is a very different city than the

university's surroundings. Shifting between the home and school environment

made Rodrigo feel disconnected from other students, as well.

Disconnected from Whites and other students. As previously

discussed, Latin@ participants reported culture shock because the classrooms

and universities were predominantly White or too diverse. Moreover, the culture

shock made participants feel disconnected from other participants who were not

Latin@. Participants like Daniela and Blanca mentioned that they felt out of

place in their classrooms and campuses because of the predominantly White

student population. Daniela generalized that she felt that White students"have

that entitlement" and privilege of not being stereotyped as unintelligent. She

explained that, unlike White participants, administrators treated her differently.

Generally, she did not connect with White participants because of her Latin@

identity and because she felt culturally different. Furthermore, Adela explained,

"In certain classes, . . . there were only like white people and none of them felt

friendly." Diana echoed Adela's sentiment when she contrasted her world at

home and personal identity as distinctly different from the White participants.

She went on to say that her values and religion were simply different from White

participants at school. Interestingly, Hector explained that he "grew up [with]

many people that thought I was Caucasian" because he primarily spoke English.

Despite this, Hector explained that he "liked to express [his] Latin@ culture" and

corrected professors and participants when they mispronounced his last name.

He mentioned that he reinforced the fact that he is Latin@ to dispel the belief that

he is White. He did not want to be associated as White and, therefore, distanced

himself from the larger White student body.

Connecting with other Latin@s. Consistently, participants explained that they sought to connect with other Latin@s. Seeking other Latin@s was important particularly when participants felt isolated from White students. Diana described that she felt extremely uncomfortable in her predominantly White and Asian classes until she met one other Latina student. They "stuck together for the whole year . . . [and] were able to help each other out." Hector illustrated that he sought other Latin@s because of the cultural commonalities between them. He also suggested that meeting other Latin@s was simply "easier." Rocio mentioned that she felt more comfortable connecting with other Latin@s "because our cultural background is similar. You have things in common. It's easier." Luz explained that she felt alienated and alone on campus until she met other Latin@ women. The other Latin@ women inspired and motivated Luz to persist and do well in school. She stated that she felt the most comfortable being around Latinas.

Seeking other Latin@s created a sense of pride in some participants. Diana expressed that connecting with other Latin@s was important because it gave her "a sense of where [she] came from and what [she] believed in." Luz illustrated that connecting with other Latin@s was a major responsibility for her because she wanted to fight the negative assumptions and stereotypes about Latin@ culture. Rodrigo similarly expressed that forming relationships with other Latin@s was important to "understand my culture" and preserve what his parents taught him.

Connecting with other Latin@s was also important for practicality. Marcos stated that he connected primarily with Latin@s simply because they were a minority on campus. Marcos suggested that Latin@s identified with each other naturally because of there were so few of them on campus. He expressed, "there's not too many Hispanic [sic] participants, but I feel like I connect with those that I [did] find." Daniela made a similar remark when she indicated that "being Latin@ does come into hand because there are other participants that are Latin@ that identify with you." Guadalupe explained that it was important for her to connect with other Latin@s because she was an AB 540 student. As she expressed, connecting with similar AB 540 Latin@ participants "fills me and encourages me to keep doing what I'm doing." Luisa also explained that she sought other Latin@s to learn more about the DREAM Act, a federal legislation in support of undocumented participants. Hence, connecting with other Latin@s provided relief to participants when they felt alone, created a sense of pride, and was a matter of practicality.

The university as positive identification and escape.Despite the difficulty in connecting with a majority of their peers, for some participants the university environment was a source of motivation and escape from the difficulties of home. For example, Hector described

> In high school, I was never open about my future and things I did with my professors. It was more about events in the city and events happening between our friends. Really no big picture things. People at the university tell you how they are advancing in the education system. I believe it's a

good thing because instead of being stuck in a bubble back home where you feel more of a burden to help with the family, at school you can develop yourself and understand more about yourself. When you are at school you know more about who you are.

For Hector, his high school and home were not places that challenged him to plan for higher education. On the contrary, the university space encouraged him to plan for higher education and move beyond the status quo by seeing other motivated scholars. Moreover, Hector reflected on his responsibilities at home that often clashed with the requirements of school. The university environment was motivational for him and relieved him from duties at home. Similarly for Guadalupe, going to the university meant that she was "exposed to [other students] and learning from them." She described, "At the university I am a student and learning. At home I am the big sister and teach my little brother and sister constantly." Guadalupe's obligations at home distracted her from focusing on her academic progress. Alejandra further explicated that home was a place to do chores; whereas school was a place to "focus to study."Ignacia also commented that the university was an escape from home where she "realize[d] that there is so much of the world we don't know." As such, the world of the university motivated many of the participants interviewed, and they emphasized how they were able to escape the responsibilities of home and understand a world beyond the home life while attending the university.

Inclusion – differentiation. Participants' insecurities and disconnectedness in the unfamiliar world of the university are related to the

dialectic of inclusion – differentiation, particularly when participants, like Gloria, did not feel "pride" in being a part of the university. Francisca echoed other participants' sentiments when she stated, "I did not feel included at school. I did not take advantage of the clubs and event opportunities on campus." Although the previous sections suggested that most participants felt excluded and differentiated from other social groups on campus, this section focused on describing how and when participants started feeling included at the school. Participants engaged in adjustment tactics to feel included and overcome insecurity, isolation, and alienation.

Time to feel included. Participants were asked to report distinct time periods for when they started feeling included at the university (see Figure 1). Two participants did not specifically state a time when they felt included. Importantly, some participants indicated that they did not feel included at any point in time, even after the first year at the university. For example, Adela indicated that she felt like an outsider even after a year at the university. Gloria mentioned that she never felt completely comfortable, either. Adela and Luisa departed from the university because they felt like they did not fit into the environment. Most participants at the UC though reported that they started feeling included and comfortable at the university after starting the second quarter, approximately 3 to 4 months after transfer. Participants at the CSU reported varying time periods; some indicated that they started feeling comfortable after 1 month, 2 months, 5 months, or after the first semester. A few participants at the UC and CSU stated that they felt comfortable since the

beginning. For those participants, they attributed their comfort to their early

exposure to university programs, counselors, and the campuses through the

educational services program at the community college.
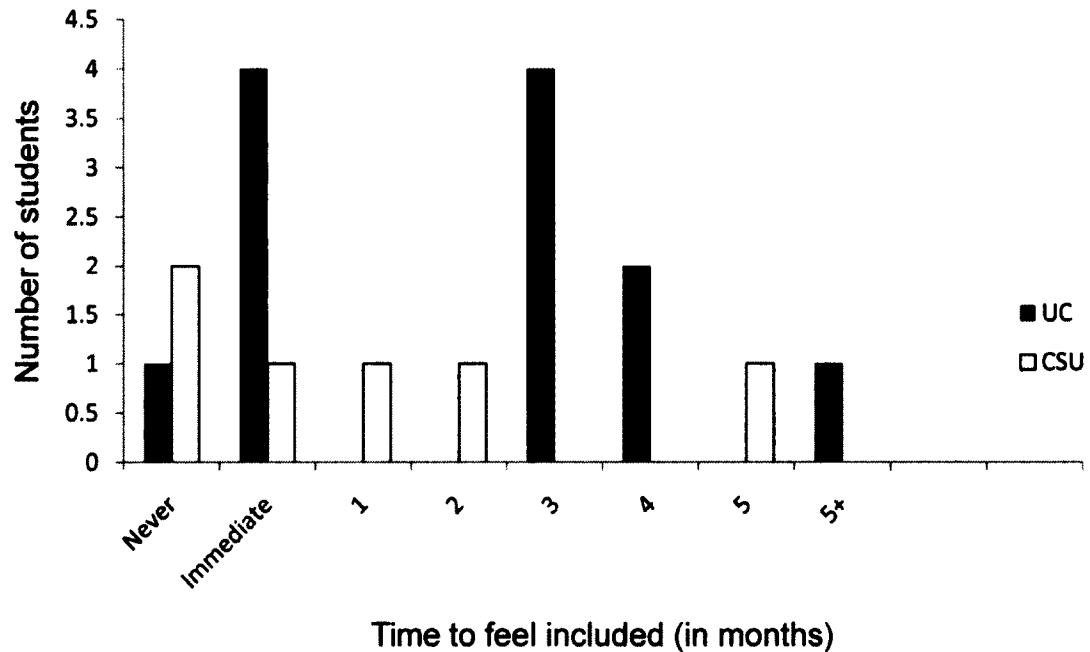
Figure 1. Participants' approximate time descriptions of when they started feeling included.

Personalized counselors/mentors. Several participants indicated that

they felt included at the university because the UC and CSU provided

personalized mentors and counselors to the participants who participated in the

educational services program at the community college. The UC and CSU

provided mentors and counselors to the educational services program

community college transfer participants as part of the UC-CSU-community

college partnership that created the program in the first place. Daniela specified

that she worked with those specific UC counselors to receive information about

the university and to become more comfortable with transferring. The counselors

helped her feel included at the UC and the mentors taught her "how to go and talk to professors." She specifically mentioned that one of the counselors was her relief and primary support. Despite the support, Daniela mentioned that she did not fully take advantage of the mentor and counselor support until after her second quarter. Marcos also worked with the counselors who provided support for the former educational services program participants at the UC. He mentioned that the counselors helped him find other friends and Latin@ studentswho had transferred from the same community college. Hortencia emphasized that the same mentors encouraged her and "believed in her." She stated, "To have someone believe in your dreams and goals is the most beautiful and valuable compliment you can ever receive" and "this was truly more important than any program, class or grade I ever received." Overall, the participants felt that the personalized counselors and mentors facilitated the transfer and provided the validation necessary to be successful.

Validation from professors, counselors, and mentors. Participants' initial sense of inclusion came from validation from professors, counselors, and mentors. In a previous discussion, Luz explained that she did not feel a part of her class or her major and the professors spoke over her. She later explained that she felt more included when she had a life-changing discussion with one of her professors. She stated that the professor "told her it was okay" to feel lost. The professor started helping and encouraging her to learn the material and be prepared for class. The professor made her feel welcomed, and she "found new ways to study and refocused [herself] to understand." Hector, one of the

participants who had a difficult time connecting to other participants, indicated that talking to one of his professors helped. The instructor helped Hector realize that other participants "felt the same way." Recognizing that other participants had a difficult time in the course helped him feel relieved and minimized his feelings of disconnectedness. Maria admitted that she forced herself to meet with professors. Surprisingly, she found that they were "very open to meeting during office hours and they tailor[ed] it to [her] schedule [sic]." She also stated that her professors became her "support system. . . when [she] was feeling overwhelmed and emotional." Diana additionally explicated that she met with her professors to know what readings to do and prepare well for classes. Also, Diana explained that the mentors and counselors helped her "refocus on school." Angel indicated that he and an advisor at the university had "quarterly one-on-one conversations" that helped him perform well in school. All in all, the participants suggested that validation from professors, counselors, and mentors helped them adapt to the university and feel included.

Joining clubs and programs. Many participants noted that they started feeling included at the university when they joined clubs. Hortencia explained that she realized that there were many clubs and organizations that helped her overcome anxiety and depression at the university. As she suggested, "The programs, clubs and organizations are so many that the only thing you have to do is pick one or two or three of where you feel the most comfortable and makes the most sense to you and your personal beliefs." Furthermore, Hortencia explained that she realized "there are many counselors, professors, clubs,

sororities, programs, groups and participants willing to help you, but you must ask or they will never know." Diana explained that she joined a college mentorship program where she was assigned a mentor. She asserted that the mentorship program and mentor helped her feel a part of the university. Likewise, Alejandra described that she joined the CAMP program at the UC. The program was designed to specifically help minority participants at the UC. The program was a place where Alejandra felt included and met other participants with similar backgrounds. She also mentioned that the program helped her in having "more contact with [her] teachers." Hector officially joined a server list at the tutoring center. To his surprise, the tutoring center was also a place where he found other Latin@ participants and people with similar backgrounds. Daniela joined the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) where she had the opportunity to mentor other participants, including participants from her former community college and high school. Several participants joined student government organizations to begin networking with other participants and to become involved on campus. Joining clubs and programs was a vital step to feeling included at the university. Luz expressed, "I joined a club. . . . It made me feel part of the school."

The interviews also revealed that participants started feeling included at the university when they joined programs related to their majors. Francisca joined the MESA program because it was related to her major in the sciences. Luisa mentioned that she joined a psychology club because she wanted to "open up, talk to them, and start forming study groups." Adela joined clubs in her major

as a matter of practicality and planning for the future because she started networking with other people in her field. Joining clubs and programs related to participants' majors helped them network with other participants, faculty, and department administrators. Overall, joining clubs and programs helped participants overcome the insecurities, loneliness, and discomfort at the universities.

Second Research Question

The second research question was:"What university spaces do Latin@ transfer participants identify as visually comfortable?" In the interviews, participants identified specific university spaces as visually comfortable and where they eventually felt included. This study borrowed from Deil-Amen's (2011) description of comfort as an integrative moment when participants felt that they academically and socially belonged and positively identified with others in an institution. The description of visually comfortable spaces by participants in this study added to the overall understanding of how participants reacted to unfamiliar environments at the UC and CSU and their consequent identity negotiation based on security, connectedness, or differentiation (the dialectics in INT). Generally, the university spaces that Latin@ transfer participants identified as visually comfortable were places where they felt the most included, affirmed, validated, and relaxed. The social relationships in those spaces positively influenced participants' sense of belongingness, comfort, and motivation. This section explores three distinct categories of comfortable spaces that helped participants become comfortable, form positive relationships on campus, and

integrate themselves at the university (see Table 4). The categories include spaces to connect with other Latin@s or participants, to benefit from others in their majors, and to escape the world. References to participants' photographic figures helped to visualize the distinct comfortable spaces.

Table 4

Research Question 2

Categories for Visually Comfortable Spaces

Comfortable spaces to connect with other Latin@s.

Comfortable spaces to benefit from others in their majors.

Comfortable spaces to escape the world.

Comfortable Spaces to Connect with Other Latin@s

Based on participants' recurrent responses and photographs, the first category of comfortable spaces was that of places where participants connected with other Latin@s or socialized with participants from similar backgrounds. The library was the most frequently cited comfortable space at the UC and CSU (see Figure 2). The primary reason why participants frequented the library was to socialize and connect with other Latin@s. Several participants provided images showing open spaces in the library where they could "hang out." These spaces often included comfortable sofas, chairs, or desks where multiple participants could sit (see Figures 3-6). As Rodrigo indicated, he "kick[ed] it at the library" where his Latin@ friends met. Rodrigo indicated that the outside area of the

library was comfortable because he could sit with friends and eat in between classes (see Figure 7). Moreover, Luz mentioned that the Chicana/o resource center in the library was a place for her to have constant empowering *platicas* with other peers (see Figure 8). The *platicas* were sessions where Latin@ participants motivated younger and new participants. Luz mentioned that the *platicas* became a source of inspiration and motivation for her to stay in school. She stated that she would have departed from school if she had not visited the Chicana/o resource center. Similarly, Luz and Diana both mentioned an all-Latin@ girl club in the Chicana/o resource center at the library that helped them feel comfortable and motivated. The all-Latin@ club was a place where girls could speak freely about their experiences, struggles, and aspirations. The club provided positive role models for Luz and Diana. Overall, the library was described as a place where participants could relax and collaborate with others.

JACK LANGSON LIBRARY

Figure 2. The library as comfortable space.

Figure 3. The library as comfortable space to socialize with others.

Figure 4. The library as comfortable space to socialize with others.

Figure 5. The library as comfortable space to socialize with others.

Figure 6. The library as comfortable space to socialize with others.
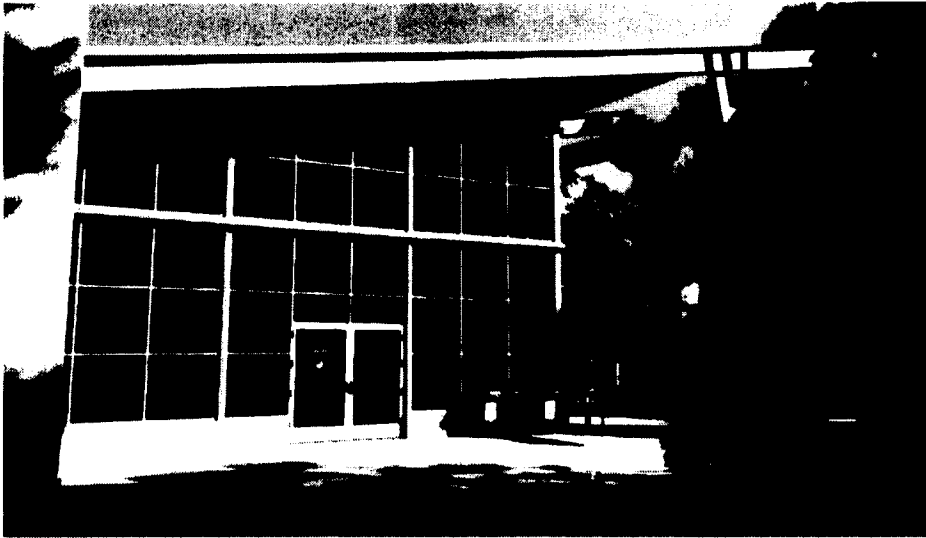
Figure 7. The outside of the library as a comfortable space.

Figure 8. The Chicana/o resource center in the library as comfortable space.

Participants also discussed other important places where they felt they could connect and identify with other Latin@s and participants with similar backgrounds. Recurrently, participants described the transfer student center as a place where they found motivation and became connected with other

students(see Figure 9). The transfer student center housed the counselors who reached out to participants in the educational services program at the community college. Additionally, the transfer student center allowed participants to socialize, which was important because it enabledthe participants to distract themselves from the pressures of school and classes. Maria and Ignacia described the center as having tables and space where they could socialize, eat together, and meet others. They felt that they could develop friendships at the center and that, in turn, helped them overcome the stress from classes. Daniela explained that the center provided snacks and treats to help them feel welcomed and invited. Particularly during midterms and finals, the center motivated participants to study and do well, while providing a comfortable space to unwind. Several participants indicated that the Student Outreach and Retention Center (SOAR) allowed them to connect with counselors, mentors, and other participants as well. The SOAR center explicitly made participants feel welcomed and established a sense of homefor participants (see Figure 10). Interestingly, Daniela described the SOAR center as a place where she learned about activism and learned to feel empowered about her Latin@ identity (see Figure 11). Daniela also actively participated in SOAR fieldtrips to other universities. Luisa described the SOAR center as extremely diverse, vibrant, and comfortable (see Figure 12). The diversity and vibrant environment at SOAR made her feel at home, as well. Lastly, Hortencia described the Cultural Center on campus as the place where she felt included and most comfortable. The Cultural Center taught Hortencia that she could positively affirm her identity as Latin@. Hector and Marcos

indicated that the student union center was their most comfortable space because it resembled home (see Figures 13-15). The place included comfortable couches and allowed them to socialize with friends, similar to the socialization and conversations they shared with family members at home. Hector, in particular, mentioned that the Cultural Center was similar to home because he could watch TV, play games with friends, and eat. The prevalent theme across the aforementioned participants' comments was that these comfortable places allowed them to connect with other studentsfrom similar backgrounds. Unsurprisingly, these comfortable spaces resembled the space in the educational services program at the community college, particularly because of the predominantly Latin@ student presence.

Figure 9. The transfer student center as comfortable space.
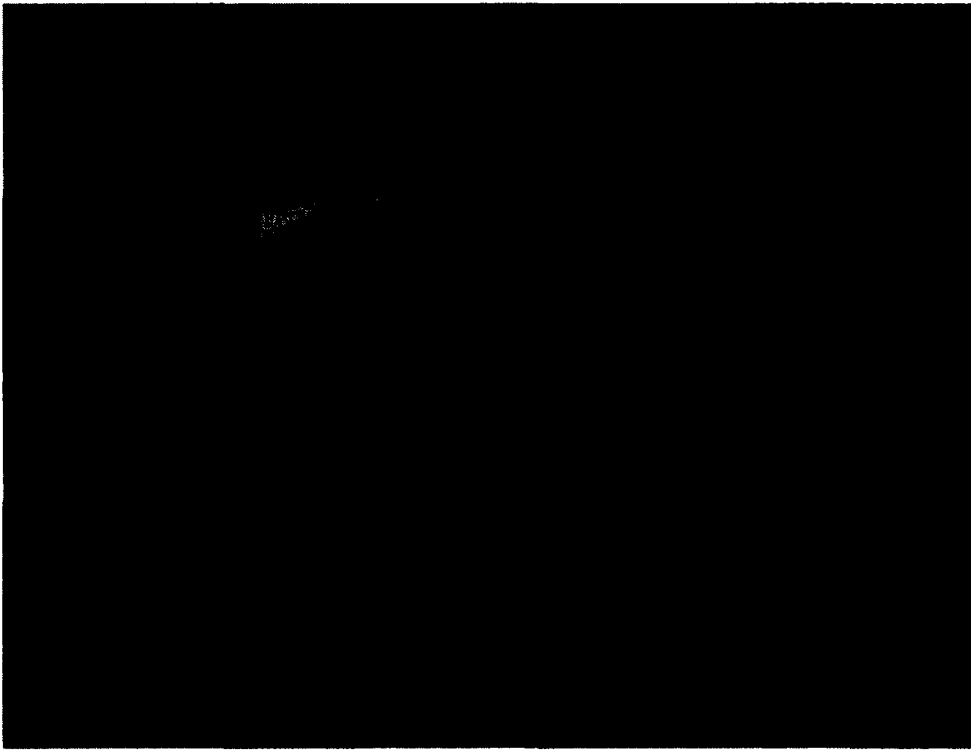
Figure 10. The SOAR center as a comfortable, welcoming space.
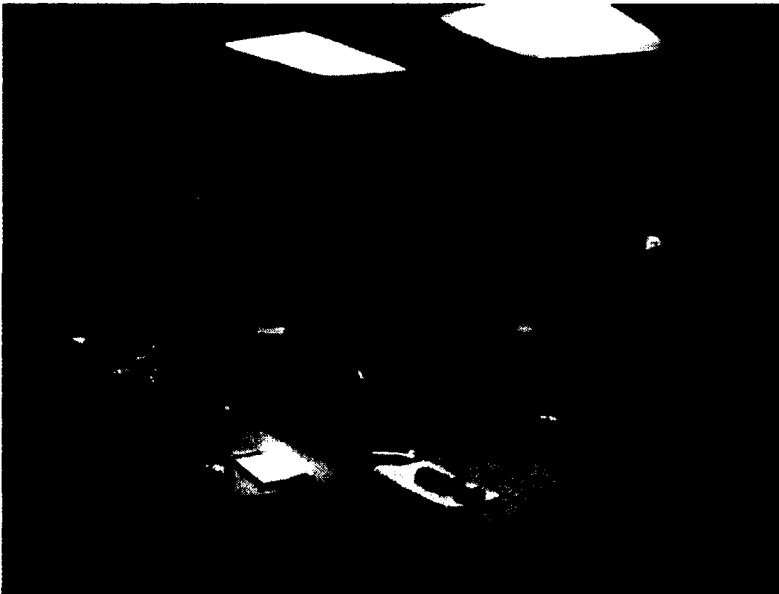
Figure 11. The SOAR center as a comfortable space for activism and empowerment.

Figure 12. The SOAR center as a comfortable, diverse, and vibrant space.

Figure 13. The student union center as comfortable space.
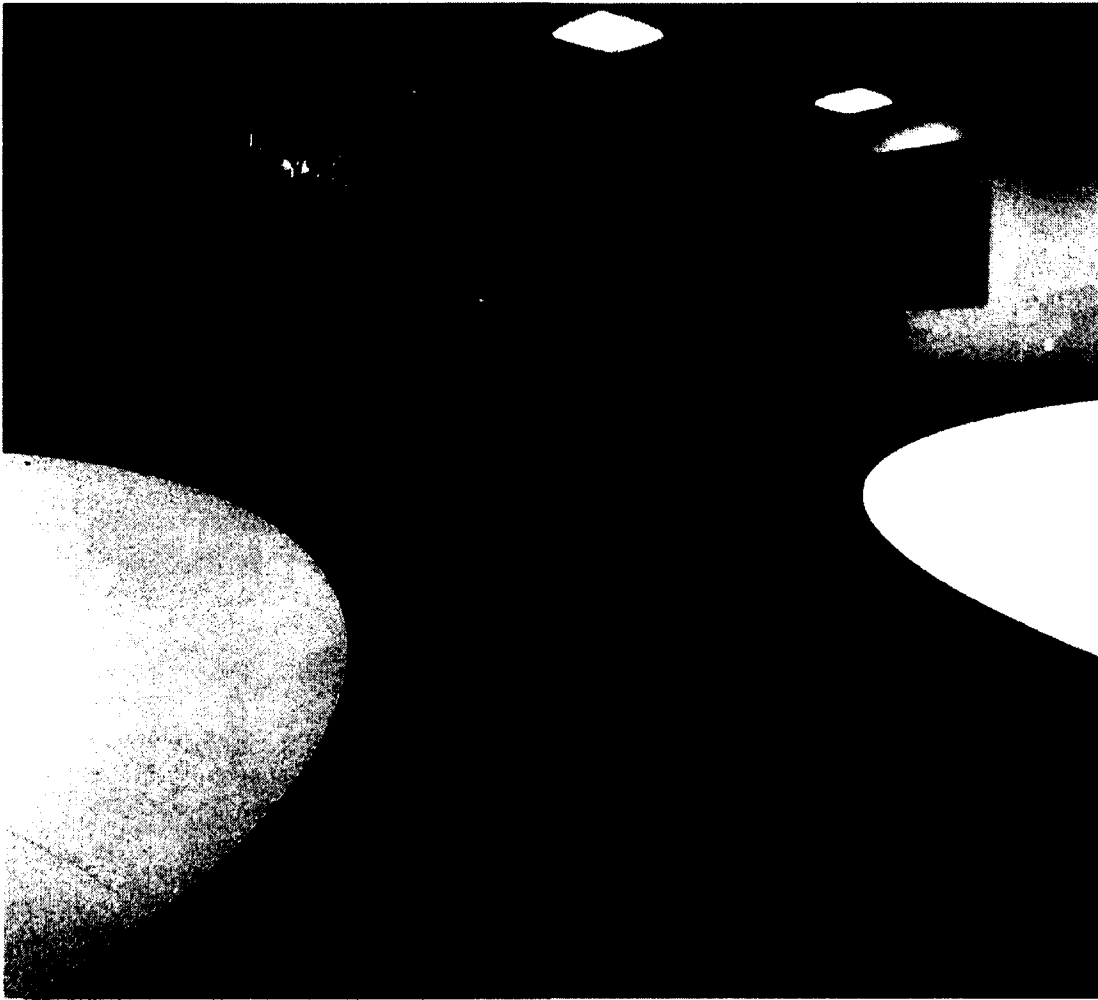
Figure 14-15. The student union center as comfortable space.

Comfortable Spaces to Benefit from Others in their Majors

Based on participants' responses and photographs, the second category

of comfortable spaces was that of places where participants could strategically

benefit from others in their majors. Several participants mentioned that the most

comfortable spaces at their campus were the buildings that housed their majors.

Participants mentioned that they felt most comfortable in the biology labs, the

school of medicine, the business administration building, the kinesiology gym

areas, the psychology department, and the Chicana/o studies department. For

example, Angel indicated that his most comfortable space was a workroom office

provided for studentsin the Department of Communications (see Figure 16). The

workroom was a place to collaborate with other communication majors, eat,

snack, and stay on task. Likewise, Ivan mentioned that his most comfortable

space was the business building which included hallways were he collaborated

and met with his peers (see Figure 17). Ivan specified that he was never on

campus for long periods of time to socialize because of work and obligations at

home. He was a commuter student who only came to campus when he had

important group projects or had to meet other studentsfrom his courses. As

such, he met studentsin the hallways of the business building, which were

largeenough for themto work together. Figure 17 shows a singular, simple bench

where Ivan felt comfortable enough to meet other studentsin his major. All in all,

these comfortable spaces allowed participants to talk to other studentsin their

major. A consistent pattern here was that participants met other studentsto do

group work. The participants strategically benefitted from visiting the buildings

and courses in their majors to connect with other studentsand groups in their

fields.

Figure 16. The major's workroom as a comfortable space.

Figure 17. The hallways of the business building as a comfortable space.

Comfortable Spaces to Escape the World

The third and final category of comfortable spaces based on student responses and photographs were areas where participants could escape the world to study and focus. This category is consistent with the previous theme describing the university as positive identification and escape.Participants consistently described certain comfortable spaces on campus as those that allowed them to study and be away from the rest of the campus or away from home. In this category, the library, the most frequently cited comfortable space at the UC and CSU, was one place that participants visited to escape the world. Figures 18-22 show participants' photographs displaying the library as a place where they could be isolated from others. The design of the spaces show separate desks, cubicles, and areas where participants could close themselves off from others. Figures 20-22, in particular, show the availability of computers or participants' personal computers as devices that participants used to drown out the outside world. The spatial arrangement of the cubicles helped participants organize their individual units to isolate themselves from others. The primary reason participants cited to escape to the library was to take advantage of the quiet and isolation. Rocio mentioned that these desks allowed her to fully immerse herself in her studies or nap when she was very tired. Moreover, the library was also a place where participants could identify other like-minded studentsas a source of motivation to keep studying. Diana and Guadalupe described the library as filled with motivated studentswho were there to concentrate. Guadalupe stated that she liked the library because "everyone is

quiet, minding their own business." She mentioned that she did not talk to other students. The silence shielded her from interacting with others, but enabled her to focus on studying. She also stated that the library was where she could "get away from people," including the distractions from her home. She noted that the library's cubicles reminded her of the community college library, which she also used as an escape when she wanted to be alone. Moreover, the library was a comfortable place for participants because, according to Alejandra, "It's a space where you can be alone or be with your friends and study together." Surprisingly, Ignacia and Hortencia described in detail that they visited the library's basement because there were comfortable couches where they could study, eat, snack, and study. They intentionally visited the basement because they knew others would not bother them. For most participants interviewed, visiting the library was an escape from the university and their home worlds.

Figure 18. The library as a comfortable space to be isolated from others.

Figure 19. The library as a comfortable space to be isolated from others.

Figure 20. The library as a comfortable space to be isolated from others.

Figure 21. The library as a comfortable space to be isolated from others.

Figure 22. The library as a comfortable space to be isolated from others.

In the same category, participants described other spaces where they

could escape the world around them. Several participants indicated that they

liked to visit the parks at the UC and CSU campuses where they could be alone.

For example, Maria frequently visited the park in the middle of her campus when

she felt stressed and in need of air (see Figure 23). The parks represented open

air and space where they could de-stress. Ignacia provided an image that

visually described the place away from the busy school buildings where she

could relax and think (see Figure 24). Different clubs or organizations displayed

fliers or booths to recruit participants, but in general, the open air spaces allowed

participants to have lunch and relax away from the busy buildings on campus.

Figure 23. The park in the middle of campus as a comfortable space.
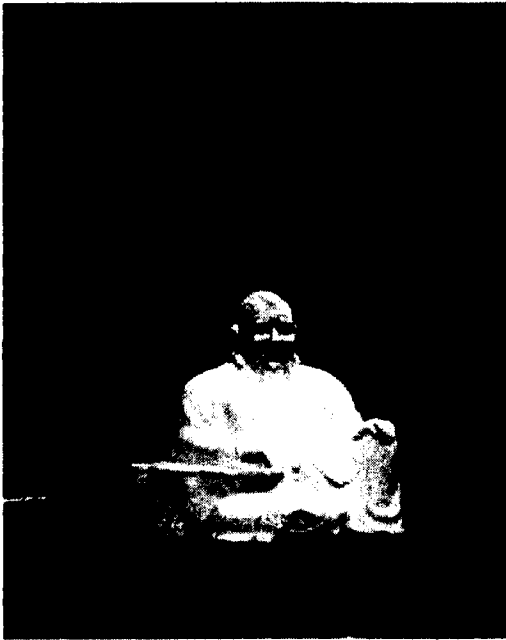
Figure 24. The park in the middle of campus as a comfortable space.

Third Research Question

The third research question was:"How does participation in an educational services program influence Latin@ transfer participants' identity negotiation and perception of visually comfortable spaces?" The previous sections described the tactics participants adapted in orderto feel included on campus and comfortable spaces that helped participants overcome insecurities, disconnectedness, and alienation. Based on these findings, it is essential to investigate if the educational services program at the community college positively influenced participants' adaptation tactics and search for comfortable spaces. To answer these questions, participants were explicitly asked if and how the program influenced how they eventually survived at the university. Active participants in the educational services program at the community college reported that early exposure to counselors and programs facilitated their transfer to the UC or CSU. Early exposure was vital for participants because it enabled them to familiarize

themselves with the university setting. Participants who did not actively participate in the activities or workshops offered by the educational services program often reported that they felt lonely, disconnected from others, or insecure in the transfer process. As such, participants described varying degrees of influence because their participation in the program varied. This section specifically reports how the educational services program positively influenced certain participants' identity negotiation in terms of the dialectics that were previously explained (see Table 5).

Table 5

Research Question 3

Influence of the Program

Predictable-Unpredictable	Early exposure to counselors.
	Early exposure to programs.
	Major awareness.
Security – Vulnerability	Security due to guaranteed admission.
	Confidence and internal motivation.
Connectedness – Autonomy	Learning to connect with peers.
	Not being afraid to look for help.
Inclusion – differentiation	Flexibility.

Note. Similar to section two of the first research question, the first column represents the clusters pertinent to INT and the second column highlights the themes that emerged from participants' voices.

Predictable-Unpredictable Environments

Early exposure to counselors. Active participants in the educational services program received early exposure to counselors at the UC and CSU campuses which positively influenced their transfer. The early exposure allowed participants to familiarize themselves with the universitiesand their academic expectations. Daniela explained in detail that "there was a small group of counselors that I already knew" because the educational services program brought partners from the UC and CSU to introduce participants to the campuses. Daniela further mentioned that she mentally prepared for transfer

because the UC representative counselor personally met with her and set out a specific transfer plan. According to Daniela, meeting with that personalized counselor was the key to "an easier transition." Since the educational services program is a strategic partnership with the UC and CSU designed to increase Latin@ student transfer rates, counselors from the UC and CSU visit the community college to expose participants to the universities. Early exposure to UC and CSU counselors was shown to beinstrumental in positively influencing participants' transfer. As Maria summarized, the counselors "went into detail of what was to come."

Early exposure to programs. Early exposure to programs also facilitated transfer for some participants. According to Rodrigo, he obtained early exposure to the "transfer mentor program," which became important for his transition. Similarly, Ignacia mentioned that she learned about the transfer center and the transfer student mentor services which helped her become familiar with the university. Adela, too, mentioned that she "found the transfer mentor program" through an early exposure workshop. The early exposure to the aforementioned programs helped participants become acquainted with the university, as well as with the counselors, mentors, and peers in the transfer student center. Expectedly, some participants mentioned that their most comfortable space at the university was the transfer student center, as evidenced in previous sections.

Major awareness. The educational services program at the community college provided information about different majors and major-related

support,which benefitted participants' transfer process. Guadalupe mentioned that she was not very involved in the educational services program, but the meetings that she did attend provided her important information about her major. Most importantly, those workshops became fundamental to knowing where to go and look for major-related support. Hortencia indicated that the program motivated her because it focused attention on her major. She explained that the program helped her "gain the tools necessary to prepare for the UC system, which is more focus oriented in your career or major of choice [sic]." Hortencia described that she learned about endless resources for participants in her major. She specified that she was motivated to become a "professional student." Another student, Alejandra, joined the MESA program because of an early exposure workshop. She joined the club because she wanted to meet other people in her major. Information about different majors and exposure to major-related support was vital in motivating the participants and familiarizing them with their future academic environments. Awareness about participants' majors at the university and support for different fields positively influenced participants' attitudesabout transfer.

Security-Vulnerability

Security due to guaranteed admission. A unique characteristic of the educational services program was that it provided guaranteed acceptance to the UC or CSU if participants participated and fulfilled all institutional requirements for transfer. Every student indicated that the educational services program helped them get into the university, which was a major relief for them.

Furthermore, as previously discussed, the educational services program helped

participants meetdeadlines and institutional requirements for transfer. Constant

reminders to meetthe deadlines and fill out applications comforted participants.

As Luz explained,

> They did so much. I owe them big time. They made all the resources
>
> available to me. I was aware of what I needed to do and doing things
>
> correctly. It's one of the reasons I am here in the moment. I needed the
>
> help desperately.

Gloria also mentioned,

> The guidance that the program is able to offer to those that take the time
>
> to participate in it is incredible. I honestly don't think I would have
>
> transferred so quickly had it not been for the counseling appointments,
>
> mentors, and encouragement I received through the program.

The participants felt secure in their efforts because of the guaranteed admission

process to the UC or CSU. As Daniela described, many participants never truly

imagined going to the university, but the program provided a sense of

confidencethat they could aspire to obtain a higher education. Undoubtedly, the

program provided security in guaranteeing admission to the UC or CSU for

participants who participated in the program and fulfilled all institutional

requirements for transfer.

Confidence and internal motivation. Because the educational services

program was also noted as an important source ofconfidence and internal

motivation forparticipants, the programalso influenced their confidence in

surviving at the university. First and foremost, the program was essential in establishing internal motivation in participants to leave the community college environment. Because the community college and educational services program werecomfort zones for many participants, internal motivation and confidence were necessary preconditions to participants taking the leap into the university. Hector beautifully indicated that the program taught him "motivation to make these changes rather than stay in my comfort zone. Going outside my comfort zone helped me develop as a person." Similarly, Guadalupe mentioned, "I would not have had the tools or self-confidence without [the program]." Rodrigo explained that the most important benefit of developingself-confidencewas that "it helped feeling comfortable" at the university. Furthermore, Diana stated, the program taught her "to keep on going and knowing that 'it's doable.'" She felt motivated and secure in transferring to the university knowing that "a part of me left them but a part of them came with me." Hortencia described that the program helped her "develop leadership skills, serve the community, and learn the importance of networking." Hortencia was motivated to transfer knowing that she had accumulated leadership skills to help herself and her community in the future. While not all participants gained confidence and internal motivation, those who did eventually reported feeling strong enough to network, find help, and join different clubs and programs.

Connection-Autonomy

The educational services program exposed participants to counselors, programs, and major-related support and, consequently, also influenced how

participants connected with others at the university. Participants who were active in the program reported that the program taught them how to autonomously navigate the university and later connect with others.

Learning to connect with peers. One of the early exposure workshops in the program included peer mentoring which helped participants connect with people already at the university. For example,Marcos explained, "When I was transferring, I felt I was alone until [the educational services program] paired us with participants at [the university]." He described that the peer mentoring sparked his interest and comfort in the transition because he met people he could contact and seek out at the university. Luisa mentioned that the educational services program paired her with participants who were going to transfer to the same university. She learned to communicate and rely on participants who were going through the same process. This provided comfort and interconnectedness with others. Luisa later stated that her group received information on the SOAR center, which "was very nice because we got to meet new people." After participants entered the university, they immediately connected with peers which provided them with a sense of comfort and relief. Hortencia considered herself a shy person prior to the program, but the leadership skills that she learned in the program's workshops stimulated her to become "involved in different activities and clubs [that] helped me learn about different academic programs." Although Hortencia indicated that she did not connect with most peers at the university, she learned how to be a leader and seek programs and people from similar backgrounds. Lastly, Maria felt secure

and motivated about transferring because the program encouraged her to look for Latin@-based programs. She mentioned, "I would not have been informed of the programs geared toward my major or participants of my [pause] who are also Latin@ Hispanic [sic]." The program successfully motivated Maria because the program's administrators and counselors showed her that she could connect with other Latin@s on campus.

Not being afraid to look for help. Althoughmany transfer participants indicated that they were culturally shocked upon entrance into the university, active participants in the educational services program reported that they learned not to be afraid to look for help. Diana mentioned that her counselors told her that "there was always someone" willing to help. Counselors informed Diana that there were many friendly individuals at the university and the key was for her to search for those helpful individuals to succeed in her academic endeavors. Hector mentioned that the educational services program "gave me resources so that I would know where to go and who to speak to at [the university]." Blanca stated that the program taught her to "take advantage of the resources that are offered to participants." Hortencia echoed the previous sentiments by explaining that the university was overwhelmingly supportive and had many resources, but participants must be willing to look for help. As she advised, participants simply must "be willing to ask." Hortencia successfully overcame her fear of looking for help, which is why she was very thankful to the program and university. Learning to look for help was important for facilitating participants' ability to connect with others and to overcome loneliness at the university.

Inclusion - Differentiation

Flexibility. According to the participants interviewed, the most important lesson taught by the educational services program in relation to the inclusion-differentiation dialectic was flexible learning. A large number of participants indicated that they felt excluded and different from other groups on campus initially, but eventually adapted because they were mentally flexible. The participants who actively participated in the educational services program workshops indicated that they learned how to be flexible to overcome overwhelming feelings of exclusion and feeling different at the university. Counselors consistently reminded participants to be mentally flexible and willing to learn new things in the new university environment. According to Diana, the program mentors and counselors taught her "different learning methods" to survive the transfer process. For instance, she stated that the program taught her "how to cope with life surroundings" and to balance her time at the university. Francisca stated that she learned the skill of management and balance because her counselor warned her about the new, unforeseeable expectations at the university. Adela stated that she learned how to be "school orientated," which included better study and social habits. Likewise, Angel expressed that counselors "gave me a lot of options and a different perspective about college." Flexibility is a competency that participants believedthat they learned from participating in the workshops. Learning flexibility is perhaps the reason why these participants overcame personal distress, the culture shock of a new environment, coped with the fast-paced changes, and became acquainted with

university atmosphere. These participants also learned to connect with others and not feel excluded from the social relationships on campus. Accordingly, Daniela beautifully stated that the program taught her to "go in with the mentality that the institution does not define you; you define the institution."

Chapter Summary

This chapter was separated into three sections to answer the research questions of the study. Each section included findings related to the specific research questions. The first research question dealt with Latin@ participants' identity negotiation when they transferred from the community college to the university. The researcher found that participants viewed the community college and the educational services program as a comfort zone. As such, participants described a culture shock when they transferred to the university. The university environment was noted as unpredictable and participants faced many obstacles beyond commontransfer difficulties that affect most students. The participants also reported insecurity due to professors, academics, peers, overly formal language, and their Latin@ identity. Participants described feeling lonely and disconnected from White and other students. As such, they had to adapt to the new academic environments by seeking other Latin@s with whom they could form relationships, and, in some cases, participants coped by seeing opportunities at the university to escape from their homes or busy academic lives. Furthermore, participants explained that they felt more included as time passed because they started forming closer relationships with counselors, mentors, and former educational services program transfer students.

Additionally, participants started feeling more included at the university when they received positive validation from professors, counselors, and mentors. Lastly, participants felt included when they started joining clubs, particularly those related to their majors.

The second question was related to Latin@ transfer participants' identification of visually comfortable spaces which influenced their identity negotiation. Based on participants' responses and visual photographs, I identified three categories of comfortable spaces. The first category included spaces where participants connected with other Latin@ students. The second category included spaces where participants benefitted from engaging with other students in their major. The third category included spaces participants frequented to escape the world around them. The latter categories provided insight about participants' adaptation and search for comfortable spaces where they could connect with others and survive in the university.

The third research question was related to how the educational services program at the community college influenced participants' identity negotiation and perception of visually comfortable spaces. The data from the interviews indicated that participants received varied support from the educational services program because some participants participated in workshops more frequently than other participants. Participants who actively participated in program workshops gained more benefits that in turn facilitated their ease of transfer. The data indicated that participants who frequently participated in the program's workshops felt more secure in their transfer because of the program policy of

guaranteed admission into a UC or CSU. In addition, participants reported greater confidence and internal motivation because of their participation in the program. Additionally, the participants reported more familiarity with the UC or CSU because the program provided early exposure to counselors, programs, and awareness. Early exposure perhaps explained why participants felt more connected and less anxious about transfer. Furthermore, the program helped participants feel more connected with other peers and empowered them to look for help at the university. Lastly, the program taught participants to be mentally flexible and facilitated their abilityto cope with the difficulties of transfer.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The Student Success Task Force (SSTF) in California recommended that

community colleges increase support for Latin@ students, including transfer

students, through educational services programs because of Latin@s' dismal

success rates, including transfer rates, in comparison withtheir peers. Countless

studies suggest that many students may not be transferring to four-year

universities because they are uncomfortable with attending a four-year institution

(Rendón, 1994; Rendón Linares & Muñoz, 2011). Studies also indicate that

administrators and leadership amalgamate Latin@ students into the larger

student body and fail to understand Latin@ students' complex identities and

needs; such amalgamation promulgates students' educational failure and

discomfort in higher education (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Rendón, 1994;

Rendón Linares & Muñoz, 2011; Tuttle & Musoba, 2013). Research is needed to

explore the complexity of Latin@ identity, how Latin@s feel when they transfer,

and whether educational services programs, like the one in this study, positively

influence Latin@ students' transition from community colleges to four-year

universities (Booth et al., 2013). Hence, the purpose of this study was to

investigate students' identity negotiation and visual perception of comfortable

spaces after they transferred from a community college to a four-year university

(a specific UC or CSU institution). This study focused solely on students who

participated in a community college educational services program that primarily served Latin@s to investigate whether participation in the program positively influenced students' identity negotiation and comfort afterthey transferred to a four-year university (UC or CSU).

The study utilized qualitative methodology, including one-on-one interviews and photographic elicitation, to answer the following questions:

1.   How do Latin@ students negotiate their identity when they transfer from a community college to a university?

2.   What university spaces do Latin@ transfer students identify as visually comfortable?

3.   How does participation in an educational services program influence Latin@ transfer students' identity negotiation and perception of visually comfortable spaces?

More specific research questions pertinent to the identity negotiation theory framework included:

1.   Do Latin@ transfer students feel secure or vulnerable, included or excluded, and connected or autonomous when they transfer to a four-year university?

2.   Do Latin@ transfer students report familiar or unfamiliar environments?

3.   What strategies do Latin@ transfer students engage in to adapt to a university?

I interviewed twenty participants who attended a UC or CSU after participating in the educational services program.

This chapter presents a summary, in-depth interpretation of the findings, and implications for policy, practice, theory, and future research. The chapter concludes with recommendations for leadership and educators.

Summary and Interpretations

The study was grounded in INTas a theoretical framework to comprehend participants' identity negotiation after transfer, confrontation of barriers, and visual identification of comfortable spaces. Through analysis of the data, I identified different themes that answered each research question and were pertinent to four dialectics in INT: identity predictability-unpredictability, identity security-vulnerability, identity connection-autonomy, and identity inclusion-differentiation. Using INT as a critical theoretical frame, the results in Chapter 4 suggested that Latin@ participants negotiated their identities in very complex and distinct ways when they transferred to a university.

For the first research question, the data from the interviews indicated that participants viewed the community college and the educational services program as a comfort zone. Several participants described culture shock when they transferred to the university. They viewed the university as unpredictable and students faced many obstacles, including travel, schedule, and adjustment issues. Many participants felt insecure academically and because of their Latin@ identity. They felt lonely and disconnected from White and other peers. Students eventually adapted to the university environment by forming

relationships with other Latin@s and viewing areas of the university as a positive

escape from their busy home and academic lives. Most participants felt more

included as time passed, and they formed positive relationships with counselors,

educators, and other students from the educational services program and joined

clubs related to their majors. Validation from professors, counselors and mentors

was a vital element that helped students feel included.

For the second research question, three key categories of comfortable

spaces were identified. The first category was that of comfortable spaces where

participants connected with other Latin@s, such as the library. The second

category was that of comfortable spaces where participants benefitted and

connected with other students in their major, such as academic department

buildings. The third category was that of spaces where students went to escape

the world around them, such as quiet spaces in the library or open green areas.

The three categories were important spaces that most students perceived as

helping them to adapt to the university.

Lastly, for the third research question, findings indicated that the

participants who actively participated in the educational services program at the

community college gained many benefits that facilitated their ease of transfer.

Those that frequently participated in the program reported active involvement in

workshops, field trips, and events. Those students felt more secure about their

transfer, particularly because of their guaranteed acceptance into the UC or

CSU. They reported greater familiarity with the UC and CSU campuses in

comparison to students that did not actively participate in the program. Early

exposure was a key element that helped participants feel more connected, less, anxious, and more motivated to transfer. The program helped students connect with other peers, which helped them feel comfortable, and the program effectively taught them to be mentally flexible to cope with the difficulties of transfer.

Based on the findings in Chapter 4, I will now describe several motifs as interpretations of the thematic findings. Each motif is grounded in previous literature to support the interpretations of the findings. Moreover, the motifs are organized to describe a chronological sequence of students' experiences before and after transfer. In other words, the motifs are organized in such a fashion to follow the participants' journey in transferring from the community college to the UC or CSU and to understand the eventual negotiation or adaptation strategies that helped them survive at the university.

Comfort at the Community College and Educational Services Program

In describing their experiences prior to transfer, most participants reported comfort at the community college and with the educational services program. Whereas some participants were excited to leave the community college, some were overwhelmed at the prospects of starting anew and entering thenew world of a university. Participants' positive reports and comfort at the community college were consistent with previous studies where participants reported more positive experiences and interactions with school administrators at their community colleges than at four-year universities (Bauer & Bauer, 1994; Davies & Casey, 1998). In a previous study, Hurtado and Carter (1996) found that

Latin@ participants felt most comfortable in school if they felt like they belonged to the culture of the institution. This may explain why participants felt comfort and belonging at the community college and in the educational services program. Most participants in the present study also described the educational services program as helpful in preparing them for transfer. These findings were consistent with previous studies where programs of the same type were noted by participants as important to their motivation, especially the support they received from counselors and in academic planning to transfer (Hoppe Nagao, Lowe, Magallon Garcia, & Medrano, 2013; Andrade, Hoppe Nagao, Medrano, Lowe, & Currie, 2015). Andrade, Hoppe Nagao, Medrano, Lowe, and Currie (2014) found that participants perceived a similar program's services as beneficial to their transfer as well as foundational to their preparation to leave the community college. Though Latin@ participants' feared leaving the community college, positive views of the educational services program indicated that the program helped create an important place for community, comfort, and academic planning.

Discomfort, Unfamiliarity, Insecurity, and Disconnectedness at the University

Upon entry into the university, most participants tended to describe the university as unpredictable, explaining that the new institutions resembled a whole new world. Although some participants were familiar with the UC or CSU they attended prior to transfer, most participants encountered an entirely unfamiliar, unknown, and daunting world in the university. Whereas the

community college and educational services program fostered a sense of comfort and community for many participants, the university atmosphere produced culture shock. Previously, Townsend (1995) found that transfer students generally viewed universities as unfamiliar. Other studies indicated that students, regardless of ethnicity or race, faced adaptation difficulties in the transfer process that made them feel out of place (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). According to Ting-Toomey (2005) unfamiliar and unpredictable environments frequently result in personal discomfort and awkward relationships. Hence, culture shock as a mental and emotional state after transfer was not surprising. Hotta and Ting-Toomey (2013) explained that culture shock is a concept that students emphasized when describing their confrontation with unfamiliar environments. Other studies have found that Latin@ students who successfully transferred to universities described the experience as a culture shock because of the unfamiliar, new educational settings (Valencia & Black, 2002). Moreover, according to Ting-Toomey (2005), ethnically diverse environments are naturally unfamiliar to individuals who live in homogenous cultures, such as the predominantly Latin@ environment at the community college in this study. Because most participants in this study came from a similar, predominantly Latin@ city and community college, confrontation with heterogeneous environments may explain their feelings of cultural shock, as well.

Additionally, several participants reported insecurity based on professors, academics, peers, formal language, and being Latin@. The fear of stereotypes was present in the current study, particularly as participants described their

perception of professors and peers' viewing them negatively. Several

participants felt that their peers viewed them as unintelligent or unprepared for

class assignments or projects. According to Ting-Toomey (2005), insecurity and

vulnerability are likely in unfamiliar environments and insecurity intensifies when

individuals do not positively adapt to the social environment. Unfamiliarity

prompts insecurity and vulnerability in individuals, as well (Ting-Toomey, 2005).

Valencia and Black (2002) explained that Latin@ transfer students often fear the

threat of stereotypes because of their Latin@ identity, which makesthem feel

mentally and emotionally insecure. The perception that peers viewed Latin@s as

unintelligent is consistent with Valencia and Black's (2002) findings that Latin@

students were mindful of negative attitudes toward Latin@s which contributed to

their insecurities on campus. Additionally, Hungerford-Kresser (2010) found that

Latin@ students felt insecure with the formal communication that occurs at

universities. For example,students reported attempted to change their

communication to feel more comfortable. Many participants in the current study,

similar to the students in Hungerford-Kresser's (2010) study, often went out of

their way to learn the vocabulary in university classrooms so they would feel less

insecure at school. They also scheduled tutoring sessions and meetings with

professors to overcome their insecurities regarding communication and

competency in the classroom. Moreover, these findings support previous studies

indicating that Latin@ students felt pressured to assimilate into the White culture

on campus, which added to their feelings of insecurity and vulnerability

(Hungerford-Kresser, 2010).

Furthermore, several Latin@ participants felt disconnected and lonely when they entered the university, as if they lived in multiple worlds, and disconnected from White and other students. Most Latin@ participants connected mostly with other Latin@s and they viewed the university as a positive place only when they felt a sense of professionalism and academic work ethic from other studentsand the campus environment. Also, some participants reported the university as a positive place for them becausethey could escape from their lives at home. According to Ting-Toomey (2005),individuals seek meaningful connection with others in new environments, but they may be forced to be autonomous and isolated if they do not identify with others. Connection with others is vital for a strong sense of self and well-being (Ting-Toomey, 2005). Previous studies indicated that a feeling of connectedness or belonging was important for the well-being of Latin@s (Hurtado & Carter, 1996). Perhaps the reason why students felt disconnected and lonely was because of the lack of Latin@ students or they did not have a visible presence at the UC or CSU. Valencia and Black (2002) found that Latin@ transfer students felt disconnected from others because they did not connect with students from other ethnicities.

Several participants in the present study consistently mentioned that they did not connect with their campuses because the student population was predominantly White, Asian, or was too diverse. The participants sought to find other Latin@s in order to feel a sense of belonging, including time to speak Spanish, and to feel understood. Peña-Talamantes' (2013) research found that Latin@ students did not easily give up their home culture at the university. They

distinctively navigated between their worlds at home and school to fulfill varying expectations which resulted in internal, emotional difficulties. The language and cultural differences between home and school were cognitively tiresome and draining (Peña-Talamantes, 2013). Perhaps the participants in this study did not feel connected in new environments because of their Latinidad, including their home and cultural differences which was a stark contrast with the diversity and predominantly White environments of the university campuses. Hence, the participants started feeling connected when they found other Latin@s or found counselors who affirmed their identity.

Positive/Negative Turning Points and Validation

This study identified important turning pointsthat marked when students started feeling connected and less insecure. Most participants described feeling comfortable and welcomed at the university when they networked with clubs, mentors, professors, and other Latin@s. Such turning points were specific time periods when students overcame their feelings of discomfort and insecurity and felt more welcomed and connected to the university. Some participants identified turning points that occurred when they began feeling discouraged, such as the case of the students who departed from the university.

Positive and negative turning points had a lot to do with whether participants received positive validation from others. Participants felt included after several months when they met personalized counselors/mentors, received validation from professors and counselors, or joined clubs and programs. Some participants felt included when they started joining groups that validated their

experiences. According to Ting-Toomey (2005), individuals feel included in other groups when they are positively affirmed. Individuals may feel remote, or distanced and different others, when they feel excluded from other social groups. In their study, Hotta and Ting-Toomey (2013) found that time was an important component of positive adjustment to new environments. The findings in this present study are consistent with Hotta and Ting-Toomey's (2013) findings because participants started feeling included approximately after the first few months, which were turning points based on external validation. By that time, Latin@ participants had sought to talk to professors, met new friends, networked within their majors, and engaged in opportunities to better themselves. Studies consistently report that validation from instructors, administrators and counselors is vital for student success and well-being (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Rendón, 1994; Rendón Linares & Muñoz, 2011). Peña-Talamantes (2013) specifically reported that Latin@ students "pointed to the great need for validation and support of their sense of self within the college figured world" (p. 274). Likewise, Hungerford-Kresser (2010) found that positive validation and understanding the cultures and backgrounds of such students helped to overcome feelings of isolation and exclusion. Hence, responses from the participants in this study indicated that professors, counselors, mentors, and clubs/programs alleviated their stress and became important social support. Positive validation (e.g., motivation from professors and administrators) was foundational for positiveturning points in students' experiences.

The Importance of Space for Productive Identity Negotiation

Participants visually identified distinct comfortable spaces on campus that they felt positively influenced their identity negotiation. There were three categories of comfortable spaces noted: spaces where participants connected with other Latin@s, spaces where they benefitted from interacting with other students in their majors, and places to escape the world. Participants connected with other Latin@s in the library and specific cultural spaces, such as the Chicana/o Resource Center and SOAR. Participants benefitted from interacting with other students in their majors in major-specific department spaces and buildings. Participants also visited open green spaces and the library to escape the world.

The identification of comfortable spaces revealed that the participants started feeling comfortable in certain areas where they felt familiarity, security, and connectedness with others or chose to be isolatedfrom others. Deil-Amen (2011) described a comfortable space as a place where students establish social and academic integration to feel like they belong and where they positively affirm their identity. According to Ting-Toomey (2005), feeling comfortable in familiar environments influences how individuals form relationships with others, particularly relationships that maximize individuals' well-being. The categories of comfortable spaces in this study were consistent with previous studies. Participants pinpointed comfortable places at school as areas where they connected with peers, administrators, and mentors from similar backgrounds (Deil-Amen, 2011), particularly other Latin@s (Ethier & Deaux, 1994).

Furthermore, as Temple's (2007) findings suggested, students were more likely to engage in school, feel included, and form communities in environments that accepted them. According to Swann, Milton, and Polzner (2000), students displayed comfort in small group environments, particularly in groups of students who shared their majors. Additionally, several comfortable places described in the present study were those that helped participants escape from their academic and home environments. These spaces were similar to those identified in previous studies (Banning, Clemons, McKelfresh, & Gibbs, 2010). Banning et al.'s (2010) work found that students often identified "restorative spaces" on campus. These were spaces where they could mentally and emotionally relax, feel comfortable and "offset the effects of mental fatigue" (p. 907). In another study, Waxman, Clemons, Banning, and McKelfresh (2007) found that the library wasa unique place where students couldsocialize, create communities, and, most importantly, relax. Consistent with these previous findings, the present study found that the comfortable spaces at the UC and CSU allowed participants to engage in relational identity building based on their Latin@ identity, professional relationships, and places where they escaped the world to focus on themselves or doing well in school.

The Importance and Positive Influence of the Educational Services Program

The Latin@ participants in this study who reported active participation in the program and received early exposure to the universities described greater familiarity, security, comfort, connection with others, and an easier adaptation to

the new world of the university. While participants reported varying degrees of assistance, the ones who participated frequently in the program's events and workshops were best prepared to adapt to the university. Participants described that early exposure to counselors, programs, and information about their majors at the university positively influenced their transfer and comfort. They also felt secure because of the guaranteed admission into a four-year university that was offered by the program. They also noted that they had improved confidence and internal motivation, which they attributed to theirrelationships withmentors and professors in the educational services program. They also learned to connect with peers and overcame the fear of looking for help. Lastly, participants reported that their mentors taught them to be flexible, which helped them with the transfer process and to navigate the four-year university.

The findings described in the previous paragraph are fully consistent with Ting-Toomey's (2005) description of competent communication, which includes productive interactions, positive attitudes, and mindfulness when entering a new space. She indicated that competent communication allowsindividuals to establish a strong sense of self, or identity salience, affirmation of new relationships, and critical reflection. Hence, individuals who participated in the educational services program may havereported a more productive confrontation with their new university campuses because of the strong sense of self and because of the knowledge they learned inthe program. The results in this study also supported previous findings that described educational services and orientation programs as positive influences for first year students (Mayhew,

Vanderlinden, & Kim, 2010). The university space was a comfortable

environment when students felt comfortable and familiar with the academic

environment (Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Hungerford-Kresser, 2010; Peña-

Talamantes, 2013). Specifically, Mayhew, Stipeck, and Dorow (2007) indicated

that Latin@ students viewed similar programs as places to meet new people and

socialize. Also, studies showed that Latin@ students generally approached

school from the perspective of belonging (Hurtado & Carter, 1996), which

explains why participation in a community-based, comfortable program was

important in promoting persistence and I students feel welcomed when they

transferred to the university. As Kenney et al's (2005) study suggested, the

comfortable areas on campus, such as the program in this study, truly "reflect[ed]

a geography of the heart" (p. 47).

The Importance of Culture, Professionalism, and Latin@ Identity

The application of INT framework to the findings of this study revealed that

culturallyrich environments helped to foster productive identifications and self-

concepts for many Latin@ transfer students. Certain comfortable spaces,

including the SOAR Center, the Chicana/o Resource Center, and the library

allowed students to engage with people from other cultures, Latin@s, and

professionals. Those spaces allowed Latin@s to identify others that spoke their

language, shared similar cultural backgrounds, and were, essentially, Latin@.

Identifying other Latin@s was important for many participants because they

needed to identify other students who were similar to them who were going

through the same experiences. The social bonds created through the

identification with other Latin@s suggested that Latinidad was a necessary component of the relational identity negotiation for successful Latin@ transfer students. According to Ethier and Deaux's (1994) research, Latin@ students often engage in a process of "remooring," or "linking their identity to people and activities on campus that areconsistent with a Hispanic [sic] identity" (p. 249). In their research, Castellanos and Gloria (2007) described that Latin@ students often engage in collective interconnectedness with other Latin@ students, which positively affectstheir "college adjustment, psychological well-being, and persistence" (p. 391). Their study revealed that many Latin@ students sought "cultural congruity," a process in which students matched their personal values with those of other students, prompting "their interpersonal connectedness and subsequent cultural validation within their university environment" (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007, p. 391). Hence, perhaps participants in the present study identified with other Latin@s as a way to preserve their Latin@ identity on campus.

Another major finding in this study was that Latin@s were driven to create professional relationships. This finding indicated that Latin@s formed instrumental relational identity based on professionalism and connections with others that helped them network in their professional majors. Students that actively participated in the educational services program consistently explained that an early exposure to the majors and professional departments at the UC and CSU helped them feel comfortable and motivated for transfer. Even students that did not actively participate in the educational services program explained that aprimary reason thatthey eventually adapted to the university was that they

familiarized themselves with their majors, major-related departments, or buildings. Professionalism was a strong component of instrumental identity negotiation that created for the Latin@ students in this study a positive sense of well-being, belonging, and integration at the university. In their study, Castellanos and Gloria (2007) described professional development as an important aspect of Latin@ students' identity formation. In fact, the authors recommended that higher education institutions pay close attention to the ways that Latin@ students seek professional ties and academic development because these are important sources of motivation for them. However, solely focusing on students' professional relational identity development risks misunderstanding the students holistically. Ideally, higher education leadership and educators must simultaneously focus on issues of "adjustment, family, emotion, or personal well-being" and on promoting professional development to best understand the culture and needs of Latin@ students (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007, p. 390). A holistic understanding of students' cultural needs, adjustment and negotiation, and instrumental professional relationality is important to best assist Latin@ transfer students.

Overall, the Latin@-to-Latin@ relational identity was vital for students because of their need to identify others at the university from backgrounds similar to their own. Students who found other Latin@s and engaged in professional relationship building, whether through early exposure or participation in clubs in their major, were more likely to feel comfortable and secure. Social relationships

based on ethnic identification and instrumental professional relational identity were important to the identity negotiation of Latin@ transfer students.

Implications

There are several implications regarding the aforementioned motifs. This section discusses the implications for policy, practice, and theory from this study's motifs.

Implications for Policy

The most important implication for policy is that policymakers and decision-makers must bring attention to the reality that many Latin@ transfer students are experiencing discomfort, unfamiliarity, insecurity, and disconnectedness at the university. The fact that two participants departed from the university when this study began indicates that even successful transfer students are at risk of dropping out if they do not feel comfortable at four-year institutions. This study confirms previous studies that describe Latin@s as experiencing culture shock when they transfer to four-year universities (Valencia & Black, 2002), as well as alienation, which negatively affects their motivation to succeed (Morillas & Randall Crosby, 2007). An appropriate response to resolve such conflicts is necessary at the level of political decision-making. Specifically, UC and CSU legislators and administrators need to be aware of and sensitive to the findings in this study to avoid alienating Latin@ students and further misunderstanding their insecurities, disconnectedness, and fears.

This study indicatesthe need for policymakers and decision-makers to provide strongsupport for educational services programs like the one in this

study. Many of the study's participants indicated that the educational services program helped them with applications, course scheduling, and the bureaucratic process to transfer successfully. Students who participated frequently in program events received important information from mentors and counselors, which reduced their feeling of insecurity and discomfort when theytransferred. The students also had early exposure to their majors at the university, which helped them to feel secure, connected, and to develop a sense of belonging. In essence, the program provided early exposure and networking opportunities for participants, which helped them feel more confident in transferring to a four-year institution. Although some researchers have questioned the usefulness of orientation and similar programs (Ellis-O'Quinn, 2012), a growing body of literature shows that these programs offer Latin@s an opportunity to socialize and find friends (Mayhew, Stipeck, & Dorow, 2007),and are linked to student success (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2012), persistence, and positive retention (Hall, 2007). Existing programs can also be successfulwhen they are updated to address diverse students, including Latin@ students (Worthan, 2013). Hence, the findings in this study largely reveal that the Student Success Task Force's (2014) recommendations for administrators to create and administer educational services programs for Latin@s are urgent, vital, and important. This study is a call for policymakers to continue assisting Latin@ students byfunding, creating, and enforcingeducational services programs.

Implications for Practice

As Castellano and Gloria (2007) illustrated, "How the university provides

faculty role models and mentors, programming, finances, 'safespaces,' and

meaningful curriculum for Latina/o students is a question that is directly reflected

in the university's campus climate" (p. 383). According to these authors,

universities have a responsibility to assist students from multiple directions,

ranging from finance to social support. Universities need to foster a campus

climate that is receptive and open to understanding and helping Latin@ students.

From such a perspective and in the spirit of the Student Success Task Force, the

findings of this study support the recommendationthat administrators and

educators should make a concerted effort to understand the complexity of

Latin@ identities and investigate the benefits of educational services program as

support systems for such students.

This study providesevidence that higher education leadership and

educators are failing successful Latin@ transfer students. In general, Latin@

student transfer rates are dismal across the nation (Bradley, 2013; Gándara,

2008) and the small sample size of successful transfer rates in this study reflects

those national trends. Many of the participants in this study described the four-

year university as unfamiliar and, consequently, they felt uncomfortable,

insecure, disconnected, and alienated. Several students reported insecurity

becauseoftheir impressions of professors and other students; students felt

insecure in classrooms because they felt that professors and other students

spoke in overly formal ways or viewed them as inferior. Such incidents in the

classroom are an indicator that educators and other students are contributing to the marginalization of Latin@ transfer students. The failure of leadership and educators to appropriately integrate and help students feel comfortable at the institution and in the classroom from the onset of transfer means that administrators and educators must pay close attention to daily practices that may contribute to the alienation of Latin@ transfer students. Understanding the complexity of Latin@ identities and the barriers they experience institutionally and in the classroom after transfer is vital to helping them feel comfortable, secure, and connected on university campuses.

Another important finding for UC and CSU practitioners was that participants felt insecure, vulnerable, and unwelcomed because of the predominantly White, Asian, or diverse environments. The UC was particularly described as being overwhelmingly White and Asian. Participants at the UC indicated that the predominance of Whites and Asians was also apparent in their classrooms. Although participants reported more diversity at the CSU, this heterogeneity was new for several participants, and they did not feel that their Latin@ identity was uniquely affirmed. These findings suggest that focusing too much on institutional diversity may be problematic when certain groups of students do not receive specialized, unique attention. As Valverde (2004) illustrated, the celebration of institutional diversity has contributed to the marginalization of Latin@ students because their unique needs are squelched and obfuscated institutionally and in practice. He goes on to argue that "the university community is more interested in symbolic actions and rhetoric" that

further marginalize Latin@ students (p. 304). Undoubtedly, better practices are necessary, including early cultural competency training for Latin@ students to increase their cultural awareness and their critical, reflective training prior to entering the university. Early exposure that includes cultural awareness may help students overcome insecurity based on the diversity of the UC or CSU. However, the onus should also be placed on administrators and educators to recognize that successful Latin@ transfer students are feeling uncomfortable and insecure in classrooms and on four-year campuses. Castellanos and Gloria (2007) argued that higher education leadership should place "focus on faculty mentors and their influence on Latina/o students' sense of cultural fit within the university" (p. 383). Shifting the responsibility to administrators and educators to make the university a comfortable place for Latin@ students is a matter of accountability. Leadership should provide training for administrators and educators that will help themrealize that they may be actively contributing to students' discomfort.

As Anzaldúa (2009) warned higher education institutions are perhaps unsafe spaces for some students. The two participants that left the four-year university during this study are an example of how unsafe institutions feel for some students. Although nearly all students in the study identified a comfortable space at their campus, the time it took for them to find such places shows that they may not initially have places to visit and feel comfortable after transfer. The use of photographic elicitation to identify visually comfortable spaces was important to capture the uniqueness, similarities, and physicality of the

environments. The visuals indicated that spaces should be physically comfortable environments for participants to use for studying, connecting with others, and for resting. Previous studies indicated that the use of photographs facilitated the visualization of elements that contributed to students' comfort (Awan, 2007; Banning, 1992a; Douglas, 1998; Hill, 2013; Lambert, 2010; Rose, 2007) especially in transitioning between different academic environments (American College Personnel Association, 1996; Borrego, 2006; Bridger, 2013). More studies that use photographic elicitation will help administrators to identify the geographies that reflect home-like environments for students (Kenney et al., 2005). Practitioners cannot afford to leave successful transfer students in spatial limbo, especially in light of the low number of students who transfer into four-year universities. Therefore, establishing comfortable spaces such as those in this study is important because these spaces enhance participants' connectedness and sense of inclusion. Such places should also communicate cultural celebration and openness to Latin@s. The findings of this study warrants the creation of comfortable spaces that target Latin@ students' need to connect with other Latin@s, network with other students in their majors, and escape from their hectic lives.

Lastly, practitioners must increase their cultural awareness and positively validate Latin@ students' identities by positively affirming students' Latinidad. With the exception of one student, every student indicated that being Latin@ was vital to their sense of self. As Hotta and Ting-Toomey (2013) explained, administrators and educators must be alert to the cultural differences of students

in order to "promote appreciation for diversity and increased interaction" (p. 563).

As Deil-Amen (2011) illustrated, Latin@s need affirmation of their culture and

community-based support systems. Castellanos and Gloria (2007) asserted that

> Latina/o students who engage in learning settings that are consistent with
>
> their cultural values and practices would have an increased sense of
>
> connection, well-being, and persistence toward graduation. . . . Infusion of
>
> cultural values for Latina/os, as well as other student groups, is a logical,
>
> ethical, competent, and likely an outcome-effective means of ensuring
>
> education as culturally relevant for undergraduates. (p. 385)

Such findings support Chang's (2005) explanation that faculty are important for

ethnic students' sense of connection and social networking on campus.

Therefore, cultural sensitivity combined with a persistent affirmation of students'

Latin@ identity is of utmost importance that should dictate the types of practices

administrators promote on campuses.

Implications for Theory

Using Ting-Toomey's (2005) INT as a theoretical framework proved

effective in understanding the mental, emotional, and psychological processes

behind the identity negotiation of Latin@ transfer students. In fact, one goal of

this study was to enhance the scope of INT by understanding Latin@ students'

identity negotiation specifically and applying the theory to visual data. This study

was theory driven, and INT helped me identify factors that motivated Latin@

students to feel comfortable at the university. Such findings revealed that theory

may produce real-world, praxial solutions that administrators and leadership can implement.

INT was useful in discovering that Latin@ participants underwent complex identity shifts in a dialectical fashion as they transferred to the university. For example, participants' responses indicated that they faced unpredictable environments, but they became more comfortable once they became more familiar with the campuses, professors, and their peers. The process of moving from one end of the dialectic (unpredictability of the environment) to the other (predictable environment) was complex and took time. Similarly, participantsfaced culture shock that made them feel vulnerable, but they became more secure when they formed strong relationships with other Latin@ students. Similar complex processes occurred in relationship to the identity connection-autonomy and inclusion-differentiation dialectics. The findings, then, show that individuals travel across or back and forth between the dialectics when they encounter new environments. Although some students traveled smoothly from a negative to a positive end of several dialectics withtime, there were several, specific instances that showed important dialectical tensions in students. One primary dialectical tension existed between students' desire to simultaneously feel like normal students and feel uniquely validated by others. In other words, students desired to be integrated into the campus to feel like a traditional students, yet this stood in direct contrast to their need for particularized attention and celebration of their culture. Such a tension reveals the complexity of mental and emotional states in students. As Hotta and Ting-Toomey (2013) explained,

dialectics by their very nature are a "tug-and-pull" of identity struggles, complex changes, and processes (p. 552). The tug-and-pull, including the dialectical tensions reveals that identity is fluid, changing, and difficult, but universities should be equipped to assist students in such mental and emotional states. Theoretically and practically, as well, higher education leadership must establish comfort for students because individuals may continuously depart from school if they feel a lack of security, predictability, and familiarity. Generally, moving toward the positive sides of the dialectics is beneficial for students' survival at the university.

This study revealed that most Latin@ transfer students have an affinity for their ethnic group, or the in-group, as a consequence of their feelings of alienation or isolation from the out-group, or other university students. The creation of in-group/out-group is largely consistent with Ting-Toomey's (2005) assumption that persons will feel included in groups that affirm their personal or cultural identities. For example, students viewed Asians, Whites, and other students as culturally and mentally different. Other ethnic groups at the university were perceived as an out-group, distinct from the Latin@ ethnicity of the participants in this study. Beyond ethnicity, students perceived university students in general as an out-group, as well, because Latin@ transfer students perceived the university students as more knowledgeable and experienced in matters of the university. In a positive sense, affinity for the in-group established emotional satisfaction through working and talking to other Latin@s, which resulted in adaptation and a sense of wellbeing. Creating ties and finding other

Latin@s was productive and helped students feel at home. Ting-Toomey (2005)

theorizedthat a strong connection with one's culture can providea profound

source of motivation and self-affirmation. As such, the cultural ties between

Latin@ transfer students were a foundation forpositive social ties that eventually

also influenced the students' comfort level and their integration into the

universities. In a negative sense, however, the creation of an out-group formed

the basis for feelings of alienation, stark difference, and isolation from the

university campuses. The extreme sense of isolation and disconnectedness

from the out-group is perhaps the reason why two students departed from school

during this study. Fortunately, in some instances, affinity or affiliation with major-

related clubs/organizations allowed students to form relationships beyond their

ethnic identity ties. In such cases, students formed strategic, instrumental ties

with other students in order to gain several benefits, including networking,

collaborating in group projects, and feeling comfortable in their major-related

fields. The professional, instrumental ties transcended the need for cultural,

ethnic ties. The professional, instrumental ties were the bridge to form

connections with out-groups, including non-Latin@ groups and other students at

the university. Ultimately, throughout the process of creating networks and

bridges, students strategically built relational and instrumental ties to successfully

navigate the new environment.

As previously suggested, Latin@ transfer students created distinct social

ties with others, including relational ties based on ethnic-affinity or on

professional, instrumental relationships. The creation of different types of social

relationships and, in this case, strategic, instrumental relationships, indicates that students *competently* formed relationships that helped them survive the university environment. For those students who had actively participated in the program's events and workshops before transfer, competent identity negotiation was largely a result of the educational services program. The program successfully taught students to be mentally flexible and unafraid of seeking help.

Professional, instrumental relationship building was a vital survival element even for those that did not actively participate in the program prior to transfer. Participants' search for and their creation of social and instrumental relational ties indicate that they developand use mindful skills to effectively navigate the four-year university environments. The social-relational skills resemble competent communication that individuals may engage in prior to entering the new environment. As Ting-Toomey (2005) explained, competent identity formation requires communication with "culturally dissimilar others" to learn skills and strategically work with others in new environments (p. 218). Individuals will often "shift their frame of reference" to know others' identities, expectations, and backgrounds (p. 226). Hence, the students in this study embodied competent identity negotiation based on their positive search for and interaction with other Latin@ students and major-related groups. Latin@ transfer students embodied competent identity negotiation skills that productively helped them form relationships with dissimilar others in new environments, despite their ethnic differences.

Moreover, the application of INT to understand students' experiences revealed that space *and* time are important and interrelated in Latin@ students' identity negotiation. In an earlier INT study, Hotta and Ting-Toomey (2013) found that time was an important factor in students' positive adjustment to new university spaces. The present study extended Hotta and Ting-Toomey's (2013) description of time to include the spatial dimensions that positively influenced Latin@ students' identity negotiation. Participants reveled that they took several months to feel included at the university. Several spatial reasons existed to explain why they started feeling included: they became familiar with their campuses, effectively navigated their universities to find professors and help, and identified spaces to connect with others or to simply escape their hectic lives. As such, time and space were simultaneously important in participants' positive identity development. Time and space merged to create the conditions for comfort, inclusion, and familiarity with surrounding environments. Participants that reported initial, immediate comfort in the university had early exposure to the programs, majors, and clubs at the UC and CSU, which suggested that early familiarity with the university spaces was vital for their ease in transfer. Early exposure was provided by the educational services program at the community college. Spatially, early exposure allowed participants to learn the geographies of their campuses, which consequently contributed to their motivation and confidence to look for help once at the university.

The application of INT revealed that students live in multiple worlds and, as such, educators and leadership should theoretically understand the ever

changing profiles of Latin@ students. Hotta and Ting-Toomey (2013) illustrated that researchers have largely applied the concept of culture shock to international students or visitors. International students and visitors typically experience culture shock and are overwhelmed by the need to balance the expectations from their worlds at home and in their new environments. Language barriers, cultural differences, and competing values, such as individualism versus collectivism, profoundly negatively impact international students' feelings of comfort and belonging in new countries. The present study found that Latin@ transfer students similarly have to balance the expectations of their worlds at home and at the university. In fact, several students pointed to language and cultural differences at home that clashed with the language and culturesof the universities. Latin@ transfer students faced culture shock in similar ways as international students. The Latin@ transfer students are not unlike other cultures and visitors that may not integrate successfully or fit the university environment, particularly when the university is predominately composed of White students (Hungerford-Kresser, 2010). Latin@ students live in multiple worlds and this finding is critical if higher education leadership wish to successfully understand and assist them. As Dervarics (2013) explained, Latin@ students' profiles are ever-changing. They are post-traditional students because they are constantly evolving. They often live at home, work full-time, take care of family, and engage in extracurricular activities. But beyond those characteristics, they challenge conventional understandings of traditional students and,thus, require unique assistance (Dervarics, 2013). Deil-Amen (2001) indicated that

Latin@ students do not integrate into universities and educational spaces like other students because they hold on to their cultural identities. Latin@ students do not divorce themselves from their home cultures, their language, ortheir identity markers as they travel between and across worlds. The application of INT was helpful indiscovering that students live in multiple worlds, figuratively and literally, and leadership should invest time in understanding the identities and consequent needs of Latin@ transfer students.

Implications for Future Research

There were several limitations of this study that can be resolved by future research studies. First and foremost, future studies should expand the sample size. This study included 20 students. Expanding the sample size will generate more information related to identity negotiation and comfortable spaces. Secondly, this study focused on the first cohort of Latin@ students that participated in the educational services program. The students pledged into the educational services program in 2011. Future studies should follow proceeding cohorts to verify if students from these cohorts experience similar mental and emotional states during and after transfer. A longitudinal qualitative study would provide additional insight in students' transfer experiences. The longitudinal qualitative study should mimic the procedures and use the methods, including photographic elicitation, from this study. Such a study can analyze students' identity negotiation to assess whether the program changed to better assist students in the future than in the first cohort Thirdly, this study did not look into quantitative data, including transcript records, grades, or overall GPA. The

findings were limited to the qualitative stories of students and, therefore, quantitative indicators may lend support to the findings of the present study.

Beyond the limitations, future studies can focus on multiple other factors that may influence Latin@ students' identity negotiation. For example, this study did not fully differentiate between students' identity negotiation in the different institutions. The study generally found themes that were consistent and similar at both institutions (UC and CSU). Future studies can more precisely compare identity negotiation patterns across more universities, including universities outside of the geographical Southern California area. Moreover, the study did not look to the identity negotiation of subgroups within the Latin@ category. Because of the limited sample and availability of successful transfer students, the researcher was unable to focus exclusively on distinct types of Latin@s, including varying nationalities. Including Latin@s from different nationalities wouldenhance our understanding of identity negotiation in a more detailed way and increase the sample size. Lastly, one student indicated that identifying as Latin@ was not important to him because he did not grow up in a family environment that affirmed such an identity. Future studies can investigate similar students' identity negotiation and confrontation with universities after transfer. Generational differences may explain why some students do not identify as Latin@ and they may report different transfer experiences in comparison to the students in the current study.

Recommendations

This studyinvestigatedhow Latin@ students negotiated their identity and survived transitioning to a university in order to provide recommendations for higher education leadership and faculty who work with Latin@ students. Understanding Latin@ students' needs, barriers, and identity negotiation is a key component of appropriately assisting them in the transfer process (Rendón, 1994; Rendón Linares & Muñoz, 2011). Hearing students' voices is a precondition to assisting them in persisting, succeeding, and surviving the university (Fernández, 2002). The following is a list of recommendations for higher education leadership and faculty:

Establish Culturally-Specific Educational Services Programs for Latin@ Transfer Students

Practically speaking, this study verifies the positive outcomes and influence of educational services programs for students, including Latin@s. As Townsend and Wilson (2006) indicated, "Institutional leaders have supported the development of institutional practices such as learning communities and first-year seminars" (p. 439). However, most previous research about educational services or orientation programs focused on traditional, residential, white students (Astin, 1993; Braxton, Sullivan, & Johnson, 1997; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The findings in this present study reveal that community-based, Latin@-based, culturally specific programs are important for Latin@s.

According to Castellanos and Gloria (2007) culturally-specific services for Latin@ students are those that "infuse cultural values for Latina/os," such as

collaboration, interdependence, belonging, and group-importance (p. 385). The authors explained that although not all Latin@s adhere to such values, "many embody these values in their daily lives," (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007, p. 386), particularly as they enter higher education. Other studies support the idea that Latin@ students adhere to the core values of interdependence, belonging, and group-importance (Gloria & Segura-Herrera, 2004). Culturally specific programs can strategically target Latin@ students to help them with academics, "career planning, academic skill development" (The Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2012, para. 1), persistence, and retention (Hall, 2007). The present study validates previous findings indicating that educational services programs help students with early exposure, positive identification as professionals and feeling good about transfer.

The programs should focus on the following objectives: (a) building community-orientated and interconnected networking between Latin@s; (b) providing counselors and mentors who understand Latin@ students' complex identities and needs; (c) providing information about the university, including where to find help and academic planning; (d) teaching leadership skills that support students in becoming reflexive and mentally flexible in new environments; and (e) providing continual information about students' majors at the university. The aforementioned objectives will prepare students to productively negotiate their identities when they transfer to universities. Leadership training, for example, may produce the confidence and internal motivation needed for students to seek help and survive the transfer process. As

some students noted, mentors and counselors effectively taught them to be leaders and to be flexible in order toadequately adapt to new environments. The onus falls on higher education leadership to promote and create programs that wellequip students for four-year universities. Educational services programs for Latin@s at the university can help eliminate the feeling of insecurity, disconnectedness, and isolation.

The previous recommendations will help administrators and educators mitigate the recurrence of negative transfer experiences and culture shock in Latin@ students. The findings are supported by two recommendations from the Boothet al.'s (2013) study. First, administrators must encourage educational services programs that "teach students how to succeed in the postsecondary environment," including the skills to "navigate and thrive in [university] environments" (Booth et al., 2013, p. 9). Ting-Toomey (2005) supportedcompetent communication as a vital skill to effectively negotiate one's identity. Such competent communication can be learned as a leadership skill for students to prepare and to survive in higher education environments. Second, Booth et al., (2013) indicated that administrators should encourage "colleges to provide comprehensive support to historically underserved students to prevent the equity gap from growing" (p. 10). Culturally-rich educational services programs, like the one in this study, provide the needed academic and emotional/mental support for students when they participate constantly. Comprehensive support includes assistance with financial aid, social networking, academic planning, and counseling. As Castellanos and Gloria (2007) indicated,

comprehensive support is essential to understand and assist the Latin@ students *holistically*. Additionally, programs should make available tostudents counselors and mentors who facilitate the transfer process and provide useful advice. The present study is evidence that counselors and mentors provide positive validation and motivation for students to succeed. Higher education leadership should strongly consider supporting the creation and enforcement of educational services programs thatfacilitate transfer participants' journeys.

The culturally-specific educational services programs should exist jointly at the community college and at universities. All students, including those who received early exposure to universities, experienced an overwhelming sense of individualism after leaving the community college. Individualism resulted in students' discomfort, culture shock, and feeling out of place when they initially entered the university. Students took months to adapt to the new universities. To avoid such negative cultural shock educational services programs should be in place that work jointly at community colleges and universities. Such programs should operate at the community college and university to track students, monitor their progress, and provide the community setting prior to and after transfer. Some students at the UC and CSU who participated in the current study worked with personalized mentors who focused solely on helping studentsfrom the educational services program. However, those mentors provided counseling and academic advice at the universities without the element of community that existed in the community college. Therefore, students sought clubs and programs that resembled the cultural or community characteristics of the

educational services program. Isolating the program to only the community college risks that students will feel discomfort, cultural shock, and initial sense of isolation when they transfer to a four-year institution.As McWhirter, Luginbuhl, and Brown (2014) noted, "more motivational support, structured programs, and clubs that engage Latino students within their schools and communities" (p. 4) is foundational to their success.

Furthermore, because time and space are vital elements that influence students' comfort, familiarity, security, and connectedness, universities should collaborate with community colleges to welcome students to the university institutions early and effectively. In particular, universities can mimic the program in this study and create partnerships with community colleges thatextend services to Latin@ students before, during, and after transfer. Early exposure and awareness of comfortable spaces at the university through educational services programs that exist in partnership with community colleges may resolve the negative repercussions of culture shock.

Promote ProfessionalRelationship Developmentand Networking for Latin@ Transfer Students

Students in this study engaged in instrumental professional relational ties. Early exposure to university information related to students' majors facilitated students' integration into the university and their collaboration with other students in their majors. As theorized earlier, professional, instrumental relationships were vital for Latin@ students to form bridges to connect with other students. Many Latin@s found motivation in knowing that other students and the university

would specifically work with them to enhance their opportunities in their majors. As such, universities need to promote professional development in educational services programs. Knowing that students are motivated to succeed in their specific majors, educational services programs can increase participation in events and workshops if they emphasize professional relationship building and development. Professional development may include research opportunities, networking with instructors, and participating in major-related projects with students. Such early exposure to opportunities, workshops, departmental events, and activities related to Latin@ transfer student majors may motivate them to persist and feel connected to the university. Castellanos and Gloria (2007) concurred that higher education institutions should radically change their mentorship services to highlight progress, skill development, [and] networking" that facilitates students' comfort in professional fields and majors (p. 289).

Advertise Culturally-Specific Comfortable Spaces Where Latin@ Students CanMeet Other Latin@s, Learn About Their Majors, and Rest

Feeling comfortable is important infostering positive interactions, connecting with others, and being at peace with oneself (Deil-Amen, 2011). Every student, except the two students who departed from school during their first year, easily identified comfortable spaces that helped them become integrated into the university socially or academically. The prevailing themes regarding comfortable spaces indicated that the university can be a positive place for students if they can find other Latin@s, other students in their majors, or escape from their hectic home lives. As such, promotion and public

communication about similar comfortable spaces should be a priority for higher education leadership. Unfortunately, the UC and CSU institutions were perhaps not overtly publicizing where and what resources are available for the Latin@ transfer students. The lack of advertisement perhaps explains why it took the students several months to feel comfortable. As such, both the UC and CSU must prioritize how to communicate with Latin@ students where they can find comfortable spaces or find resources that willhelp them feel welcomed from the onset of their transfer journey.

The comfortable spaces should be advertised as multi-purposed. This study revealed that students visited distinct, diverse comfortable spaces. This finding suggests that administrators and educators should advertise spaces designed to celebrate Latin@ cultures, such as the SOAR and Chican@ Resource Center, areas designed for specific majors, such as the biology or sciences buildings, and places to rest, such as the library or parks. Students visited different comfortable spaces for different purposes. However, no matter what their purpose for visiting a space was, all of the spaces were important for their motivation and social relationships on campus. Even the places that help students escape the world are important because, as Banning et al.'s (2010) work suggest, restorative spaces help students regain energy and motivation. Comfortable spaces are inherently multi-purposed because they help Latin@s learn about their culture and embrace each other, work with other students in their majors, or simply escape the world around them.

Undeniably, comfortable environmental conditions are linked to positive relationships and high student achievement (Earthman & Lemasters, 1996), high academic performance (O'Neill & Oates, 2001), and positive identity development (Kenney et al., 2005). On the other hand, uncomfortable spaces, including poorly designed buildings, contribute to students' feelings of discomfort (Banning, Middleton, & Deniston, 2008). As Castellanos and Gloria (2007) summarized, student cultural centers are "warranted, given that they maintain 'home-like settings' and 'safe spaces' for Latina/o students to express themselves, feel connected, [and integrated] within their student communities" (p. 388).

Increase Cultural Competency Training for Students, Administrators, and Educators

Participants in the present study indicated a fear of stereotypes and discomfort with other students in their classrooms. Educators and administrators helpedto contribute to students' sense of differentiation and alienation from the out-groups at the university. Therefore, cultural competency training for administrators, educators, and in the classroom is needed to mitigate Latin@ students fear of other students and to also help non-Latin@ students embrace Latin@s.

Although cultural competency training is not a new concept and the phrase has been widelyused in higher education (Martin & Vaughn, 2010), Wade-Berg, Weisinger, and Hicks-Coolick (2013) explain that

it is imperative that we put a call out to our colleagues to strengthen the preparation of our students to work in diverse cultural settings. To do so means that we take responsibility for ensuring that our curriculums are intentionally designed to include opportunities where students can develop and enhance their intercultural competence and communication skills. . . . Effective intercultural competence relies on cross-cultural communication skills, including the ability to effectively demonstrate respect, show empathy, value diversity/difference and be able to listen. Development of such skills leads students to be able to better identify and comprehend cultural strengths that differ from their own. (para. 1-3)

Similarly, Booth et al.(2013) indicated that "Colleges can help [diverse] learners understand both why and how to choose a goal and stay focused, develop connections, engage both inside and outside the classroom and make contributions on their campuses" (p. 8). Booth et al. (2013) recommend that educators incorporate diversity and cultural competency lessons in classrooms, advertise cultural diversity centers and events on campus, and promote participation in extracurricular activities that enable exposure to different cultures. To validate and encourage Latin@ students, faculty and educators can advertise programs, clubs, and workshops that will help them "feel connected to the college" (Booth et al., 2013, p. 8). Reynolds, Cain, and Manarino-Leggett (2014) illustrated that "by encouraging students to embrace their own culture, they are able to develop an appreciation of another student's culture. Together, students develop a love of learning and individually they are able to build on their personal

strengths" (p. 87). Other in-classroom practices may include guest speakers, field trips, and Latin@-based pedagogy from Latin@ authors to increase students' cultural knowledge about Latin@s.

As previously mentioned, however, the responsibility to change the institutional climate to be more sensitive to Latin@ student needs must fall on administrators and higher education leadership. A major source of discomfort comes from administrators' failure to uniquely focus on Latin@ students' needs. Administrators should be aware of the cultural differences across students. Tatum, Hayward, and Monzon (2006) indicated that institutions need to develop training for administrators to be more culturally aware if institutions wish to increase Latin@ transfer rates. Places like financial services, academic counseling, and resource centers must be adequately equipped to help Latin@ students (Tatum et al., 2006). Cooper (2001) argued that administrators must immerse themselves in Latin@ youth's culture to create positive environments and form bridges to higher education. Castellanos and Gloria (2007) explained that administrators should be guided by "cultural congruity [to] fit between students' personal and institutional values" (p. 391). To promote and establish cultural congruity, administrators should attend Latin@ student and educator conferences, and participate in cultural awareness training sessions, workshops, and events. Moreover, Bensimon et al. (2012) emphasized that administrators be culturally sensitive and involved in Latin@ students' careers as a form of validation and source of motivation. For administrators that resist cultural competency training or focusing on Latin@ students' needs, Bensimon et al.

(2012) explain that such individuals should recognize the urgency of helping the fastest growing minority group in the United States. Foundational to cultural competence is the recognition that students, administrators, and educators should delve into understanding Latin@ students' needs because Latin@s are the fastest-growing student population. The future of our social and economic realities will inevitably require everyone to understand and positively interact with Latin@s.

Summary of the Dissertation

There are approximately 1.8 million Latin@ students enrolled in higher education, but they are trailing behind their non-Latin@ peers in degree attainment and success (Bradley, 2013; Fry, 2011). Additionally, over 58 percent of Latin@ students have enrolled in community colleges (Camacho Liu, 2011). Despite the high enrollment, only 20 percent of Latin@ students transferred from two-year public community colleges to four-year universities in 2010 (Leal Unmuth, 2012, para. 1) and transfer is also a problem in the state of California (Campaign for College Opportunity, 2013). Studies indicate that transfer is a daunting and culturally difficult process for Latin@ students, which may explain the overwhelmingly low transfer rate in thispopulation. This is compounded by the fact that administrators and educators have failed to recognize Latin@ students' unique needs and barriers by assimilating them into the overall student population.

This study sought to address the aforementioned problems by investigating successful Latin@ transfer students' identity negotiation and

visualization of comfortable spaces at universities. The study focused on students who participated in a community college educational services program and whether the program facilitated or positively influenced students' transfer. Using identity negotiation theory as a framework, the findings suggested that Latin@ transfer students faced unpredictable environments, described the university as a whole new world, and experienced cultural shock. Additionally, they felt insecurity because of their professors, academics, peers, formal language, and their identity as Latin@s. The students reported feeling disconnected, especially from White and other students. Inevitably, students started feeling comfortable as they connected with other Latin@s and saw the university as a place for professional and academic positive identification and as an escape from their home environment. After time, students felt included because they were able to connect with personalized counselors, felt validated byprofessors and counselors, and joined Latin@ or major-based clubs. Furthermore, the university provided comfortable spaces. In these spaces students made connectionswith other Latin@s and withpeople in their majors, and were able to escape from their hectic worlds. The dissertationconcluded with recommendations for the leadership of community colleges and four-year institutions to continuously support the creation and enforcement of educational services programs. Such programs prepare students who are actively involved in workshops and events. Programs similar to the one in this study are a potential solution to the transfer difficulties faced by many that Latin@ students.

Because Latin@ students are the fastest growing minority group in the United States (Gándara, 2008), administrators and educators must invest time and energy in addressing the obstacles that Latin@ students face when they transfer. To avoid losing students, such as those who departed during this study, universities must pay attention to the cultural and physical surroundings of their campus. Similarly, cultural sensitivity is vital if we are to serve Latin@s, a largelymisunderstood, but vital, population for the future of California and the nation.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Statement to participants: The following interview is designed to gather information to help us understand your identity as a transfer student and experience at UCI or CSUF after your participation in Adelante at SAC. The interview questions should only take about twenty to thirty minutes to complete. Your responses are completely anonymous; in other words, only grouped results will be reported and no one will know how you answer the questions. Your participation in this study is voluntary. By participating in this interview, you are giving your consent to participate in the study. You have the option to skip any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. If your discomfort is such that you wish to discuss it with personal counselors, you may call CSUF IRB Office at (657)278-7640 or irb@fullerton.edu.

Section I: Demographics Questions

The purpose of these questions is to collect background information about participants. Your answers will remain confidential.

1. What is your gender?
    a. Male
    b. Female
    c. Other

2. What best describes your age?
    a. 18-22
    b. 23-27
    c. 28-32
    d. 33 or older

3. Would you describe yourself as (Check all that apply):
    a. American Indian / Native American
    b. Asian
    c. Black/African American
    d. Hispanic/Latino
    e. White/Caucasian
    f. Pacific Islander
    g. Other

Section Two (Adapted from Hotta & Ting-Toomey, 2013): The Transfer Experience

Students' Experience Prior to Transfer

1. Why did you decide to study at UCI/CSUF?

2. How did you feel about leaving Adelante and SAC?

3. How did you prepare yourself for transfer?

4. Did Adelante help you prepare for transfer? If so, how?

5. What recommendations do you have for the Adelante Program to better prepare students that want to transfer to UCI/CSUF or other universities?

6. What were some of your expectations of UCI/CSUF?

7. Did UCI/CSUF fulfill your expectations?

8. Were you familiar with the UCI/CSUF campus? If so, why?

Students' Experience After Transfer
1. What challenges did you face when you transferred?
   a. Can you describe any events that may have made you feel insecure or vulnerable?
   b. What did you do to feel less insecure or vulnerable?

2. Describe a time when you may have felt like an outsider during transfer. What did you do to improve the situation so that you felt more connected to people?

3. In what ways have you adjusted to the new university (living, language, transportation, studying, etc.)?
   a. Was your adjustment influenced by Adelante? If so, how?
   b. How would your adjustment to a university be if you had not participated in Adelante?

4. When did you begin to feel comfortable about transfer?
   a. What happened during this time?
   b. What factors contributed to helping you feel more comfortable?
   c. If others were involved in helping you feel more comfortable, who were they? What was/is their relationship to you? Describe how they helped you during your transfer.

5. Describe how you formed new relationships at the university.
   a. How did you approach people?

b. How should people approach you?
c. Was the process of forming relationships different at the university than in Adelante or at SAC?
d. How are your relationships at the university different than in Adelante or at SAC?

6. Describe the most comfortable space for you at the university.
a. What about the physical space makes it comfortable?
b. What about the people in the space make it comfortable?
c. If there was one thing you could change about the physical environment to make it more comfortable, what would that be? Why?

7. Some Latin@ transfer students describe themselves as living in multiple worlds and cultures. How do you see yourself?
a. If you see yourself as living in multiple worlds and cultures, how are these worlds different?
b. How is your world at the university different than other worlds you live in?

8. Is identifying as Latin@ important to you?
a. Does identifying as Latin@ present any difficulties at the university?
b. Is the comfortable space somewhere you can discuss or embrace being a Latin@?

Closing remarks: You identified the _____ as the most comfortable space for you at UCI/CSUF. I am very interested in seeing what this place looks like. Can you please text or email me a picture that captures the place on campus to help me understand why this space is comfortable? I will provide you with a $10 Target gift certificate for sending me the visual and participating in this project.