Fall 2017

Going the Extra Mile: Successful Transfer of Latino/Latina Students from Two-Year Institutions to Four-Year

Christopher S. Card
Old Dominion University

GOING THE EXTRA MILE: SUCCESSFUL TRANSFER OF LATINO/LATINA STUDENTS FROM TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS TO FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS BASED ON A PERSISTENCE FRAMEWORK

by

Christopher S. Card
B.M. Ed. May 1986, James Madison University
M.S. Music Education May 1993, University of Illinois, Champaign/Urbana

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

HIGHER EDUCATION

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY
December 2017

Approved by:

_____
Christopher Glass (Director)

_____
Wendy Scott (Member)

_____
Dennis Gregory (Member)

ABSTRACT

GOING THE EXTRA MILE: SUCCESSFUL TRANSFER OF LATINO/LATINA STUDENTS
FROM TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS TO FOUR-YEAR
INSTITUTIONS BASED ON A PERSISTENCE FRAMEWORK

Christopher S. Card
Old Dominion University, December 2017
Director: Christopher Glass

The purpose of this qualitative dissertation was to provide insight as to the experiences of

Latino/a students at community colleges preparing to transfer as compared with those from

Latino/a students who had already transferred. The Latino/a population is one of the fastest

growing minority populations in the United States yet despite the growth experienced by this

population in the United States, particularly in states such as California and Texas, accessing

equitable higher education opportunities and achieving educational success have both been a

tremendous challenge to this culture (Perez & Ceja, 2010). Eight Latino/a students preparing for

transfer from two different community colleges were interviewed twice based on two semi-

structured protocols. Eight Latino/a transfer students from two different universities were also

interviewed with these protocols, producing a total of thirty-two interviews. The transcriptions

from both phases and groups of students were then coded following the methodology of

Moustakas (1994) and compared to a persistence framework (Swail, Redd, & Perna, 2003). This

framework was altered to reflect new emerging themes and the Latino/a students' stories and

quotations. The findings produced many themes which matched the cognitive, institutional, and

social forces of the Swail et al. (2003) framework but four new themes emerged from the

interviews that were not associated with previous research. These themes including belonging,

civic commitments, cultural identity intersections, and mentor influences will prove to be an important part of the understanding of Latino/a transfer issues for scholars, administrators, and students of higher education.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the following people who have helped me on this immense voyage, as I learned about life and myself through this research and the toil and commitment involved:

First, my family, all of them, but especially my wife Robyn for putting up with this exploratory time and proof-reading my work, and particularly Bobbi Case, my sister-in-law for the hours spent transcribing these interviews. Both are fantastic. All of my family made this possible.

Thanks to my fantastic Old Dominion University Higher Education classmates, cohort, faculty, and staff. You all have influenced me in special ways to become a better scholar, researcher, and person. Thanks to Dawn Hall, one of the wisest, most positive, and up-lifting persons in the Department. Immeasurable thanks to my committee, first, Dr. Dennis Gregory, who was my first introduction to the Educational Foundations and Leadership Program at ODU and has left a powerful lasting impression. Next, Dr, Wendy Scott, who truly inspired me with her mentoring and super teaching skills in the qualitative arena, she is a special person. And finally, my true friend and brilliant mentor, Chair of my committee, Dr. Chris R. Glass. He inspired the fire within me to become a real researcher, patient person, yet determined, and better, more confident leader. Thanks immensely, Dr. Glass.

I would not have finished this project without the fantastic help of my superb friends, colleagues and administrator debriefers Alejandra Diaz-Rangel and Tania Alvarez. Alejandra, you made this all come together. Thank you for your tireless commitment to this project from the onset. I also want to thank Tania, your input was invaluable. Thanks to all my friends at the ODU Transfer Office, especially Daniela Cigularova, you made my time with you folks so informative and special. And thanks to Jose Ramos, your talks with me helped greatly.

Thanks to Dr. Bobbi Frye and Dr. Terri Manning and the Office of Institutional Research. You all helped me make this a reality. You are great researchers and represent the best in community colleges.

Finally, I hope this all leads to positive life improvements for all. In the words of Bob Dylan, Nobel Prize winner 2016:

> Come writers and critics
> Who prophesies with your pen
> And keep your eyes wide
> The chance won't come again
> And don't speak too soon
> For the wheel's still in spin
> And there's no tellin' who
> That it's namin'.
> For the loser now
> Will be later to win
> For the times they are a-changin'.

DEDICATIONS

To my wife, Robyn, and all of my family, everywhere. I am truly and sincerely blessed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF APPENDICES

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background

Latino/Latina students represent a minority proportion of the total student higher education population in the United States - only 11.3% (Cuyjet, Howard-Hamilton, & Cooper, 2011). This sub-community is one of the fastest growing minority groups, and it will soon be the largest minority group in the United States (Passel & Cohn, 2008). Even though Latinos/Latinas will soon make up the majority of students in K-12 education, they will remain underrepresented in the university setting (Rivas, Perez, Alvarez, & Solorzano, 2007).

Half of all Latino/Latina students in the U.S. attend Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs) which are private or public colleges and universities where half of the attendees are from low-income households (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2010). California accounts for the largest HSI student enrollment, followed by Texas and Puerto Rico. HSI's account for only 5% of all of the institutions of higher education in the United States (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2014). Of the 210 HSIs in the U.S. in 2010, 55% of these were two-year institutions.

Latino/Latina students are overrepresented in the community or two-year colleges (Cuyjet et al., 2011). Much of the inequity in representation between two-year and four-year institutions is due to: lack of information provided to Latino/Latina students on student college enrollment, the importance of family ties, and first-generation college family experience (Cuyjet et al., 2011). This disparity is of great concern to higher education administrators and student affairs leaders (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2014). Fry (2004) argues that the major reasons Latino/Latina students do not go to college, or leave college, within the system of college entrance itself, include: lack of experience in higher education, the cost of tuition, the need to work to earn money, and the feeling that success does not require a college degree.

Transfer from two-year to four-year institutions by college students, in general, has been the focus of much research (Cabrera, Casteneda, Nora, & Hengstler, 1992; Goldrick-Rab, & Pfeffer, 2009). Cohen (2003) identifies a number of factors resulting from state-coordinated action, which can positively affect transfer from two-year institutions. These actions include the following: organizational structures that make community colleges branch campuses of the state universities, universities with more flexible admission standards, state policies that give priority to community college student transfers over other transfer students, widespread availability of articulation agreements (either on a course-by-course basis or institution-to-institution), common curriculum core, common course numbering, and guaranteed admission for students meeting specified criteria. However, there has been little specific research on the phenomenon of transfer for the Latino/Latina college student. Much of the emphasis of studies specifically on Latino/Latina students have been multicultural in nature and have focused on acculturation, assimilation, and biculturalism (Cuyjet et al., 2011).

Community colleges serve as the primary entry point for Latino/Latina students pursuing higher education. This is because of poor academic preparation and misinformation about financial aid as well as ease of access (Hurtado, Carter, & Spuler, 1996). Existing networks at community colleges have provided strong reasons for Latino/Latina students to attend these schools (Person & Rosenblum, 2006). Latino/Latina college students select community colleges based on knowledge and encouragement provided by peers and older family members already attending or working at the community college. This information provides a springboard and background for new research which delves into specific transfer aspects of students from this Latino/Latina sub-community. Once Latino/Latina students are in community colleges, there are certain factors that logically should aid in the promotion of transfer to the university level. This is

the area of focus taken by this dissertation.

Conceptual Framework

This research serves as a study of successful transfer elements as perceived by several individuals from this sub-community, through the lens of a student persistence model by Swail, Redd, & Perna (2003). The persistence model provides a conceptual framework for the researcher. The researcher will also provide suggestions as to what staff at two-year colleges can do to support this transfer based on the implications of this study and recommendations provided. *Persistence*, as it relates to transfer, will be explained in this chapter under the Definition of Terms section.

The holistic approach suggested by Swail et al. (2003) proposes that three major areas are necessary for success in the persistence of transfer. Cognitive forces include quality of learning, study skills, and time management. Social elements include financial issues, social coping skills, cultural values, and parental and peer support. Institutional forces, including the welcoming nature of institutions and how they provide support.

Forces or Tiers of the Framework

As noted above, Swail et al. (2003) provide three forces affecting student persistence and achievement in college (see Figure 1). These include cognitive, social, and institutional issues or factors. The cognitive forces include the academic ability, both strengths and weaknesses, of a student. This would include such areas as math, reading, and writing and what a student brings with him/her to college. The social forces include parental and peer support, the development or existence of career goals, educational legacy (first-generation college attendance, etc.), and coping with social situations. The institutional portion of the framework relates to the ability of the college to provide support to students during their college years.

Cognitive issues. It is evident that Latino/Latina students enrolled in developmental courses have a strong sense of encouragement for success (Cuyjet et al., 2011). If students are lacking in these areas, they need support (Crisp, & Amaury, 2010). The community college can provide the study skills and learning skills necessary for early preparation of transfer to the four-year institution (Achieving the Dream and Public Agenda, 2012).

Social issues. Many theorists respond to the nature of importance of finances, cultural values, and peer and family support for Latino/ Latinas. Ethnic identity is developed and maintained even before college assimilation. Financial support is encompassed in the means of providing information to Latino/Latina students. All of these factors assist in this cultures' success in college and at the university level (Torres, 1999). The social lifestyle can be inflated by student social interactions with others and extracurricular activities. This leads to transfer from the two-year institution (which provides few extracurricular activities) to the four-year institution which would, in most cases, provide many extracurricular activities (Bean & Eaton, 2000).

Institutional issues. Once again we can consider respected researchers in higher education who support this framework. A students' race is an important factor in many minority students' decisions to stay in college (Torres, Winston, & Cooper, 2003). The idea that institutions can provide a positive structural environment supporting Latino/ Latina students is paramount to their success. Latino/Latina students need places to gather and converse in groups (Cuyjet, Howard-Hamilton, & Cooper, Eds., 2011). They need positive academic services and student services that meet their needs (Bean & Eaton, 2000). Transfer can successfully happen with good advocates and positive advice.

This framework provides a structure for additional studies supporting this equilibrium.

Taking the three issues or factors above individually, a strong case can be made by comparing other theories that support this framework. While some cases may refute the idea that Swail et al. (2003) support - that not all three factors need be evenly distributed - the framework remains in strong support of student success in transfer and can be utilized to disprove those concepts from such earlier studies (Tinto, 1993).

The study by Tinto has been enhanced by a number of researchers. According to Tinto's model of student integration and departure from academia, there are six characteristics of persistence or departure (see Figure 2). Before the entrance to postsecondary education, students develop attributes that are shaped by their family. They also develop academic and social skills and abilities in both formal and informal settings. These skills and abilities help to form students' goals and commitments regarding college, the workforce, and their place in society as a whole. During college, formal and informal college experiences influence the level of integration into the college, academically and socially. According to Tinto, this level of integration has an impact on the student's development of goals and commitments, resulting in either a decision to persist in or depart from college (Tinto, 1993). While this model has been utilized extensively, the model fails to integrate off-campus academic and social systems. It also does not thoroughly explain the impact of external campus factors, such as finances, family obligations, and external peer groups in his student dropout model (Cabrera, Casteneda, Nora, & Hengstler, 1992).

A study by Swail et al. (2003) found that the factors which Tinto does not explain in full, are reflected in other models as well as that of a revised model by Bean & Eaton, (2000). Bean's model is a psychological reflection and visual framework of college student retention and turnover (see Figure 3). Student intentions to persist are influenced by those attitudes which are shaped by experiences with the institution. Bean's model incorporates background,

organizational, environmental, attitudinal, and outcome variables. Bean stresses the concept that a student's attitude regarding college tends to influence the intent to persist or dropout.

Bean and Eaton (2000), also reflect coping behavior in their model, to help explain a student's "comfort-level" with the campus structure. Eaton and Bean note the level of academic and social integration into the campus structure as indicators of an individual's adaptation to college life (Bean & Eaton, 2000). Comfort-level is also reflected by Swail et al. (2003). These researchers describe this concept as social factors, or the ability to interact effectively with other individuals, personal attitudes, and cultural history.

Significance

The significance of this research, in the long run, is twofold. First, it will tell the stories of successful Latino/Latina transfer students through a strong conceptual persistence lens. Second, it will provide administrators and researchers new methods for practical administrative, professorial, and student concepts for promoting this successful transfer for Latino and Latina students through information obtained from interviews with community college students and university students.

Impact of the Research

The results of this research will lead educators and higher education administrators to important decisions and changes for making the transfer of Latino/a students from two-year colleges to four-year institutions more successful. The results should provide concrete elements of how the phenomenon of Latino/a transfer can be improved. It is hoped that the results will yield rich descriptions of the successful transfer of this sub-community and how it can be melded with and through the persistence lens of Swail et al. (2003).

The Purpose

The overarching lens through which this dissertation is viewed is a social constructivist paradigm which uses a qualitative, phenomenological conceptual framework in which participants are asked how they conceptualize the research problem. The research questions or sensitizing concepts focus on:

1. How do Latino/a students who are anticipating transfer from two-year institutions to four-year institutions experience their transfer preparation?

2. How do Latino/a students who have transferred from two-year institutions to four-year institutions share their experiences?

3. How are the experiences of Latino/a students who intend to transfer and those who have transferred comparable with one another?

Delimitations

The data collection will begin with sources that reflect Latino/Latina college students conversing about the positive nature of college in general. This seems the logical choice as it will provide an overview of the sensitizing concept of this dissertation. A qualitative, unobtrusive research observation will be made on a specific website, recommended by several Latino/Latina doctoral students. This site at http://www.latinosincollege.com/studentblogs/ will be used to ascertain details from Latino/a college students. The focus will be to gain unobtrusive information on the research questions.

The method of data collection will run from December 2016 through April 2017. This will provide time for extensive interviews and coding analysis of 32 interviews with students from three kinds of community colleges as well as three kinds of four-year universities.

The study will include interviews with 8 Latino/a students from community colleges (with intent to transfer) interviewed once, then revisited for follow-up interviews. It will also include interviews with 8 Latino/a students from universities who have already transferred. These students will be interviewed once, then revisited for follow-up interviews. Follow-up intervals will be approximately two weeks. There will be three community colleges involved in this study. Community college students will be selected as they represent the study best in having projected a positive inclination to transfer as informed to their advisors. The community college is the beginning of the transfer pipeline for these students and the abundance of these students at the community college level makes them a most logical choice for interviews. Similar criteria will be used to select three universities where students have actually transferred from community colleges.

The sample will be a criterion sample and subjects will be predetermined by their age (18-30) and desire to transfer (as determined by their counselors), or their having transferred to the university level. For this reason, it will be stratified and purposeful. Once again, the data collection will address the three research questions.

Definition of Terms

Transfer. In this dissertation, transfer refers to "…a behavior linking persistence from one institution to the enrollment of another that can be interpreted as persistence in the system of higher education" (Hagedorn, Cypers, & Lester, 2008, p. 646).

Persistence. In this setting, persistence refers to the factors that affect a student's continuation at a college.

Transfer through Persistence. This is the lens through which we measure positive transfer methods and concepts at an academic institution. It is a combination of transfer and

persistence that makes for successful movement to another institution.

Phenomenology. In this dissertation, phenomenological research attempts to explain the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experiences of a group of people around transfer, itself. The researcher attempts to understand human behavior through the eyes of the participants in a study.

Qualitative. This is the investigative methodology utilized in this dissertation. It emphasizes looking at variables in the natural setting, through open-ended questions that provide direct quotations. The interviewer is an integral part of the investigation.

Latino/Latina. Refers to all types of men and women whose ethnic origins are found in Central America, Caribbean, and South American countries (Cuyjet, Howard-Hamilton, & Cooper, 2011).

Organization of the Study

This dissertation is organized into five chapters, a bibliography, and appendices in the following manner. Chapter 2 is a literature review of related literature and recent studies in closely related areas. Chapter 3 will consist of methodological considerations and data collection procedures. Chapter 4 will consist of the limitations, results, and findings. Chapter 5 will consist of a summary and conclusions, implications and recommendations. This will be followed by a bibliography and appendices.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In this chapter, this researcher reports on the studies and details surrounding the nature of the subject of successful transfer of Latino/Latina students from two-year institutions to four-year institutions and positive concepts based on a persistence framework. The literature review begins with a general overview and then narrows the perspective.

Demographics

During the last 20 years, the number of minorities in higher education has increased substantially (Arbona & Nora, 2007). Latinos/as make up the largest racial/ethnic minority group in the United States, and they are one of the fastest growing groups, second only to Asians/Pacific Islanders (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2007). Despite the growth experienced by the Latino/Latina population in the United States, particularly in states such as California and Texas, accessing equitable higher education opportunities and achieving educational success have both been a tremendous challenge to this culture (Perez & Ceja, 2010). Preparation for and entry into higher educational institutions have been major issues for many Latino/Latina students. Compared with all other youth aged 16 to 19 years, Latinos/as are more likely to drop out of high school. This contributes to the extreme low enrollment of these students into colleges and universities (Perez & Ceja, 2010).

Precollege Experience

Ortiz and Santos (2009) contend that the elimination of affirmative action in several states where there are high numbers of Latinos/Latinas has created issues with acceptance to post-secondary institutions for this minority culture. Outreach programs have begun in middle

schools and high schools, but Latino/Latina students and groups with high poverty levels receive disparity in the education they receive due to segregation (Cuyjet, Howard-Hamilton, Cooper, Eds., 2011). The achievement gap between Whites and Latinos is now larger than ever, with little conclusive evidence of the cause (Ortiz & Santos, 2009).

In addition, cultural bias in the American College Testing Assessment (ACT), as well as the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), is a very well documented controversy in the higher education literature (Perez, 2002; Zwick, 2004). While the developers of the examinations work to make them show diversity, many boards of trustees are reconsidering their use in college admissions because of the increasing evidence that standardized test scores are not the best predictors of college success (Cuyjet et al., 2011). A lack of a relationship between standardized test scores and college achievement has also been demonstrated for Latino/Latina students (Rodriguez, 1996). Although Latino SAT scores have been found to be significantly lower than those of Whites, their college grades were equivalent (Pearson, 1993).

College Choice and Family Influence

The literature available on student's decisions on college choices examines the decision-making processes and behaviors of many different kinds of students. Most of this literature is directed at a number of specific factors which impact students' decision making. Some of these factors include the following: student ability or cognitive factors; parental educational background levels, expectations, and encouragement; encouragement from high school teachers and counselors; race and ethnicity; socioeconomic status; and gender (Ceja, 2006; Hearn, 1991; Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999; Hossler & Stage, 1992).

These researchers have developed models to help to explain college choices. Hostler et al. (1999), utilizes a popular model that identifies three stages of college choice. These stages

include predisposition, search, and choice. This model helps to explain what is a long and complicated process of decision making which includes many post-secondary experiences which are reinforced and influenced by various informational sources. Cultural capital has also influenced college choices. This refers to non-financial social assets that promote social mobility beyond economic means. Examples can include education, intellect, style of speech, dress, or physical appearance (Ceja, 2006). Also, social capital has influenced the college choice process. This can be seen as simply social relations which influence productive benefits (Ceja, 2006; Perez, 1999).

The literature has little to reveal about Latino/Latina students and the information sources available specifically to them during the college choice process. Even less is known about the ability of parents and other family members to act as sources of information or provide relationships and resources for these students, many of whom are first-generation college students (Ceja, 2006). According to Hossler et al. (1999), parental influence is important throughout the college choice process yet becomes less important as students reach the search and choice phases. At this point, other sources of information such as peers, teachers, and counselors come into play. Yet, parents remain a strong source of influence for many students, particularly when parents are college-educated, and the home setting is a vital area for college information. This may not be the case for Latino/Latina high school students as many of these children are the first in their families to enter college.

In a study by Ceja (2006), twenty high school female Chicanas were interviewed at three stages in their procession toward graduation and proceeding to college. While this qualitative study cannot be generalized beyond its California high school application, it proved some interesting points which could be tied to the results of this study of *transfer*. The study showed

that almost all of the Chicanas, regardless of which types of colleges to which they were applying, noted that their parents lacked a formal understanding of the college choice process of applying to and selecting schools. As these particular Chicanas applied to schools, the roles that their parents were able to play was significantly reduced practically to only emotional and financial support (p. 93). In many cases, the parents of the students in the study were hindered by language barriers. Parents, in these cases, did not speak English fluently and spoke Spanish at home. They also lacked an understanding of the educational system in the United States, as a whole. These issues posed major obstacles for those parents attempting to learn more about college choices.

Ceja (2006) explained that with little parental understanding of the process, decisions for college then became, more or less, up to the student. This posed issues as students were unfamiliar with navigating the process of application, financial aid, and selecting classes. These issues applied predominantly to the students who were first born or first among their siblings to go to college. Once a first born has been through the process, the Chicana siblings would talk about the difficulties that their older siblings encountered as he or she navigated the college choice process (p.96). In this way the older siblings became the "protective agents" (p. 95), so to speak. They became the primary source of information and acted as role models.

Once a sibling took on these obligations, this study showed that many of these Chicanas took on a double-duty responsibility of not only learning the process for application, but also informing and familiarizing their parents about this process. The motivating factor for this behavior proved to be a desire to familiarize parents with the college process so that they, in turn, could inform younger siblings. This way the educational pipeline could be continued (Ceja, 2006).

This study is pivotal in helping to explain the strong need for more study in this area, as family support pertains to college entrance and directly to college transfer for completion of degree confirmation (Desmond & Turley, 2009; Romero & Roberts, 2003). Understanding the relationships and resources available to this minority for transfer to degree attainment is the real purpose behind this dissertation, and the need for this purpose is shown by the lack of research in this direct area.

Higher Education Acceptance for Latinos/as

Once into higher education, Latino/Latina students show a lower graduation rate as compared to their African American and White counterparts. The figures from NCES, 2002, state that the percentage of 25 - 29-year-old Hispanics with at least a bachelor's degree was lower for these students (10%) than African Americans (18%) or Whites (34%). The gap in attaining this degree can be attributed largely to factors related to these students' college-going experience (Arbona & Nora, 2007). Many Latino/Latina students are first-generation and have never experienced the details of applying to and attending college. Their families have never gone to college and, therefore, they are at a loss.

More than half of all Latino/a students who enroll in college, initially enroll in a community college (Arbona & Nora, 2007; Fry, 2004). Latino/a students are less likely to enroll in a four-year institution. Nationally, 55% of Latino/Latina students enroll in community college in comparison with 42% of African American, 40% of Asian-American, and 36 % of White students (Perez & Ceja, 2010). Proximity and cost have been utilized to explain this enrollment. An interesting consideration is a concern that pre-college factors, and family issues, in particular, have not been studied in depth as to their effect on Latino/Latina students' enrollment in two-year institutions or four-year institutions (Chronicle of Higher Ed, 2001; Fry, 2004).

Transfer Information

According to national data, about two-thirds of high school seniors who enroll in community colleges do so with some intention to pursue a bachelor's degree by transfer to a four-year institution (NCES, 2008). The reality is that a high percentage of these students will fail to achieve this intention, even after long periods of enrollment at community colleges (NCES, 2008).

These trends are particularly disturbing for Latino/Latina students, for whom the opportunity to complete a degree or transfer to a four-year institution is among the lowest of all ethnic groups (NCES, 2003; Perez & Ceja, 2010). Nationally, for example, of all first-time community college Latino/Latina students in 1995 with intentions to transfer, only 5.5% of these students managed to do so by 2001 (NCES 2003; Perez & Ceja, 2010). This same report implied that after six years, an estimated 48% of these students were no longer enrolled at the community college and had departed their institutions without obtaining any degree.

This data on community college enrollment and completion rates indicates discouraging outcomes for Latino/Latina students, especially in light of their higher than average inclination to enroll in community colleges and their low transfer and success rate at four-year institutions. This is a critical juncture in the educational pipeline for this culture. It helps to explain why Latino/Latina students lag behind every other student population group in college degree attainment (Fry, 2003).

Barriers Faced by Latino/Latina Students

The challenges these students face in transfer have been documented by many studies. For example, researchers have noted Latino/Latina students are more likely than Whites to be the first in their families to attend college, making navigating the community college system and

accessing resources and information regarding transfer options problematic (Ornelas & Solorzano, 2004; Perez & Ceja, 2010). Latino/Latina students are also more likely than their counterparts to delay their entry into college beyond direct entrance after high school as well as to enroll in college on a part-time basis (Cuyjet, Howard-Hamilton, & Cooper, Eds., 2011; Fry 2003). These students also attend community colleges with lower overall transfer rates, and more frequent "stop out" rates, experiencing interruptions in their enrollment (Arbona & Nora, 2007; Fry, 2003; Wassmer, Moore, & Shulock, 2004).

Latino/Latina students are also more likely to enter higher education with low levels of college readiness and a greater need to enroll in remediation courses. Research by Adelman (1998, 2006) and Hagedorn (2004) has shown proof of the above as well as the results that students who begin community colleges with remediation needs are far less likely to transfer into four-year institutions. This remediation, especially in writing, has been cited as the most serious barrier to degree completion among community college students (NCES, 2004).

Low levels of academic success and low transfer rates for Latino/Latina students to four-year institutions and low completion rates at the community college raise policy concerns over postsecondary access and completion opportunities available for Latino/ Latina students. The data on Latino/Latina community college students make it clear that the current transfer culture is failing Latino/Latina students, many of whom enter the community college system with a goal of earning a four-year college degree. These poor postsecondary outcomes have resulted in a growing adult Latino/Latina population that is increasingly undereducated. According to Cook and Cordova (2007), the college attainment of Latinos/Latinas 25 years and older in the United States was 12%, compared with 18% for African Americans, and 31% for White adults. These disparities in educational outcomes between the growing Latino/Latina population and the White

population also yield significant patterns of income stratification. In California, for example, the median income gap between White adults with a bachelor's degree and ethnic minorities with the same educational level is as high as $13,000 (NCES, 2007).

Promoting a viable community college transfer culture for Latino/Latina students is an important educational policy necessity. Discovering and uncovering the components of the phenomenon of transfer that facilitate the success of Latino/Latina students is paramount to the proper and fair treatment of this culture. While there is much literature on the barriers to persistence and transfer for the Latino/Latina culture, the next section of this literature review focuses upon a conceptual framework which highlights future persistence and retention through "transfer" for Latino/Latina students and could possibly aid this culture in overcoming these boundaries.

Models of Student Persistence and Retention

A large number of models and theories have been utilized to explain different cultures of students' attrition in higher education. Two more popular models are Tinto's attrition model, first developed in 1975 and Bean and Eaton's Psychological model (2000). These two models are thoroughly discussed in the methodology chapter of this dissertation.

Tinto's model of student persistence (1975, 1987, 1993) has been tested extensively by a host of researchers interested in retention in higher education (Braxton & Briar, 1989; Cabrara, Casteneda, Nora & Hengstler, 1992). Researchers Braxton, Shaw, and Johnson (1997) studied the initial prepositions of Tinto's original model and examined the construct of academic integration and how it impacted institutional student persistence. They compared multi-institutional sites versus single institutions. They found that multi-institutional sites provided more robust results. Therefore, this dissertation will utilize a multi-institutional approach.

Bean and Eaton's model (2000), was more of a psychological model rather than a sociological model. This model was based on other organizational process models of turnover (Swail et al., 2003). It emphasized the significance of behavioral intentions. Intentions to persist are influenced by students' attitudes, which are shaped by their experiences with the institution (Bean & Eaton, 2000).

Combining both of these models, Swail et al. (2003) came up with the model this researcher employs in this research. The similarities in the models have been emphasized by empirical studies (Cabrera, Castaneda, Nora and Hengstler, 1992, Tierney, 1992). Both Tinto (1993), and Bean & Eaton (2000), argue that precollege characteristics are determinants of college behaviors and actions. Also, they contend that the student/institution fit are important issues and that that persistence is a result of complex interactions (Hossler, 1984).

However, there are shortcomings to both models, individually. A number of authors suggest that the theories are limited when applied to minority students (Rendon, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000; Tierney, 1992). Believing that students, especially those of color, must or will disassociate with their culture, belief system, and familial support network to become integrated and accepted into a new life on campus, is difficult to accept. This is suggested by Tinto (1992) as well as Bean & Eaton (2000). Rendon, Jalomo, & Nora (2000) suggest that minority and under-represented students live in a process of biculturation, where individuals live simultaneously in two cultures or realities. This affects minorities as well as Whites as the two navigate their ways through cultural competency (Rodarmor, 1991).

This relationship between college and student is emphasized by the Swail et al. (2003) model. Neither of the other two discusses the relationship between classroom and student as thoroughly and openly as this model (Rodarmor, 1991; Swail et al. 2003; Tinto, 2000). The next

section of this literature review describes the Swail et al (2003) framework in fine detail. It formulates the essence for the lens through which this study of transfer will be developed.

Persistence and Achievement

Swail et al. (2003) propose a model which integrates persistence and achievement and can be utilized to explain the relationship between college and student. It reflects student attributes and institutional practice. The variables of achievement and persistence are projected alongside one another and this is what makes it so applicable to the specific study of "transfer." It takes this persistence and achievement to pursue the essence of transfer this researcher has identified. This geometric model is different than other models as it places the student in the very center of the model rather than making the student a separate entity in a flow chart or structural equation model. Even Tinto (2000) suggests that none of the models he has researched discusses the connection between classroom and retention, where the institution has the closest connection to the student.

This model provides a visual representation of the cognitive and social attributes of the student experience, along with providing institutional factors affecting the application of the concepts of achievement and persistence (see Figure 1). These three forces all affect a student by providing a way to view a student's cognitive and social attributes as they are placed along with the institutional role of the college or university. The triangle represents the forces which affect students of all races and cultures. Outside the triangle are the forces with which they contend. Inside the triangle are a set of internal processes forming questions for the student as they determine directions to persist or achieve (Swail et al., 2003).

The *cognitive factors* form the academic ability on one side of the triangular figure. This includes what Swail et al. (2003) call the strengths and weaknesses of students considering their

proficiency in reading, writing, and mathematics. Another side of the triangle shows the students'

social inclinations such as a student's ability to interact effectively with others, cultural history,

personal attitudes, and family influence. Finally, the third set of external factors includes

institutional practices such as financial aid, academic services, curriculum and instruction, etc.

All of these three areas create this unique framework.

Equilibrium of the model

The geometric model is designed to allow persistence through "transfer" when all of the

dynamics between social, cognitive and institutional factors are working with each other. Swail

et al. (2003) call this reaching *equilibrium* (p. 80). There must be some kind of balance between

growth, development, and persistence, otherwise, students risk stopping or dropping out (Tinto,

1975). Swail et al. (2003) describe the outside variables in each of the three factors (cognitive,

social and institutional) as attributes that either combine, work against, or act neutrally in each

student. The way these variables interact creates a net effect for the geometric model or

reciprocity. The authors give an example of what they call *reciprocity* (p. 81), which is when the

variables of academic motivation, appropriate learning environments, and academic support

combine. The three variables as well as many other variables, when connected, have a large

effect on student achievement and persistence through which we view "transfer." The

researchers refer to this as the "reciprocity of variables effect" (p. 81) and this is part of the three

planes of the geometric framework.

The intent of the model is to show equilibrium in its many forms. The triangular

framework would most definitely never be equilateral, due to the complexity of human behavior

and learning theory. Truly, there is an infinite combination of variables from each of the three

axes that would provide *equilibrium* or that status when the cognitive, social, and institutional forces combine to make a stable and supportive environment for persistence and achievement.

If a perfect equilateral triangle did exist, it would most probably not be the best model for a student's stability. According to Swail et al. (2003), it is not reasonable to assume that this type of equilateral model represents human ability and behavior. A student's individuality suggests that the model should be flexible to the point of *equilibrium*. The human condition is very flexible with ebb-and-flow. It could never be considered static. The shift of one social or cognitive area prompts protective responses in other areas. This is part of what student experience encompasses.

A student can have low cognitive skills or academic resources but outstanding social skills. This could be the case due to good social networks, strong social networks, but lacking in academic fortitude due to a below average educational experience in middle school and high school. To adjust for this inequality, the institution would make up the necessary skills and even add more assistance, through social services, and support programs, etc. to allow the student to reach strength in achievement and persistence in "transfer" (Swail et al., 2003).

Another example provided could be a cognitively strong yet socially weak student. In this case, some would assume this type of brilliant thinker, who lacks some social graces could persist through *transfer* and graduation without support from the institution. However, the college experience is more than simply completion and includes developing a student to his/her social and academic potential. Thus, the institution should intervene to help with social skills to last throughout a lifetime (Swail et al., 2003, p. 83).

Finally, a student within this model could exhibit very high cognitive and social abilities, therefore, lacking a real need for a great deal of institutional support beyond what would be

considered basic instruction. Some might say this instruction could act as more of a hindrance than a helpful channel to success. Students fitting this example of the framework are perfect candidates for distance education and with this type of assistance from the institution, they will find success and persist (Swail et al., p.84).

The Swail et al. (2003) framework has been successful in application at many colleges and universities. This final section of this literature review shows examples of two case studies, utilizing this framework for retention and achievement at the post-secondary, collegiate level.

Institutional Case Examples

Glendale Community College, in Glendale, Arizona, utilizes a system which was designed in a similar manner as was recommended by Swail et al., (2003) in their work called "Retaining Minority Students in Higher Education." The system targeted and identified characteristics of at-risk students to improve the retention and success of minority students. The program provided data on specific student groups, especially Latino/Latina students to identify stop-out and dropout patterns, GPAs, and other data important for student success in transfer and retention. It was utilized by administrators, faculty, student support staff and researchers. It was approved and recognized by Swail et al. (2003). The system has enhanced the multicultural affairs program's ability to fulfill its goals. It also helped the institution to initiate an early warning retention system for at-risk students (Mendoza & Corzo, 1996).

At the University of Colorado at Boulder, a major goal of their mission was to retain, recruit and graduate underrepresented students. The model they used was extremely similar to that developed by Swail et al. (2003). The model consisted of five integrated primary components for student development and retention from "transfer." The integrated program consisted of a Summer Bridge Program, Freshman Leadership Course, Academic Clustering,

Academic Excellence Workshops, and Financial Aid Tutoring. The program maintained strong counseling and tutoring as well. As evidence of its success, approximately 85% of the forty new Multicultural Engineering Program students registered for fall 1996 returned for the following academic year (Swail et al., 2003).

These two institutions have utilized tools developed through the model prompted by Swail et al. (2003). The goal of this study is to reach new objectives, utilizing the sensitizing agents, to gain new knowledge through interviews with sixteen students from both community colleges and four-year institutions as well as prompts developed from initial data collection, which can also be generalized and applied by administrators, faculty, student support staff, and researchers. The fact that this conceptual framework has already been utilized in real collegiate scenarios gives it even more applicability to this study.

Development of the Study

This literature review has uncovered studies and details dealing with the overall concept of the phenomenon of Latino/Latina transfer in this study, to the more refined nature of the matter of the conceptual framework. The third chapter of this dissertation will deal with the methodology behind which this study proposes to reach its goals of answering the sensitizing concepts.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Design: A Persistence Framework and Phenomenological Protocol

This qualitative study focuses upon the significance of transfer to Latino/Latina students as they maintain their persistence through higher education. This chapter will describe the methodology to be utilized in this study.

This study focuses on three sensitizing concepts including:

1. How do Latino/a students who are anticipating transfer from two-year institutions to four-year institutions experience their transfer preparation?

2. How do Latino/a students who have transferred from two-year institutions to four-year institutions share their experiences?

3. How are the experiences of Latino/a students who intend to transfer and those who have transferred comparable with one another?

This dissertation utilizes previous research to inform the direction of the dissertation (Card, 2015). This research study provided assistance in focus and direction as well as providing initial rationale. In looking at this dissertation study, the initial draft protocol was developed following a variation on the theory or framework including the concepts of Swail, Redd & Perna (2003) (see Figure 1). The protocol was further justified by the qualitative procedures utilized by Moustakas (1994). After an extensive literature review of well over thirty-five studies as well as the in-depth inclusion of this researcher's initial observation of Latino/a students' conversations, specific themes emerged through horizontalization. That is, large domains or categories of text were analyzed. Branching or creating possible new growing concepts from original ideas were developed. Then this researcher will review the "sensitizing concepts" (the research questions)

for this study, and thoroughly collapse specific codes. Following the work of Moustakas (1994), this recursive style of coding is all part of a thorough phenomenological approach. The coding will be done for this dissertation, twice with a debriefing after each coding and proper triangulation with two peer debriefers, a Latina Ph.D. student, and a university administrator, Ph.D. student, for trustworthiness. Bracketing is an important on-going analysis, as this researcher looks inward to realize personal bias. The textural descriptions used, serve to allow the researcher to understand the meaning and depth of this phenomenon of "transfer" and the essence of the "lived" experiences of the participants (Hayes & Singh, 2012). All of this produces a more pure essence of the phenomenon of transfer itself. Thus the choice of phenomenology and Moustakas (1994) approach.

Sample

The data collection will begin by observing Latino/Latina college students conversing about the nature of community college and college, in general. While many Latino/a sites provide only the positive side of different views of transfer, a specific site was recommended by a number of Latino/a Ph.D. students as being simply statements of Latino/a students about community college, universities, and transfer. This source was determined to be the least biased when compared with other, more commercial and promotional sites.

For this dissertation, a visitation of this site was conducted. The interviewer gained entry to the students through e-mails and with the advisors at the community colleges as well as the four-year institutions. Each interview lasted approximately forty-five to sixty minutes. Interviewees will be assigned pseudonyms. Data was collected via a thematic association checklist (see Instruments section). Throughout the procedure, the topics were developed and added to the initial protocol in a codebook and a tally was kept of themes, as well as notation of

subthemes and numbers of times these were mentioned in an initial frequency chart.

Sixteen interviewees were selected by criterion, purposeful sampling. It was projected that eight of the students for this study would come from three different community colleges in Virginia. The other eight came from four-year institutions in Virginia. The community college students were identified by indicating transfer through their counselors. The students at the four-year institutions had transferred from two-year colleges. The students' ages were between eighteen and thirty. These Latino/Latina community college students were interviewed in order to represent their stories and aspirations of transfer and their experiences toward this end. The Latino/a four-year university students were interviewed to share their ultimate experiences with transfer. Then the responses were compared. Both groups were re-interviewed within two weeks so that they could reflect on their stories and add any details they may have forgotten. This provided trustworthiness and richness to the details of their narratives as well as helped to reach saturation for this study in the coding process.

Data Collection

Using the complete transcriptions of each participant and the unobtrusive, observations, the seven coding steps of Moustakas (1994) were employed as discussed in the data analysis of this chapter. From these individual textural-structural descriptions, this researcher developed a composite description of the meanings and essences of the Experience, representing the group as a whole. The coding was done twice with a debriefing of drafts submitted to the two debriefers. This process created trustworthiness and triangulation. The method followed those outlined by Hays and Singh (2012) and Moustakas (1994).

The initial blueprint below gave "voice" to the participants. Following the constructs of Swail et al. (2003) for understanding persistence, the following table was derived for this

dissertation, matching revised research questions to the revised conceptual framework. The frequency of specific terminology or phrases and key concepts were all collected in the manner which Moustakas (1994) prescribes including "stacking" concepts through coding and based on previous research (Card, 2015). Carefully new themes were written into the field notes as the experience transpired. Every code is related to the initial draft protocol (see Instruments section below).

The following is a blueprint chart, based on the earlier research and adapted framework of Swail et al. (2003), of the categorical codes this researcher began to use for the interviews in this dissertation:

Table 1

Categorical Codes

Interview Questions

Demographics
  Gender
  Type of Hispanic origin
  One or both parents born in the US
  Parental Education

Environmental Factors/Institutional
  Amount of financial aid received
  Number of hours worked per week
  Enrollment intensity

Academic experiences/Cognitive
  Time with a faculty member
  Time with academic advisor
  Grade point average (GPA)
  Special counseling/developmental
    Class

Open ended questions/Social
  Hopes and aspirations
  Support from *La familia*
  Acquaintances/friends/cultural
    Interaction
  Community Service

These codes cover a wide array of qualitative richness from each of the subject's words as well as the interviewees from previous research by Card, (2015). The interview participants' purpose is to show a broad array of supportive words and themes beyond the overall protocol. Additional themes were developed as a result, which added to the richness of the text. They are described in the findings (Chapter Four) of this dissertation. All coded concepts and actions listed above were explored to provide substance to the quality of this qualitative observation. Personal bias is part of any study as explicated by Moustakas (1994) and was part of this search process in coding. Everyone has an experiential vision through which reality is perceived, but the interviewees, as well as the participants' use of the themes, will be entirely a product of the results of the coding process. Upon returning to the field notes, the research will bear this thematic content. Certainly, the best way to determine the patterns within the personal statements of the individuals is to look at key testimonials within each area (Moustakas, 1994).

Personal Reflection

This researcher's reflection on the unobtrusive observation during an earlier study included what was predominantly a sense of being an "outsider." That is, in a culture with specific needs and a unique identity, the researcher felt outside this realm, being unobtrusive and just watching what transpired. The researcher, had his own bias toward the issues explained on the site but no real connection with the participants. As this researcher became more involved with the coding process and the real understanding of this marginalized sub-community, he became "closer" to being an "insider" and really feeling the issues of the Latino/Latina students. The voice of the stories had produced, in this researcher, a more complete sense of the marginalization and problematic issues of transfer, and it became harder to remain completely

impartial. Therefore, bracketing and peer debriefers were imperative to account for trustworthiness and triangulation.

The physical and emotional environment of actually being at the community college to interview the subjects gave a human element to the stories that could not be denied. The bias of empathy and emotions for the plight of the Latino/a community college student is real and shows in this phenomenological design. However, peer debriefing created more "fairness" to the research as did the triangulation. Member checking occurred with all the interviewees as they received a formal email thanking them for their participation and giving them a synopsis of the results, as well as inviting them to look for the dissertation on Proquest and ask questions if they so desired (see Appendix E). This dissertation uses referential adequacy with many other scholarly sources as well as constant simultaneous data collection/analysis with a formal journal for trustworthiness.

Instruments

The semi-structured protocol is designed to solicit responses relevant to the study's purpose but does not include questions that explicitly or directly name specific educational experiences that might contribute toward a student's intercultural learning. Students were selected from their advisors within the student services departments who interact with these students most. The interviewer responded to the students in a conversational manner using a variety of prompts to understand the nature and quality of their experience and to elicit relevant contextual details. The interview notes were summarized and analyzed using constant comparative methods to identify themes in the data with the codes being inductively derived from the data.

During the interviews, the researcher took notes and digitally-record the interview with

the participant's permission. Digital audio files were transcribed, in addition to being used to clarify the researcher's notes. Recordings will be kept in a private space only accessible to the researcher for five years following the conclusion of this study. If the participant had chosen not to be digitally-recorded, the researcher would have taken more detailed notes during the interview; the researcher's notes would be the data for any participant who would choose not to be digitally-recorded. This was not the case for any of the interviewees. Because the research design is qualitative, no hypotheses are presented in this dissertation.

Data Analysis

The following was the procedure depicting the concepts by which this researcher followed for the coding process of this dissertation. Each step was carefully pursued and utilized in a thorough process. This procedure reflected the methodology of Moustakas (1994).

First, this researcher planned to list the words and concepts which relate to "transfer," from the complete transcriptions of each participant. This is what is considered preliminary grouping, or horizontalization, as the researcher looks for similar concepts (Moustakas, 1994, p. 120). The researcher then worked to reduce the excessive terms that were vague or were not necessary for understanding the phenomenon of transfer. This is reduction, and the researcher looks for recursive and constituent ideas and words from the participants (p. 121).

The researcher looked for themes from the interviews and see if they were recursive. These formulated the fundamental "core of the experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121.) These themes were validated by the transcriptions and checked against the explicit words of the participants. This was carefully done two times, for a synthesis of all results.

Using the above, the researcher constructed what is referred to as Individual Textural Descriptions including the advice of the debriefers or fellow doctoral student colleagues. At this

juncture, verbatim examples from transcribed interviews were used along with those from the students. The variations which arise from the coding were also incorporated as imaginative description (Moustakas, 1994).

The researcher constructed individual structural descriptions of the experience based on the textural description and imaginative variation (p. 121). It is through the thematic coding and constructs, that each research participant produced a textural-structural description of the meanings and the essences of the experience. All of this was incorporated, including the invariant constituents and themes. From these individual textural-structural descriptions, this researcher developed a composite description of the meanings and essences of the phenomenon of "transfer," representing the group as a whole. Specific quotations are utilized (with added pseudonyms) along with the synthesis of this meaning as derived from the participants.

Interviews took place on the college campuses of the community colleges and the four-year institutions. The researcher made sure his interactions take place in private or semi-private locations where participants feel comfortable meeting. e.g., a private or semi-private location at a residence hall for convenience or private office space at the library, etc. The interviews lasted approximately 45-60 minutes each. The first set of interviews simply opened up a starting place for the researcher to comprehend some general details of the students' experiences as they pertained to Pre-transfer and actual Transfer. The second set of interviews, following the second protocol (see Appendix B), really allowed the interviewees to get to know the researcher and develop trust. This enabled both parties to "share" in a dialogue which focused on the cultural issues which marginalize these students. The findings in Chapter 4 and discussion in Chapter 5 reveal this dialogue in great detail.

In qualitative studies, it is common to employ a purposive sampling strategy where

individuals with characteristics specific to the study's research questions are identified and included in the study. Data are collected from the participants until the data reaches a saturation point, e.g., no new information being revealed by additional participants. This researcher anticipated that data would reach the saturation point before 20 interviews were completed. This number of participants is appropriate for a single qualitative study in which semi-structured interviews are used. The saturation point for this study was closer to 25 interviews. This researcher found that the second set of interviews for each group of students (Pre and Post-transfer) was very revealing as the interviewees became more familiar with this researcher.

Data Management

Data will be stored for up to five years in a locked, private office, or alternative protected space, of the interviewers. In addition, electronic data will be stored on a password-protected computer or another computer to which only the interviewer has access. After five years, digital audio files will be destroyed. Only the researchers will have access to the data before names and personal identities have been removed.

Additional individuals, such as peer debriefers who were Latina and administrators or Latina and Ph.D. candidates, were involved in the analysis of the data; however, these individuals did not have access to personal identification information of the participants. Peer debriefers only contributed to analysis because they were objective third-parties whose expertise in qualitative research or cultural interpretation of data was of benefit. After the analysis was complete, only the researcher had access to records and data. The names of individuals were not connected to participants' identities during analysis and in the resulting paper.

Risks and Benefits of Participation

Individuals might have been concerned about personal information being shared with

other individuals, particularly due to the personal nature of being a member of a minority and non-citizen group in another country, such as a Latino/a student. However, the voluntary and confidential nature of participation was thoroughly stressed, in addition to measures that were taken to provide confidentiality. As a result, a limited likelihood existed that participants would experience the above harm. Furthermore, this researcher believes that participants who took part in this study actually benefitted from reflecting on their own experiences and gaining a better understanding of themselves and how they interact with others in their current learning environment.

No problems were anticipated, although when conducting interviews, the researcher needed to remain aware that English is occasionally not the participants' primary language. As a result, the researcher sometimes needed to speak more slowly, in addition to repeating or rephrasing questions. In addition, the researchers needed to be cognizant of cultural differences in communication, such as participants' desire to maintain direct eye contact or not.

Limitations Perceived

Personal bias would be considered a limitation. The fact that this researcher is not Latino/Latina and is older than the interviewees as well as being White, however, did not pose an obvious assumption of unbalanced power and perhaps create tension for the interviewees. Also, the sample size did not pose a limitation, particularly when reviewing response rate. The fact that only a sample of community college students and university students were utilized creates a limitation in generalizability discussed in the findings in Chapter Four. Other limitations are also discussed further in Chapter 5.

Chapters Four and Five and Appendices

Chapter Four includes the results of the coding procedure synthesized with details from

the interviews. It also includes all findings. The final chapter, Chapter Five, draws conclusions

and makes suggestions for future research while discussing the findings. The complete

dissertation includes the bibliography/references and a number of appendices.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

For this study, the researcher focused on answering three research questions:

1. How do Latino/a students who are anticipating transfer from two-year institutions to four-year institutions experience their transfer preparation?

2. How do Latino/a students who have transferred from two-year institutions to four-year institutions share their experiences?

3. How are the experiences of Latino/a students who intend to transfer and those who have transferred comparable with one another?

Summary of Methodology

Sixteen total subjects (n=16) from four different institutions were interviewed twice following the proposed structure of the methodology (see Appendix C). This made a total of thirty-two (32) interviews. First, eight participants were identified through their counselors and advisors from two institutions of higher education. These eight were purposively sampled as having transferred from community colleges to a suburban university and an urban research university, both with student populations of approximately 30,000. These students were between the ages of eighteen and thirty, a mixture of three (3) males and five (5) females, and all of Latino/a descent. These students were considered the "Post-transfer group." All of the students have been renamed to protect their real identities. They included three males: "Michael," 30 years old, "Juan," 23 years old, and "Jose," 20 years old. The "Post-transfer" group also included the following five females: "Aleanna," 20 years old, "Dianne," 21 years old, "Emily," 23 years old, "Jean," 21 years old, and "Leanna, 22 years old. Their answers to the initial protocol (Appendix A) were transcribed, coded, and analyzed categorically. The initial eight interviewees

had also transferred from two different types of community colleges, one very small and rural (approximately 1,000 students), the other very large and urban (approximately 20,000 students).

The same eight interviewees (the "Post-transfer" group) who had recently transferred to universities, were interviewed again approximately five to ten days later. This protocol can be found in Appendix B. These responses were also transcribed, coded thematically, and merged with the first round of coding. Recursive themes were drawn out and analyzed. The interviews for each phase lasted from 45-60 minutes each.

Eight students from two different community colleges were selected and interviewed in this same manner. These eight students included four (4) females and four (4) males preparing for transfer as identified by the transfer department and advisors at their institutions of higher education. One community college was very urban, serving approximately 15,000, and the other very rural and extremely small, serving approximately 1,000 students. These eight students included four males, hence referred to as: "James," 22 years old, "Manuel," 21 years old, "Nathan," 26 years old, and "Jason," 22 years old. This group also included four females, hence referred to as: "Lisa," 20 years old, "Trisha," 18 years old, "Allison," 28 years old, and "Katie," 22 years old. The findings from all the coding, both categorical and thematic, were compiled and peer debriefing was utilized as a final method of trustworthiness. Two Latina administrators, one community college administrator and doctoral student, and one university administrator were consulted as peer debriefers to assist with applicable themes and provide their overall reflection on the phenomenon of transfer as explicated by the transcriptions of the interviews.

Organization of Findings

This chapter will first present the basic themes associated with the conceptual framework as derived from the coding of the transcriptions (Moustakas, 1994; Swail, Redd & Perna, 2003)

in a synthesized manner. The research questions divide the themes as they emerged for those students who had yet to transfer from the community colleges and those who had already transferred from community colleges and were at the university level. Then, salient case examples of stories and quotations which stand out as significant, powerful, and illustrative of the themes derived from each group will be described and compared. The themes will be presented first as those which fit into the Swail, Redd & Perna (2003) conceptual framework, then those conceptual themes which fit into the framework, yet had key differences from the conceptual framework, and finally those that were uniquely surprising or fit the Latino/a student uniquely and did not fit the framework at all.

Experiences Pre-Transfer

  Prominent themes that fit the persistence framework. The framework used by this researcher is thoroughly described in Chapter Two: Literature Review. There are fundamentally three factors considered in this conceptual design. These include: Cognitive Factors, Institutional Factors, and Social Factors as forces acting on any student's persistence in transfer.

  Cognitive Factors. It was evident through the interviews that many themes were exposed in the dialogue between community college students and this researcher. The Swail, Redd, & Perna (2003) framework applies to many kinds of students. The Latino/a students in these interviews showed the most prominent evidence of the following themes under the heading of cognitive forces or factors. These included: "Quality of learning," "Critical thinking ability," and "Time management."

  Quality of learning. Many of the students complained that their high school preparation was not what it should be to prepare them for college. They stated that they felt "unprepared" for

college-level writing and college math, in particular. "Lisa" describes her experience with high

school and college level math issues in the following quotation:

> Researcher: So you say you used the student services here at the college. Which ones
> have you used?
>
> Lisa: I've went for chemistry tutoring and math, Pre-Cal tutoring. I feel like high school
> did not prepare me as well for these subjects. The school I went to was not so hot. It was
> in a tough neighborhood in New York and we were bussed in. The teachers did not take
> time with us.

"James" states his issues with his English courses and quality of learning in this

quotation. It sums up the problems with English as a second language and encapsulates most all

of the Pre-transfer students' feelings that their high school coursework did not sufficiently

prepare them for college work.

> James: Well, the classes that I take, I'm taking American Literature and British Literature,
> so I actually use the writing center for them to help me edit papers. English is not my
> primary language, even though I feel I speak it well.
>
> Researcher: So you're not taking American Literature?
>
> James: I am.
>
> Researcher: Oh, you're taking both of them?
>
> James: Yeah. I have taken both, and I had to balance and went to the writing center so
> they can help me out a little bit. And, I mean, I usually don't use them as much because
> I've got to work and I don't have that much free time.

Critical thinking ability. This theme was evident in the way that the Latino/a "Pre-

transfer" students selected classes which made their hope for transfer to university complete.

They were most often successfully advised to choose courses that counted for credit in their

transfer. Thinking through which courses were reciprocal between the community college and

the universities to which they hoped to transfer was an example of cognitive forces. A negative

example of this was provided by "Manuel" who explained he had been at his community college

for three years. He felt being "self-advised" had led to some issues in navigating preparation for

transfer.

> Researcher: You said at first you had some issues at first – getting back to the transfer part of things – with being self-advised.
> Do you feel like the student services have been pretty important in your –

> Manuel: Yeah. Just not – not used up properly. So I could have – I could have gone to my advisers, and I'm sure if I did, then I wouldn't be here (community college). I would probably be at (university) already.

In direct contrast, those that were advised suggested smooth transfer opportunities. The

following readily indicates this:

> Researcher: Is there anything about the way that this specific college works or operates that you feel is confusing or unfamiliar or has been difficult for you to navigate?

> James: I mean, overall, the navigation part, not at all.

> Researcher: Okay.

> James: I have advisors and professors that help you throughout the way. Whenever you have any questions or extra questions on a process or filling out anything, there is help available.

> **Time management.** With this theme, the Latino/a community college students were in

agreement that they all had to work hard to balance their busy lives. This was an emergent

common theme. All of the students held part-time jobs and balanced full-time course loads as

well. Realizing deadlines for bills, living on their own, taking school courses, and doing

homework were all areas exposed in their lives as community college students. Family, friends,

and having a job worked to help these Latino/a students.

> Researcher: Tell me about that (your busy work life). Tell me about your working situations?

> James: I am an operations clerk for CBRE. It's a real estate management company. I work second shift, 3:30 to 11. I'm a full-time student online and in class in the morning.

Researcher: Wow. You're a busy guy.

James: I get out of here, get dressed, and go back to work
Researcher: And you're –

James: But it does balance out. I do homework at work, so. They allow me to do that.

Some of the students from the Pre-transfer group (4 out of 8) worked with family. Here is an example of this in the Latino/a culture from an older student of this specific Pre-transfer group:

Nathan: Right now I'm working with my dad, which is construction/labor work, waterproofing, and sealing crawl spaces. I am also a full-time student.

Others were working in nail salons, boutiques, and other various level jobs (with family) to make ends meet.

Institutional Factors. Through careful coding and the recursive nature of overlapping ideas and categorical themes, three clear topics emerged associated with transfer. These included financial aid, student services, and recruitment and admissions.

Financial aid. The Latino/a Pre-transfer group showed a two-thirds majority of those who were using financial aid versus those who did not. All were aware of financial aid and many were very astute on methods to utilize the aid in combination with scholarships and saved money, in order to get the most out of spending at their institution of higher education.

Researcher: And how is that helping to pay for school? You've got your work. That's a big chunk of it. Is the rest of it being paid by financial aid?

James: Financial aid. I pretty much use financial aid for my classes. I'm taking 15 credits at the moment and pretty much my work, pretty much pays for all the books and all the modules that I have to pay for, like the access code and all of that. It adds up, so it helps.

Researcher: I know. I know. It does. That's good. You've put it all together, so you've kind of got a package. So, you were well aware of financial aid and aware and all the things that were going on.

James: Oh, yeah.

One student utilized many parts of her scholarships in addition to financial aid to make things work for her and allow her to say "Ok. Now I can go to school."

Trisha: Yeah. That's like my main one (financial assistance in aid), but I want to have other options, just in case. Because for me, like, money is the biggest issue.

Researcher: I think for everybody, money is a pretty big issue. So tell me more about how you're making it with the money situation.

Trisha: Well, first I think it was kind of how I'm going to pay for college, and then when I got financial aid, it was like how am I going to get to college, then I got the refund, I was like, okay, you need to invest in a car, and then –

Researcher: Yeah. That's right. You bought a car. Tell me about that again.

Trisha: It's a 1996 Toyota Camry, old car. But –

Researcher: But it gets you where you're going.

Trisha: Yeah.

Researcher: And the financial aid, you get from – plus the Ruth Shaw Scholarship

Trisha: And the Pell Grant.

Student Services. In reflecting on an emergent theme of student services, the Pre-transfer Latino/a students utilized them in the proportion of 6 out of 8. This researcher found that these students when taking advantage of the services such as bridge programs, transfer advising, and clubs (including those designed for Latino/a students), were very comfortable about their opportunities for successful transfer to the institutions of their choice. An example of one Latino student's utilization of these services is as follows:

James: Well, definitely when – I guess my first semester that I actually came to (community college), I was really like settling, pretty much like transitioning from high school to college. I didn't know how actually serious the work is. So one of my advisors told me to pretty much to go to the career services, and they do, you know, tutoring and all that stuff. So once I found out about it, I actually did way better in math, because math is not my strongest subject. So I was able to maneuver the whole class with tutoring, so.

Researcher: Very good. So when you came on board, you immediately went there. How did you know to go there? Or was one of your professors –

James: Yeah, one of my professors told me. One of my advisors, actually, told me from the "Men Up Program."

Researcher: Oh, from "Men Up." That's an initiative program for Latino's geared for college men. Okay, so.

James: Yeah. Because I was really – because they follow up with how your grades are doing and all that stuff, so they saw that – like math wasn't my strongest suit, so they told me about the extra help, about the math tutoring, and all that stuff. And I took out – I was able to pass that class.

Researcher: Good. That's a good thing.

Another example of a Latina student using the services included "Lisa's" involvement:

Researcher: So sharing with your advisers and being involved with the Passport program. Remember we talked a little bit about that last time. Tell me some more about that.

Lisa: The Passport program?

Researcher: Yeah.

Lisa: It was really cool. I really liked it. They were here on the campus every so often, checking in on us and holding – not holding meetings, but we were able to walk in and talk to the advisers and just make sure we were on track. If we had any questions, they were here. They even -- like I said, they sent out newsletters every month, and it was pretty cool, because it, you know, let us know when they were going to be on what campuses and how long and who was going to be there.

Researcher: So it was like an organization. It's not really a class, it's an organization?

Lisa: Yeah. Yeah, it's an organization, and they also had like, on the newsletters they had (university) events that they were having that we were able to attend, like basketball, yeah, basketball games, they were – what else would we do.
The basketball games and they were allowing us to go on campus and they were giving us food and, you know, got us in the game, it was pretty cool.

Researcher: That sounds neat.

Lisa: Yeah. It was really well put together and it was – it was definitely beneficial to me because, you know, they were there to our aid. They were aiding us throughout the whole way.

Researcher: Great. And that helped you make a decision, too?

Lisa: Yeah. Yeah.

Researcher: Going to the games and –

Trisha: Yeah. It was really cool, and I definitely would consider just transferring to (university) after this, just because they showed how important it was that their students were, you know – making sure that that was the school for them and making sure that, you know, we had everything we needed to properly transfer.

Admission. While 3 students indicated having problems with admissions, 5 students from this category showed no problems. Most of the issues dealt with filing forms and getting the correct classes. Those students who spoke with friends having college experience, as well as family members and counselors were successful in transfer preparation. Others were not as successful.

Researcher: So who helped you the most in preparation for transfer and classes?

James: It was pretty much my best friends that graduated from (university) already that went to medical school, yeah, he's pretty much been the one that have shown me what classes to take or what – what I should do to build up my school curriculum in order for me to be accepted a lot quicker. So he's the one that pretty much is telling me –

Researcher: The ropes --

James: -- the ropes.

Researcher: -- as they say. Right?

James: Yeah.

Researcher: Okay. Well, that's good. And your best friend is – he's in the medical –

James: Yes. He's in the medical field. He's going to be a cardiologist.

Another student could not master the website for numerous reasons. This was a major challenge in navigating the system and registering for class admissions.

Nathan: The first time that I was trying to register for classes, that's a real confusing bunch of buttons, because they've got like five different options that say five different combination of search and register, and if you click the wrong one, you can't – if you click just search for sections, then it will take you to this thing where it will show you what classes there are, but you can't register. And if you click search and register, it does this other thing.

Researcher: Very confusing.

Nathan: Yeah. That was when I had to get my brother to help me out with, because everything I clicked, would just take me back to the same screen again, and it's –

Researcher: Frustrating.

Nathan: Yeah.And then you've got to go to a whole different place to actually, like, sign up for them properly and pay for them.

Researcher: Okay.

Nathan: So it's a whole lot of different menus to click through. That's hard for me –

Social Factors. By far, the categorical and storyline themes that fit under this heading were the most prominent which were projected by all the Pre-transfer Latino/a students. Many social factors or forces were discussed in the dialogues between students and this researcher, including finances, educational legacy, English as a Second Language (ESL), etc. but certainly family stood out as a uniting theme between all of the participants.

Family influence/values. This theme was represented by all of the interviewees. One student referred to his family with these words "…Well, I mean, I feel like hard work pays off and I feel like all the sacrifices my parents have done, it's a way to pay them back. I want to make them proud and pretty much, having feel that they came and had to adapt to our country not in vain." Others said their parents were very supportive, yet confused by the process. The value placed on the parental support was very important to most interviewees. Some pointed to economic support, and others to hopes and dreams of being more than what their parents were or had been. Many suggested that siblings, nephews, aunts, cousins, etc. provided strong support in

transfer and helped to "…solve problems…" or "…set the example…" for their brothers and sisters. This was represented by an understanding of navigating the system through previous family experience and advice, a concept supported by much research (see Chapter Two: Literature Review).

But one student at the community colleges felt more than her family's support. "Trisha" states it this way:

Trisha: I said that my advisors were like my mom.

Researcher: Yeah. That's what it was.

Trisha: And the SGA is like my family, like we're a pretty good group, because we're seven campuses. So I know pretty much people from all campuses and we all hang out. We go bowling or we have movie nights or sometimes we'll have karaoke night on campus. So we all – and there's this camp that's called Camp Cheerio that the school does, and it's a leadership retreat kind of thing, and that's where we all met, and it's mostly students who are involved, and at the camp, you do a lot of like really good stuff. It kind of teaches you to learn to love yourself and like how to be a leader, how to be – you kind of get paired up in groups that become your family, and then you share things and it's just – everyone that goes there, like says that they go up a different person and come back a different person, and I felt it because we do this one activity like where you turn your back and it's like touch everyone who you think is great, or touch everyone who you think is funny. And I'm like that's just kind of like everyone's confidence kind of grew with that camp. And that's when we all became, like, really close friends. All nationalities and cultures.

Unique Themes that Did Not Fit the Swail, Redd, & Perna (2003) Framework

There were four surprising and unusual themes included in these interviews devoted to those Latino/a students thinking about and preparing for transfer that fall under social forces or factors. They include: "Belonging," "Civic Commitments," "Cultural Identity Intersections," and "Mentor Influences." These themes expand the Swail et al. (2003) framework to reflect the Latino/a cultural differences unique to these 8 students as evidenced by their individual responses in the dialogues. This framework can be found at the end of this dissertation under *Appendix D*. The framework maintains a full complement of social forces along with these

unique elements of the students' experiences in the social area. Cognitive forces and institutional

forces proved to be less prominent in this sample.

     Belonging. The concept of being a part of the community college for these students was

generally not to be found in the answers to the dialogue this researcher established with five of

the eight participants. Often, they admitted to feeling "alone" making transfer and advising

decisions on their own.

> Researcher: So do you feel connected to college, here?

> Manuel: No, I don't think so. I mean, okay. So this is my third year here.

> Researcher: Okay.

> Manuel: And the reason why is I self-advised myself the first couple of years.

> Researcher: Okay.

> Manuel: And so it could be that I just didn't take advantage of the advisers that are here.
> So I really would have been out of college. I think I'd blame it on more on myself, just
> that I wasn't, you know – take advantage of the resources that are available to me here.
> Often I would just feel alone.

     Yet those that were connected or involved in college functions seemed more at ease with

the hopes and dreams of transfer. "Trisha" is an officer in SGA, Phi Theta Kappalon Society, and

on the Presidents' Advisory Board at her community college. She explains who she feels is most

involved in activities on her campus. She is concerned about the Deferred Action for Childhood
Arrivals or DACA situation. This is an immigration issue which is being debated by the Federal
Government at the time of this writing.

> Trisha:…the ones involved, most of us are international students, like students who don't
> live at home, who have parents in other countries.

> I don't' know why, but like when I first got to (a different community college within the
> system), I felt like I was like the only student who was away from their parents, and when
> I came here and I met like students from Kenya, students from the Bahamas, from the
> Caribbean, there's some from –

Researcher: And you think they're the most involved students? You would say they're definitely the most involved students?

Trisha: Yeah.

Researcher: Why do you think that is? Can you put your finger on it?

Trisha: Sometimes I think it's like because we have it twice as hard. We want to do twice as much or just like we know we always have to go the extra mile to get things. Like, I mean, especially the government today, we're not really looked at as the best people.

Researcher: So you have to try twice as hard.

Trisha: That's how I always think I have to try, like, twice as hard as a regular student. So I'm just like you always have to be ahead so you can be looked at and respected.

Researcher: So along those same lines, you said, you know, you're getting ready to go and protest DACA and the lack of support now in government and you're getting ready to be involved in that political side of things and the social challenges, and you've had economic challenges.

Trisha: Yeah.

Researcher: So what other experiences, besides – the homeless story that you told me, which was pretty heavy, and other things that you've shared with me, what other things politically and socially have been barriers to you that you can see as far as transfer is concerned? Like specifically the things that have come up that have been barriers for you?

Trisha: I don't think, like, more for me, but more for like my friends, especially like the ones that have DACA issues, I know – I know there's a lot in (this state), and I know – I don't know how many we have at (this college), but I know (large university in-state) has like 27,000. And I know a couple here, I know at least 40 people that have it, and like one even broke down crying, we found out like he was planning to cancel (quit school). It's just like their life, their school, and now they can't – necessarily they cancel in six months, when are they going to transfer?

Researcher: Right.

More of the involved students who took advantage of belonging to their school were committed and persistent in directing energy toward transfer. However, some complained that there was no specific draw to being a part of the college due to outside responsibilities and commitments to work, school work, and family. "James," says:

Researcher: So this school has some community aspects, no?

James: Yes. I haven't been able to get involved in it because I work full time, but, yeah, they do.

Researcher: what kinds of service things do they do?

James: Community service to build your resume. They help you with internships, so.

Researcher: You haven't been able to do any of the internships?

James: I have not, no. it's usually for people that don't have –

Researcher: Have a job.

James: -- have a job. I have a full-time, pretty much – I know I don't need it, but I probably might need it along the way. It's just pretty much for people that are just out of high school that don't have, not even an entry-level job. I also help my family and go to class all the time.

Researcher: Oh, I see. All right.

Civic Commitments. Many of the students interviewed felt that it was important to be

civically involved. As represented by Trisha's comments above, this was very important to the

active students, and helped prove positive direction and persistence to transfer. Other students

mentioned some different civic-oriented Latino/a programs such as "Men Up" which provides

opportunities for picking up trash and other responsible activities for molding the Latino man.

A special initiative program for those students who could possibly be homeless was mentioned

by "Trisha" as she had experienced living at a half-way home. She says the following:

> I do want to like help others, not necessarily students but kind of like that area, that maybe are homeless or – I volunteer a lot and there's – called "Relatives." It's a place where homeless teenagers live. So I go there a lot and I'm actually joining another one that's called (Garbled) and that's for kids that like parents have died or they've gone through a traumatic thing. So I'm kind of starting now, but that's just volunteering. But I want to like maybe a foundation for like students are homeless and can't get to school, like a scholarship. I don't know. Hopefully, I want to like – I think that's my main goal is to, like, help other people and help people be aware of the things that other students have to go through, because I don't think everyone is kind of like woken up or

open to things that other people have to go through because they don't have to go through it so they think it doesn't exist.

And I think transferring can be hard because some of us don't like – when I came from Mexico, I didn't even know what the NCT or SAT was. I didn't know how much junior year mattered into going to that score. Nobody really took the time to explain what everything was. I kind of had to do research on my own, but I'm like – junior year, senior year I met a teacher. She was a Spanish teacher and she was the one who kind of walked me through, like, what the SAT was, what the – what university, college, what would be the pros and cons, and I still talk to her to this day. She's from Chicago, but she was – she was kind of like one of those teachers that cared about everyone, so she looked out for everyone and kind of like helped everyone.

Many of these students are driven by their need to interact with civic commitments and be a part of this need in society. Other students from this Pre-transfer group expressed interest in volunteering in SOAR and other programs for the homeless.

Cultural Identity Intersections. The way in which these students aligned themselves culturally was a determining factor in their lives and influenced their feelings and experiences towards their belief in successful transfer. Some aligned themselves as only Latin or only Mexican while others stressed Latino/American or Mexican/American. All of these students were very prideful of their cultural alignment but with varying emphasis on the American portion of their culture. James says:

James: I describe myself as pretty jumbled culturally, but I'm definitely –

Researcher: I like that. Let me write that down, "jumbled culturally." Okay.

James: Because I grew up almost the whole time in the U.S., but I have my dad and his whole extended family, so I had the very strong sense of that growing up, too.

Researcher: And that is again the –

James: They speak Spanish in the house because my dad won't speak anything else.

Researcher: Okay.

James: He can, he just won't do it.

Researcher: So your dad is more along the Spanish side, but your mom is –

James: My mom is American.

Researcher: Okay. So you would describe yourself personally as Spanish American, I guess.

James: I usually go with that. I just call myself Hispanic.

Others were much more adamant about their nationalities or cultural alignments. Note the following:

Researcher: Tell me a little bit about your family and your family background.

James: Well, I'm Honduran. I came here when I was 10, to the United States. My parents were both workers. We all came at the same time. We're very family oriented. What else. My mom is a housewife. My dad works as a construction engineer, and he's a plant manager now. And, yeah, pretty much – actually, haven't provided a lot financially. I moved out of there when I was 18 and I've been working since I was what, 15 –…

…Well, pretty much, you know, I'm legal here, you know. I'm legal. I wasn't – it's like a lot of, I guess, stereotypes with Latino students, immigrants, where they all come from a certain country, and it's not like that. And I feel like you have to prove yourself twice as much, even if you are, like, let's say for a job, you're competing against Caucasians, African-Americans, mostly Caucasians, you have to work twice, just to get half as much as a person will get, so.

Researcher: Okay.

James: So to put it – yeah. I have to prove myself. Like I have to do it – style just to put on my resume, fluff it up, just because of where I come from or my background. I guess they don't feel like it's good enough, so.

Researcher: What about the present situation with the DACA, you probably have read about that. What do you think about that?

James: I think it's unfair. It's definitely unfair because everybody has an aspect that helps the country, you know. A lot of people are saying that we're taking their jobs, but you don't see American people doing janitorial work and construction.

Researcher: Interesting.

James: It's mostly Hispanics that does that. So I don't know what they will do if they send all of those people back. Are they going to do it? Because like –…

… Yeah. Are they going to do it? Because, I mean, they don't – people in America don't like doing hard labor. It's the people that come from hardships that does it just to make a living.

At the time of this writing, the questions remain for some of these students as to whether or not to align themselves completely with an America, or for that matter, with a university which they feel is not accepting of them on an "equal playing field" with other students or people. The DACA issue remains unresolved.

Mentor Influences. This theme is present three-quarters of those students who were interviewed at the Pre-transfer level (six out of eight). Some refer directly to a key person who helped them transfer and others just make reference in passing to the importance of mentors who can help with transfer issues. To the student interviewees at the community colleges, mentorship appears to be a strong supporting influence in persistence toward hopeful transfer. Mentors provide a guide for these students who are mostly first-generation, in need of guidance.

"Nathan" had great difficulties with the website at his community college and therefore used his brother, who had been through the community college experience, to assist him directly as a mentor in registration. Nathan says:

> Nathan: Well, that was a really simple thing. It was just navigating the website, because he'd had to do it a bunch of times. I couldn't figure out how to register for courses or anything. So he just showed me how to do that.

 "Trisha" used a mentor in her dealings with community college as well. She says:

> For financial aid, before I came to (community college), it was just like me googling a link to getting to things. It was confusing. But like after I got here, now I go to my advisors, like – the men in my advisers is like the student life office people, but they both – they're both advisors for the clubs I am in, so I go to them for questions and things. They help mentor me.

Indirectly, while some students did not use the word mentor, they were using specific students, friends, teachers, and advisors to help direct their paths and make transfer more of a

reality. Some described them as "…my close Latino friends…" and also "...people who had been through this experience."

Experiences Post-Transfer

  Most prominent themes that fit the persistence framework. Again, the framework used by this researcher at the onset of the interviews is thoroughly described in Chapter Two: Literature Review. There are fundamentally three factors considered in this conceptual design. These include Cognitive Factors, Institutional Factors, and Social Factors as forces acting on any student's persistence in transfer.

  Cognitive Factors. The three most prominent factors or forces that emerged as themes with the eight Latino/a students in the "Post-Transfer" group were again dealing with "Quality of learning," "Critical thinking ability," and "Time management." All names presented in this dissertation are pseudonyms for the students' real names. In this manner, the most strict confidentiality is maintained.

  Quality of learning. The following idea sums up most of the students' concepts on their preparation for transfer from community college to a four-year institution. This was a common theme:

> Aleanna: I found the work we did at (community college) to be real easy and not the best preparation for (university). Nothing there was really that hard.

  Thus, most of the students in the "Post-transfer" group felt ill-prepared in the quality of learning they received at the two-year institutions from which they transferred. With reference to the quality of learning and preparation for transfer from community college to university level learning, many of the post-transfer students simply felt that they were inadequately prepared

specifically in the area of technology. The next conversation illuminates the lack of technology available to this community college transfer student and how far behind she felt upon transfer:

> Researcher: Yeah. So, it really was more high tech, wasn't it? I mean it was a challenge that way in transfer to (university).

> Dianne: Yeah. It was like a lot of other students already knew how to use the micro Ipads from other classes, as opposed to the community college I transferred from, they don't really have those same micro Ipads. So, theirs was – a lot of students already had background knowledge on how to use them, and like for me, it was the first time. It was interesting.

This lack of preparation or "gap" in quality of learning was a recursive theme and certainly to be expected in transfer students based on previous research (Ornelas & Solorzano, 2004).

Critical Thinking Ability. This theme presented itself in the way that the Latino/a "Post-transfer" students selected classes which made their transfer to university complete. In other words, they had to choose courses that counted for credit in their transfer. Thinking through which courses were reciprocal between community college and the universities to which they transferred was an example of cognitive forces. An example of this was provided by Dianne in the following excerpt from an interview session. When asked about her "issues with navigation of transfer" she said:

> It was more like navigating the stuff they required. I pretty much did everything on my own. I didn't really have much help except my cousin, that she – she transferred here as well from the community college and she pretty much helped me. She's like, "This is what you need to do." And she showed me on the website the little – the little steps that you have to complete in order to go through it. But other than that, I didn't have like the school help or anything.

Most of the "Post-transfer" interviewees described their experiences with choosing classes that counted in transfer as a "navigational barrier" for Latino/a students. Juan said the following: "The website was confusing, but I found the classes I needed on my own."

This sums up the critical thinking skills necessary for a positive transfer for this group of students.

Time management. With this theme, the Latino/a students concurred that they all had to work harder to make their busy college timetables workout. This was a common theme which emerged. Almost all of the students held part-time jobs and balanced fulltime course loads along with this. Realizing deadlines for bills and other lifestyle changes were exposed in their lives as university students and family and friends worked to help these Latino/a students.

> Researcher: Can you kind of explain that more, maybe tell me a little bit more about the deadlines?
>
> Juan: Yeah. Just recently I had my mother – I received an e-mail from her, like especially with– for example, graduation application deadlines, and a particular scholarship deadline for next month, and since she's been kind of keep me updated, I've been able to kind of keep on top of things. Even when it comes to – what else – even – even little things like as rent, even though like I would normally, like, remember, she would – if it was the week of when rent is due and I hadn't done it yet, then she would – she would let me know.
>
> Researcher: Give you a little reminder?
>
> Juan: Yeah. Yeah, which is good.
>
> Researcher: That's good. Yeah. That's excellent. Very important.

One Latina student explained the issues of time management at the university level in a way that clearly expressed these transfer students' typical problems and needs.

> Researcher: I remember the last time we talked, you were talking about working full time when you were here (at the community college), and evening classes, those were –
>
> Dianne: Yeah.
>
> Researcher: -- and even when you got to (university), pretty tough, huh?
>
> Dianne: Yeah. I mean, I had a few night classes. So like taking the night shuttle, although my roommate Juan was very, like, helpful and he would give me rides sometimes.
>
> Researcher: That's good. That's good. And then just dealing with the transit system, huh?

Dianne: Oh, yeah. Getting to know it, yeah. That was another thing. They actually offered a class a "SSC", also –

Researcher: Oh, really?

Dianne: -- yeah, for the transit system, which was helpful. And then they introduce you to like Apps you can download on your phone, like where you can check the bus when it comes and stuff.

Researcher: All right. Well, that helps managing your time.

Overall, the cognitive factors/forces were less prominent with this group of interviewees than represented by the original persistence framework as depicted in *figure 1* page 46 of this dissertation.

Institutional Factors. Three themes emerged from the conversations with this group of post-transfer Latino/a students. These themes included financial aid, student services, and admissions.

Financial aid. Almost all the interviewees who were post-transfer reflected upon their need or use of financial aid (7 out of 8). Some stated that the forms were difficult to complete and understand for first-generation college students. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form was particularly confusing to some respondents. One Latina student "Emily" answered a question in the following way:

Researcher: But it's difficult, isn't it, to figure out the system, to figure out where to apply and what to do?

Emily: Yeah. And I feel like they – again, there's like a communication barrier for like parents who are coming in the United States, they don't really know what college is like, you know. Most of them haven't even experienced no more than a high school education, you know. So they don't – they don't know what, you know, like the education system here in America has to offer. They don't understand the forms.

Another subject of confusion, which came up consistently, reflected a compliance with the conceptual framework under financial aid, yet with a key difference for only Latino/a

students. Scholarships for only Latino/a students are difficult to obtain. This was best explained

by the following quotation:

> Earnestine: And I don't have scholarships yet, because again, (my community college) is a very, you know, Latino-heavy base, so if there was a scholarship that was you can apply because you're Latino, it would be like taken like that because everyone's Spanish. Maybe here, if there was a scholarship for Latinos, maybe I could apply and I would get it.

> Another interviewee explained the financial aid form issue like this:

> Researcher: But it's difficult, isn't it, to figure out the system, to figure out where to apply and what to do, which forms you need and so on?

> Dianne: Yeah. And I feel like they – again, there's like a communication barrier for like parents who are coming in the United States, they don't really know what college is like, you know. Most of them haven't even experienced no more than a high school education, you know. So they don't – they don't know what, you know, like the education system here in America has to offer. I feel that's another – like, barrier for Latinos. Especially filling out the forms.

Overall, filing forms with financial aid and in other areas was complicated by the forms

themselves, lack of help, and the language barrier for these Latino/a students.

Student services. Many of the interviewees in this category felt that the use of most

student services was helpful. The following quotation focuses on academic services which this

student found helpful.

> Juan: Yeah. I think it was mainly helpful because I hadn't had a calculus course since I was a senior in high school, and, like, going into a Calculus 3 class three years later without exposure to math was very difficult, and unfortunately, the first test showed me it was.
> So I was able to – I was able to talk with some of the tutors. Of course, it was a free service and so it was a public kind of thing, so they were very helpful in that. And even like a bunch of friends and I, like, we learned a lot more and we ended up getting good grades, like, in the end.

> Researcher: That's good.

Another interviewee endorsed a completely different type of student service. In this statement "Dianne" explains her involvement with the Student Service Center or "Student Success Center."

> Dianne: So, I mean, all of that was reinforced. And, like, "We have this. We have SSC," which is like a new building, and they have all the counseling center in there. They help you with your career. So they really enforce, like, all the different options that you had to go to get help.
>
> Researcher: What's – what does SSC stand for again?
>
> Dianne: Student Success Center.
>
> Researcher: Oh, yeah. Okay. So that was a way for you to feel more comfortable what with your surroundings and –
>
> Dianne: Yeah. SSC had, like, a learning center, like, inside of it where you can go to do homework and stuff. So it's like a lot more approachable.
>
> Researcher: Did that kind of remind you of here (this coffee shop environment) or not so much, or how was that? Was it comparable, or –
>
> Dianne: I guess I thought it was good, just because – I mean, I never really had difficulties with classes here, but over there I feel like sometimes you do need that extra help.
>
> Researcher: Yeah.
>
> Dianne: So, it was nice to know that you could make an appointment to get someone to help you.

Admissions. This theme was brought out by numerous interviews, categorically showing that Latino/a students have issues with the admissions process. The following conversation summarizes many of the students' views on their conflicts with admissions. In this quotation, the barrier of the admission process is overcome by a helpful counselor at the community college but little help is provided at the university.

Researcher: How did they help you?

Suzy: Okay. So when I told her about wanting to transfer and – without my associate's degree she recommended it. And from there she just – I personally sent my letter. Like I know how to do that, but from there, when I got accepted she told me what needed to be done and to check on the website, the stuff they tell you to do, but they're not very clear. So, you know, she just tells – she told me like what's – like where this room is located in order to get the information I need, or, for example, the writing test, also, I didn't know I had to do that. She said it was a requirement. So I went and – I went to go do it as well, and I didn't know I could do it, like, sitting there on my laptop, you know.

Suzy: -- but at the community college, I feel like they do everything for you. I feel – like, not everything for you, like where, you know – but they're very helpful. For example, with financial aid over there, their office, they'd help you fill out the application, they'd sit there and explain to you what you needed. They'd show you. You know, just small stuff…

like that, compared to here (university), they tell you what form that you need and you don't know what the form looks like or, you know, it's just a big – you know, it's a big jump to where they help you to where they don't help you, type of thing.

The next quotation refers to a Latina student's frustration with admissions forms. This was a recurring barrier for many of the "Post-transfer" group.

Dianne: I just – not being knowledgeable about, like, transferring, kind of like guidance counselors kind of helped me through that, you know. I wouldn't have known on my own. I guess like the paperwork, like you have to fill it out, you know, make sure all your credits transfer.

Social Factors. The Swail, Redd, & Perna (2003) framework consists of numerous social factors that contribute to the student experience of persistence and achievement (see *figure 1*). While many independent categorical codes are indicated on this framework, the predominance of these codes as they appeared in conversations with the "Post-transfer" Latino/a students for this research was focused on the following fewer specific themes. Within this caption of social factors, the most prominent theme amongst this group of post-transfer interviewees was a consistent reference to the importance of family.

Family influence/values. This theme was represented by all respondents to the interviews. Some referred to their families as "…the most supportive people in my transfer from

one school to the other…," while others said their parents were simply "…there for pep talks." The value placed on the parental support was truly important to all interviewees. Some pointed to economic support, some to transportation support, and others to hopes and dreams of being more than what their parents were or had been. Many suggested that siblings, nephews, aunts, cousins, etc. provided strong support in transfer and helped to "…pave the way…" or "…set the example…" for their brothers and sisters. This was represented by an understanding of navigating the system through previous family experience and advice. This is supported by much research (see Chapter Two: Literature Review).

Unique Themes that Did Not Fit the Swail, Redd, & Perna (2003) Framework

The surprising and unusual themes included in this section devoted to those Latino/a students already having transferred fall under social forces or factors. Once again, in a recursive manner (Moustakas, 1994) they lead to the reformatting of the persistence framework of Swail et al., (2003). Interestingly enough, the same areas were exposed. These concepts were parallel to those seen with the Pre-transfer group. Again, they include: "Belonging," "Civic Commitments," "Cultural Identity Intersections," and "Mentor Influences." (see Appendix D).

Belonging. The concept of **"**Alone" or "On My Own" was represented through the stories of six of the eight Latino/a students who had already transferred from a community college. "Alone" was presented as a feeling that the student was the only one of his/her culture wrestling with the issues of transfer including filing financial aid forms, navigating the application, and figuring out which courses were reciprocal to the university to which the student was transferring. "Alone" was a theme that was also strongly represented, in which students expressed a sensation of being the only Latino/a student in a particular classroom or being singled out by a teacher/professor. "On My Own" represented a similar theme but more

dominant, as the student projected the statement that transfer was achieved solely by oneself with no help from friends, family, or student services. An example of this "On My Own" was represented by the following conversation with Michael. On this concept of "On My Own," he states:

> Researcher: But then once you got here, you found the student support services helpful, or no?
>
> Michael: There was a lot of things, like – by the time I decided to come here, I had spoke – I had – I had realized I wasn't going to get any help, or at least – that was my mindset. So I said, you know, "I have to do everything on my own."
>
> So I e-mailed the history department and asked to speak to the head of the history of the department to see if this was a place I wanted to transfer. I talked to people in the business school, not using transfer services at all, actually. And then, you know, I did – I did go along with, you know, the official transfer process, but I don't remember speaking to anybody. I remember going to a transfer day, but I kind of felt, especially since I came here a little bit older –
>
> Researcher: Yep.
>
> Michael: I kind of felt like this is – you know, that's for the younger person. That's for somebody else. For me, I knew I, kind of at this point, I had to do things on my own, or at least that's what it felt like.

Another example of being the only Latina in a classroom and sensing this lack of belonging was demonstrated by Dianne. She explains her "aloneness" and how she overcomes these feelings.

> Dianne: Definitely the demographic of (My university). I grew up in (Blank) and it's very Latino-heavy, but in (My university), my first couple of weeks I honestly thought I was the only Spanish person that went here because I did not – I could not find any Spanish person here. But then I started reaching out to, like Latino, student alliance, you know, and other Latino-based groups, and also like Latino or multicultural, like, frats and sororities, and so I got – I felt more at home, I guess, and other than that – like, when I'm in my – because I'm taking my higher level classes now that I'm a junior at (My university), and now there I feel a little bit like alone, because I'm the only really Spanish person in my class, I feel that's pursuing elementary education, so.

Civic commitments. The concept or theme represented by "Civic Commitments" was recursive in many cases. Students were members of many different types of clubs doing things that represented responsibility in the community. This helped to socialize the students and helped them meet other Latino/as who were interested in similar things. Transfer issues were solved by hearing others in these clubs speak of their problems and explain how they had overcome them by navigating the system. First generation students appear to use this community involvement to make up for a lack of family college/university experience. While family played a role in all the interviewee's responses, in some cases it was a supportive and active role, involved with the college, while in others it was a weaker, yet morale bolstering role as a "cheerleader" for the student.

In discussing "Civic Commitments," one quotation and story truly helps the research community understand the importance of this theme and its application to Latino/a transfer. Note the following from Leanna:

> Leanna: -- club about volunteer hours for honor students, and we had to do – we had to have a certain amount of hours as a volunteer, and I remember I sat there thinking, you know, "What can I do for my community?"
>
> Researcher: Yeah.
>
> Leanna: And my – one of my friends was like, "Well, you could volunteer at the Food Bank." And I was like, "Well, I feel like everybody does that. You know, I don't feel like I would do much for my community just volunteering at the Food Bank."
>
> So I thought, I struggled a lot in elementary school and even through transfer with the language, with English. So I thought, you know, why not start a program where we tutor Hispanic students and help them – you know, help them break that barrier.
>
> Researcher: Yes.
>
> Leanna: And so I did that with the help of a friend – a friend of mine. He was affiliated with the Methodist church, and we went and spoke to the pastor at (a United Methodist Church), and she allowed us to start a program there at her church, and now it is a ministry of that church.

Researcher: That is interesting.

Leanna: It's called Una Familia.

This shows the sense of commitment to an organization which helps other Latino/a students learn the English language and become more familiar with the transfer and college process. Another Latino student expresses his own thoughts on community involvement with the following words:

> Michael: It's like you need to be involved in support of the community to meet new people and make the transfer more…sort of…natural for everyone.

"Michael" is involved with a college-supported soup kitchen, feeding the poor and getting to know all manner of society. His transfer was socially very successful as well.

Cultural Identity Intersections. The topic of being "Mexican-American" or "Culturally Independent" seemed to be a response that helped define each interviewee's social, political, and economic views of transfer. While most students had no comments for this question from the second protocol (see Appendix B) or had no response on social and political involvement, those that did respond, provided rich data through stories of being treated marginally or being treated in unfair ways.

"Juan" and others represented themselves as partially American and partially Latino/a or culture-specific. In their conversations, these students found less of a constant social struggle in their transfer to four-year institutions. They exhibited pride in coming to America through their stories. Observe the following comments by Juan.

> Researcher: Okay. So I guess we use words like Hispanic and Latino and Latina and Cuban and all these different terms to – to identify your culture. What do you say – when people ask you about your family's alignment, what would you say it is?

Juan: I would just say I'm half American and half Mexican, you know. There's not – like, I don't feel like one presides over the other or the other is lesser than another. I consider myself half. So I'm proud to say that, you know.

Researcher: That's good.

Researcher: What's one word or two words you could use to describe your transfer experience?

Juan: Let's see. I think to describe the transfer experience?

Researcher: Or even your experience on the whole with college, you know, going from small time place to a –

Juan: I think it's just like a smooth transition, I guess.

Researcher: Okay.

Juan: Like it wasn't – there wasn't anything really difficult. I mean, like me and my – I have to thank one of my roommates because she was, like, on – like on the money when it came to figuring out a place to live. Like it was, what, July – not July, but like February or March when we had started looking at the contracts, and then when I ended up going to the transfer orientation, there were people that were still looking for roommates and looking for a place to live, so. I do have to –

Researcher: You were on the ball.

Juan: Yes. It's like, "Oh, we're already living here," you know. It was – it was pretty good.

Others of this post-transfer group were more independent in their cultural identities. Note

the following:

Researcher: These times are filled with all kinds of political and social and economic challenges for Latina and Latino students. Can you tell me how you've experienced that, or if you have experienced it…

Dianne: I feel like I'm not a very political person, so even though there are a lot of controversies like with Hispanics and stuff, I don't really like to get myself involved in politics, so I just kind of brush it off, like whatever is happening. And, I mean, I do keep up with it. I'm aware of what's happening, but –

Researcher: Sure.

Dianne: And I guess, like, also listening to other Latino students who were here for, you know, just like him, from freshman year to like to where they are now, like hearing their experiences, too, as well, comforted me a little bit more, made me feel less alone.

Researcher: Great. That's good. That gives me an idea of what you were going through – some idea.

Dianne: Yeah.

Researcher: And I guess it would be interesting to hear, like, maybe a story or a specific example. Can you think of an example, or am I putting you on the spot, you know?

Dianne: No, you're not.

Okay. So an example would be for my TLED 301 class, I was the only – I was the only Spanish person there, and then we – my professor touched a topic on English – English learning learners, something like that.

Researcher: Okay.

Dianne: EL – it's like children who – who come from different countries and they have to learn a certain language, so – I mean, they have to learn the English language, so when she was talking about that, I don't know, I felt a little bit like put on the spot because she would make, like, a lot of eye contact with me and she would like – and she would like ask me, like, "Oh, how was it like for you?" And I guess you could say she like put me on the spot a little bit. I was the only Latino student in that class. Everyone else was white and black.

Researcher: Yeah.

Dianne: Like there weren't like no Asians or no Middle Easterns.

Researcher: Yeah. You were the one –

Dianne: I was the only one. So I wasn't – I wasn't sure if she was trying to like – like let everyone else know what it was like through my eyes –

Researcher: Yeah.

Dianne: -- but I guess she was – she was going at it at a good intention, not so much at a mad intention, not trying to be like prejudice or racist or anything.

Researcher: Okay.

Dianne: She was – she was really trying to like let everyone else know how it's like. Because here in (institutions' city), when I did my observation, I didn't see, like,

any diversity. Like there is no diversity in (institutions' city). When people say that (this institution) is like a very diverse school, I just kind of laugh inside –

Researcher: (Laugh,) yeah.

Dianne: -- because I'm like – I'm like, "Where"? you know?

Researcher: Exactly. Yeah. That's exactly –

Dianne: We may have, like, you know, like Indian or Middle Eastern or like Spanish or – but they're not as heavily based as like, maybe, the black that we have here, you know. So it's, I don't know. That's just my opinion, you know.

Researcher: Yeah. That's good. That's what I'm here for. I'm here for your opinion. So that's for sure.

Yet another view on independent cultural independence was explicated by Michael. He

comes across very animated in this interview and shows his angst toward an unfair kind of

transfer specifically for the Latino/a culture. His views are strongly aligned with the present

political situation for Latino/a immigrants.

Michael: And, you know, these are real issues and it's really sad to see how, like, the rich manipulates the poor for their best interest and turns the people who could benefit from everybody, like from working together, against each other. That's how I truly see it.

But, a lot of people are talking about going here and going there. I might be working abroad, but I'm from here. I was born here. I'm not leaving. No one's forcing my family to leave. Like, I don't think it would ever get like that. I just believe in the system too much, the American system too much to believe that you could ever like forcefully move people. You'll have, like, racist stuff, you know, and you'll have stuff that will marginalize people, I mean, that was before this administration that's marginalized minorities and things like, but now it's more out there. At least now you see the enemy that you fight instead of it being in the shadows.

But, yeah, I'm not going anywhere. My dad's not going anywhere, like. We're from here, you know. I'm just invested in building my version of America. I'm not really concerned about how other people feel about it.

Mentor influences. The concept of "Mentorship" was exposed through the

conversational, open-ended questions asked of those students who had already transferred from

community college to four-year institutions. This idea is represented by seven of the eight

students who had transferred, through their direct references as well as indirect references. The need for this specific helping service would most definitely appear to be a necessity to be provided by student services at each higher education institution. To lend a helping hand, to guide students in a unique advising capacity, at a level each student can comprehend is truly important for this group of Latino/a students.

"Dianne" sums up the mentor influences expressed by many interviewees.

Dianne: I wish, like, (My university) partnered up transfer students with like mentors, you know, like maybe junior or senior mentors that are in the same major as them, you know, and these mentors have to be transfer students, too. They can't just be like four-year students. They have to be, like, transfer students. And it was mandatory that, like, each senior or junior at some point had a mentor – a transfer junior or senior had to mentor these new transfer people, you know? Because that would help – that would prevent, like, so many phone calls.

Researcher: Yeah.

Dianne: Because I was constantly calling, because I had no idea, you know, and I feel like that's what (my university) should do in order to make them – but I feel like (my university) wants you to struggle. I feel like they don't – they don't – I don't know. I don't want to -- feel like they want you to succeed, because that's too much either. They do want you to succeed, obviously, if they're providing all this help, but I feel like (my university) wants you to get, like, twisted up and all of that complicated stuff that really, at the end of the day, when I look back, I'm like, "It really wasn't even that complicated."

Michael indicates the transfer mentorship influence in unique words:

Researcher: So if there's one word or maybe two that describes your feelings about your transfer experience to (students' university), can you sum it up in like one word or two words? Hard to do, maybe.

Michael: I would say, I'm not sure this makes sense, but to be foggy. It's like a foggy experience.

Researcher: Foggy.

Michael: You're kind of -- you feel like you might be walking through like a forest. It's a very foggy forest.

Researcher: Yeah.

Michael: You know at the end -- you know the forest is going to end at the other side. Like, community college is on one side of the forest; university -- four-year university is on the other side of the forest, it's just getting through this kind of foggy forest with a very poor guide.

Researcher: That's good. Getting through with a poor guide.

Michael: I do -- I believe -- I firmly believe that the transfer process and then -- and then -- well, the transfer process coupled with, you know, the commuter life and non-traditional life with being a student at a university, to me probably those are the two things that make people kind of stop school. You know what I mean? Because you don't really feel -- one, it's really hard to get here, and then, two, once you get here, you don't necessarily feel … but perhaps a mentor or good advice from an advisor could help.

Researcher: Yeah.

Experiences Pre-Transfer and Post-Transfer Compared

The three areas of the interviewees' Pre-transfer and Post-transfer experience will be discussed and compared in the following section. These areas include Cognitive Factors/Forces, Institutional Factors/Forces and Social Factors/Forces (Swail et al. 2003). The themes were quite recursive yet slightly different for each group of interviewees. This was reflected in the balance of responses or the numbers of responses reflected by each theme.

Cognitive Factors/Forces. The theme of quality of learning was quite similar for both the Pre-transfer and Post-transfer groups. Both groups commented that they were ill-prepared for college-level coursework. The Latino/a students from the community colleges expressed poor preparation in their high school experiences as well as poor preparation in reference to the language barrier, particularly noting Spanish to English. The Post-transfer students indicated poor preparation in their actual transfer from community colleges to their universities especially in the area of technology.

Critical thinking ability was very similar as well. However, students at the community college level (Pre-transfer group) seemed better advised toward the prospects of transfer while

those Latino/a students who had transferred commented on doing much navigating of their transfer on their own. This created more confusion on dealing with websites as well as choosing classes.

Time management was an issue to be expected by both groups. It is interesting to note that almost all the Latino/a students interviewed, both Pre-transfer and Post-transfer, were living off campus and managing full-time course loads as well as full-time jobs. This is a trend worthy of future study, but most certainly a cultural trend. Even those with scholarships and financial aid maintained jobs while balancing coursework.

Institutional Factors/Forces. Financial aid was most prevalent at the university level for those Post-transfer Latino/Latina students (7 out of 8). This was slightly less at the community college level. This could be due to two things. First, two of the students did not know about financial aid and were self-advised, and second, one student could not use financial aid as he was older and had been in the navy where he felt using his GI Bill would be more sensible at the university level. The FAFSA form while having been revised and possibly more approachable to navigation by the Pre-transfer students was an area of confusion for the Post-transfer group.

The theme of student services programs was referred to by both groups in many ways. New initiatives for Latino/a students such as "Men Up" are quite popular. The student success centers and tutoring services are most definitely being utilized by Latino/a students. However, some students are still unaware of these services, particularly at the two-year institutions. Word-of-mouth is the most prominent way these services are spoken of and shared. This is a concern, as many of the Latino/a students are working and balancing school. They just work and go to school without connecting or "belonging" to the institution of school. In this manner, they most certainly do not get the message about these services.

Admissions as a theme was only problematic the community college level with 3 out of 8 Pre-transfer students. At the Post-transfer level, admission was a problem with 5 out of 8 of these students. The issue lies predominantly with the university level counselors. These students encountered problems with transferring credits, understanding forms, and proper counseling.

Social Factors/Forces. Many students at the Pre-transfer level utilized family support monetarily, morally, and as examples for paving the way to college and helping "cheer them on" to transfer. The same was true at the Post-transfer level. This was a huge theme for all of the students.

Unique themes outside of Swail et al. (2003). Looking at "Belonging" in these two groups, it is interesting to compare the sense of "Alone" and "On My Own" permeating the students at the university (Post-transfer) level and the 3 Latino/a students perhaps more engaged at the community college level (Pre-transfer). While almost all the university students commented on how difficult it was feeling loneliness and feeling singled out as unique, and a similar trend was pointed out by community college Latino/a students. There was, however, a small number, especially at the community college showing some sense of belonging. Perhaps the smaller size of the community colleges provided more nurturing of belonging. This is by far a subject of concern for all higher educational institutions.

The dedication to "Civic commitments" of this Latino/a culture as evidenced by these interviews is astounding. At the Pre-transfer level, groups like "Men Up" and "Relatives" are brought out by the Latino/Latina students as they volunteer for soup kitchens, picking up litter, and helping the homeless. This theme permeates the Post-transfer group as well, with one student even developing her own ministry to Hispanics who need help with ESL at a Methodist church.

"Cultural identity intersections" are a mixture of both Pre-transfer and Post-transfer groups. It is safe to say many felt prideful of being culturally unique as well as American, yet the political climate at the time of this writing produces many questions for the Latino/Latina culture. Will transfer create an "equal playing field" for this culture? Do they have to work "twice as hard to be accepted?" Certainly, barriers need to be addressed, and quickly, as this community rapidly becomes one of the largest group of minorities in the United States higher education system.

"Mentor influences" were indicated by both Pre-transfer and Post-transfer groups both indirectly and directly. The Pre-transfer Latino/a students found assistance in family members who had been through preparation for college and some transfer processes before. They used these others to "pave the way" and provide support. Others at the community colleges found mentors in teachers and advisors. They helped shape and mold a successful transfer preparation. At the Post-transfer level, several students mentioned that they wished for help in transfer performance with the use of an assigned student who had transferred. Some included the necessity for guidance through a peer who had experienced what was needed for transfer.

Summary of Findings and Transition to Chapter Five

The newly uncovered themes of "Belonging," "Civic Commitments," "Cultural Identity Intersections," and "Mentor Influences" were truly unique to this study. They provide new concepts to this study of the successful transfer of Latino/Latina students from community colleges to four-year institutions. Through the initial process of refining the focus of this study and through the 32 interviews encompassing the end results of the findings, this study serves the administrator, professoriate, and students involved with the Latino/Latina community.

In the final chapter, Chapter 5, the limitations, recommendations for future research, and this researcher's personal reflections will be introduced. Also, the meaning of the findings will be assigned to student service practitioners, higher education policymakers, and the professoriate. The final chapter summarizes all results to give a sense of finality to this research.

CHAPTER FIVE: INTERPRETATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter highlights the major findings of this study of sixteen Latino/Latina students who experienced preparation for successful transfer and successful transfer to a four-year institution from a two-year institution. The chapter presents a review of the study's purpose, research questions, methodology, and results. Limitations of the study as well as contributions to existing scholarship and higher education practice are discussed, as well.

This qualitative study focused on the significance of transfer to Latino/Latina students as they maintain their persistence through higher education. The study utilized previous research by Card (2015) to focus on the sensitizing concepts. Two sets of semi-structured interviews in a Phase One, Phase Two format (see Appendix C) from eight community college Latino/a students and eight university Latino/a students provided the answers to the following research questions:

1. How do Latino/a students who are anticipating transfer from two-year institutions to four-year institutions experience their transfer preparation?

2. How do Latino/a students who have transferred from two-year institutions to four-year institutions share their experiences?

3. How are the experiences of Latino/a students who intend to transfer and those who have transferred comparable with one another?

In looking at this dissertation study, the initial draft protocol was developed following a variation on the theory or framework including the concepts of Swail, Redd & Perna (2003) (see Figure 1). This framework was restructured to represent specifically Latino/a issues and the themes presented in the interviews (see Appendix D). Analysis of these themes presented many categorical codes as well as thematic codes which were structured under cognitive, institutional, and social forces. It was then determined that four themes were entirely unique to this study of sixteen Latino/a students and representative of their struggles in preparation for and completion of transfer. These four themes include Belonging, Civic Commitments, Cultural Identity Intersections, and Mentor Influences.

Summary of Findings

Analysis of the eight Pre-transfer Latino/a student sets of interviews and those of the eight Post-transfer interviewees yielded significant thematic content. The most unique themes emitted by this interview process were all highly significantly associated with the Latino/a culture, transfer preparation, and persistence itself. These themes included Belonging, Civic Commitments, Cultural Identity Intersections, and Mentor Influences.

Experiences of the Pre-Transfer Group. This group mostly exhibited a lack of Belonging, although those that were members of clubs and participated in school activities appeared better suited for the preparation for transfer than the Post-Transfer group. They showed more direct mentor influences in preparation for transfer through family, friends, and close advisors. They showed both strong political opinions as well as Americanized ideals in their Cultural Identities. Many were civically active.

The Social Forces of the family played an important role in this Pre-transfer group. Family bolstered morale and helped financially as well as set examples for their children. As

first-generation college students planning to earn four-year degrees, these Latino/a students wanted to excel beyond the achievements of their parents, wishing to make them proud. With the theme of Belonging, some felt alone and "self-advised" while many utilized the student services and felt more comfortable with transfer preparation. Civic commitments were a huge part of this Latino/a group and provided the interesting impetus for transfer. Many felt unsure about transfer due to the immigration issues at the time of this writing. Their Cultural Identities and alignment to the United States were mixed.

Looking at the Cognitive Forces in their stories, there was definitely an agreement upon a lack of quality learning at the community college level. They were aware of the need to specifically choose classes carefully so that reciprocity occurred in transfer. A focus on time management was expressed as a necessity. This was to be expected by all minority or any minority transferring students (Cuyjet et al., 2011).

Institutional forces were also typical of all of the interviewees, including the prominent use of financial aid. Yet, there were little or no issues with the admissions process, the forms for FAFSA, or admittance. There was a great emphasis from this group on the importance of student services, particularly Career Services.

Overall, the transfer process for this group of Latino/a students is headed in a positive direction in higher education. The Pre-Transfer group showed a strong inclination towards understanding cognitive forces of matching classes and credentials that actually were transferable to the universities to which they wished to transfer. Those that participated in school activities also showed a sense of Belonging at the community college level in the fact that they were not simply attending school then leaving to go to work. This can be interpreted as somewhat contradictory to previous research which states that a vast majority of Latino/a students at the community college

level are not involved in activities outside of class and work (Cuyjet et al., 2011). This essence of Belonging was inspired by their strong desires for Mentor Influences. The community college students in this study were actually more involved in college than this researcher expected.

Experiences of the Post-Transfer Group. This group showed evidence of a lack of belonging, many civic commitments, a multitude of identity intersections, and very little direct mentor influences. Many from this group expressed a "foggy" or uneasy transition in transfer but most felt like they made it on their own. They projected a need for student services but remained aloof.

Cognitive Forces were especially noted through an agreement upon a lack of quality learning at the community college level, a need to specifically choose classes carefully so that reciprocity occurred in transfer, and a focus on time management was expressed. This was to be expected by all or any transferring students.

Institutional forces exhibited by the interviews included confusion over financial aid, some use of student services, and confusion over forms for admission. These Latino/a students were unique in their feelings of very strong family ties. While overall, English was their second language, and their families spoke little if any at all of this language, the consensus was that family support meant everything to these students even when their families were simply a "cheerleading" force and attended very few school functions. Most of these students were the first generation and represented collegiate goals many of their parents did not understand.

The unique social forces of belonging, civic commitments, cultural identity intersections, and mentor influences were also exclusive to this group of Latino/a Post-transfer students. They represented a feeling of "aloneness" or lack of belonging in most cases, yet were adamant about getting involved in civic causes. Their cultural intersections were very mixed, with those

proclaiming more alignment to the United States feeling more confident in overall cultural

assimilation. They were almost all in agreement on the need for mentorship in transfer for better

success.

Group Experiences Compared. Overall, the Pre-transfer students seemed better

prepared, in many ways, to transfer than the Post-transfer group as they each reflected on their

individual situations. As evidenced by the interviews, many of the Post-transfer students (six of

eight) expressed confusion about the transfer process, in looking back. Most of the Pre-Transfer

students were exposed to positive student services and mentor influences and were comfortable

and prideful of their individual cultural identities. Some of the Post-Transfer students (five of

eight), on the other hand, provided very mixed feelings on their identities, and yet most struggled

less to identify their most prominent mentors.

There was an extreme lack of belonging in over two-thirds of both groups, overall. This

is evidenced by the fact that most all the Pre-Transfer students worked and lived on their own,

simply going to school and then leaving for work. Few had connectivity to the colleges they

attended, except some of the Latino/a students who found this through mentor influences. Even

the university Post-Transfer students were mostly commuters and maintained little or no ties to

their universities except for those with strong mentors and strong involvement with school

activities.

Civic commitments and church involvement played an important role in the lives of

almost all the interviewees. Twelve of sixteen students were involved in some type of school

organization, whether it was "Men Up" for Latino men or SOAR at the community college level,

these organizations helped to bridge the transfer process. Churches and soup kitchens, as well as

trash pick-up, were all areas of civic involvement for both groups of students.

Identity intersections were mixed. The community college, Pre-transfer students were mostly all very prideful of their unique cultural backgrounds, yet some identified as predominantly American and were very proud of this factor. Those who had successfully transferred to the university level showed that this cultural identity, and the intersection of one's personal identity with one's culture, played an important role in how they became part of the institutional culture and how they made a successful transfer. Most of the Post-transfer students identified as part of the American culture of the United States, yet unique as to their personal place in society and mindful of their cultures.

A very important finding was the fact that families of these Latino/a students exhibited a high value for higher education. Most of the previous literature (Ceja, 2006; Hearn, 1991; Hostler, Schmit & Vesper, 1999) indicates Latino/a families simply focus most on job-related experience and working toward this goal. As indicated by these findings, the families for these two groups of Latino/a students placed a high value on getting an education at the higher educational level. The families may not completely understand the higher educational process but they are strong "cheerleaders" for the success of their students at colleges and universities.

Discussion of Findings Through Relationship of Findings to Theory

Latinos/as make up the largest racial/ethnic minority group as well as being one of the fastest growing of such groups in the United States (NCES, 2007). Accessing equitable higher education opportunities and achieving educational success has been a tremendous challenge for this culture (Perez & Ceja, 2010). Understanding the relationship between real Latino/a students' experiences, first hand, and how this relates to transfer from community colleges to universities is the crux of this dissertation. The findings will be discussed in relation to the groups of students studied and the research questions.

Pre-Transfer through Post-Transfer Experiences

Cognitive experiences. This group of eight community college Latinos/as (Pre-transfer) and eight university Latinos/as (Post-transfer) felt ill-prepared to face the coursework involved at the community college level. This points directly to the theme of "Quality of learning." Some used the tutoring services available, particularly those writing services available in English. Of course, for almost all, English was a second language, and therefore this finding is to be expected and is supported by Ceja (2006). But are Adelman (1998, 2006) and Hagedorn (2004) correct in suggesting these students are far less likely to transfer? This researcher sees successful transfer as a most likely direction for at least five of the eight interviewed from the Pre-transfer group who used tutoring in English as well as many who utilized services for remediation in writing from the Post-transfer group.

The theme of "Critical thinking" was reflected by students choosing the right courses for reciprocity in transfer. Students who were advised found no problems preparing for transfer and those self-advised often faced problems with this. Ceja (2006) points to the root of this issue being accounted for through first-generation naivety. Finally, under cognitive themes, this researcher encountered time management concerns by all these students. This is justifiably unique to college students working at least part-time as well as going to school full-time. This is distinctly a part of today's Latino/a student culture and should be reflected upon by scholars and practitioners.

Institutional experiences. The themes uncovered by the Latino/a student dialogues in this study including "Financial aid," "Admissions," and "Student services" can all be supported by the scholarly work of many (Cuyjet et al., 2011; Hossler et al., 1999). Both the Pre-transfer group and Post-transfer group utilized financial aid in combination with other sources of money to pay

for college in sensible ways. Most saw no issues with admissions, yet the Post-Transfer group

complained about the FAFSA form and reciprocal courses for transfer. Many mentioned

navigating technology such as the websites and newer software programs. They were also fond

of career services, utilizing "Men Up" and "Passport Programs" to prepare for transfer, as well

as "Student services" at the university level. This theme is important as many of these

experiences are more contemporary and add meaning to their need and contribution to this

research.

Social experiences. Family plays into this research in so many ways (Ceja, 2006; Hearn,

1991; Hossler, Schmit & Vesper, 1999). The most prominent concept learned from this research

points to the fact that family means so much more than just economic support to the Latino/a

students at these institutions of higher education. Their siblings often paved the way for their

college experiences when "…mom and dad have no college experience, only speak Spanish, and

are only cheerleaders for me." ("Jose").

The four most distinctive themes including "Belonging," "Civic Commitments,"

"Cultural Identity Intersections," and "Mentor Influences" all are unique to this area of research

on Latino/a culture. They cannot be found in other scholarly literature as they pertain to this

group of Latino/a students. The fact that the Pre-transfer students shared these similar trends with

the Post-transfer students is quite important to higher education practitioners, scholars, and

students.

Belonging was represented by the Pre-transfer group by a sense of "lack of community"

which was also simply stated as feeling alone. At the Post-transfer level feelings of "Alone" or

"By myself" permeated the transfer students. The DACA issue had many of the community

college students aroused, while other distraught feelings about the present immigrant situation

were expressed by the university level students. Yet a glimmer of hope lies in the involvement of students in "Civic Commitments." "This brings all nationalities and cultures together," said one student, "It's like you need to be involved in support of the community to meet new people and make the transfer more…sort of …natural for everyone." (Michael, Post-transfer group).

"Cultural Identity Intersections" were mentioned in different ways. Rendon, Jalomo & Nora (2000) suggest minority and under-represented students live in a process of biculturation, where students live in two cultures or realities. This research found that those that were American dominant in their intersection of cultures, seemed to make a better fit in our "Americanized" higher education institutions. Yet a necessity to reach out to these students on their individual levels seems paramount to successful transfer. "Mentorship" provides a strong exemplary link to an institution of higher education. This was mentioned extensively both directly and indirectly by the Latino/a students in their dialogues at both Pre-transfer and Post-transfer levels.

Summary Statement

The rich data uncovered by dialogues with eight Latino/a community college students preparing for transfer to universities, and eight Latino/a university students already having transferred from community colleges, through thirty-two interview sessions, provides many thematic directions for scholars, administrators, and students of higher education to reflect upon. Many themes were substantiated by a persistence framework by Swail et al., (2003) but four themes were unique and did not fit this framework. These themes of "Belonging," "Civic Commitments," "Cultural Identity Intersections," and "Mentor Influences" provide a purpose for this study as an important addition to the lack of research in the area of Latino/Latina student transfer.

Implications for Further Research

      This study provides fodder for new research in many ways. At the community college level and the university level, the question of a longitudinal study with these sixteen Latino/a students would be very enlightening. Do the community college students actually transfer to the university level? Are the hopes of a transfer to specific universities realized? Do both groups persist to graduation? Quantitative research on these students measuring their answers to questions via survey, and mixed methods with focus groups, could prove interesting to measure the persistence of these Latino/a students.

      The question of whether more emphasis on student services implies more positive, successful transfer for Latino/a students is a possible track for further research. It would appear that those Latino/a students, both Pre-transfer and Post-transfer, who are most involved with student services, feel most successful with transfer. More study in this area with a control group not involved with student services, and an experimental group directly involved with such services as mentor influences, career advising, and Latino/a organizations, would prove beneficial to this area of study.

      Cognitive preparation for transfer to universities, in the areas of high school bridge programs and community college outreach programs, could also be studied. Are we preparing the Latino/a student culturally for the appropriate transfer to various community colleges and universities? Much work needs to be done in this area as well.

      Finally, a study in the realm of time management for the Latino/a student. This would include balancing jobs, civic commitments, family, and school, and could prove very important to student service administrators and the professoriate at higher education institutions, as well. All the students interviewed balanced jobs and their school work, but many also balanced the

complete gamut of areas mentioned above. This researcher has noticed that this is a growing

trend amongst the student bodies at most universities. Is it more prevalent amongst Latino/a

students than Caucasians or other minorities?

All of these questions lead to the necessity for more study. Transfer administrators, as

well as higher education scholars and professors, need to be aware of these issues as they direct

and focus their work, lessons, and study. This study, while important and conclusive in many

ways, leaves questions to be answered.

Implications for Practice and Recommendations

The need for a sense of belonging in transfer is called upon by the themes evidenced in

this study. The overarching feelings expressed by these interviewees points to the necessity for

student services at all higher educational institutions to provide vehicles for reaching out to the

Latino/Latina community to make each student's transfer successful. As evidenced by Dianne of

the Post-Transfer group, providing Latino-based groups for socialization is key. Where Michael

from the Post-Transfer group showed inclinations to do all transfer activities alone or on his own,

Dianne provides the answer. With the prediction that over one-quarter of the United States

population will become Latino/Latina in the year 2030 (Passel & Cohn, 2008), this need to

address transfer students' sense of belonging is paramount.

Student services should provide clubs and many gatherings of the intercultural nature to

make a Latino/a student feel wanted and a part of an institution's society. This is still not the case

across the country at many higher educational institutions, even at the time of this writing.

Perhaps the government should "step up" and mandate such practices, or at least perhaps

accreditation policies should include the necessity for this kind of intercultural activity.

The need for civic commitments is crucial to Latino/a success in transfer, according to this research. Fourteen of the sixteen students interviewed proclaimed an involvement with a civic activity and this involvement lead to a personal social adjustment in transfer. A social adjustment and a civic commitment were often so important for that Latino/a student to persist in a transfer that it can be considered a key factor. Civic activities such as soup kitchens to feed the poor, political clubs and organizations, and even a Methodist organization for the teaching of ESL (as evidenced by Leanna from the Post-Transfer group) helped these Latino/Latina students make the transfer. Most every one of the community college students interviewed (seven of eight) mentioned a strong association with a church environment. This is truly an issue which would appear most specific to the Latino/Latina culture of these students.

What about the theme of Identity Intersections as evidenced in this study? Any sub-culture of students will always look at their own personal culture and make a personal decision in how they feel affected by the United States and its citizens. How can academics, researchers, and practitioners reflect on making the transfer for these Latino/a students successful through their Cultural Identities? This researcher would suggest a freshman seminar opening students to intercultural awareness. This could pave the way to persistence in transfer for Latino/a students. Having the academic professorship re-evaluate their syllabi so that inclusion of the Latino/Latina student is emphasized as an important part of Identity Intersections for these students.

Orientation sessions must include assigning mentors early in the agenda and process. Mentorship has proven effective in the persistence of Latino/a students who truly are most needing of this service (Cuyjet et al., 2011). To see this reinforced and actually mentioned by many students in this study is a scholarly breakthrough. First person, rich dialogue about mentorship is a reality in this study.

Getting family involved and reaching out to these skilled laborers and this "blue collar" generation who did not go through the college process, but just want a better world for their sons and daughters, is another challenge. Why not have interpreters available at orientation, as well as inviting Latino/a parents in their natural Spanish language to football games and other cultural events? It seems only fair to all in this age of inclusion.

Institutional forces. The financial aid search through the filing of appropriate forms is a confusing part of the Latino/a students' transfer and reflection on transfer. This was brought out by ten students out of the sixteen. The language barrier, the complication of terminology, and the length of the forms, all contribute to Latino/a transfer students' confusion. Simplify the forms, and provide them in Spanish. This is the answer for our university and higher education institutions governing bodies to make things equitable for this culture of people.

Student services and admissions both have many improvements to be made in order to gain the participation of this fast-growing sub-culture. All of the methodology indicated above could help to somehow "level the playing field" of a field that truly cannot be leveled.

Cognitive forces. Seminars should be provided at the community college level and four-year institutional level for all students in the area of time management. At the least, instructors should provide time management suggestions in their classes. These areas are important to all cultures.

Bringing critical thinking skills and quality of learning at the community college level is a challenge. Better communication of learning standards in articulation agreements between institutions could improve the learning standards at the community college level. While this shows in this research devoted to Latino and Latina students, again, it applies to all students and is definitely an issue to be confronted.

Limitations

This study was limited by three basic factors. These included generalizability, and availability of subjects, and observational personal bias. Because this study was completed in a relatively refined area, covering just two states, and was originally proposed to include six different institutions of higher education but utilized only four, it could have been expanded given more time and resources. The actual generalizability of this study is somewhat limited to two states.

The subjects were all students who volunteered to give their time and therefore were perhaps more eager to share successful means of transfer than would other Latino/a students. Overall, this researcher did receive negative and positive results in looking at what was successful for transfer and what was not.

This researcher, as would all researchers, acknowledges personal bias toward the cause of these subjects. The concept of reaching out to assist versus remaining completely neutral and unbiased became very difficult for this researcher. The triangulation of this researcher being an "outsider" combined with two "insider" peer debriefers, helped to give this research its balance and trustworthiness.

This Researcher and Reflections on Personal Bias

The barriers for these Latino/a transfer students are many. Their stories are rich with examples of how they could possibly not be successful. This researcher first became interested in the struggles of Latino/a students through a multicultural awareness course as well as through students he encountered in teaching at the community college level. It was and is this researcher's intentions to remain completely removed and unbiased to the issues of these

students. However, it became increasingly more difficult for this researcher to remain an "outsider."

The stories of these students speak of inequity beyond the level of impartiality. This researcher utilized the most professional manner in dealing with these students but the inequity of the political times, as well as the backgrounds of these students, created a great deal of unbalanced passion for their cause in the mind of this researcher. It is at this point that the researcher feels he has become more of an "insider" in reflecting and contemplating these thematic issues as they emerged. The end result is a somewhat impassioned look at these Latino/a students' issues and how they can be resolved in this qualitative study.

Issues of Gatekeeping and The Study

It is interesting to note that as the study developed, the change in the United States Federal Governments' administration occurred. The U.S. went from being governed by President Barrack Obama to being governed by President Donald Trump. The issues of immigration reflected vast differences. In looking at the issue of Latino/a transfer, colleges were perhaps reticent to open their resources on this subject.

After the change of command, this researcher tried three different community colleges to gather data through interviews with Latino/a community college students. The gatekeepers at these institutions would not allow the research stating that either, one: there was too much doctoral research being applied to students at one time and another study would be more than the student body could handle, or two: our institution does not allow access to such information as could be gathered by this research track.

Finally, relying upon this researchers' colleagues in a separate state, a second institution's transfer department at the community college level was finally in formal agreement to allow the

research data collection to be done. This process prolonged data collection for this research by over four months. The questions about research and the present political environment can be daunting. This research has been painstakingly completed but the resolution of the present immigration political situation remains to be an issue of contention.

Summary and Conclusion

This dissertation was designed to qualitatively uncover the answers to the following three sensitizing concepts:

1. How do Latino/a students who are anticipating transfer from two-year institutions to four-year institutions experience their transfer preparation?

2. How do Latino/a students who have transferred from two-year institutions to four-year institutions share their experiences?

3. How are the experiences of Latino/a students who intend to transfer and those who have transferred comparable with one another?

The study reached thematic saturation through thirty-two semi-structured interviews with eight Latino/a community college students approaching transfer and eight Latino/a university students having already transferred. The results indicated four themes unique to Latino/a transfer including: "Belonging," "Civic Commitments," "Cultural Identity Intersections," and "Mentor Influences." These themes were evident in various ways but proved to help make these Latino/a students successful in their preparation for, and completion of, the transfer process.

Much scholarly research surrounds the concepts of the Latino/a college student experience (Ceja, 2006; Cuyjet et al., 2011; Hossler et al., 1999; Perez & Ceja, 2011), but none of these scholars points to the four unique Latino/a student themes of transfer uncovered by this

research. The findings help to create new directions for scholars, administrators, and students in higher education.

<u>References</u>

Achieving the Dream & Public Agenda (2012) Building institutional capacity for data-Informed decision making. New York, NY: Author: retrieved from http:achievingthedream.org/site/default/fileresources/ato_CuttingEdge_no3.pdf.

Adelman, C. (1998). The kiss of death? An alternative view of college remediation *National Crosstalk*, 6.

Adelman, C. (2006). The toolbox revisited: Paths to degree completion from high school through college. Washington, DC: National Center for Educational Statistics.

Arbona, C. & Nora, A. (2007). The influence of academic and environmental factors on Hispanic college degree attainment. *The Review of Higher Education, 30*, 247-269.

Barnett, E. A. (2011) Validation experiences and persistence among community college students. *The Review of Higher Education, 34*, 193-230.

Bean, J. P., and Eaton, S. B. (2000). A psychological model of college student retention, In J. M. Braxton (Ed.), *Reworking the student departure puzzle*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.

Braxton, J. M., Shaw, A. M., and Johnston, R. M. (1997). Appraising Tinto's theory of college student departure. *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research 12*, New York. 107-164.

Cabrera, A. F., Casteneda, M. B., Nora, A. and Hengstler, D. (1992). The convergence between two theories of college persistence. *Journal of Higher Education, 63*, 143-164.

Ceja, M. (2006). Understanding the role of parents and siblings as information sources in

the college choice process of Chicano students. *Journal of College Student

Development, 47*, 87-104.

Chavez, A. F., Guido-DiBrito, F., Mallory, S. L. (2003). Learning to value the 'other':

A framework of individual diversity development. *Journal of College Student

Development,* 44, 453-456.

Chronicle of Higher Education. (2001, August 21). *Almanac Issue.*

Chronicle of Higher Education. (2010, August). *Almanac Issue.*

Chronicle of Higher Education. (2014, August). *Almanac Issue.*

Cook, B.J., & Cordova, D. I. (2007). Minorities in higher education: Twenty-second

annual status report: Third supplement. Washington DC: *American Council

of Education.*

Crisp, Gloria, & Amaury, Nora. (2010) Hispanic student success: Factors influencing the

Persistence and transfer decisions of Latino community college students enrolled in

Developmental education. *Research in Higher Education, 51*, 175-194.

Cuyjet, M. J., Howard-Hamilton, M. F., & Cooper, D. L. (Eds.). (2011). *Multiculturalism

on campus: Theories, models, and practices for understanding diversity and

creating inclusion*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Desmond, M. & Turley, R. N. (2009). The role of familism in explaining the

Hispanic-White college application gap. *Social Problems, 56*, 311-334.

Fry, R. (2003). *Hispanic youth dropping out of schools: Measuring the challenge*.

Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center.

Fry, R. (2004). *Latino youth finishing college: The role of selective pathways*.

Washington DC: Pew Hispanic Center

Http://pewhispanic.org/reports/report.php?Report ID=30.

Goldrick-Rab, Sara. (2006) Following their every move: An investigation of social-class differences in college pathways. *Sociology of Education. 79*(1), 61-79.

Goldrick-Rab, S. & Pfeffer, F. T. (2009) Beyond access: Exploring socioeconomic differences in college transfer. *Sociology of Education, 82*(2), 101-125.

Hagedorn, L. S. (2004). The role of urban community colleges in educating diverse populations. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 21-34.

Hagedorn, L. S., Cypers, S. & Lester, J. (2008). Looking in the rearview mirror: Factors Affecting transfer for urban community college students. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 32*: 9, 643-664.

Hayes, D, G. & Singh, A. A. (2012) *Qualitative inquiry in clinical and educational settings*. The Guilford Press: New York.

Hearn, J. C. (1991). Academic and nonacademic influences on the college destinations of 1980 high school graduates. *Sociology of Education, 68*, 158-171.

Hossler, D. (1984). *Enrollment management*. New York: College Examination Board.

Hossler, D., Schmit, J., & Vesper, N. (1999). *Going to college: How social, economic, and educational factors influence the decisions students make*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Hossler, D., & Stage, F. K. (1992). Family and high school experience influences on the post-secondary educational plans of ninth-grade students. *American Education Research Journal, 29*, 425-451.

Hurtado, S. (1996). The campus racial climate: Context of conflict. In C.S.V. Turner, M. Garcia, A. Nora, and L. I. Rendon (Eds.), *Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Higher Education* (pp. 485-506). Boston: Pearson Custom Publishing.

Hurtado, S., Carter, D. F., & Spuler, A. (1996) Latino student transition to college: Assessing difficulties and factors in successful college adjustment. *Research in Higher Education, 37*, 135-157.

Hurtado, S., Milem, J., Clayton-Pedersen, A. and Allen, W. (1999) *Enacting diverse learning environments: Improving the climate for racial/ethnic diversity in higher education*. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report, vol. 26, no. 8, Washington DC: Graduate School of Education and Human Development, The George Washington University.

Karp, M. M., Hughes, K. L.. & O'Gara, L. (2010) An exploration of Tinto's integration framework for community college students. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory, and Practice, 12*(1), 69-86.

Kennamer, Michael A., Katsinas, Stephen G., Schumacker, Randall E. (2011). The moving target: Student financial aid and community college student retention. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 12*(1), 87-103.

Moustakas, C. E. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

National Center for Educational Statistics. (2002). *The condition of education 2002.* (NCES 2002-025). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Education and Improvement.

National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). (2003). 9/6/01 Beginning

    Postsecondary students' longitudinal study (BPS: 96/01). Retrieved from

    http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d07/tables/dt07_318.asp.

National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). (2007). Status and trends in the

    education of racial and ethnic minorities. Retrieved from

    http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubinfo.asp?pubid=2007039.

National Center for Educational Statistics. (2008). The condition of education,

    today. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

Ornelas, A., & Solorzano, D.G. (2004). Transfer conditions of Latina/o community

    college students: A single institution case study. *Community College Journal*

    of Research and Practice, 30, 233-248.

Ortiz, A. M., & Santos, S. J. (2009) *Ethnicity in college: Advancing theory and*

    improving diversity practices on campus. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Passel, J. S., & Cohn, D. (2008). *U.S. Population Projections: 2005-2050*. Washington

    DC: Pew Hispanic Center. Retrieved from

    http://pewhispanic.org/reports/report.php?ReportID=85.

Pearson, B. Z. (1993). Predictive validity of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) for

    Hispanic bilingual students. *Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 15*, 342-356.

Perez, C. (2002). Different tests, same flaws: Examining the SAT I, SAT II and

    ACT. *Journal of College Admission, 172*, 20-25.

Perez, L.X. (1999) *The interface of individual, structural, and cultural constructs in*

    Latino parents' efforts to support their children in planning for college.

    Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles: CA

Perez, P. A. & Ceja, M. (2010). Building a Latina/o student transfer culture: Best practices and outcomes in transfer to universities. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 9*(1), 6-21.

Person, A. E., & Rosenbaum, J. E., (2006). Chain enrollment and college enclaves: Benefits and drawbacks of Latino students' enrollment decisions. In C. L. Hoen, S. M. Flores, & G. Orfield (Eds.), *Latino Educational Opportunity*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Rendon, L. I., Jalomo, R., Jr. and Nora, A. (2000). Theoretical considerations in the study of minority student retention in higher education. In J. M. Braxton (Ed.) *Reworking the student departure puzzle* (p. 127-156). Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press

Rivas, M. A., Perez, J., Alvarez, C. R., & Solorzano, D. G. (2007). An examination of Latina/o transfer students in California's postsecondary institutions (Latino Policy and Issues Brief No. 16). Los Angeles University of California, Los Angeles, Chicano Studies Research Center.

Rodarmor, W. (1991, Sept.) California Q & A: A conversation with Troy Duster. *California Monthly*.

Rodriguez, R. (1996). Life after Hopwood. *Black Issues in Higher Education, 13*(12), 8-10.

Romero, A. J. & Roberts, R. E. (2003). Stress within bicultural context for adolescents of Mexican descent. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 9*, 171-184.

Salas, S. (2014). Pipeline dreams: Latina/o community college students pushed off

the transfer path. Dissertation, California State University, Long Beach.

Swail, W. S., Redd, K., & Perna, L. W. (2003). Retaining minority students in

higher education: A framework for success. *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report*

Series, 30(2). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Tierney, W. G. (1992). An anthropological analysis of student participation in college.

Journal of Higher Education, 63, 603-618.

Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: a theoretical synthesis of recent

research. *Review of Higher Education, 45*(1). 89-125.

Tinto, V. (1982) Limits of theory and practice in student attrition. *Journal of Higher*

Education, 53(6), 687-700.

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student retention*.

Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Torres, V. (1999). Validation of a bicultural orientation model for Hispanic college

Students. *Journal of College Student Development, 40*, 285-299.

Torres, V., and Phelps, R. E. (1997). Hispanic American acculturation and ethnic

identity: A bicultural model. *College Student Affairs Journal, 17*(1), 53-68.

Torres, V., Winston, R. B., Jr., and Cooper, D. L. (2003). Hispanic American students'

Cultural orientation: Does geographic location, institutional type, or level of stress

Have an effect? *NASPA Journal, 40*(2). http://publications.naspa.org/naspajournal/

vol40/iss2/art10).

VCCS.edu. (2016). Retrieved from http://www.vccs.edu/about/where-we-are/college-

locator/

Wassmer, R., Moore, C., & Shulock, N. (2004). Effect of racial/ethnic composition on

    transfer rates in community colleges: Implications for policy and practice.

    Research in Higher Education, 50, 651-672.

Zwick, R. (2004). *Rethinking the SAT: The future of standardized testing in university*

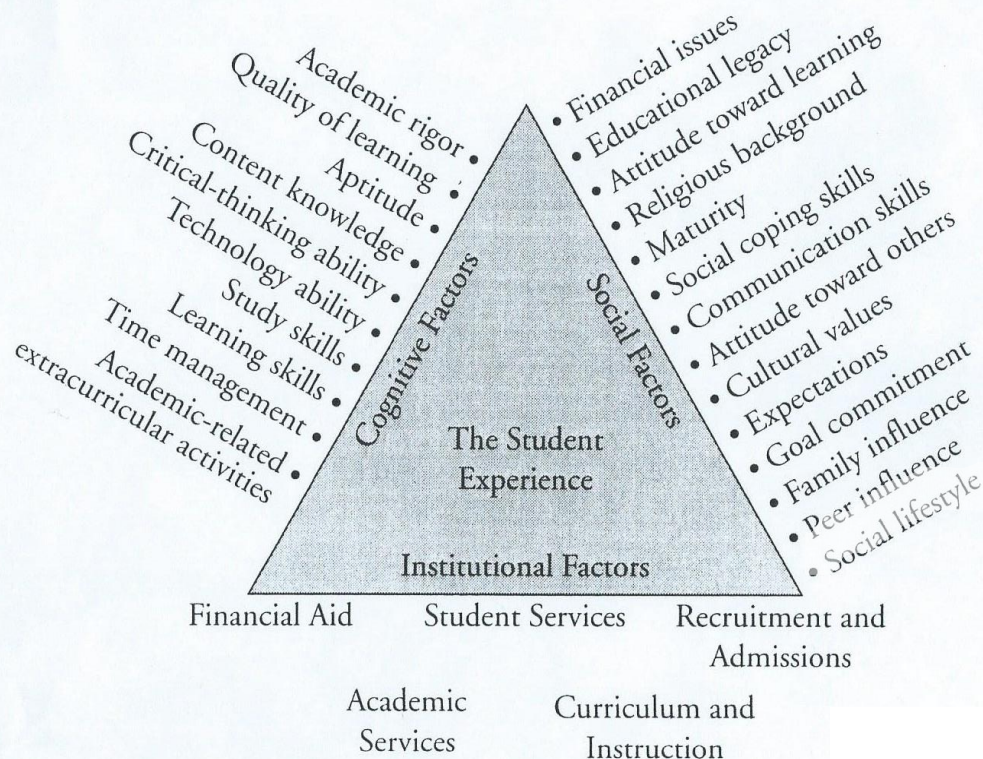   *Admissions*. New York: Routledge.

Figure 1. The conceptual framework utilized for this dissertation. Adapted from "Retaining Minority Students in Higher Education: A Framework for Success," by W. S. Swail, K. Redd, and L.W. Perna, 2003, *Ashe Higher Education Report Series, 30*, p. 77. Copyright 2003 by Wiley Periodicals, Inc.
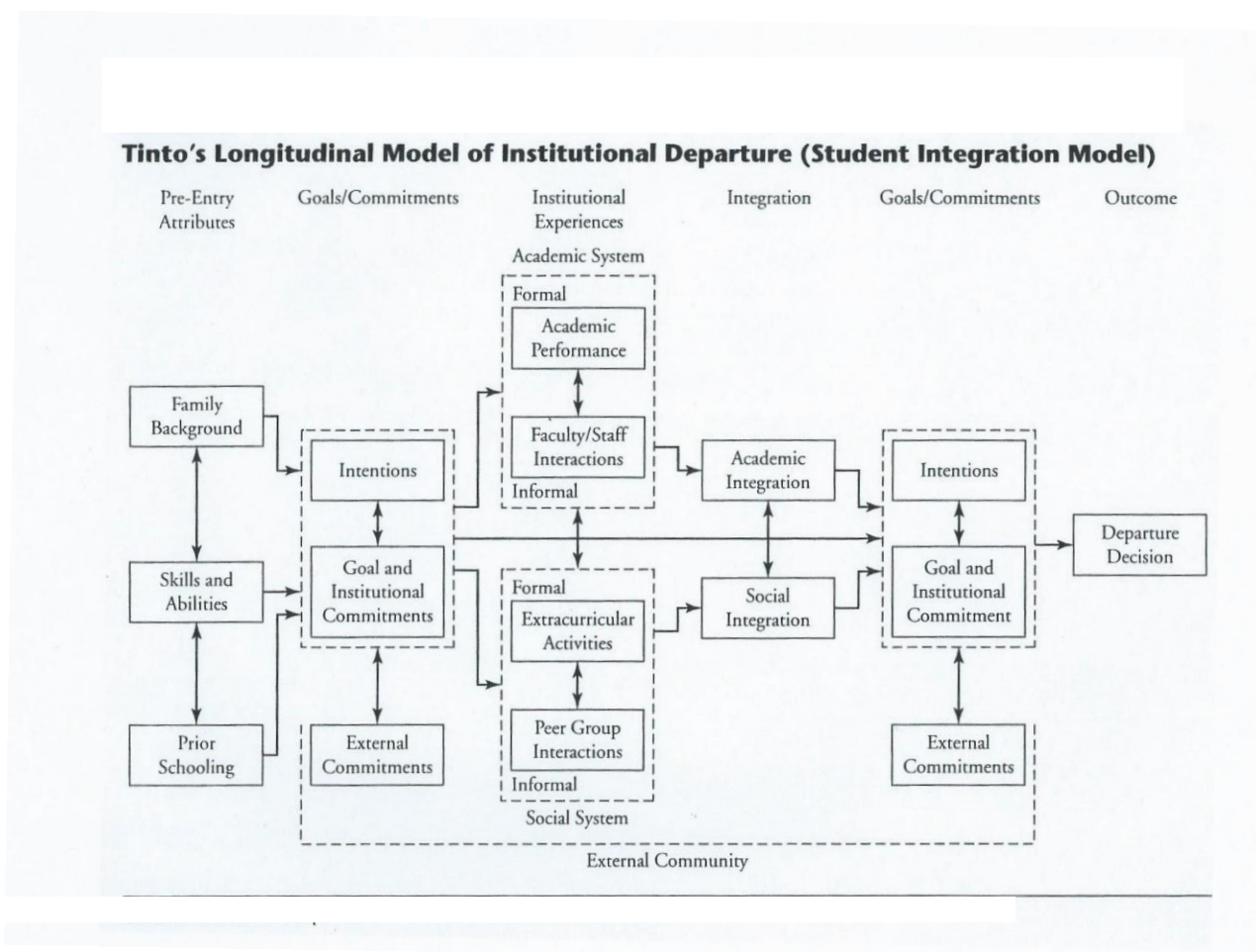
Figure 2. Tinto's longitudinal model of institutional departure and student integration as proposed originally in 1993. Adapted from "Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Retention," by V. Tinto, 1993, p. 114. Copyright 1993 by the University of Chicago Press.
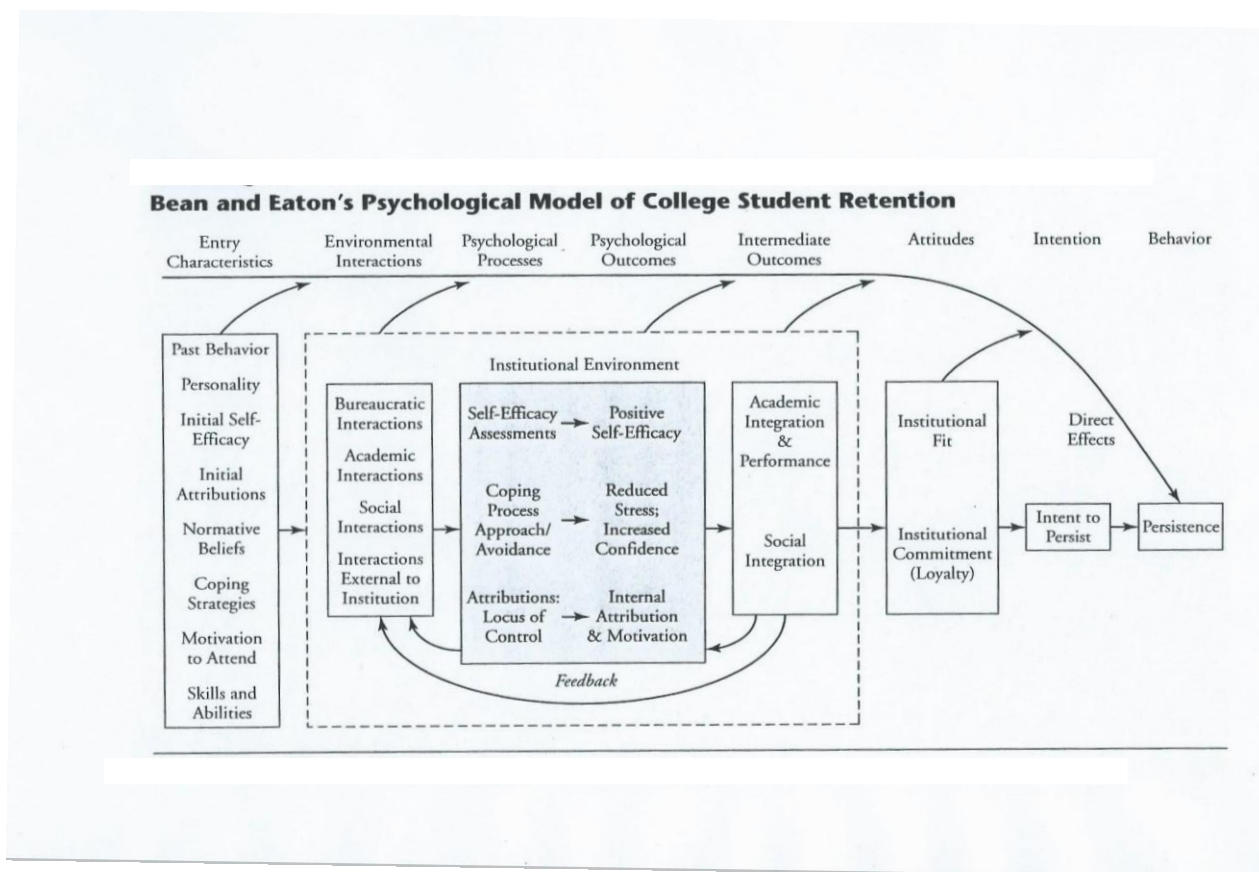
Figure 3. Bean and Eaton's psychological model of higher education student retention showing the choices of higher education students. Adapted from "A Psychological Model of College Student Retention," by J. P. Bean and S. B. Eaton, 2000, in J.M. Braxton (Ed.) *Reworking the Student Departure Puzzle*, p. 57. Copyright 2000 by Vanderbilt University Press.

Appendix A

How do Latino/a students perceive how institutional experiences affect transfer?

1. Is there anything about the way your specific college works or operates that you feel is confusing, unfamiliar or difficult to navigate?

    1a. What about preparing for or transferring to a four-year institution, did you encounter any difficulties with this?

    1b. What were or are your hopes for college? What do you want to do? Tell me about your experiences or give me some examples in your life, which led you to these hopes.

    1c. Did getting through (issues listed) make you feel different?

    1d. So the issues you encountered were…

How do Latino/a students perceive how social experiences affect transfer?

2. When you encounter these difficulties, who do you talk to these about?

    2a. Is there anyone else?

    2b. You said (repeat those named). Ever talk to students?

    2c. What do you share?

    2d. Tell me a story about sharing a difficult issue with someone about transfer.

    2e. So the people you share your issues with include… and that's everyone?

How do Latino/a students perceive how institutional and cognitive experiences affect transfer?

3. Has there ever been a time when you used any of the student support services provided by the college/university?

    3a. I mean the resources such as advising or the writing center, financial aid, or recreation center…

3b. Have they helped you in the transfer experience or given you support? (Tell me a

 story about this experience.)

3c. Describe your overall experience with these resources…

3d. How do you pay for school?

3e. Are you aware of financial aid?

3f. So you feel that these support services would include… and have they been helpful

 or not? Why do you think this is the case?

How do Latino/a students perceive how cognitive/social/institutional experiences affect transfer?

4. Although we use the words like Hispanic, Latino, Latina, Cuban, etc. to describe students

    and their culture, tell me about your family's alignment and where they come from?

    4a. Tell me how your family feels about you going to school?

    4b. What about your family's education?

    4c. Tell me your family's story.

    4d. Do you feel your family is a part of (this school)?

    4e. Who is or has been most supportive of your transfer?

    4f. What are the ways Latino/a would like to see families the institutions and family work

        together to support transfer

5. What are your hopes and dreams after college?

6. Anything you'd like to add to our interview? Final thoughts about your experience here?

Appendix B

Questionnaire Protocol Two – Second Session Probing Questions

1.One experience which helped you navigate through college that you described the last session was (blank). I was hoping to have you explain this experience further, maybe expand on the story?

2.Sharing with (blank) helped you get through difficult times in college transfer or transfer preparation. Can you expand on this?

3.Your experiences with student support services were very (unimportant/important) to you when you (prepared for/made the) transfer to a four-year university. Why do you believe this is so?

4.Your family background was an (important/not so important) motivation in your transfer or transfer preparation. Tell me another story about a time when family helped or did not help.

5. Your dreams of (blank) motivated you to transfer or prepare for transfer. Why do you think this was so important?

6. These times are filled with political, social and economic challenges for Latino/a students. Can you tell me how you have experienced this?

7. If you had to describe your challenges or barriers to transfer, could you give me an example?

8. What's one word or maybe two that describes your feelings about your plans for or your experience of transfer to another institution?

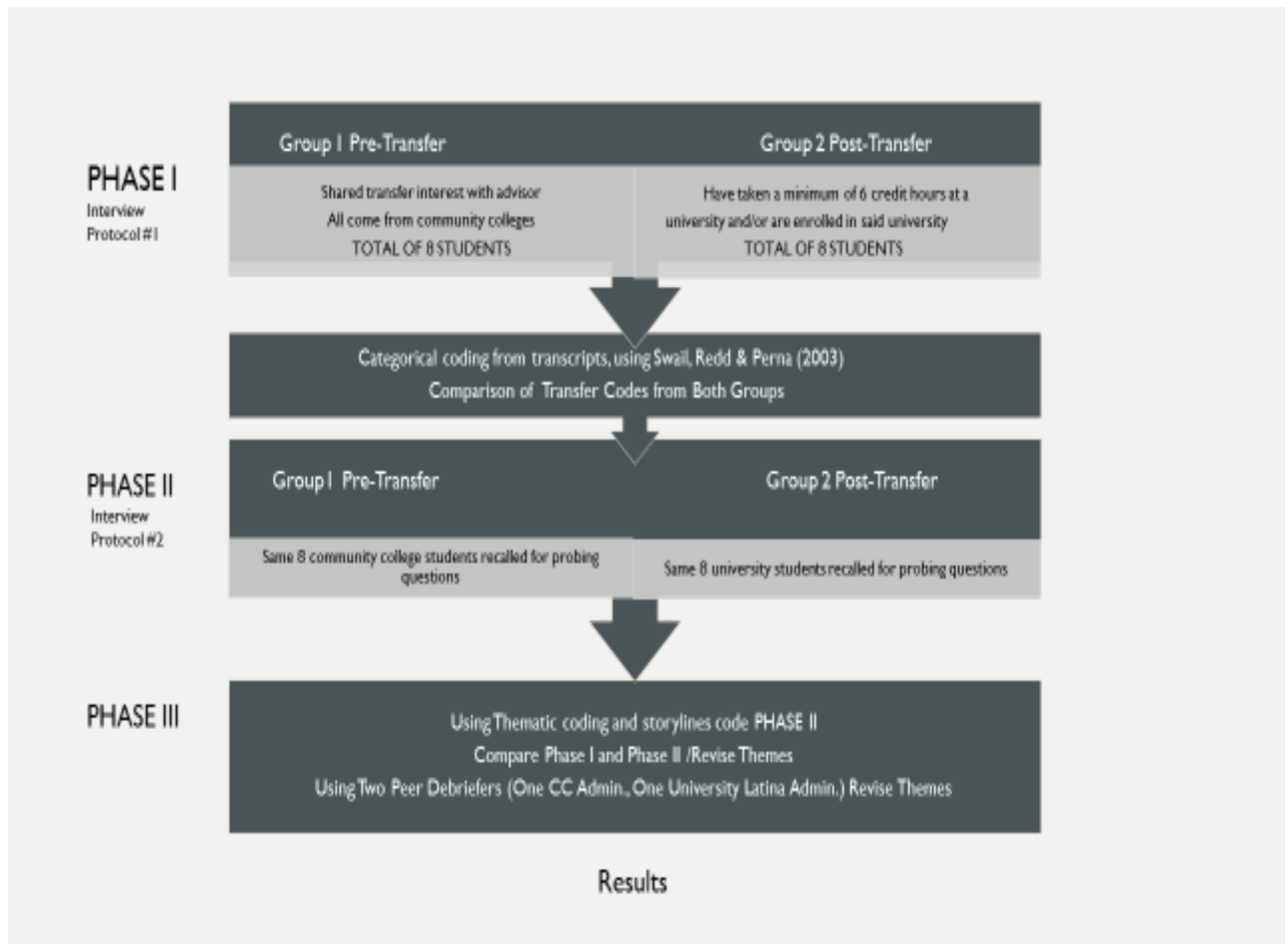9. Anything you want to add to our session?

Appendix C

PROCEDURE

Figure 4. Procedure for this dissertation methodology as developed by Card (2017) in this study.

Appendix D

New Persistence Framework

Specific to 16 Latino/a Interviewees

Based on Swail, Redd, & Perna (2003)

Quality of Learning

Financial Aid

Critical Thinking Ability

Cognitive Forces

Student Services

Time Management

Latino/a Interviewees Pre-Transfer and Post-Transfer Experience

Institutional Forces

Recruitment and Admissions

Social Forces

Financial Issues   Educational Legacy   Communication Skills   Cultural Values   Family Influence

Belonging   *Civic Commitments*   *Cultural Identity Intersections*   *Mentor Influences*
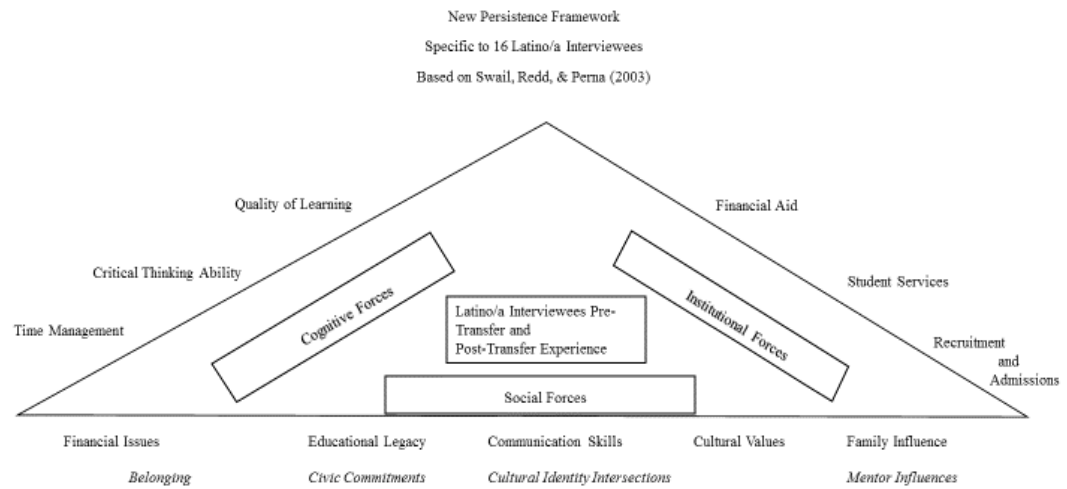
Figure 5. New persistence framework specific to sixteen Latino/a interviewees developed by Card (2017). Adapted from "Retaining Minority Students in Higher Education: A Framework for Success," by W. S. Swail, K. Redd, and L.W. Perna, 2003, *Ashe Higher Education Report Series, 30*, p. 77. Copyright 2003 by Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

Appendix E

November 11, 2017

Christopher S. Card, Ph.D.
Doctorate Higher Education
Old Dominion University
Norfolk, VA 23529

Dear   :

It is with deep appreciation and great thankfulness with which I write this letter to you about your participation in the study titled "Going the extra mile: Successful transfer of Latino/Latina students from two-year institutions to four-year institutions based on a persistence framework." The study was a huge success and your participation was invaluable. You may have been quoted in this dissertation, but all names and identities have been protected with pseudonyms or false names.

The study revealed four major new themes in the transcriptions of the interviews between myself and the community college students getting prepared to transfer as well as the university students who had already transferred. These themes included a necessity for a sense of Belonging to ones' institution, the need for Civic Involvement, the need for Cultural Identity, and that of Mentor Influences. The importance of family and other themes was brought out as well, as the dissertation highlights the importance of these concepts and others toward transfer from community college to the university level. You were a part of all of this and I sincerely thank you!

If you would like to see the dissertation in its entirety, and perhaps a quoted comment by you, it will most likely be available under my name, with the title above, and on Proquest, the computer sight, which you can Google in the Spring of 2018 (June or July). Future publication of this paper will be forthcoming. Again, I sincerely thank you for your participation in this important and timely research. You made it possible and you are to be commended!

Questions or comments contact,

Christopher Card, Ph.D.
Ccard016@odu.edu
Cscard@gmail.com

VITAE

CHRISTOPHER SEAN CARD
Educational Foundations & Leadership
120 Education Building
Old Dominion University
Norfolk, Virginia 23529

EDUCATION:
 <u>**Old Dominion University,**</u> Norfolk, VA
   Doctor of Philosophy in Higher Education – accepted to Darden School of Education
   in April 2014   Graduation Date: December 2017

 <u>**The Ohio State University,**</u> Columbus, OH
   Doctor of Philosophy in Music Education - finished coursework, June 2000

 <u>**University of Illinois,**</u> Champaign-Urbana, IL
   Master of Science in Music Education   May 1993.   GPA: 4.885/5.0

 <u>**James Madison University**</u>, Harrisonburg, VA
   Bachelor of Music Education, Magna Cum Laude. May 1986. GPA: 3.68/4.00

MOST RECENT PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Transfer, Advising and Articulation Office at Old Dominion University. Spring-Summer
 2016. Created Data Base for State Committee on Transfer, SCHEV. Created Brochure for
 transfer program. Job shadowed and assisted advising administration learning on the job as an
 intern.

**Full-Time Graduate Assistant Darden College of Educational Leadership, Old Dominion
 University:** 2014-2016   Stake Holder Record Keeper for HIED Leadership college and CCL
 program, Photographer, Website Design, Newsletter compilation, Recruiting tour coordinator-
 student affairs, enrollment management.

Central Piedmont Community College, Charlotte NC. Fall 2015. **Institutional Research
 Department Intern.** Studied and Interviewed four focus groups of 10-12 students in
 Developmental Math and English. Worked closely with staff to develop questionnaires and
 final reports for the college.

Adjunct Music Professor, Tidewater Community College, Norfolk Campus. 2003 –14
 Teaching Music Appreciation classes to non-music majors in large group lecture setting. Three
 or more classes per semester. Started, and directed first Jazz band at the college. Developed
 courses and curriculum. Taught Improvisational Techniques. Performed at special occasions
 with Jazz Band. Taught Applied lessons to Brass Students including trumpet and trombone.