Electronic Theses, Projects, and Dissertations

Office of Graduate Studies

8-2022

EXPERIENCES OF LATINA STUDENT MOTHERS IN THE TRANSFER PIPELINE: AN INTERPRETIVE PHENOMONOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Aurora Vilchis

EXPERIENCES OF LATINA STUDENT MOTHERS IN THE TRANSFER

PIPELINE: AN INTERPRETIVE PHENOMONOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

_____

A Dissertation

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

_____

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

in

Educational Leadership

_____

by

Aurora Valencia Vilchis

August 2022

EXPERIENCES OF LATINA STUDENT MOTHERS IN THE TRANSFER

PIPELINE: AN INTERPRETIVE PHENOMONOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

_____

A Dissertation

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

_____

by

Aurora Valencia Vilchis

August 2022

Approved by:

Dr. Enrique Murillo, Jr., Committee Chair, Education

Dr. Sharron Pierce, Committee Member

Dr. Audrey Baca, Committee Member

ABSTRACT

Characteristics of who today's college student is has drastically changed over the years with more students over age 25, may have dependents, employed full-time, attending school part time and likely a parent. These students are known as post-traditional students who make up 85% of undergraduates nationwide. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of Latina students, who are mothers, and have successfully transferred from a community college designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) to a four-year public higher education institution also designated as an HSI. Data was collected from eleven participants who shared their experiences of an intersecting identity as mother and student through in-depth qualitative interviews. Through an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), there were five key findings; 1) Motherhood: Being the Example for Future Generations, 2) The Enrollment Cycle: Enrollment and Re-enrollment, 3) Health: Physical, Mental & Emotional Wellbeing, 4) Learning in a Pandemic and 5) Embracing Cultural Heritage. This study informs high education leaders and practitioners on how to best support this growing student population.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my amazing committee member for their support in this process, especially to my amazing chair Dr. Enrique Murillo Jr. His mentorship and more importantly, his friendship, has given me the encouragement needed to complete this dissertation. A special thanks to my CSUSB family, from my cohort 10 classmates to my co-workers and friends who always provided a sounding backboard when needed. I will always be a Coyote4Life!

I thank my family for their unconditional love that was much needed during this five-year process. You have lifted me up, reminded me to trust in God and given me so many words of comfort that I cannot be thankful enough. To all my grandparents, my parents, my siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles, nieces, my best friends, and those who have become my family, I could not have done this without you, and I celebrate this accomplishment as OUR accomplishment, thank you. Lastly, to my son, Jacob, I hope I am an example for you pursue your dreams. I love you.

DEDICATION

To the mothers, your identity as both a mother and a student is valid. You are capable, you are not alone, and you can do this!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Latinas represent one in five women in the Unites States and are
expected to be nearly a third of all women by 2060 (Gándara, 2015). College
enrollment is growing and with it the Latina college student population (Fry and
Lopez, 2011; Sapp, Marquez Liyama, and Dache-Gerbino, 2016). Typically,
higher education institutions focus on serving first time college students
transitioning from high school (McDonnough and Fann, 2007) however, unlike
traditional age students (age 17-21) post-traditional students are over age
25, may have dependents, be employed full-time, attend school part time
and/or be a parent (PNPI, 2018; Soares, 2013). Post-traditional students now
make up 85% of undergraduates nationwide (PNPI, 2018; Soares, 2013).
Additionally, more than one in five college students is a parent (Lewis and
Haynes, 2020). It is not difficult to make the connection that Latina student
mothers make up a sizeable portion of post-traditional undergraduate college
students and have been referred to as a "hidden population within the [post-
]traditional student population" (Jiménez and Oliva, 2017, p. 112). As Latina
student mothers navigate the Transfer Pipeline, they begin in two-year
community colleges (Gándara, 2015; Navarro-Cruz Dávila, and Kouyoumdjian,
2020; Núñez, Sparks and Hernández, 2011; Pérez Huber, Malagón, Ramirez,
Camargo Gonzalez, Jiménez and Vélez, 2015). The Transfer Pipeline is defined
by Pérez Huber, Huidor, Malagón, Sánchez, and Solórzano (2006) as the

experience a student encounters as they move through the various levels of the education system from primary, secondary and into postsecondary institutions. The community college post-traditional students attend are often Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI), a federal designation meaning it is accredited and degree-granting public or private nonprofit institution of higher education with 25% or more total undergraduate Hispanic full-time equivalent student enrollment (Santiago, 2006). Furthermore, the number of colleges designated as HSI is growing with an increase of 150% over the past 25 years (*Excelencia*, 2020). Despite the growing number of Latina post-traditional students pursuing baccalaureate degrees the literature makes it clear that higher education systems are least successful in facilitating the transfer function from community colleges to four-year institutions (Bensimon and Bishop, 2012; Herrera and Jain, 2013; Pérez Huber et al., 2006; 2015).

As a Latina and student mother, I distinctly recall the alienating feeling of being unwelcomed in my undergraduate experience based on my parenting identity. According to a national student parent survey, 40% of students feel isolated as a parenting student on a college campus (Lewis and Haynes, 2020). Latina student mothers have unique experiences pursue a bachelor's degree as "their challenges magnify with motherhood because they deal with society's cultural ideals, expectations, and definitions of a mother's role in higher education" (Jiménez and Oliva, 2017, p. 112).

Problem Statement

Latina student mothers are overrepresented in community colleges and underrepresented in baccalaureate degree attainment (Bensimon and Bishop, 2012; Herrera and Jain, 2013; Pérez Huber et al., 2006; 2015). Despite the growing number of Latina post-traditional students pursuing baccalaureate degrees, and four-year institutions designated to serve them, there is an absence of commitment to creating a receptive culture for transfer students, which is contributing to this disproportionately low degree attainment (Bensimon and Bishop, 2012; Herrera and Jain, 2013; Pérez Huber et al., 2006; 2015). Additionally, the growing number of student parents on college campuses across the United States remain an invisible student population (Lewis and Haynes, 2020).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of Latina students, who are mothers, and have successfully transferred from a community college designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) to a four-year public higher education institution also designated as an HSI.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do Latina student mothers describe the transfer experience from a Hispanic Serving community college to a four-year university also designated as an HSI?

2. How does an intersecting identity of student and mother impact, if at all, the transfer experience?

3. What influence, if any, does attending a Hispanic Service Institution have on the transfer experience of Latina student mothers?

Significance of the Study

This study situates post-traditional Latina student mothers as a critical population in higher education that needs to be further explored. Findings from this study will provide the experiences of students in this population and should be widely shared among practitioners in higher education to advocate and better serve them. Bringing about the experiences of Latina student parents who have successfully transferred to a four-year institution could potentially provide a model of what receiving four-year institutions should do to properly serve incoming post-traditional transfer students. Additionally, this research will help close the gap in research on the growing number of college students who are parents. However, it is important to note that this study alone will not be sufficient. Through this research, the experiences of transfer students who are parents were explored and shared. A better understanding of this student population will allow higher education administrators to review their existing

policies and practices and consider how changes can be made to best serve this student population.

Theoretical Underpinnings

The conceptual framework for this study drew upon Laura Rendón's (1994) Validation Theory and the concept of transfer-receptive culture from Jain, Herrera, Bernal, and Solórzano (2011), which were informed by Critical Race Theory. As critical conceptual models that center on issues of race, ethnic equity and the structural racism in higher education, this framework emphasizes the role of both the community college and four-year universities as well as the validating members of the institutions as key in facilitating the transfer function for Latina students who are mothers.

Assumptions

Assumptions of this research study included students who transferred to a four-year institution were considered being successful in their educational journey. Furthermore, the assumption was made that there is a gap in degree attainment for the specific population of Latina students who are mothers. When comparing student parents with their counterparts, student parents are less likely to complete a degree when compared to non-parent students (PNPI, 2018; Soares, 2013). Additionally, post-traditional students are often underserved in four-year institutions therefore, this study was needed to bring about recommendations for policy change to better serve post-traditional student

parents in four-year institutions. Finally, assumptions about the participants included that they were truthful as they shared their experiences.

Delimitations

In this study, the phenomena of the transfer experience from the perspective of other groups such as Latino fathers was not explored and focused on the experiences of Latina student mothers. This study was not exclusive to single mothers as marital status was not criteria for participant selection so; participants were single, married, divorced, separated, in a relationship with a significant other or they declined to state. The student mothers in this study transferred from the community college; therefore, this study did not examine experiences of Latina student mothers who used the transfer function as they pursued their bachelor's degree.

Definitions of Key Terms

In this study, the Unites States Census definition of "Latino/a": any person of "Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin". The word Latino/a/x also encompasses the terms Chicano/a/x, Mexican American, Mexican, and Hispanic. These terms may be used interchangeably but the preferred term used to describe this population is Latina as an inclusive ethnic identity of other Latin American nationalities. The exception is in the literature review, which refers to each population as noted by the original researcher when directly quoting the source.

The definition of a post-traditional student is based on the classification from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2002; PNPI 2018) classified as meeting any of the following six characteristics; (1) delay enrollment after high school, (2) attend part time, (3) work full time, (4) are financially independent of their parents, (5) have dependents other than a spouse, are single parents, or (6) do not have a high school diploma. In the literature, the term Adult Learner is used and typically refers any student in higher education over the age of 25 (Yoo and Huang, 2005). These two terms are often used interchangeably in the literature however, the word nontraditional implies something negative and is viewed as a deficit-based term; therefore, it is not a preferred term. A newer term used to describe this population is post-traditional (Soares, 2013) and is used to describe students age 25 or older however, the literature review references the term primarily used by the researcher.

The term Transfer Pipeline is used as defined by Pérez Huber, Huidor, Malagón, Sánchez, and Solórzano (2006) referring to the experience a student encounters as they move through the distinct levels of the education system from primary, secondary and into postsecondary institutions.

Summary

In this chapter, I have introduced the topic of research through the problem and purpose statements, research questions, and theoretical framework are introduced. This chapter then concludes with some assumptions, delimitations and definitions that will be key for the literature review. The

following chapter reviews the existing literature on Latinas in higher education,

post-traditional students, as well as the critical transfer function. In addition, the

literature on the Hispanic Serving Institution is explored and how it can contribute

to the critical transfer function for Latino/a students.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review examines some of the existing research on the pipeline for Latinas in education. In addition, the cultural and familial influences of Latinas as well as their resiliency and agency as they pursue postsecondary education. The chapter then transitions into the body of literature on post-traditional students, which is said to have begun as early as the 60's and 70's with Knowles (1973). However, the research on this student population does not always take into consideration social identities such as race or ethnicity. Research that focuses on post-traditional student parents was reviewed, specifically the intersecting identities of motherhood and student. Next, it focuses on the critical role of the transfer function for the post-traditional student population from the two-year community college to the four-year university and specifically the experience of transfer for Latinas. It explores literature specifically about Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) where post-traditional Latina enrollment is high and often where they are overrepresented. Finally, it concludes with the conceptual framework for this study using both Validation Theory (Rendón, 1994) and transfer-receptive culture (Jain, Herrera, Bernal and Solórzano, 2011) which are informed by Critical Race Theory (CRT).

Latinas and Education

There is limited research focusing on Latina student mothers in higher

education and their experiences. Often, Latinas are compared them to their male

counterparts or students of other racial ethnicities (predominately-White

students) without disaggregating by gender. Of women, ages 25 – 29, Latinas

complete college degrees at 19% while their White counterparts earn college

degrees at 44% (Gándara, 2015). Latinas are entering higher education at

increased rates based on population growth (Gándara, 2015; Pérez Huber et al.,

2006; Pérez Huber et al., 2015). They are outperforming their male counterparts

(Pérez Huber et al., 2006; 2015), and they have familial support and

encouragement (Espinoza, 2010; Jabbar et al., 2019; Sapp et al., 2016).

However, they continue to be underrepresented and excluded from college

degree completion (Bensimon and Bishop, 2012; Education Trust-West, 2017;

Núñez et al., 2011). Furthermore, current research demonstrates the cultural

shifts Latinas experience from traditional (antiquated) female gender roles

(Stevens, 1973) to more recent studies that focus on the encouragement Latinas

receive from their families and the resilience they demonstrate as they pursue

college degrees (Santamaria Graff, McCain and Gomez-Vilchis, 2013; Sapp,

Marquez Kiyama and Dache-Gerbino, 2016).

Latino/a communities have fought against the historical exclusion and

denial of access to equal education opportunities through key legislation such as;

Mendez v. Westminster in 1945, Plyer v. Doe in 1982, California (CA) Proposition

209 in 1995 and CA Assembly Bill 540 in 2001, which were highlighted in the Majority Report by Education Trust-West (2017). To understand Latina educational attainment in the United States, it is important to reflect on these law changes as movements of resistance in the Latino/a communities, which demonstrates the active pursuit for equal educational. In their study, Pérez Huber, Huidor, Malagón, Sánchez, and Solórzano (2006) analyzed data which showed; out of 100 Latina elementary students, only 54 will graduate from high school, 11 will then graduate from college, 4 will graduate from graduate or professional schools and less than 1 earned a doctorate degree. The educational pipeline for Latino/a students has not been an easy one and more often found to be a "broken trickle" at every step (Pérez Huber et al., 2006, p. 2). Ten years later, data was reviewed again and increases in educational attainment were made across all racial/ethnic groups (Pérez Huber, Malagón, Ramirez, Camargo Gonzalez, Jimenez and Vélez, 2015). For Latinas, the numbers increased for those one hundred elementary students to show 63 graduated from high school with the same numbers for college graduation and beyond (Pérez Huber et al., 2015). However, researchers Pérez Huber et al. (2015) also noted the increase was likely attributed to the increase in population providing evidence that little improvement has been made for Latinas. The necessary factors that Pérez Huber et al. (2006) found to enable Latina students to transition through the pipeline to undergraduate degree completion were campus climate, role modeling, mentorship, financial aid and more importantly, the role of the family.

Influence of Latino/a Family Values

Traditional or sometimes referred to as antiquated, values in Latino/a culture about the role of women can be summarized by what Stevens' (1973) coined term, marianismo. This emphasizes the dichotomy between a 'good' or 'bad' woman and the Latino/a cultural expectations to be pure, good, caring, of service and motherly like the Virgin Mary (Stevens, 1973). This idea should be considered in relation to the social construct of machismo found in Latin America and Latino/a culture, which is associated with masculinity and considers the role of women to be subservient emphasizing the problematic gender norms (Stevens, 1973; Windsong, 2018). Additionally, when a Latina has desires to pursue higher education, binaries of 'sexually promiscuous or 'academically talented' begin to be attributed as if she is cable of only one or the other (Stevens, 1973; Sapp et al., 2016). With the emphasis on the self-sacrificing role of Latinas authors, Sapp, Marquez Kiyama and Dache-Gerbino (2016) argue that marianismo "suggests that young Latinas who are active with their families cannot also be successful scholars" (p. 41). This can create a juxtaposition of gender roles for Latinas who do not subscribe to these marianismo beliefs and values. Educational aspirations may also call into question the Latinas' familismo, which stresses "loyalty, reciprocity, and solidarity" to both the nuclear and extended family (Vega, 1990 as cited in Espinoza, 2010, p. 318). Espinoza (2010) examined this dilemma of values for Latinas with a keen sense of familismo as they also managed their role as students in a doctoral level program

12

and intended to maintain their 'good' Latina daughter identity. Data for their study included fifteen Latina graduate students enrolled in doctoral programs at institutions in Northern California with the average age of 27 (Espinoza, 2010). Most of the participants were Mexican American/Chicana with one Puerto Rican, one Ecuadoran and one Salvadoran but none of the participants were married or had children (Espinoza, 2010). With a focus on relationships and responsibilities while in graduate school, participants were categorized as either integrators, integrating family with school life; or separators, keeping their school life separate from their family life (Espinoza, 2010). The strategies of integration or separation employed by Latinas, in relation to their families, demonstrate the different approaches Latinas may take as they climb the educational ladder (Espinoza, 2010). The separators, like Rosa, shared an instance where she was asked to help younger siblings with schoolwork and rather than explain she was studying for a midterm exam the following day, she provided the help needed honoring her familismo (Espinoza, 2010). Integrators on the other hand made communication about school with family a priority and many of the Latinas who fell into that category shared details such as the heavy workload, deadlines and the demands of graduate school (Espinoza, 2010). This was demonstrated by Veronica who told her mother she was "prioritizing school over family" and not coming home during a holiday which her mother eventually understood (Espinoza, 2010). Latinas with competing roles may experience pressure navigating the multiple expectations between cultural family values and educational goals, as they

grapple with the harmony that must exist between the two; it is important for high

education institutions to acknowledge this so Latinas do not feel alone in their

efforts (Espinoza, 2010).

Adding to the literature on the influence of the Latino/a family, Jabbar,

Serrate, Epstein and Sánchez (2019) examine Latino/a students in two-year

community colleges and the key role that families and family networks play in

providing inspiration and other supports during the educational journey. Like

Espinoza's (2010) integrators, families were involved in the important decision in

regard to the transfer process and provided validating words of affirmation that

motivated students and kept them going (Jabbar et al., 2019). The Latino/a

students described their family's validating support as grandmothers making

breakfast before class each morning, pep talks from their children and, a father

saying "échale ganas" (give it your all) (Jabbar et al., 2019). Prioritizing family

needs was also key for the decision-making process as the Latino/a students

considered geographical proximity of the four-year institution they would transfer

to (Jabbar et al., 2019). The Latina students in their study were more influenced

by familismo than their male counterparts were as they considered family

matters, such as babysitting younger siblings or caring for elderly family

members, in their decision on whether their campus choice would be bound by

location or not (Jabbar et al., 2019). This points again to how machismo is

problematic in the Latino community providing males the privilege of not being as

obligated as the Latinas through familismo to consider these family matters in the

college decision-making process. The research concludes by pointing to a critical implication for institutions and policymakers that, as Latina students prepare to transfer, they do not make choices for themselves but are influenced by family and family networks (Jabbar et al., 2019).

<div align="center">Resilience and Agency of Latinas</div>

Demonstrating Latinas are successful in the college-going process, research has examined areas of agency (Sapp, Marquez Kiyama and Dache-Gerbino, 2016) and resiliency (Santamaria Graff, McCain and Gomez-Vilchis, 2013) as factors in academic achievements. In their research of Latina's in the college choice and transition period, Sapp et al. (2016) worked with high school aged Latinas to understand their agency for college opportunities. Alternatively, Santamaria Graff et al.'s (2013) work focused on post-traditional Latinas, defined as being over age 25, may have dependents, be employed full-time, attend school part time and/or be a parent (PNPI, 2018; Soares, 2013), who were enrolled in college courses pursuing a bachelor's degree and exemplified resilience attributed by their seasonal farmworker backgrounds.

Focusing attention on agency, Sapp et al. (2016) turned to Bandura's (2000) concept of agency to conceptualize Latinas being empowered to take charge in settings where they have been historically excluded such as educational environments, which was exemplified in "personal, proxy and collective agency" (p. 46). Participants in the study included sixteen Latinas who were from an urban area in the northeastern U.S. with their ethnicity makeup as

majority Puerto Rican but others also identified as Dominican, Cuban and multi-racial Latinas (Sapp et al., 2016). The Latina students in their qualitative study discussed challenges in their high school environments and few (30%) identified at least one teacher or administrator that encouraged them however, 90% identified a family member who provided encouragement and "in some cases served as agents of support to assist them with gaining access to college" (Sapp et al., p. 47). This influence, or collective agency, from family was demonstrated when one Latina described the shared love of animals she and her mother had as the basis for a decision on what university to attend so she could study animals (Sapp et al., 2016). Latina students also presented their individual agency to continue their education in actions such as attending summer school or enrolling in an Advance Placement (AP) class to earn college credit while in high school (Sapp et al., 2016). Acknowledging all the structures that systemically keep students of color from accessing higher education, Sapp et al. (2016) found the Latinas in their study either activated their own agency or had collective agency through influence agents in their lives who supported their college going behaviors.

In a qualitative study, Santamaria Graff, McCain and Gomez-Vilchis (2013) recognized the resilience that Latina students exemplify while pursuing higher education degrees. Using a resiliency model from Morales and Trotman (2004), their qualitative study of five Latina students aimed to understand the factors that lead to successful completion of a college degree (Santamaria Graff

et al., 2013). The Latina participants were described as post-traditional students from Mexico or Central America, the first in their families to earn a degree, majority English language learners and all attended branch campus approximately 40 miles from the main university in the state of Washington (Santamaria Graff et al., 2013). In their findings, all participants experienced obstacles that could have possibly ended their pursuit of a college degree but were determined to succeed (Santamaria Graff et al., 2013). Not all the Latinas had family that fully understood their goals, so they found themselves having to demonstrate resiliency by opposing family as two of the participants described family objections to the time and money required for their education (Santamaria Graff et al., 2013). Also, participants also exhibited resiliency when they considered their experience of work in the fields as a driving force in their decision to create a better life for themselves and their families. One participant described it as such, "Lupe, who had also worked as a farm laborer, described her childhood as "doing hard farm laboring." She wanted a "better" life for herself and explained, "inside my heart I wanted something different [but it was not] until I had my kids when I realized that I wanted them to have a better option." It was that realization that prompted her decision to pursue a higher education degree" (p. 340).

Although there were challenges with family which Santamaria Graff et al. (2013) described as a chasm between goals to improve life and fulfilling the expected role of a good Latina mother; it was this balance between both worlds

and a desire to better their lives and the lives of their children that fostered their academic success.

Examples of the Latina women in these studies, whether high school aged or post-traditional with seasonal farm working backgrounds, clearly demonstrate resiliency and agency which were considered critical to their academic success and verified their power to pursue and earn college degrees. The next section of this literature review will continue to explore post-traditional students, specifically the intersecting identities of motherhood and student.

Post-Traditional Students Mothers

The profile of undergraduate college students is shifting in multiple ways including personal and familial commitments that compete with their academics. This section of the literature review will examine research on the growing population of post-traditional undergraduate students. However, it is relevant to note that research on understanding this population of post-traditional has been "virtually ignored ... and future research needs to develop a line of inquiry on the college access concerns of [post-] traditional students" (McDonough and Fann, 2007, p. 65, Gumport, Chapter 3). Additionally, a focus on the intersecting identity of student and mother will be examined as 39% of women in two-year community colleges are raising dependent children (Gault and Reichlin, 2014) and 26% of all undergraduates across the U.S. are parents (PNPI, 2018).

As of 2018, the Postsecondary National Policy Institute factsheet indicates post-traditional students are 85% of all undergraduate students nationwide

(PNPI, 2018). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), post-traditional students are classified as meeting any of the following six characteristics; delay enrollment after high school, attend part time, work full time, are financially independent of their parents, have dependents other than a spouse, are single parents, or do not have a high school diploma (McDonough and Fann, 2007). As research on post-traditional students (previously referred to as non-traditional) evolves, so does the language that is used to describe the student demographic. Soares (2013) begins to describe this unique and diverse group in a more comprehensive way. Unlike the term non-traditional, which possess negative connotations, frame students in a deficit lens whereas post-traditional expands the idea of who these students in a more diverse way to capture their broad range of backgrounds, experience and identities (Soares, 2013). As a growing population, it is important to understand post-traditional students and their unique and individual characteristics as they pursue higher education. More likely to enroll in two-year public institutions, 26% of post-traditional students are parents (PNPI, 2018). Gault and Reichlin (2014) for The Institute for Women's Policy Research did an analysis of NCES data and looked at gender, race and ethnicity for post-traditional students who are parents and found that 39% of women in community college are mothers and 20% of male students in community college are fathers. Of the women who are mothers in community college, they are more likely to be women of color (Gault and Reichlin, 2014). A breakdown of the NCES data from Gault and Reichlin (2014)

show the proportion of racial/ethnic populations who are mothers in community college and found 54% Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander, 53% Black, 6% American Indian or Alaska Native and 35% Latinas. With multiple racial/ethnic groups having over 50% of their populations as women with children, it is imperative institutions understand the implications for these student populations if they do not college earn degrees.

In her book, The Price of Motherhood: Why the Most Important Job in the World is Still the Least Valued, Ann Crittenden (2001) writes about the "Mommy tax" which economically impacts women in their financial earnings in a career despite college education, just for being mothers. These lost wages due to being a mother are higher for well-educated women as they have the potential for higher earnings with advance degrees (Crittenden, 2001). In addition to the known wage-earning gap between men and women, Crittenden (2001) emphasizes that among women there is a distinct pay gap between mothers and non-mothers. Degree completion also reflects this gap when comparing student parents with their counterparts as student parents are less likely to complete a degree when compared to non-parent students (PNPI, 2018; Soares, 2013).

<center>Barriers and Challenges</center>

Research on post-traditional students has frequently focused on their barriers and challenges that prevent this student population from earning degrees when compared to their traditional undergraduate student counterparts for example, Lin (2016) conducted a review of literature that focused on barriers

<center>20</center>

and challenges experienced by female post-traditional students enrolled in United States higher education institutions. Key challenges for female post-traditional students include having multiple roles, specifically responsibilities outside of the classroom such as employment, financial and most importantly family responsibilities (Lin, 2016). Carney-Crompton and Tan (2002) compared undergraduate female traditional age students (18-22) to female post-traditional students aged 34 - 44 and looked at support systems, psychological functioning, and academic performance. They hypothesized an increase in support would be associated with lower depression and anxiety as well as higher academic performance, which they predicted, would be stronger for the post-traditional students (Carney-Crompton and Tan, 2002). None of the traditional aged students had children whereas 19 of the 21 post-traditional women in the study had children (Carney-Crompton and Tan, 2002). Using multiple survey instruments such as the Beck Anxiety Inventory, a depression scale and a social support measure survey, researchers conducted t test analysis and found that "[post-]traditional students performed at a higher academic level than did traditional students" with no difference in psychological functioning related to anxiety or depression. (Carney-Crompton and Tan, 2002, p. 146). This finding was of particular interest to researchers as they noted the post-traditional students "had more stressors such as familial commitments at home (e.g., care of children) and fewer sources of instrumental and emotional support (p. 147). Lin (2016) also found patterns in the literature identifying female post-traditional

students as having additional stress in their lives related to their multiple roles of student and mother however, Carney-Crompton and Tan (2002) confirm it does not always place them at risk of not successfully completing their higher education degrees.

Focusing on single mother college students, Duquaine-Watson (2017) shares her research in the book Mothering by Degrees of 86 single mothers over an eight-year timeframe. Mothers perusing high education also experience the challenge navigating the societal expectation of being a parent especially when that social definition is based on the "Standard North American Family (SNAF), a norm based on the model of a white, married, middle-class, heterosexual couple that includes a male breadwinner and stay-at-home wife and mother plus their biological offspring" (p. 19). Duquaine-Watson' (2017) research on single mothers highlights participants' experience with the deeply political nature of maternal identity in the United States. Titled "America's Childcare Crisis" (p. 110) Duquaine-Watson (2017) dedicates a chapter to the financial constraints single mothers encounter especially related to childcare access and the cost of childcare.

Childcare is a common barrier for degree completion among student parents, especially for single women (Cooper, 2018). Female post-traditional students with younger children have experienced increased level of pressure as they balance childcare responsibilities and out of class activities on minimal time budgets (Lin, 2016). When compared to their male counterparts, female post-

traditional student anxiety and stress levels are higher (Lin, 2016). With research

identifying the challenges, college students who are mothers encounter due to

childcare (Cooper, 2018; Duquaine-Watson, 2017); Eckerson, Talbourdet,

Reichlin, Skyes, Noll and Gault (2016) examined U.S. Department of Education

data for a state-by-state assessment of childcare availability on college

campuses. It is often difficult for parents who are enrolled in higher education to

find childcare resources while balancing the many responsibilities of being a

parent and student (Eckerson et al., 2016). Despite the higher demand than

capacity, there is a national decline of childcare centers at both two and four-year

public institutions (Eckerson et al., 2016). From their research with the Institute

for Women's Policy Research, a national view shows that 43% of student parents

are single mothers, 89% live with low-incomes and they are disproportionately

women of color (Eckerson et al., 2016).

Post-traditional student mothers often take time off or delay completion

(Gault and Reichlin, 2014). Data from the PNPI (2018) indicates after three

years, 33% of post-traditional students leave two-year institutions without a

degree. In their survey by The Institute for Women's Policy Research of

community college students in Mississippi, 30% of student mothers took a least

one break in enrollment (Gault and Reichlin, 2014). Student mothers who had

children under the age of 18 were more likely to take time off at 41% (Gault and

Reichlin, 2014). In their study, attempting to understand why students take time

off, they found, of the student mothers in Mississippi's community college, 72%

reported elevated levels of stress (Gault and Reichlin, 2014). Although feelings of stress are common among college students, one-third of the student mothers attributed stress as a contributing factor for taking time off (Gault and Reichlin, 2014).

<div align="center">Prejudice/Stereotypes/Negative Campus Climates</div>

Additional challenges post-traditional students experience while pursuing a college education include discrimination, negative stereotypes, prejudice, and negative campus climates (Coker, 2003; Navarro, Dávila and Kouyoumdjian, 2020; Santamaria Graff, McCain and Gomez-Vilchis, 2013). In a qualitative study, Coker (2003) used the theoretical paradigm of Black feminist theory to examine experiences of African American female post-traditional students. Eight of the ten women in the study were mothers with 3 undergraduate students and 7 graduate level students (Coker, 2003). After conducting focus groups, the findings were developed into themes of motivations, challenges, and sources of strength with challenges based on experiences of racism, sexism, and cultural misunderstanding (Coker, 2003). Participants described experiences in classrooms where they felt unheard because they were women with one student describing it as her "opinion not [being] valued if the professor is male" especially "if there are outspoken male [students] in the class" (p. 667). One participant also reported a negative experience after asserting them self, so they were heard in class discussions, then had an unfavorable interaction with their White instructor feeling, as an African American woman, they were marginalized because of the

<div align="center">24</div>

cultural differences in communication (Coker, 2013). This manifested in the participant changing their behavior in the classroom as she explained: "doesn't this man see I am older and have probably been out of school for some time? [He] used to make me feel stupid if I asked a question, he felt I ought to have known the answer to. So eventually I stopped asking questions" (p. 668).

Also feeling inadequate, one of the post-traditional Latinas from Santamaria Graff et al.'s (2013) research explained she was wrongfully placed into a special education class because she was shy in expressing herself in class, which had teachers assuming she was somehow unintelligent and incapable of thinking. Another participant described unsupportive teachers, who did not understand the cognitive benefits of speaking both Spanish and English, enforcing the use of English only. She then felt stigmatized in the college setting because educators assumed Spanish was her stronger language and had to overcome the stereotypes by continuously proving her capability (Santamaria Graff et al., 2013). Latina student mother participants from Navarro-Cruz et al.'s (2020) research had a disconnect with institutions both at the high school and college level through negative experiences with perceptions of prejudice and negative campus climates. These negative experiences occurred often with a Latina student mother would reveal her parenting identity to peers, faculty, and staff with one participant who described an unsupportive faculty member tell her of a decrease in grade despite her having a doctor's note due to her ill child and the faculty replied, "that's my policy" (p. 9). This also was demonstrated when

25

Latina student mothers were unable to find designated lactation areas or appropriate parking to avoid walking a long-distances while pregnant (Navarro-Cruz et al., 2020). An in-class discussion on financial support through federal childcare created feelings of prejudice from one Latina student mother since she herself was receiving the free federal benefit for her child, she felt as if she could not speak up and disagree with her classmate (Navarro-Cruz et al., 2020). Experiences of prejudice were also felt when Latina student mothers had to take their children to class not only because they had their child with them but also because as a young mother "it's assumed you're not responsible, that you don't have the resources..." (p. 9). These experiences of discrimination, stereotypes and prejudice created instances for post-traditional women to develop coping skills.

Coker (2003) described sources of strength for the African American post-traditional women as their coping strategies, which got them through challenges of sexism and racism when they employed humor, compromise, excellence, and confrontation. Similarly, Santamaria Graff et al. (2013) also described the strong coping skills the Latina post-traditional students developed, due to the experience of discrimination based on language, which allowed them to persist in their academic goals. Coker (2003) depicted the women combating racism and injustice as they demonstrated excellence when they submitted their best academic work (Coker, 2013). The African American post-traditional females were determined to reach their highest potential. They felt they should move

beyond the educational attainment of the previous generation as well as set the

example for those around them and "their role as mothers, sisters, daughters,

wives, aunts … played a major factor in shaping their vision for a future of

enhanced opportunities" (Coker, 2003, p. 672).

Recent research on post-traditional student mothers is limited due to the

lack of data available; Gault, Holtzman and Reichlin Cruse (2020), for The

Institute for Women's Policy Research, reviewed existing data sources that track

metrics for students who are parents such as enrollment, retention, and

graduation. They reviewed data sources such as Integrated Postsecondary

Educational Data System (IPEDS), Nationally Representative NCES data that

uses three data sources, the National Postsecondary Students Aid Study

(NPSAS), the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BSP) and

the Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study (BandB), the Community

College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) as well as others. The data

sets being used by institutions only focus on first time, full-time students. Student

populations are misrepresented and unaccounted for as is evidence by the

approximately 40% of students who are missing as they do not meet the first

time, full-time criteria (Schneider and Deane, 2014). This also creates a situation

where institutions become unaccountable for student performance benchmarks

and student success allowing for "schools that do not successfully educate their

[post-] traditional students [to] escape punishment, while those who are

successful will miss out on the recognition" (Schneider and Deane, 2014, p. 9). In

addition to lacking data on post-traditional students, Gault et al. (2020) find that these existing data sources and systems do not adequately collect information on the parental status of students. For institutions that are collecting student's dependent data on the Free Federal Application for Student Aid (FAFSA), they are not using the information to serve the post-traditional student parent population (Gault et al., 2020). Data on a student's parental status is often restricted to financial offices and not shared with other student services areas (Gault et al., 2020). Their briefing paper argues that it would take little effort or expense to build questions on a students' parenting status into these data sources and is vital to keeping college accessible to students who are raising children (Gault et al., 2020). Just collecting the data would not be enough, "including student-parent outcomes as part of college equity metrics is essential to closing gaps in college access and completion and would further progress toward a range of equity goals, given how likely student parents are to overlap with traditionally marginalized student groups" (p. 11) such as Latina student mothers.

Identity of Motherhood

Recent research is beginning to fill the gap in the literature on Latina student motherhood identity; however, there are still too few pieces of peer reviewed studies being published. Despite the little research on the intersecting identity of Latina mother and student, significant work has been conducted by Jiménez and Olivia (2017) which focuses on Latina student *mothers' trenzas de*

identidades (multiple strands of identity). Additionally, Navarro-Cruz, Dávila, and Kouyoumdjian (2020) aimed understand how Latina student mothers persisted in the educational pipeline as they transitioned into an identity of mother while also experiencing the transition from high school into postsecondary education. Jiménez and Oliva (2017) draw on Chicana feminist theory to apply *trenzas de identidades* (multiple strands of identity) as a framework to understand the experiences of community college Latina mothers. Acknowledging childbirth is a uniquely impacting experience on educational goals; Navarro-Cruz et al. (2020) used a model of student persistence as a lens to examine Latina student mother's transition as student parents into higher education. Although not a critical framework like Chicano feminist theory, Navarro-Cruz et al. (2020) claims the value of the persistence model is being able to understand persistence from a longitudinal aspect. As Chicana/Latina mother scholars, Jiménez and Oliva (2017) weave together three main strands of Latina student mother's identities; mother, student and professional to explore their navigation of the educational pipeline. In their research, data was collected from students attending Pacific Coast Community College and researchers focused on four Latina mothers who were diverse regarding marital status, social class, age, career aspirations and ethnic and racial background (Jiménez and Oliva, 2017). In their findings, the tranza (strand) of identity most prominent was motherhood (Jiménez and Oliva, 2017). One participant, Rosa, shared of the upheaval in her life as she explained, "after I got pregnant, everything fell apart, I lost my job. There was a lot of

turmoil" (p. 120). As a single mother, Rosa was searching for employment and grappled with what a mother should be and referenced the perfect TV family, she contemplated returning to school but did not initially consider it an option as she "needed to be more mom than a student" (Jiménez and Oliva, 2017, p. 121). After some time, Rosa did return to school enrolling at the two-year community college and noted "that being a student is actually gonna... help me be a better mom" (p. 121). This allowed her to reconcile the oppression she felt as a single unemployed mother with the intersection of being a student and created an opportunity through education (Jiménez and Oliva, 2017).

Similarly, the Latina student mother participants in research from Navarro-Cruz et al. (2020) found harmony in their new identities of mother and student through persistence. The Latina student mothers in their study all became mothers between the ages of 15 and 19 with seven attending high school and 6 enrolled in either a two-year or four-year college during the time of their pregnancy (Navarro-Cruz et al., 2020). Researchers found a noticeable factor of commitment in ten of the participants who all continued their aspirations to go to college, as they did not want to interrupt their goals for higher education (Navarro-Cruz et al., 2020). Persistence was demonstrated in one participant's commitment when she described the reason being "with my son, I feel like I just want to be that example . . . my motivation was just him really." (p. 8). The motivations to persist in their education journey shifted after having their children with some Latina mothers desiring to go beyond a bachelor's degree and into

30

graduate school or change in career trajectory desiring to enter helping fields such as social work (Navarro-Cruz et al., 2020). One Latina mother explained, "I want to be a social worker. . . I see a lot of flaws in the system that I've been affected by myself" so her identity as a mother and experiences became a driving factor in her decision to persist (Navarro-Cruz et al., 2020). It is important to note that almost half (6) of the 13 Latina student mothers were transfer students before attending the four-year regional-serving institution where the data was collected, this is consistent with research indicating Latina students who are mothers primarily begin their educational journeys at two-year institutions (Gándara, 2015; Núñez et al., 2011; Pérez Huber et al., 2015).

Jiménez and Oliva (2017) sought to share the narratives of a hidden population within the post-traditional student population, Latina student mothers. Latina student mothers' *trenzas de identidades* "affirm motherhood as a positive force and source of strength and wisdom that contribute to their educational pursuits" (p. 126). As post-traditional students, Latina student mothers' experiences make them unique in that their "challenges magnify exponentially" based on the intersections of their cultural identities (p. 127).

The above review of literature focused on post-traditional students, the profile of who they represent in the undergraduate college settings at both two and four-year institutions and the barriers and challenges they encountered. Post-traditional students are mothers with intersecting identities of their gender, class, and racial/ethnic identity and, they demonstrate persistence in their goals

of higher education degree attainment. It is clear from the literature that the rates of bachelor's degree completion for post-traditional Latina student mothers will only increase if institutions of higher education are successful in the facilitating the transfer function from two to four-year institutions.

Critical Transfer Function

California Public Higher Education

The Master Plan for Higher Education in California (MPHEC) defined organization, structure, and policy for all public higher education in California (California, 1960). The MPHEC created distinct lines with three entities: the junior colleges, the State College System, and the University of California (UC) each serving specific populations (California, 1960). The junior colleges, now known as community colleges, allow all California residents open access with courses offered for the purpose of transferring to a four-year, baccalaureate-granting institution (California, 1960; Callan, 2009; Cohen, Brawer and Kisker, 2013). Each entity would be governed by a specific group to ensure their mission was being fulfilled but also allowed some autonomy for decision-making, moving it away from the former approaches (California, 1960; Callan, 2009). The MPHEC initially stated that there were to be no tuition or fees for students at the community college (California, 1960) but these "provisions… eroded" and tuition fees were assessed to supplement the public funds from the state (Callan, 2009, p. 9). In 1960 legislators wrote in the MPHEC a recommendation for funding to "increase the proportion of total current support … from the approximately 30 per

cent now in effect to approximately 45 per cent" (California, 1960, p 13). In their research that 'followed the money' Rhoads, Wagoner, and Ryan (2009) found that the community college received more than double the state proportion from 1970-1971 to the 2005-2006 academic year, moving from 20.2% to 41.9% while both the UC and CSU systems saw a decline during the same period. However, despite receiving a large amount of funding at the community college, when compared to the number of students being served, they are still underfunded as research from Rhoads et al. (2009) found evidence of a decrease in spending on the community college from the state based on full-time student equivalent (FTSE). Their research points to the neoliberalism state of public higher education which is moving away from the government support or 'welfare model' to a more post-industrial era based on "production, management, and commodification of knowledge" (p. 11). This quote best summarized their research where they "choose to center a democratic vision of the community college (the community college as a social interventionist institution), but in recognition of interests shaped by the neoliberal revolution" (p. 13). Rhoades et al. (2009) found their hypothesis to be supported when looking at the pattern of lower funding which is intensified when most students attend part-time. Having so much reliance on state-public funds jeopardizes maintaining financial stability. The community college is doing so much more with less compared to the other systems of public higher education in California and it becomes difficult to execute and effectively serve its mission.

Transfer Experiences for Latina Students

It is imperative that support and assistance is provided for Latinas transferring from a community college to a university since Latinas seeking a bachelor's degree primarily begin in community colleges (Gándara, 2015). The role of the community college has historically been one for providing access (Cohen et al., 2013) and are gateways to four-year universities for Latino/as (Pérez Huber, Malagón, Ramirez, Gonzalez, Jimenez and Vélez, 2015; Pérez and Ceja, 2010; Rivas, Pérez, Alvarez and Solórzano, 2010). The community college has been found to be the entry point to postsecondary education for Latino/as, making it a critical institution in the public higher education system (Pérez Huber et al., 2015; Rivas et al., 2010). Unfortunately, as the research previously mentioned, the pipeline for Latino/as is leaky especially in the transfer function from the community college to the four-year university (Pérez Huber et al., 2006; 2015). As of 2010, the California Community colleges now have Latino/as as the largest racial/ethnic group on its campuses (Rivas et al., 2010; Solórzano, Acevedo-Gil, and Santos, 2013). Research shows an overrepresentation of Latino/a students in the California Community College compared to the University of California, specifically for the Los Angeles area (Pérez Huber et al., 2015). Núñez, Crisp and Elizondo (2015) found in their research using national datasets of students enrolled in community college, that "although 86% of [Latino/a] students expected to earn bachelor's degrees or higher, only 60% reported plans to transfer to four-year institutions" and only 23%

34

were successful in the transfer process within six years. (p. 58). Data on Latino/a community college students reveals, "the current transfer culture is failing Latino/a students" creating a barrier for earning a 4-year college degree (Pérez and Ceja, 2010).

Bensimon and Dowd (2009) point to the current issue in California of an undereducated Latino/a population and the need for Latino/as to have greater access to elite institutions (Bensimon and Dowd, 2009). Looking at the problem of lack of diversity at elite institutions, the transfer function is a solution (Bensimon and Dowd, 2009). Bensimon and Dowd (2009) use an ethnographic approach to "examine the lived experiences" (p. 638) of five Latino/a students from a California community college, Long Beach City College (LBCC), and transferred to a four-year institution. In understanding the college choice process, Bensimon and Dowd (2009) turn to the transfer choice gap which "refers to the phenomenon of students who are academically eligible for transfer to a selective university but elect to transfer instead to a less selective institution or not transfer at all" (p. 635). Bensimon and Dowd (2009) aimed to understand the transfer choice process for the Latino/a students who were not constrained by academic qualifications based on meeting requirements to transfer to highly selective institutions in California, the University of California (UC) system yet; had not transferred to a UC (Bensimon and Dowd, 2009). Bensimon and Dowd (2009) use the six forms of support from Stanton-Salazar (2001) that should be used by

institutional agents to guide students in the opportunities for their educational

journey, the six support forms are:

Funds of knowledge: for example, information about resources and how

colleges operate

Bridging: acting as a human bridge to opportunities

Advocacy: acting on behalf of students to promote their interests

Role modeling: modeling behaviors associated with effective

participation in academic domains

Emotional and moral support

Personalized and soundly based evaluative feedback, advice, and

guidance: providing institutional funds of knowledge as well as genuine

emotional and moral support (p. 268).

A narrative analysis methodology was used for interview transcripts to

represent the students' own voices (Bensimon and Dowd, 2009). Researchers

emphasized in their results that rather than focusing on what the students did, or

did not do, as many practitioners tend to do; their focus was to interpret what the

institution did, or did not do, to influence the transfer choice gap for these

Latino/a participants (Bensimon and Dowd, 2009). Similarly, Pérez and Ceja

(2010) turn to critical conceptual models of Latino/a critical race theory (CRT)

and validation theory to call attention to key practices that promote transfer for

Latino/a students from the institutional actions by taking on the responsibility and

"committing themselves to institutional change" (p. 13).

Research findings from Bensimon and Dowd (2009) highlight the failings of the community college institution and its institutional agents to provide knowledge to the Latino/a students from the time they enrolled to when they were ready for transfer (Bensimon and Dowd, 2009). Their research found "the absence of faculty members, counselors, and others within the college who acted as "institutional agents" in these students' lives particularly striking" (p. 651). Based on the results from the study, practitioners at LBCC evaluated what practices and policies that could be changed, and many adjustments were made to remove barriers to advising on transfer choice (Bensimon and Dowd, 2009). Researchers Bensimon and Dowd (2009) "suspect that thousands of Latina and Latino students fall into the transfer choice gap because counselors and instructors do not have the funds of knowledge to assume the role of transfer agents" (p. 652). It is important to note that researchers Bensimon and Dowd (2009) have clearly identified developing highly effective "expert transfer agents" as being essential to eliminating transfer choice gaps for Latino/a students and providing them an opportunity to identify as "elite" students (p. 653). Pérez and Ceja (2010) found promising practices in the literature of community colleges and collaborating universities who work together to focus on being relationship centered. This was demonstrated in a model-transfer partnership program, Puente (meaning Bridge in Spanish), found across the state of California in high schools and community colleges where validating agents, or institutional staff members, provide support needed to Latino/a students for transfer (Pérez and

Ceja, 2010). These programs have been to be highly effective and "unquestionably doing its part to facilitate transfer" (Pérez and Ceja, 2010, p. 13).

Understanding that there are low transfer rates for historically excluded student groups such as Latino/as, Jabbar, Serrate, Epstein and Sánchez (2019) aimed to study this by looking at community college students' family support as they made key decisions during the transfer process. Focusing on the family support, Jabbar et al., (2019) indented to explore current community college students who were enrolled during the time they navigated the transfer process into a four-year institution using asset-based theoretical frameworks. The authors acknowledge families are vital in all education decisions beginning with K-12 but emphasize that they continue to be vital into postsecondary decisions such as the choice-making process for transfer, which the current literature on family engagement is limited on (Jabbar et al., 2019). Community college students enrolled in two different Texas institutions, who declared their intention to transfer within 12 months, were the intended subjects of research (Jabbar et al., 2019). One hundred and four students made up the sample of participants in their study with findings focused on the 56 Latino/a participants. The subset of Latino/as were 32% male, 68% female and 68% identified as being the first in their family to attend college (Jabbar et al., 2019). Jabbar et al. (2019) found families and family networks of Latino/a students influenced them in their decision choices in two key ways with the first being "transferring cultural values, beliefs, validating experiences, and advice" and second by "direct and indirect informational

38

supports" (p. 262 and 263). An example of the transfer of cultural values,

students who were first in their families to attend college as well as parents

shared their desire to create a better standard of life for their children as reasons

for transferring to earn a degree (Jabbar et al., 2019). Like the financial barriers

many adult students encounter pursuing a college degree (Carney-Crompton and

Tan, 2002; Coker, 2013; Gary, Kling and Dodd, 2004; Lin, 2016), Jabbar et al.

(2019) found financial support from family was key in their transfer choice

decision making process and this was especially true for student parents. On

being a parent:

> One student summed up her decision to seek transfer in her current
>
> region based on the diverse in-kind supports. As she describes: The only
>
> reason I would choose GSU [Grand State University] is because financial
>
> stability. I live in the house that [my dad] has over here, so I am pretty
>
> much rent-free. I don't have to pay any of the bills. ... The only thing I pay
>
> for is like groceries and things for my son, so that helps a lot. Whereas if I
>
> were to go somewhere like out of the city it's going to be more expensive .
>
> . . the daycare, the prices, can also go up. The direct and indirect financial
>
> assistance thus demonstrate another dimension of familial support which
>
> made students feel supported through the transfer choice process (p.
>
> 266).

Referring to in-kind financial support students received, many Latino/a

students mentioned that family members provided childcare such as when they

"kept the kids out of the room" while doing homework (Jabbar et al., 2019. p. 265). Jabbar et al. (2019) also found Latino/a students made family needs such as geographical location of a university a priority in their choice making process. If the students cared for younger siblings or if they relied on parents to provide care for their own children, this influenced their decisions in university selection (Jabbar et al., 2019). Their research helps to problematize the idea that Latino/a student's make individualistic choices in the college decision-making process and aim to address the ways that policies are affecting the largest growing population in the U.S. (Jabbar et al., 2019). Finally, their research highlights that the transfer experiences of Latino/a students are certainly influenced by family units, but it should not be assumed the same for all Latino/a students specifically when considering the intersectional lives and experiences of Latino/a students (Jabbar et al., 2019) such as Latina student mothers.

In their research recommendations, Pérez and Ceja (2010) place the onus of building a Latino/a transfer culture as the responsibility of the higher education institutions. Their fourth recommendation states "College outreach programs should be culturally responsive and ought to reflect the specific needs of the Latino/a student population they serve. Such programs would promote college attendance and transfer while instilling in participants a sense of pride in their heritage" (p. 16). The critical transfer function and transition duty lies with the higher education institutions, those with a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)

designation are well positioned to foster the transfer culture and increase transfer rates for Latino/a students.

Hispanic Serving Institutions

As referred to in Chapter One, Latino/a students are more likely to choose a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) since HSIs have institutional characteristics that students identify and align with (Santiago, 2006). By understanding how HSIs can best serve the diverse populations of Latino/a students, institutions can increase degree completion for Latina student mothers. Attention to the growing number of Latino/a students in higher education began in the 1980s (Santiago, 2006). Through policy advocates and legislation, in the mid-80s, the term "Hispanic-Serving Institution" was coined, and, by the late-90s, federal funding was allocated to support institutions who qualified for the designation (Santiago, 2006). To receive the designation Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), institutions must meet the criteria which is defined by federal law as accredited and degree-granting public or private nonprofit institutions of higher education with 25% or more total undergraduate Hispanic full-time equivalent student enrollment (summary of Title V of the Higher Education Act, as amended in 1998). Over 50% percent of designated HSI's across the United States and Puerto Rico are associate degree granting institutions (Santiago, 2006) however, HSIs consist of two-year or four-year, public, or private and located in all geographical parts of the U.S. which creates a challenge for researchers who compare outcomes (Núñez, Crisp and Elizondo, 2016). A framework to

understand institutional diversity among HSIs was created by Núñez et al. (2016) with six types (Typology) of HSIs; (1) Urban Enclave Community Colleges, (2) Rural Dispersed Community Colleges, (3) Big Systems four-year Institutions, (4) Small Communities four-year Institutions, (5) Puerto Rican Institutions and (6) Health Science Schools. Research on HSIs is growing, as is the number of colleges designated as HSI with an increase in institutions of 150% over the past 25 years (Excelencia, 2020).

To understand an institutional administrative level perspective de Los Santos and Cuamea (2010) surveyed HSI university presidents, chancellors, and chief executive officers to identify what challenges they faced as an institution. Responses to the survey were coded and placed into themes with the first question addressing challenges the institutions faced and the second asking if these challenges were due to their institution status as an HSI (de Los Santos and Cuamea, 2010). Themes for the challenges that the institutions faced were funding, student preparedness, student retention/success, faculty, and affordability (de Los Santos and Cuamea, 2010). Although listed as the final challenge for presidents and chancellors, affordability was an issue and in particular for a California university president referring to "low-income [post-traditional] adults struggle to pay for college while raising families" (p. 102) which was consistent with literature on financial challenges for post-traditional students (Cooper, 2018; Duquaine-Watson, 2017; Eckerson et al., 2016). For the second purpose of their study, de Los Santos and Cuamea (2010) determined funding

and student retention/success were related to the HSI designation with one Texas public university president emphasizing that "HSIs are more likely to be located in parts of the country … [where] competition for scarce resources will continue to be a serious problem" (p. 103). Although their research findings do not designate responses by institutional type or how long the institution has been designated as an HSI, de Los Santos and Cuamea (2010) recommend future research with a similar study comparing but HSI and non-HSIs to determine what issues may be more related to the institution's designation as an HSI.

The number of HSIs are increasing, with a majority being designated in the last 30 years, yet not enough research is being done on how this influences the experience of Latino/a students attending designated HSIs (Fosnacht and Nailos, 2016). Fosnacht and Nailos (2016) use student engagement theory, which combines Astin's (1984) student involvement theory, Pace's (1984) quality of student effort concept, and Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, and Associates' (1991) research on the benefits of out-of-class activities. Fosnacht and Nailos (2016) assert that using Student engagement theory can allow HSIs to create a supportive educational environment for Latino/a students, even though being an HSI is not part of their founding likely having "their roots as Predominately White Institutions (PWIs)" (p. 190). In their findings, analysis using two-sample t tests revealed students who attended HSIs "perceive greater gains in their personal and social development" based on instructors being more likely to use Effective Teaching Practices (ETP) however, there were no other significant outcomes for

43

other variables (Fosnacht and Nailos, 2016). Researchers conclude that the unexplained effects of HSI attendance on student engagement and perceived gains are modest and not able to be medium or large statistical classifications. One explanation for the modest findings is "HSIs are defined by their enrollment profile not their founding mission" so, the Latino/a populations are not the primary audience the institutions serve despite their designation (Fosnacht and Nailos, 2016, p. 197). In their recommendations, Fosnacht and Nailos (2016) posit HSIs must intentionally integrate their HSI designation into the mission and practice of the institution.

Latino/as primarily enroll in institutions with the federal designation of Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) so, research on community colleges that are HSI and their influence Latino/a students is important (Núñez, Sparks and Hernández, 2011). Núñez et al. (2011) sought to add to the research on HSIs by conducting a large-scale quantitative study to exam what differentiates Hispanic students who enroll in HSIs from those who do not. The purpose of their study was to examine factors related to Latino/a students' enrollment in 2-year HSIs with the central research question being "How are factors related to demographics, habitus, and various types of capital associated with enrollment patterns in community colleges, particularly those community colleges that are HSIs" (Núñez et al., 2011, p. 22). The primary data for this study was from the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Educational Statistics collected through the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study 2004 with

data that included demographic characteristics; parental and student socioeconomic status; educational experiences and expectations, and a set of risk index and nontraditional student markers (Núñez et al., 2011). A large sample of 9,550 community college students was pulled from the data, which included 1,650 Latino/a students (Núñez et al., 2011). The dependent variable used in this study was if students were enrolled in a community college that was an HSI or a non-HSI (Núñez et al., 2011). Independent variables used in the analysis of the demographic characteristics broke down student's ages into three groups: age 19 or younger, 20 – 23 years of age and 24 or older (Núñez et al., 2011). A risk index of post-traditional student indicators included timing, academic preparation, and financial or familial responsibilities that could place students at risk for not completing college (Núñez et al., 2011). In their results, Núñez et al. (2011) found statistically significant differences for Latino/a and Black community college students, which demonstrated that they were more likely to be older than traditional age students were and had risk factors associated with unsuccessful college completion. Data confirmed that 4 in 10 Latino/a students (39%) attended community colleges that were HSI (Núñez et al., 2011). Findings also included that although female students outnumbered males across all racial/ethnic groups, specifically for Latinos and Blacks (62% and 64%), being a male and Latino is positively related to enrolling in an HSI community college compared to a non-HSI community college (Núñez et al., 2011).

Research by Núñez et al. (2011) confirms how critical HSI community

colleges are in offering access to higher education for Latino/as. Their research

provides insight to the distinctions between students enrolled in HSI community

colleges compared to Latino/as in non-HSI community colleges (Núñez et al.,

2011). In addition to being a critical access point to postsecondary education,

HSI community colleges serve as the gateway to bachelor's degrees and beyond

for Latino/a students who intend to transfer institutions as they were more than

twice as likely to start their educational journey in an HSI community college

compared to a non-HSI community college (Núñez et al., 2011). The profile of

HSI community colleges enroll an overrepresentation of Latino/as who tend to be

older and have higher risk factors for not completing college such as "first-

generation, college-going, working, supporting a family, attending part-time,

delaying higher education, and never having completed a diploma" (Núñez et al.,

2011, p. 34). Núñez et al. (2011) conclude with some recommendations for future

research that include the need to develop college choice models that are more

reflective of the Latino/a student perspective. As an implication for policy and

practice, Núñez et al. (2011) highlight the need to emphasize the role of the

transfer function as well as how to meet Latino/a students' needs.

Serving Latino/as Students in Hispanic Serving Institutions

The number of Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) are growing with more

institutions meeting guidelines to qualify for the federal designation; however,

they are frequently criticized for graduating Latino/a students at low rates

(Garcia, 2016). Despite the federal designation of Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), institutions are not founded with a mission to serve the Latino/a student population (Garcia and Okhidoi, 2015) however, with the designation institutions are still charged with enrolling and serving diverse populations. If HSI institutions are evaluated based on white normative standards such as having a focus on completion rates only, Latino/a students will continue to be minoritized in higher education institutions (Garcia, 2019). Leading scholar on HSIs, Dr. Gina Ann Garcia offers a better solution to examine how members of a higher education organization make sense of its HSI designation as an identity of serving rather than a federal qualification (Garcia and Okhidoi, 2015; Garcia, 2016; 2019).

Garcia and Okhidoi (2015) were interested in learning how one HSI serves their Latino/a student population and found the Chicana/o Studies department and the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) were key to how the institution demonstrated its servingness. Data was collected from an HSI located in the Southwest, which was part of a larger state system with 35% Latino/a student population in 2012 (Garcia and Okhidoi, 2015). The institution was selected based on the historical founding of the institution and the history of Latino/a students traditionally being underrepresented but then had significant enrollment growth after student led movements in the late sixties (Garcia and Okhidoi). The subjects of this case study included administrators, faculty, staff, and students aimed "scrutinize the institution's current practices for serving Latino/a and other underrepresented students within a bounded context" (Garcia and Okhidoi, 2015,

p. 348). Data for the research was primarily collected from interviews with administrators, faculty and staff as well as focus groups with students then coded using Hyper RESEARCH 3.0.2 (Garcia and Okhidoi, 2015). Findings uncovered two important themes about serving diverse students at an HSI "(1) the historical presence of culturally relevant curricula and programs and (2) the embedding of culturally relevant curricula and programs within the structures of the institution" (Garcia and Okhidoi, 2015, p. 349). Embedding culturally relevant curricula into the structures of the institution was exhibited by the institution offering Chicana/o Studies courses that met students' General Education (GE) requirements allowing for students who did not major in the subject to be exposed to the course content (Garcia and Okhidoi, 2015). This experience of Chicana/o courses allowed one student to break down stereotypes as he explained:

I had to do Chicano Studies classes for my minor and I hated it. I didn't want to at first, because I had an idea about what "Chicano" was, because I'm Mexican and they tell us, "Oh, Chicano is not educated," or whatever. But there is [sic] so much culture and so much things [sic] behind it. When I got there I was like, "Oh this is kind of cool," and I have learned a lot of stuff. So I ended up taking more [classes] than I was supposed to take (p. 350).

Garcia and Okhidoi (2015) conclude that having culturally relevant curricula and programs embedded into the systems of the institution are key to serving Latino/a students. Two recommendations are made by the researchers

48

were to one, have ethnic studies courses part of general education requirements and two; have ethnic studies as its own department to institutionalize it into the culture of the university (Garcia and Okhidoi, 2015).

In her research, Garcia (2016) argues that focusing on enrollment and graduations rates alone is limiting the identity of institutions that are serving Latino/a students. Existing research on HSIs typically evaluate data outcomes on enrollment and graduation rates but do not account for institutions that may lack financial resources to serve the growing number of students. Garcia (2016) aimed to "explore the ways in which organizational members at one four-year HSI co-construct an identity for serving Latinas/os, with an emphasis on sustaining and enhancing the culture on education of Latinas/os" (p. 12). To understand the organizational behavior, Garcia (2016) drew from two theories about pedagogy from Muses' (2014) theory of Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) to contend that having a Latino/a-serving identity, an institution "should sustain the culture of Latino/a students while enhancing their educational experiences" (p. 121). Acknowledging the difficulty of conducting research of an HSI due to institutional diversity, Garcia (2016) used the Typology of HSIs developed by Núñez et al. (2016) to select the site for the research as a Big Systems Four-Year institution, which accounts for 21% HSIs. Using a pseudonym, Naranja State University (NSU) was selected for the study based on its constitutional diversity, federal designation as an HSI and prominent level of grant activity (Garcia, 2016). NSU is considered a large, public, master's granting

institution, founded in the late 1950s and has grown to reflect the demographics of the local area including the increasing Latino/a population (Garcia, 2016). A purposeful sampling technique was used as Garcia (2016) recruited 47 non-student participants who were administrators, professors, and staff members as well as 41 student participants. A case study research design was selected to explore the construction of identity within one organization that serves Latinas/os (Garcia, 2016). With an aim to study the phenomena occurring at this HSI, Garcia (2016) conducted interviews and focus groups with participants with questions and prompts about the institution and its identity as well as questions about curricula, pedagogy, and services. Two main themes emerged from Garcia's (2016) research, which were values and processes. Focusing on actions of the institutional members, Garcia (2016) attributed the construction of the identity as Latino/a serving to the students and non-students and has "chosen to make reference to a "Latino/a-serving identity," which has no connection to the HSI designation, as opposed to an 'HSI identity', which seems more directly connected to the federal definition" (p. 217).

In the findings, Garcia (2016) provides five ways members of the institution construct a Latino/a-serving identity; (1) providing access to students through a regional focus, (2) giving back to the community, (3) connecting with students on a cultural level, (4) seeing students as co-creators of knowledge and (5) believing that all students can be successful. The most salient ways for students were the last three especially with in-class experiences creating space

for them to feel connected to faculty who shared common values and culture as they did (Garcia, 2016). This was shared by one student participant who felt a connection with a Chicana/o Studies professor described their own experience with the Chicano Movement of the sixties and explained "it grabs my attention, and I focus in class" which enhanced the students learning experience (p. 130). Garcia (2016) can demonstrate how members of this institutional organization constructed meaning through an HSI identity of serving and "what it means to be Latino/a-serving (sense giving)" (p.134) rather than an identity solely based on retention and graduation rates.

This review of literature on Hispanic Serving Institutions demonstrated the challenges a federal designation can bring when serving Latino/a students is not at the foundation and mission of the institutional organization. Research presented is beginning to ask questions beyond the traditional metrics of enrollment, retention and completion and attempting to make meaning of what a HSI can do, and more importantly how the members of the institution can truly serve its Latino/a students.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This study draws on the critical conceptual models of Validation theory and transfer-receptive culture to understand the experiences of Latina students, who are mothers, and have successfully transferred from a community college designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) to a four-year public higher education institution also designated as an HSI. In a transition to college project,

51

Laura Rendón's (1994) research revealed that the low-income, first-generation students of color believed they could be academically successful through validating experiences and validating agents. As a framework, Validation theory provides higher education faculty and staff an opportunity to empower students of color to find their "agency, affirmation, self-worth, and liberation from past invalidation" enhancing their college experience for success (Rendón Linares and Muñoz, 2011, p. 17). Validation includes liberatory and equity elements related to power and agency for historically marginalized students recognizing institutions of higher education are frequently invalidating (Rendón Linares and Muñoz, 2011).

Founded in critical legal studies with roots in the post-civil rights era movements, Critical Race Theory (CRT) in education recognizes the role of racism in the racialized postsecondary educational setting, especially for students of color, who make up many community college students across the United States; however, they are not reflected in those who transfer (Jain et al., 2011). Informed by Solórzano's (1998) five tenants of CRT; Jain, Herrera, Bernal, and Solórzano (2011) developed transfer-receptive culture. Centering on the intersection of race and racism, the CRT lens permits scholars to see "transfer as a racialized phenomenon" (Jain, et al., 2011, p. 254). Challenging the dominant ideology, which is the second tenant of CRT, Jain et al. (2011) use transfer-receptive culture to remove the misnomer that the community college is the only institution responsible for transfer. Transfer should be seen as a "dual

52

commitment" between both the sending two-year community college and receiving four-year institution in which both institutions take responsibility with supporting students (Jain et al., 2011). Creating a transfer-receptive culture allows institutions to make commitments to issues of social justice, the third tenant of CRT, by creating opportunity for the upward mobility of first-generation, low-income students of color (Jain et al., 2011). Transfer-receptive culture seeks to honor the voice and experience of student's faculty and staff to improve the transfer pipeline as formed by the fourth tenant of CRT on the centrality of experiential knowledge (Jain et al., 2011). Additionally, the fifth tenant of CRT places an emphasis on being interdisciplinary including research areas such as ethnic studies and women's students (Jain et al., 2011), which is crucially relevant to understand the transfer experiences of Latina student mothers.

Without a theorical framework that is critical about race, ethnic equity and the structural racism perpetuated in higher education, research leads to conclusions that place historically marginalized students in a deficit frame, as exemplified Bensimon and Bishop (2012) in this quote of a potential research finding, "Latinos have the lowest college completion rate of any group, rather than Higher education is least successful in retaining and graduating Latinos of any group" (p. 2). Jain et al. (2011) constructs a similar statement regarding transfer students who are majority students of color in that, "students will be successful because they are transfer students. This is in opposition to the belief that they are successful despite being a transfer student" (p. 253). This proposed

study will use Validation theory and transfer-receptive culture as the theoretical and conceptual framework to reveal how two and four-year institutions of higher education are failing in their role to facilitate the transfer function for Latina student mothers.

Validation Theory

Validation Theory suggests that with validating experiences students can "acquire a confident, motivation, "I can do it" attitude, believe in their inherent capacity to learn, become excited about learning, feel a part of the learning community and feel cared about as a person, not just a student" (p. 15) allowing them to be academically successful in their higher education pursuits (Rendón, 1994; Rendón Linares and Muñoz, 2011). Rendón (1994) refers to "nontraditional" students but unlike the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) definition of nontraditional as students over age 25, may have dependents or other similar factors; Rendón does not exclusively follow that criteria rather, the research centers on college students who did not fit the 'traditional' college student profile meaning they did not have families that are financially stable with college-attending backgrounds, typically "White males from privileged backgrounds" (p. 33). Validation theory speaks to the issues encountered by students from low-income backgrounds, the first in their family to go to college and did not immediately enroll in college after high school or had a break in enrollment (Rendón, 1994; Rendón Linares and Muñoz, 2011). Initial research by Rendón (1994) was targeted at male and female African American

54

and Latino/a students who did not live on campus and commuted to school; these students were from various institutions including a community college, a liberal arts college, a comprehensive state university and a research university.

Validating experiences come from validating agents who are individuals academic and/or interpersonal, who "took the initiative to lend a helping hand, to do something that affirmed them as being capable of doing academic work and that supported them in their academic endeavors and social adjustment" (Rendón, 1994, p. 44). Validating agents out-of-class are often family and friends (sisters, brothers, partners, spouses, children, grandparents, uncles, aunts, classmates, friends attending and not attending college) and those in class are often college staff, faculty, peers, counselors, advisors and/or coaches (Rendón Linares and Muñoz, 2011, p. 14). Rendón (1994) identifies two types of validation, Academic Validation, and Interpersonal Validation, both occurring in-class and out-of-class. With six defined elements of Validation Theory, it is important to note the first element as being the responsibility of the members of the institution, validating agents are key in taking an active role rather than waiting on the student to come to them (Rendón, 1994; Rendón Linares and Muñoz, 2011). The second element is described as validation occurring when students feel they have a sense of self-worth and are capable, accepted and valued (Rendón, 1994; Rendón Linares and Muñoz, 2011). Since the basis of the initial research project on college transition was based on Austin's (1985) student involvement theory, the third element of validation places it as a prerequisite to

55

student development in that validation occurs prior to a student being fully involved in college life experiences (Rendón, 1994; Rendón Linares and Muñoz, 2011). The fourth element of validation describes the location of where validation takes place as being both in academic class settings as well as out-of-class. The fifth element clarifies that validation is a developmental process indicating that it should happen often and regularly and "the more students get validated, the richer the academic experience" (p. 44). The sixth and final element of validation is that it should occur early, in the first year and even the first few weeks such as orientation and summer transition programs (Rendón, 1994).

Validation has been found to be especially beneficial for students of color who have been historically marginalized, especially Latino/a students as they have often had invalidating experiences where they "encounter subtle and overt forms of racism, sexism, and oppression on college campus" (Rendón Linares and Muñoz, 2011, p. 17). Students who do not fit the traditional college student profile need to rely on out-of-class validation since it is less likely they receive validation being the first in their family to attend college, may be discouraged by family members or even told "they were wasting their time attending college" (Rendón, 1994, p. 46). This finding is key for post-traditional Latina student mothers who often experience invalidating experiences due to their motherhood identity with 21% feeling somewhat or very uncomfortable disclosing their parenting status to professors (Lewis and Haynes, 2020). However, Rendón (1994) found faculty and staff who were validating with students, despite their

past invalidating experiences, were able to transform students into "powerful learners who are excited about learning and attending college" (p. 46). Institutional validating agents who employ validation do so when they are genuine, caring and it is done in a nonpatronizing way (Rendón, 1994).

Since its inception in 1994, validation has been used as a theoretical framework, a tool to improve pedagogy, as a Student Development Theory and has had informed other theoretical perspectives such as ABC model of creating inclusive environments (Tatum, 2007), Community Cultural Wealth model (Yosso, 2007) and Moll, Amanti, Neff and Gonzalez's (2001) Funds of knowledge (Rendón Linares and Muñoz, 2011). Additionally, it has contributed to Liberatory pedagogy (Freire, 1971) which posits that the banking model, or filling students with information as a way of learning, is inadequate and oppressive in nature (Rendón Linares and Muñoz, 2011). When students are empowered to be creators, holders and beneficiaries of knowledge, they are participating in liberatory pedagogy and validating their participation in knowledge "as full members of the academic and social community" (Rendón,1994, p. 51; Rendón Linares and Muñoz, 2011).

<center>Transfer-Receptive Culture</center>

The research problem was also examined with the conceptual framework of a transfer-receptive culture from Jain, Herrera, Bernal, and Solórzano (2011). Informed by Critical Race Theory, transfer-receptive culture is defined as, "an institutional commitment by a four-year college or university to provide the

<center>57</center>

support needed for students to transfer successfully—that is, to navigate the community college, take the appropriate coursework, apply, enroll, and successfully earn a baccalaureate degree in a timely manner" (Jain et al., 2011, p. 252).

Informed by the theoretical perspective of critical race theory (CRT), the function of transfer should be seen as a dual commitment between both the sending and receiving institutions (Jain et al., 2011). According to Jain et al. (2011) the five elements of transfer-receptive culture are:

The first two elements of a transfer-receptive culture are the following pretransfer efforts:

Establish the transfer of students, especially nontraditional, first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students, as a high institutional priority that ensures stable accessibility, retention, and graduation; and

Provide outreach and resources that focus on the specific needs of transfer students while complimenting the community college mission of transfer (Jain et al., 2011, p. 258).

The last three elements of a transfer-receptive culture, which are post-transfer, include the following:

Offer financial and academic support through distinct opportunities for nontraditional-reentry transfer students where they are stimulated to achieve at high academic levels;

Acknowledge the lived experiences that students bring and the

intersectionality between community and family; and

Create an appropriate and organic framework from which to assess,

evaluate, and enhance transfer-receptive programs and initiatives that can

lead to further scholarship on transfer students (Jain et al., 2011, p. 258).

The first two elements are the first opportunity for the transfer student to

interact with a validating agent, which should occur as early as possible (Rendón,

1994). Outreach officers and admission counselors are the first individuals that

may provide the validating interaction but, is also an opportunity for an

invalidating experience (Rendón, 1994). To highlight the first two elements,

Herrera, and Jain (2013) describe the University of California, Los Angeles

(UCLA) and their Center for Community College Partnerships (CCCP). As an

elite, selective university, UCLA has admitted nearly 40% of each new

undergraduate class as transfer students due to successful partnerships from

California community colleges and demonstrating transfer-receptive culture

(Herrera and Jain, 2013). Through activities such as hosting events at the UCLA

campus specifically for community college chancellors and presidents as well as

the chancellor making personal visits to community colleges (Herrera and Jain,

2013). The impact of the chancellor's visits was exemplified by one community

college student as:

I can't believe the Chancellor of UCLA actually came to our college.

Having him and the other UCLA people here made me realize that UCLA

does care and that it is a place I could transfer to. They made it real for

me, made me feel wanted and I'm excited to transfer as soon as I can

(Herrera and Jain, p. 58).

The chancellor served as a validating agent in this visit to the community

college and it occurred early in the transfer experience creating a successful

transfer-receptive culture for the participant (Herrera and Jain, 2013).

Element four seamlessly connects with the validating experiences that are

critical according to Rendón's (1994) Validation Theory. Both the transfer-

receptive culture element and Validation acknowledge the role validating agents

play during the transfer process (Jain et al., 2011; Rendón, 1994). All five of the

elements highlight the responsibility that the receiving institution shares with the

community college (Herrera and Jain, 2013). More importantly, all the elements

honor the multiple intersecting identities of the transferring student population

(Herrera and Jain, 2013). The transfer-receptive culture is fully employed when it

centers on the lived experiences of transfer students, so the final element of

assessment and evaluation ensure all efforts toward creating a transfer-receptive

culture are reviewed for opportunities of institutional improvement (Herrera and

Jain, 2013).

Summary

To summarize this review of literature, chapter two has examined the

pipeline for Latinas including the critical community college Hispanic Serving

Institution. Research demonstrated that the post-traditional student population

and the subpopulation of Latina student mothers are often minoritized in institutions of higher education. The needs for post-traditional Latina student mothers to successfully complete educational goals, although complex must be addressed at an institutional level. Institutions designated as Hispanic Serving Institutions have an opportunity to meet this need if members of the HSI organization have a comprehensive understanding of their identity in being Latino/a-serving. Gaps in the literature can be addressed with further studies examining the role and responsibility the institutions take in serving the Latina student mother population which this proposed study will aim to do by understanding the phenomena of transfer from the perspective of the student mothers using a critical framework of both Validation Theory and transfer-receptive Culture.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this chapter, I share my positionality statement, which includes my personal biography and how my identities informed my role as the researcher in this qualitative study. I also revisit the purpose of this study and then review the research design and methodology. As part of the research design, I discuss the setting, how the Latina student mothers were selected to participate and then transition to the data collection methods. Additionally, I review how the methodology approach influenced data analysis and the coding process. Finally, I conclude by addressing how I maintained trustworthiness to ensure accuracy.

Positionality and Role as Researcher

Glesne (2016) poses questions that many consider as they enter the role of qualitative researcher such as how they interact with participants, how identities such as age, gender and race affect their experience as data is collected and, what to do about it. In this section, I discuss my identity as a woman, a Latina, and as a single mother while I pursued my bachelor's degree as well as my professional role in education. It is important for me to disclose how these identities have influenced my interest in this research on the educational journeys of Latina student mothers. I must be aware of how my personal experience will influence how I understand the experience of the

participants in this study therefore, I will incorporate Tracy's (2010) concept of sincerity. Through sincerity, I will aim to be transparent by acknowledging my biases and subjectivity and, will be reflexive throughout this research process.

Acknowledging subjectivity has had negative connotation when conducting empirical research and historically researchers have been encouraged to omit themselves from the research (Glesne, 2016). As qualitative research has evolved authors such as Peshkin (1988), who was among the first, emphasize the value of the researcher's subjectivity into the research (Glesne, 2016). Peshkin (1988) has given language, using the phrase "subjective I's", to help explain how my individual experiences will connect with the participant's experiences (p. 18). As the researcher it is important to identify personal subjectivity and acknowledge it when conducting qualitative research studies (Glesne, 2016; Peshkin, 1988). I will do this by acknowledging my firsthand experiences and be reflexive as I interview participants and come to understand their lived experiences (Glesne, 2016). I am eager for the idea of how my subjective self can prompt questions and interpretations for this research (Glesne, 2016).

Professional Experience

In my professional role as a program coordinator in higher education serving students for over 12 years, I have a predisposition to advocate for students. My work experience includes serving post-traditional students and I have experienced the institutional failings when services are not available for this

63

population. Knowing some of the challenges that post-traditional students encounter, due to personal experience, I have found myself in a facilitator position between students and faculty or students and administration. Personal experiences, identities, and values contribute to a researcher's subjectivity (Glesne, 2016; Peshkin, 1988). Throughout this process, in addition to understanding my subjectivity, I maintained a disciplined approach especially as I analyzed the data. I further explore this as I continue to discuss my identity and positioning as well as later in the chapter with the data analysis and trustworthiness sections.

<u>Identity and Positioning</u>

Glesne (2016) discusses inhabited positions that are ascribed, achieved and subjective. These positions are described by Glesne (2016) as stemming from identities I have no control over (ascribed) such as my gender, race, and age to those that come about due to personal accomplishments and values (achieved and subjective). Glesne (2016) explains that "being attuned to positionality is being attuned to intersubjectivity, or to how the subjectivities of all who are involved guide the research process, the content, and, possible, the interpretations" (p. 151). As an educated Latina pursuing a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership, I have positioned myself to conduct this study through a critical lens with a goal of forming future policies to make change and better assist Latina student mothers in higher education (Creswell and Poth, 2017; Glesne, 2016; Sipe and Constable, 1996).

As a woman and as a Latina, I have learned that my experience of having access and attending college is a privileged one. I began college as a traditional student, entering my local public four-year university directly from high school with goals of completing my bachelor's degree in four years. Being Mexican American, I struggled with my identity and not knowing the Spanish language was a big part of that. Both of my parents learned Spanish as adults. I was extremely privileged with both of my parents having bachelor's degrees from a private university. I grew up hearing their college stories like my mom recalling the day her parents drove her to campus and moved her into the dorms or when my dad did something crazy with his fraternity brothers. My college journey included Greek life as I joined the sorority that my aunt helped establish when she attended the college years prior. Being part of this organization seemed like the 'college' thing to do but it felt like I was stepping into new shoes that were uncomfortable and did not quite fit. I knew that over time the experiences would get better or eventually 'loosen' up and mold to my feet because of the advice my family provided. I am extremely privileged to have my grandmother, who holds a Doctorate in Education, give me encouraging words of wisdom on perseverance, which I knew was not a common experience for my peers. I had friends who were accepted into the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) but quickly realized it was something I was not qualified for based on my parent's educational achievements. This furthered my understanding and awareness of the advantage my family provided me. On my educational journey, as I

transitioned from my sophomore to junior year, I became a mother. This new life was not something that was planned and growing up in a devoutly Catholic home, I feared I had become such a disappointment as an unwed mother and being so young. In addition to the cultural pressure I felt, I also recall sitting in the classroom desk and having physical discomfort, as I did not fit with my big round pregnant belly. This feeling of being in an unwelcoming space only increased because I had no one to talk to that identified with my experience. My faith is particularly important to me, and it grounded me, it kept me going because I knew God had plans for this new phase in my journey.

After taking that spring term off when my son was born and a summer break, I re-enrolled and continued pursuing my Sociology degree with the support of my family who encouraged me to persist. I took advantage of the childcare services on campus and was fortunate to qualify for free federal government funding through the program CCAMPIS, 'Childcare access means parents in school' which helped subsidize the cost. I vividly recall pushing my son in his stroller on campus to drop him off on my way to class or to my on-campus student employment job. I took Ethic Studies courses and felt I had a deeper insight to my cultural heritage. In my Chicano Studies courses, we explored the oppressiveness Mexican American's experienced in public schools for speaking Spanish. I then felt I understood my grandfather's decision not to speak Spanish at home so my dad would not grow up with an accent. This understanding allowed me to embrace my identity as a Mexican American, a Chicana. This

culturally empowering knowledge was something I knew I needed to pass onto

my son. At the age of two, he attended my first college graduation ceremony. I

participated in the university's Latino Graduation and proudly wore my serape

stole with my cap and gown as I marched into the arena behind the mariachi.

Despite successfully completing my degree, I still often encountered the stress of

managing multiple roles as student, mother, and employee. I had experiences of

self-doubt, feelings of inadequacy and the "imposter syndrome" frequently took

root when things became mentally exhausting and overwhelming. I tell this story

of my journey and my identity because I have since learned this experience of

being a parent while pursuing a college degree is not an entirely uncommon

story. However, these stories have not been widely shared among practitioners

in higher education. I hope, through my research, to tell the powerful stories of

Latina women who are mothers and pursuing high education degrees, as I did.

As part of my role as the researcher, I plan to be anticipatory, a learner,

analytic, reassuring, and grateful; all to be a good qualitative researcher (Glesne,

2016). It is my hope that any connections with participants through experiences,

identities, and or values will aid in building rapport and fostering trust with

participants (Glesne, 2016). As a Latina mother, I may be able to connect with

many participants based on our cultural and gender identities, which can

enhance the research. The insider identities that I may share with the participants

is described by Stanley and Slattery (2003) as an advantage in conducting

research. This shared identity will also lend to my ability to further probe in the

interview process based on my own experiences. It will also be my responsibility as the researcher to be reflexive and differentiate on how I may interpret participant's perceptions from my own (Saldaña, 2016). However, I also acknowledge that I will not connect with all participants based on my firsthand experiences, identities, or values. There will be participants who may have different experiences related to being a mother, varying ages, and educational trajectories. More specifically, I did not transfer from a community college so I will not have that connection of the transfer experience. Being on the outside of experiences or identities I do not connect with will call for additional reflexivity as I conduct research through interviews and interpretation (Glesne, 2016). Having a goal to use this research to share experiences of students in this population and advocate for this student population will be something I must acknowledge and continuously ask reflexive questions to myself throughout the entire research process. Through this research, I hope to understand students' stories during the transfer experience and then in turn bring them to the forefront for higher education administrators to help bring about advocacy and change for this student population.

<div align="center">Purpose Statement</div>

The Post-secondary National Policy Institute (PNPI) identifies that 85% of all undergraduate students are post-traditional with key characteristics such as working full time, attending college part-time, have family responsibilities including being a parent (PNPI, 2018; Soares, 2013). Gault and colleagues from

WRPI (2020) have identified that 36% of Latino/a students in community colleges nationwide are Latina mothers. Despite the growing number of Latina post-traditional students pursuing baccalaureate degrees the literature makes it clear that higher education systems are unsuccessful in facilitating the transfer function from two-year to four-year institutions (Bensimon and Bishop, 2012; Herrera and Jain, 2013; Pérez Huber et al., 2006; 2015).

Accordingly, the purpose of this interpretative phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of Latina students, who are mothers, and have successfully transferred from a community college designated as an HSI to a four-year public higher education institution also designated as such. I was particularly interested in how they described their experience of successfully navigating the transfer pipeline and what, if any, influence did attendance at an HSI have on their transfer experience. Therefore, the study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do Latina student mothers describe the transfer experience from a Hispanic Serving community college to a four-year university also designated as an HSI?

2. How does an intersecting identity of student and mother impact, if at all, the transfer experience?

3. What influence, if any, does attending a Hispanic Service Institution have on the transfer experience of Latina student mothers?

Research Design

With a goal to understand experiences by exploring in an in-depth manner, but not to generalize, the best approach was a qualitative research study to explore the phenomenon of transfer (Bhattacharya, 2017). I have identified this phenomenon of the transfer experience for a specific group of people, Latina student mothers, so a phenomenology approach was most appropriate (Creswell and Poth, 2017; van Manen, 2016). Although phenomenological approaches can include both a methodological as well as a theoretical framework (Bhattacharya, 2017), I did not use phenomenology as a theoretical approach. The theoretical framework I leveraged for this study, which was been described in detail in chapter two, are Rendón's (1994) Validation Theory and transfer-receptive culture from Jain, Herrera, Bernal, and Solórzano (2013). I did however use phenomenology as my method which, described by Bhattacharya (2017), aims to understand the "meaning, structure and essence of the lived experiences of a phenomenon for a person or group of people" (p. 98).

The use of phenomenology as a method has evolved, with origins in philosophical and psychological applications (Creswell, 2014). Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) highlight the leading figures in phenomenology as Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre with Husserl's founding principle as the experience and its perception. Aiming to capture the essence of an experience and building on the initial work of phenomenology from Husserl, Heidegger (1962) advances this methodology approach to include hermeneutics, also

known as an interpretive approach, to better guide a meaningful inquiry (Lopez and Willis, 2014). Hermeneutical phenomenology is one of the two key approaches to phenomenological methodologies (Creswell and Poth, 2017). Van manen (2016) describes the hermeneutical phenomenology as making meaning of the lived experience and interpreting the participant's life.

Based on these tenants, this study was conducted using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as derived by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009). Smith and colleagues (2009) describe IPA as combining both the phenomenology and hermeneutic aspects as an approach to qualitative research. This allowed me to understand the experiences of Latina students who are mothers and transferred from an HSI community college to a comprehensive public four-year university also designated as such. As in interpretative approach, IPA differs from the descriptive tradition from Husserl (1970) where the researcher must "shed all prior personal knowledge to grasp the essential lived experiences of those being studied" (Lopez and Willis, 2004, p. 727). As a researcher of this study as well as a Latina student parent while I pursued my bachelor's degree, I was not able to fully exclude my firsthand experiences from this study, which I disclosed earlier in my positionality statement.

To get close to the participants of this study and understand their experience, the qualitative approach was most fitting (Creswell and Poth, 2017). Glesne (2016) describes that, as the researcher I sought to "interpret, and share others' perspectives" (p. 26). Using IPA by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009), it

allowed me to "stand alongside the participant" (p. 36) to understand how they make sense of their personal and social world. Furthermore, using IPA, as the researcher I engaged in a "double hermeneutic" as I attempted to make sense of what the participants shared while they also attempted to make sense and meaning of what occurred in their life (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009, p. 3). The deeper level of analysis required of IPA is discussed in more detail in the data analysis section of this chapter. I conducted this study through a critical lens with a goal of forming future policies to make change and better assist Latina student mothers in higher education (Creswell and Poth, 2017; Glesne, 2016; Sipe and Constable, 1996).

Setting

The community college has been found to be the gateway to postsecondary education (Cohen, Brawer and Kisker, 2013), especially for Latinas (Gándara, 2015) however; earning a bachelor's degree typically requires the transfer function from the community college to the four-year institution. Additionally, Latino/a students are more likely to attend Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) due to the institutional characteristics they identify and align with (Santiago, 2006). For these reasons, this research was conducted at a four-year university designated as an HSI. In California, the public universities are considered the largest public state university system in the United States (Rhoads, Wagoner and Ryan, 2009). Moreover, a common choice for the post-traditional student population is to transfer to their local public four-year institution

(Cohen et. al., 2013; Schneider and Dean, 2015). For this study at a public four-year university with an HSI designation, situated near local community colleges, I used the pseudonym of Southern State University (SSU) to provide anonymity (Creswell and Poth, 2017). Due to the COVID-19, global pandemic data was collected online using the Zoom conferencing platform, which students of SSU have free access to with their student account. Typically, the setting would be the natural setting where participants are experiencing the phenomena of transfer, for example, at SSU university, to "gather up-close information by talking directly [to participants] ... and seeing them behave within their context" (Creswell and Poth, 2017, p. 43). With students attending their academic coursework and accessing all student success services through virtual platforms such as Zoom, they have been in this setting during the global pandemic in an online environment for at least one year, which could be considered their "new normal".

Participant Selection

Creswell (2014) encourages the use of purposeful sampling in qualitative research. Smith and colleagues (2009) indicate the importance of a homogeneous group, not so they are identical, but so the researcher can "examine in detail psychological variability within the group, by analyzing the pattern of convergence and divergence which arises" (p. 50). Additionally, Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) also recommend that participants be selected purposively and homogeneously. I conducted purposeful sampling to ensure that participants identify as Latina mothers enrolled at SSU (Creswell and Poth, 2017;

73

Smith et al., 2009). Participants in this study were selected based on five criteria; (1) their transfer and current enrollment status at SSU (2) those who identify as female, (3) Latina, (4) have one or more children, and (5) are age twenty-five or older. The criteria for age were derived from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) on post-traditional students. Marital status was not criteria for participant selection, so participants were single, married, divorced, separated, in a relationship with a significant other or they declined to state. This designation was made due to the length of time a post-traditional transfer student may take to get to the post-transfer stage in their educational journey. Post-traditional student mothers often take time off or delay completion as they frequently leave institutions without a degree and later return (Gault and Reichlin, 2014; PNPI, 20198). During this time, it is common for relationship statuses to change therefore, to eliminate a layer of complexity of when a participant may have been single, married, divorced, etc. that status was not used as a criterion for inclusion. It is important to note that questions on support systems were included in the interview protocol (Appendix A).

Participants were recruited through emails and social media posts distributed through designated centers that support this student population at SSU including the childcare center, the adult center, and the center for transfer students (Appendix B and C). Only the center for transfer students and the adult center posted the flyer on social media. The recruitment email included a link to a Qualtrics survey which included questions to ensure participants met the five

identified criteria. Once all criteria were met, the questionnaire then asked for contact information to set up the individual interview. For Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, Smith, and associates (2009) recommend the number of participants as three to six for an appropriate sample size; therefore, this study targeted that number of participants. A total of 68 Latina student mothers completed the survey. After this overwhelming response rate, the survey was closed after only eight days.

Upon further review of the survey data, two participants were not eligible because one was no longer students at SSU, and one was not age 25 or older. 65 women received an email requesting to schedule an interview if they planned to be enrolled at SSU the following term. These additional criteria helped to significantly reduce the number interviews scheduled and ensure they would still be SSU students at the time of the interview which would take place after the term ended. 17 women scheduled an interview for the study but six decided not to participate after scheduling or were a no show for the Zoom interview. The remining 11 women were each interviewed for as few as 45 minutes to as much as an hour and a half in length.

To protect the identity of the participants, a pseudonym was used which was selected by the participant. Many women chose to select a name that honored a special woman in their personal life or a woman by whom they are inspired. Some women chose to keep their name to honor their personal journey.

There were 11 participants in this study with ages ranging from 26 to 64. Table

one provides their demographics including their self-described ethnic identity as

well as information about their child(ren). A brief introduction to each of the

participants and a snapshot of their educational pathway is provided in the

introduction of chapter four which presents the findings of this study.

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Participant (pseudonym)	Ethnicity	Age	Children
1. Eugenia	Mexican American and German	64	2 sons aged 42 and 40, 1 daughter aged 30 and 2 grandsons aged 20 and 18
2. Georgina	Mexican, Naturalized American Citizen	37	1 son age 17
3. Gigi	Latina	32	1 daughter aged 13 and 3 boys (triplets) age 3
4. Isabela	Hispanic	31	1 daughter aged 9 and 1 son age 5
5. Jyn	Mixed Latinx	43	2 daughters aged 20 and 13
6. Kat	Chicana	34	1 son aged 7 and 1 daughter age 4
7. Lorena	Salvadorian and Mexican	36	2 daughters aged 16 and 12 and 1 son age 4
8. Marilyn	Mexican and Salvadorian	26	2 sons aged 4 and 5 months
9. Nina	Hispanic	47	1 son age 11
10. Rosie	Hispanic	47	2 daughters aged 26 and 20 and 1 son age 17
11. Zoila	Salvadoran	46	4 children 2 daughters aged 27 and 20 and 2 sons aged 24 and 11

Data Collection Methods

For phenomenological studies, researchers primarily rely on interviews as data (Creswell and Poth, 2017). Glesne (2016) describes interviews to "make words fly" (p. 96). Using a baseball metaphor, Glesne (2016) encourages the researcher to 'pitch' or create questions that elicit great responses that reach far as key to successful research. Additionally, I kept a researcher journal to track my thoughts and be reflexive during the data collection process (Glesne, 2016; Peshkin, 1988). Glesne (2016) describes the importance of being reflexive during this process so I as the researcher can "understand […] ways in which [my] personal characteristics, values, and positions interaction with others in the research situation to influence the methodological approach and the interpretations [I] make" (p. 156).

Interviews

I conducted individual semi-structured in-depth interviews (Glesne, 2016; Smith et al., 2009) with Latina student mothers who are enrolled at SSU. To better understand the phenomena of the transfer experience and fully capture the essence of their experience, interviews were conducted while the participants were still enrolled and pursuing their undergraduate degree (Glesne, 2016; Smith et al., 2009). The purpose of the in-depth interviews was to create a conversation feel, allowing participants to get comfortable and "tell their stories, in their own words" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 57). To do this, I created interview questions, also known as an interview schedule, as recommended by Smith and colleagues

(2009). Glesne (2016) recommends the use of a grand tour question which

Spradley (1979) defines as "a request to verbally take the interviewer through a

place, a time period, a sequence of events or activities" (p. 101). A grand tour

question allowed the participant to reflect and go back to the something they may

not have thought of for some time (Glesne, 2016), I asked them to share who

they are and about their educational pathway (Appendix A). Agee (2009)

emphasizes the reflective process as being key in qualitative inquiry and this

translates to the creation of interview questions as a process in which questions

are "developed or refined in all stages of a reflexive and interactive inquiry

journey" (p. 432). As I conducted the interviews, I adjusted questions in the

moment to get clarification or go back to something the participant shared. This is

what Smith et al. (2009) refer to as probing questions, a tactic to inquire further.

Interview questions evolved especially as it related to a participant's past, their

ethnic identity, and their role as a mother (Agee, 2009; Creswell and Poth, 2017).

Agee (2009) recommends allowing the participant to engage as part of the

interview process. Smith et al. (2009) advise this collaboration with the

participant and recommend providing the schedule or list of the questions to be

participants prior to the interviews taking place. This will allow "both the

interviewer and interviewee [to be] active participants within the research process

(Smith et al., 2009, p. 58). In this instance each participant received the

questions in advance and often referred to thinking about the question in

advance of the interview. Smith and colleagues (2009) stress the need for the

researcher to be an active listener, which aided me in building rapport with the participant. Smith et al. (2009) recommend interviews to be 45 to 90 minutes in length and I was able to keep interviews under 90 minutes. I conducted the in-depth, semi-structured interviews at a time appropriate to the participants for their convenience, many occurred on the weekday late afternoons or on a weekend. Additionally, allowing the participant to choose the time provided an opportunity for privacy and a confidential discussion (Glesne, 2016). As shared in the site selection, interviews were conducted using the virtual Zoom online conference platform which also meant interviews often took place in the home of the participant, so it was essential they felt comfortable sharing their experiences.

Researcher Journal

Throughout the data collection process, I maintained a researcher journal, which assisted me with the recording my personal thoughts and feelings about the experience. Glesne (2016) also describes this as a "research diary" (p. 78). Peshkin (1988) calls on researchers to "systematically seek out their subjectiveness" while the research is occurring rather than after it has concluded (p. 17). To do this Peshkin (1988) writes how he, as well as other researchers including Smith (1980), wrote down their specific feelings, emotions, and sensations they were experiencing as part of their field work procedure. Glesne (2016) also describes the importance of tracking my own thoughts as the researcher to help me be attuned to my emotions to reveal any subjectiveness. I made these notes in my researcher journal especially after each interview when I

frequently was moved by the participants stories of resilience and perseverance. Additionally, I was aware of how my positioning and identity became relevant in the data analysis process. A few questions Glesne (2016) recommend reflecting on include "what surprised you?" to help track assumptions, "what intrigues you?" to track personal interests, positions, and "what disturbs you?" to track possible stereotypes and prejudices (p. 78). Ultimately, the journal assisted me to 'tame' my subjectivity as I began analyzing data (Peshkin, 1988).

Data Analysis

For the data analysis process of this Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), I referred to the theoretical framework for this study using both Rendón's (1994) research on Validation theory and Jain, Herrera, Bernal, and Solórzano's (2011) concept of transfer-receptive culture. Participants stories of their transfer experiences included validating and often invalidating agents in their pathway. Some of these were in the community college of university, which will be revealed in chapter four.

I began the initial process of data analysis after each interview ensuring transcriptions were properly captured. During this process at the end of summer 2021, the world began to slowly resume with in-person interaction amidst the ongoing Covid-19 global pandemic. As a graduate student and full-time employee, I returned to work in person which created a need to put my work away for some time as I adjusted to a life of commuting and working in-person.

After interviews were transcribed from this IPA study, and some time away

from the transcripts, I then began to analyze the data on how the Latina student

mother participants in the transfer pipeline made meaning of their experience.

Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) make it clear there is not one specific

prescribed way to conduct an IPA analysis but, the analytical focus should be "an

account of how the analyst thinks the participant is thinking" (p. 80) which is a

reference back to the double hermeneutic process previously mentioned. Smith

and colleagues (2009) provide common processes of IPA as a guide to analyze

the data through the following six steps:

Step 1 - Reading and re-reading

Step 2 - Initial noting

Step 3 - Developing emergent themes

Step 4 - Searching for connections across emergent themes

Step 5 - Moving to the next case

Step 6 - Looking for patterns across cases (p. 82-101)

Reading and re-reading allowed me as the researcher to really immerse

myself into the original data (Smith et al., 2009). As I moved into step two, I

merged re-reading with the initial noting eventually creating detailed notes and

comments on the data (Smith et al., 2009). These notes and comments were a

way for me to "engage in analytic dialogue" for each line of the transcript (Smith

et al., 2009, p. 84). In step three of their guide, Smith, and colleagues (2009)

encourage identifying emergent themes from the notes and comments but at the

same time still reflecting on the initial reading and noting stage. Step four asks

the researcher to search for connections across themes and how they fit together

(Smith et al., 2009). This step has similarities to how Saldaña (2016) describes

the coding process as being more than just labeling but linking ideas. Smith,

Flowers, and Larkin (2009) remind researchers they are not prescribing an

analytic approach but recommend keeping an open mind at this step and even

consider discarding any emergent themes that may not align with the research

questions. These steps were done for each participant transcript and once this

was done, the next step had me move to the next participant transcript. Smith

and colleagues (2009) highlight one "important skill in IPA in allowing new

themes to emerge with each case" (p. 100) meaning being aware of how I may

have been influenced from a previous case as I moved through each one. The

final step has the researcher identify patterns and connections across all cases

(Smith et al., 2009). As experts in IPA, Smith, and colleagues (2009) caution the

novice researcher against being too descriptive but to truly embrace the

interpretative focus with a dive deep and attempt to engage in multiple levels of

interpretation.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness, rather than validity, is most appropriate in a qualitative

study Glesne (2016). In this research, I took several steps to ensure

trustworthiness of this study. According to Tracy (2010), eight criteria are

identified as a conceptual pedagogical model for best practices and quality

research. These key markers are a worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethics, and meaningful coherence (Tracy, 2010).

I identified a worthy topic in exploring the experiences of Latina student mothers in the transfer pipeline. This is also a timely topic with the number of post-traditional students who are parents are growing at a significant rate across the United States (PNPI, 2018). The identified participants, data collection and analysis processes of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) are complex and provide rich rigor to this study (Tracy, 2010). Tracy (2010) uses sincerity to get at being an honest and transparent researcher. As part of my data collection, I used a researcher journal where I tracked my reflexivity and recalled my subjectivity, which I elaborated on earlier in this chapter with my positionality statement. Glesne (2016) describes member checking as requesting participants to review and provide feedback on their interview transcripts to ensure that what they have said is accurate and reflects their thoughts. Tracy (2010) expands on this by describing that member reflection may be more appropriate in which the researcher provides findings, rather than transcripts, for review to ensure accuracy as well as give an opportunity to collaborate by giving reflexive elaboration if needed. I provided participants both the transcripts for their review and approval as well as a draft of my chapter four findings. Additionally, in IPA, Smith and colleagues (2009) encourage participants to be active in the review process through a co-analyst role as being an ethical practice for this type of

research. As such, I asked participants to review my interpretations to ensure

how I made meaning of their experience fit well with what they have shared

(Creswell and Poth, 2017; Glesne, 2016). To ensure credibility, I provided what

Glesne (2016) refers to as rich, thick descriptions. In these rich, thick descriptions

of the Latina student mother experience, my writing is "allowing readers to

understand the context for [my] interpretations" (Glesne, 2016, p. 53). Next,

Tracy (2010) describes the importance of resonance for excellent qualitative

research as being the "researcher's ability to meaningfully reverberate and affect

an audience" (p. 844). To achieve this, I attempted to provide aesthetic merit

thought my writing and findings, so it resonates with readers. It is my hope this

research provides a significant contribution to educational research on Latina

student parents. Tracy (2010) also emphasizes the ethical considerations a

researcher must make. As for procedural ethics, this study was submitted to the

Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval prior to collecting data (Appendix

D). Informed Consent from each participant was also collected as required by

IRB (Appendix C). Situational ethics was also be considered specifically in the

when I conduced the interviews. As previously mentioned, the interview schedule

was provided in advance, so participants were aware of the topics that were

covered. Relational and exit ethics were considered as I aimed to be respectful

and engaged in a mutual arrangement by providing each participant with a copy

my findings (Tracy, 2010). Tracy (2010) concludes the eight markers with

meaningful coherence in which the researcher has accomplished the purpose

they set out to as clearly connected literature with research questions as well as interpretations and findings.

Additionally, Glesne (2016) encourages the development of a time frame for data collection and analysis to ensure trustworthiness. Reviewing the raw data soon after it has been collected was the plan however, as described earlier in this chapter that was not achievable as planned. It is important to note Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) acknowledge there is not an exact estimate of time and there may be variables such as working on this full-time or part-time. They described "just how time-consuming it can be to carry out good qualitative work, and to stress the importance of budgeting enough time for this work when planning the study" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 55) which was essential in considering my timeline. Glesne (2016) encourages researchers to remain flexible to ensure a quality study.

Limitations

Limitations of this study included variables that were outside of my control as the researcher (Glesne, 2016). Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, there were additional barriers to plan for, especially the timing of the data analysis. Additionally, being on the Zoom web conferencing platform created technical difficulties when occasionally internet connections were. At the onset of each interview, we discussed the plan on how to resume should that occur.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of Latina students, who are mothers, and have successfully transferred from a community college designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) to a comprehensive public university also designated as an HSI, using Smith, Flowers, and Larkin's (2009) Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) methodology. To do this, the following questions were used to guide the study,

1. How do Latina student mothers describe the transfer experience from a Hispanic Serving community college to a four-year university also designated as an HSI?

2. How does an intersecting identity of student and mother impact, if at all, the transfer experience?

3. What influence, if any, does attending a Hispanic Service Institution have on the transfer experience of Latina student mothers?

Findings of the Study

In this chapter, I present my findings as a result of the IPA (Smith et al., 2009) and my theoretical framework. Combining the two critical conceptual models of Laura Rendón's (1994) Validation theory and Jain, Herrera, Bernal, and Solórzano's (2011) transfer-receptive culture; both were used to understand

86

the experiences of Latina students, who are mothers, and have successfully transferred from a two-year community college designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) to a four-year public higher education institution also designated as an HSI. I begin with introductions of the eleven women who transferred from their community college to Southern State University (SSU), a pseudonym, for a comprehensive public university in Southern California. I share their stories of their academic journey and how they made meaning of their transfer experience (Smith et al., 2009). The data collected from participant interviews revealed five key themes, 1) Motherhood: Being the Example for Future Generations, 2) The Enrollment Cycle: Enrollment and Re-enrollment, 3) Health: Physical, Mental and Emotional Wellbeing, 4) Learning in a Pandemic and 5) Embracing Cultural Heritage.

Participant Introductions

The following brief introductions of the eleven participants shared her self-identified ethnic identity, about her children and about her transfer journey. Each woman revealed past experiences which sometimes included trauma, abuse, illness, and other hardships. Their stories also included experiences of happiness, excitement, perseverance, resiliency, and determination. These introductions provide a brief snapshot of who participants are with the aim of giving context as each theme is presented.

Eugenia is age 64 and describes her ethnic identity as Mexican American and German. She has three children, two sons aged 42 and 40 and one daughter

aged 30. She has also helped raise her two grandsons aged 18 and 20. She began her college experience right after high school and earned a certificate to enter the workforce. Years later in her life after working with a historical society to preserve the Mexican American culture of the region, she had an invalidating experience with museums that did not take the exhibit seriously without advanced education. This experience prompted her to pursue transfer level coursework at her local community college to work toward a bachelor's degree which she hopes will validate her existing expertise to honor her family's history.

Georgina is age 37 and describes her ethnic identity as Mexican, naturalized American citizen. She has one son, age 17. Born in Tijuana, Mexico she immigrated to the United States as a young girl. She grew up in a family who experienced poverty and at times they were unhoused living in abandoned buildings or parks. After meeting her husband in high school, she left school before earning her diploma. She also primarily cared for her younger siblings while her mother was in prison. After some validating experiences from teachers after volunteering at her son's school, she was encouraged to pursue education. Georgina is the first in her family to attend college. With early experiences at a private for-profit technical vocational school, Georgina found her way to her local community college and persisted through some physical health barriers. After completing her bachelor's degree, she plans to continue for a teaching credential.

Gigi is age 32 and describes her ethnic identity as Latina. She has four children, one daughter aged 13 and three sons, triplets, age three. She comes from a family with limited educational background, her father left his education in middle school. After a short experience taking coursework at a private online university, she focused on her career and raising her daughter as a single mother. With encouragement from therapists at her workplace where she is makes appointments in a psychiatry call center, she returned to her local community college. Just before transferring, she had her son's, triplets, who are three. She plans to purse graduate school to become a psychologist with a master's degree in marriage and family therapy and a doctorate degree.

Isabela is age 31 and describes her ethnic identity as Hispanic. She has two children, one daughter aged nine and one son aged five. She enrolled in her local community college right after high school but left shortly after because she and her husband moved out of state for the military. After her marriage ended, she continued her educational journey with on and off enrollment as a single mother after a divorce. Once she had access to larger offerings of online courses at a nearby community college, it became easier to complete transfer requirements. She has now been married for five years, her current husband and two children support her goals to pursue the criminal justice field and working in law enforcement.

Jyn is age 43 and describes her ethnic identity as mixed Latinx. She has two children, daughters aged 20 and 13. She began her college pathway with

enrollment at a private university but was unsuccessful in that setting. Jyn then focused on her career and building a family with her husband. At age 40 she experienced a mental health crisis that forced her to take pause in her career that was causing her to be unwell. She then made the decision to return to school through her local community college where she and her older daughter both attended together for some time. When time came to transfer, she chose to attend the branch campus of SSU near her home. Jyn is researching graduate school options and hopes to pursue a career as an occupational therapist focusing on the whole wellness of a person both physically and mentally.

Kat is age 34 and describes her ethnic identity as Chicana. She has two children, one son aged seven and one daughter aged four. She left high school before earning her diploma and focused on work. She returned to education however, coursework at her local community college did not feel connected to potential career opportunities. Becoming a mother prompted her return to her local community college to set an example for her child. Kat plans to pursue a teaching credential after her bachelor's degree to teach history at the high school level and then possibly a master's degree to teach at the college level.

Lorena is age 36 and describes her ethnic identity as Salvadorian and Mexican. She has three children, two daughters aged 16 and 12 and one son aged four. After a challenging high school experience due to a family move out of state, she primarily cared for her younger siblings and focused on a job right out of high school so she could provide financially for her family. This obligation

prevented her from pursuing higher education. Later in her life as a mother of two and recently divorced, Lorena received support from work colleagues to enroll in her local community college. However, she paused enrollment shortly after due to the conflicting responsibilities for her daughters. After time away from education, Lorena's current husband provided additional encouragement for her to enroll again and work toward her goal of a bachelor's degree. Lorena earned three associate degrees at her community college before transferring. She is also interested in pursuing a master's degree in psychological science for counseling.

Marilyn is age 26 and describes her ethnic identity as Mexican and Salvadorian. She has two children, sons aged four and five months. Marilyn was in the foster care system and knew education would be her opportunity for a better life, so she enrolled in community college right out of high school. A cousin, who helped her with registration and was also attending, influenced her choice for community college. Once she became pregnant with her first child, she paused her enrollment. With the support of her husband, family members, and many campus resources, Marilyn received five associate degrees when she resumed her enrollment. She transferred to SSU during the Covid-19 global pandemic and persisted through a semester when she gave birth to her second child while still enrolled. She is pursuing a bachelor's degree in sociology and taking advantage of SSU student support programs.

Nina is age 47 and describes her ethnic identity as Hispanic. She has one son aged eleven. She is single and has never been married but experienced a

physically abusive relationship with her son's father. Nina is currently six and a half years sober in her battle with alcoholism. She began her first community college course later in her adult life with a goal of more advanced career opportunities based on barriers she encountered that prevented job growth. She hopes she is an example for her son to pursue education teaching him skills for success and destigmatizing being able to ask for help when needed.

Rosie is age 47 and describes her ethnic identity as Hispanic. She has three children, two daughters aged 26 and 20 and one son aged four. She was born in Mexico and immigrated to the United States for high school. She earned a diploma but did not pursue college because she became a mother. After a divorce from an unsupportive husband, she eventually she took college courses but had no intention of going beyond a certificate program. Once her children became adults and she had encouragement from them and others so, she decided to continue her education taking courses that allowed her to transfer. She is considering pursuing a teaching credential after her bachelor's degree.

Zoila is age 46 and describes her ethnic identity as Salvadorian. She has four children, two daughters aged 27 and 20 and two sons aged 24 and 11. Zoila became a mother for the first time at age 17 and left high school before earning her diploma. After having her child, she returned to an adult school to earn her GED and other coursework to gain skills for employment. Zoila found limited job advancement without a bachelor's degree. She then attended community college on an off over the years due to children and restrictions of her physical health.

Zoila has been resilient in the transfer pipeline and is grateful for the shared experiences with her daughter who is pursuing her college degree at the same time.

<p style="text-align:center">Motherhood: Being the Example for Future Generations</p>

I introduce the first theme as motherhood to begin the findings of this study. Participants shared their identity as a mother and a student as being an example to their children about the importance of education. This was the most prominent theme found in the analysis. They each spoke of their decision to pursue education with such certainty in relation to how they modeled this value. This theme helps to answer research question two, 'How does an intersecting identity of student and mother impact, if at all, the transfer experience?' in describing their experiences of becoming mothers and what that meant for their pursuit of education.

After becoming a mother, the idea of going to college became more prominent for many participants and their child was often the reason they made the decision to enroll. Gigi described her thoughts after she learned she was expecting, "once I became pregnant and realized there's going to be someone else that's going to be dependent on me" she knew education would be the pathway to a financially stable career so she could provide for her daughter. She explained how having her daughter truly determined her path toward higher education.

Participants discussed how their enrollment in college coursework, either at the community college or university level was a tool to help guide their own children in making decisions about higher education. Nina described her journey as a student as being one who sought out help often. She modeled this behavior for her son and explained:

> My son, he just turned 11 years old, and I tell him, if you give yourself a chance you can do so many things. And he, you know, he sees me, he sees my struggle, but he sees that I reach out to people. I tell him, you need people because I can't always be there. I can't be there so you when you don't know an answer it's ok to get help.

Providing this example through her words and her actions is how Nina combines her intersecting identity as mother and student.

Georgina describes her experience discussing college with her son who is 17 and preparing to graduate high school. She encouraged him to consider taking advantage of attending a community college first and utilizing the transfer function as she did but also shared with her son that "whichever choice you make you know me, and dad are here to support you" indicating her commitment to encourage any path of pursing education after high school. Eugenia also has grandsons of a similar age, one in his first year of college and the other preparing to graduate high school. She described instilling the value of education when she discusses education with asking about their GPAs and future plans. She shared:

And I would say you know you're coming close to the time when you're going to be, maybe considering college and, you know, analyzing your classes and seeing what the work demand is and, you know, just having some insight as to how to prepare for the next step.

She would also speak to them about her experience in education and any tips she could share even offering to help with expenses, she explained ""I told him for his birthday I would buy his books and materials that [the school] don't cover" which she hoped would be both a financial support and an incentive.

Kat shared "being a mom is part of my identity" which she explained when her children watch her do homework, she knows she's setting the example as she described "my son he picks up on everything he sees everything I do so, when he's like 'oh are you doing homework now'… he sees me being responsible and doing my homework". Her decision to return to college and re-enroll stemmed from wanting a career rather than a job as she shared her thought process of how she wanted to set the example:

I need a career I need something stable. I can't just, you know be going from job to job and you know not having a career, and then I'm like and then what kind of example is that for him you know that, you know, if I don't have a career, how am I going to have the face to tell them like hey you need to go to school, and you need to do something I haven't even done.

Being this example for her children is central to her identities of mother and student.

A few of the participants explained how their young adult children were also attending the local community college at the same time as they were. Zoila's daughter was going to college at the same time, and she described the family bond it created:

I was like more encouraged to, you know, like tell my daughter 'Come on, let's do this together' and I think that was her first semester where she got her highest grade, only because we were together, you know for two of those courses.

When asked what the experience was like, she described a moment at home:

We were at the kitchen table together and doing homework, and that encouraged my other two to come sit with us and do homework. School became like this family event right here and then my daughter and I were in like a little competition. I wanted her to do better, but, you know, she should do better because I want her to outdo me, and I felt really good about that.

These shared experiences with her daughter and younger children allowed her to be both mother and student forming unforgettable memories for their family.

Jyn also shared a similar experience with one of her children. Her oldest daughter had also been attending a nearby community college but in her daughter's second year, they both attended the same local community college. Jyn described seeing here daughter on campus:

> We were at the same campus. So funny. Oh, well, at first it was funny because you know it's a local community college, so all her high school friends are there. It was just funny and then when she was on campus, I would see her like walking across the thing and then be like, super obnoxious and waiving. And she was doing the 'I don't know you' (motioned to cover her face) and it seemed like she was just like 'oh god' like just keep walking mom.

Jyn was clearly proud of her daughter also pursuing higher education and had such a huge smile on her face the entire time she shared that story.

Being a mother while also attending college was often a juggle of priorities for the participants. The women shared moments of difficulty and guilt when their school and motherhood responsibilities competed with one another. Georgina shared about her conflict during important moments in her son's life:

> Now when I was going to school, I was like, there were times where I was crying because he was in his last year [of middle school] in eighth grade and sometimes I couldn't be there for some of his events. I was used to taking him when he had sports, taking him, and being the parent that

volunteers. They all drive the kids, but then school, you know, did not

allow me to always do that, so I had that guilt.

This guilt she experienced was a common challenge that many of the

participants described balancing while on their educational path. Marilyn also

spoke about her "mother's guilt" taking time away from her children while she

attended school but knew education would bring opportunities for her family.

When Rosie shared about her first experience enrolling in her local

community college, her children were young, and it was difficult to manage caring

for her children while also fulfilling her responsibility as a student to complete

coursework. She had recently become a single mother but shared her attempt

and explained how her children "went with me to the library and waited while I did

my homework" sometimes spending full afternoons reading books while she did

her schoolwork.

Isabela was so proud to share the moment of her associates degree

graduation with her children, she took them with her to the drive thru celebration.

She wanted her children to experience this accomplishment with her. When she

shared with her children that she would be enrolling in more course, attempting

to explain the transfer process, her young children did not understand at first.

Isabela shared the reaction of her nine-year-old daughter who said, "you're

gonna go to college again? … aren't you too old?". Isabela explained her

daughter is becoming very vocal with her opinions and could have become a

more frustrating situation however, Isabela used the opportunity as a learning experience to clarify education can be for all ages including moms. Motherhood was the most salient theme participants shared and this was reflected many times in the analysis. The identity of being a mother will also be demonstrated in other themes throughout the findings in this chapter. Being a mother often gave purpose for enrollment and participants' goal to seek higher education however, being a mother also created reasons to pause enrollments for many.

<div style="text-align:center">The Enrollment Cycle: Enrollment and Re-enrollment</div>

Many women found themselves in an enrollment cycle where they started at an educational institution, paused attendance, and re-enrolled more than once. I refer to this term as being a 'cycle' emphasizing the natural flow like a circle that can be ongoing and regularly repeating which is common and should be expected. Often the literature research refers to student's 'delay' or pause in enrollment indicating they are late, behind, or somehow out sync of where they should be (Coker, 2003; Navarro, Dávila and Kouyoumdjian, 2020; Santamaria Graff, McCain and Gomez-Vilchis, 2013). With the use of the term such as Enrollment Cycle, I present the idea that a regular occurrence of pausing and re-enrolling should be expected and reframed as an appropriate pathway for student parents without the negative connotation that they are in anyway late, slow, or behind in their educational attainment.

This cycle of enrollment may have begun right after high school or later in their lives. Jyn shared an accurate description when she stated, "young people who are age 17 or 18 years old who have haven't had, who haven't figured themselves out yet or what they want" explaining the reality that some young people simply do not fully understand the commitment to education so quickly after high school. This was true for many of the participants who started and paused enrollment soon after, often due to becoming mothers. Alternatively, many women found themselves attending later in their lives after finding barriers and stagnation in their career prospects. This theme is organized into sections that focus on the first experience participants had enrolling in college and the reason behind their decisions for that first enrollment, then into some of the common occurrences for re-enrollment. Additionally, this theme then considers the participant experiences at their various institutions based on Jain, Herrera, Bernal, and Solórzano's (2011) concept of transfer-receptive culture with pre-transfer and post-transfer processes.

The First Enrollment

Georgina first attended collage shortly after high school and enrolled at a private for-profit institution for a certificate program as pharmacy technician. She took out a large student loan to cover the tuition fees. At the end of her nine-month program, she graduated however she never worked in the field. The institution made commitments for job placement however, that did not take place and since then the school has closed. Similarly, Gigi attended a private for-profit

100

online university as her first experience of attending college shortly after high school at age 19. Gigi explained how "once I became pregnant, I realized there's going to be someone else that's going to be dependent on me" as being the reason she should purse a college degree. Gigi experienced challenges once her daughter was born and described her declining mental health with postpartum depression, her relationship with her daughter's father ending and "when she was born, I remember that I had to drop a class for the first time, because I couldn't keep up" starting a cycle of enrollment and re-enrollment. Jyn's story is another example of beginning her higher education pathway right after high school. Jyn attended a private Christian university and describes she was pressured by family to attend because it was "it was the Christina thing to do" despite her feeling not ready or prepared for that experience. There are some cultural values to consider with her comment, which will be discussed later in theme four related to cultural heritage. Jyn the described it as her "failing miserably" because she just did not understand what would be required of her and more importantly the financial cost associated with that level of responsibility. Jyn shared she is "still paying off those student loans from 1995" and has since become such an advocate for young people to begin their educational journey at a community college. After leaving the university, she pursued a career, got married and had two children and she explains that she "had put education on the back on my mind" creating a long pause in enrollment.

<u>First, GED</u>

Some of the participants described leaving high school before completing requirements for graduation so their first educational enrollment decisions were intentional to return to pass the General Education Development (GED) test. Zoila's first experience attending her local community college was shortly after she finished her GED program at an adult school. Zoila left high school after becoming pregnant at age 17 but later had an opportunity to participate in a special program for young mothers to continue their education. She recalled her decision explaining, "after having my baby I was like, I think I'm going to go for this high school diploma thing." After the success of her earning her GED, she enrolled in her local community college as the natural next step being encourage by teachers at the maternity school. Unfortunately for Zoila, she described being very confused about the process explaining:

> I didn't know nothing about financial aid. So, I was like, how am I gonna pay for this, you know, I think it was two or three classes that I took and it just wasn't good for me and I dropped out.

Kat also left high school before completing her diploma. She explained after meeting her fiancé and becoming engaged, they agreed he would financially provide for her, and she would not need to finish her education. She described herself as being "still just a kid" to make that type of decision at age 18. After three years, things did not work out in the relationship, so they ended their engagement. Kat then returned to school to complete her GED. A few years

later Kat began a new relationship and became a mother for the first time. As a mother in her 20's, and after working in an office for some time, Kat considered higher education. She thought about how she needed pursue education for a career rather than a life with multiple jobs to make ends meet as her mother did, she explained, "I could remember my mom had like two or three jobs. And I was just like, I don't want to do that you know like that's just too much" so she knew further education would be needed for a career with higher wage opportunities. Kat's siblings and boyfriend were most supportive in her decision to attend her local community college and agreed to help provide childcare.

First, Community College

Other participants began their educational experience directly with the community college which was in alignment with the literature on Latina mothers pursuing education (Cohen et. al., 2013; Núñez et al., 2011, Pérez Huber et al., 2015; Rivas et al., 2010). Eugenia knew college was the next step for her after high school, especially with the example from her mother. She received training in nursing as a Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN) with a certificate from her local community college right out of high school, before having children. Eugenia was interested in continuing her education to pursue a bachelor's degree and enrolled on and off over the next fifty years balancing life, her physical health and motherhood.

Isabela's first college experience was at her local community college right after high school. She aspired to work in the medical field after a validating

experience from a teacher who led the school club for future health occupations. She did not attend a university due to concern of being unable to afford tuition however, she did not apply because she "didn't want that disappointment" of being denied either. Isabela's path then took her and her husband out of state due to military where she was unable to continue her education due to financial challenges. She and her husband were a newly married couple with one car, food insecurities and a single income with a baby on the way.

A year after high school, Marilyn decided to attend her local community college as a place for her to consider what her future would be as she described, "I needed to find my path, what do I want to do in life" as being her reason for choosing that first enrollment. Marilyn's experience in foster care and eventually a group home allowed for self-reflection on what she wanted for herself, she explained "I was living with the foster family and my thoughts at the time was in order for me to become a better version of myself, was to get an education." The financial benefit and having family members that also attended the community college aided in her decision for that first enrollment. She knew she would not receive any financial support from her mother and would be unable to afford attending a university, and she described:

> I didn't have plans on going to something that big for me because it's like, as I mentioned I'm a first generation so that's completely new area for me, so I wanted to say within my comfort zone, especially having family members actually went to [the community college] and in addition to that, I

actually got help from my cousin who actually was going to [the community college] and he helped me out with the process of all that, so that really did help me out.

Marilyn completed a few years in community college and once she became pregnant, she took a few semesters off for her child.

First, Work

Participants also had educational pathways that began with work right after high school and then sometime later considering higher education. Nina earned her high school diploma but had no desire to pursue anything beyond that. She got a job right after high school and worked in the hospitality industry at a hotel as a receptionist making enough money to live fine as an independent woman but mostly paycheck to paycheck. Nina explained how she had been in the same job almost 15 years and had been unable to advance without more than her high school diploma. After successfully leaving the abusive relationship, she began searching for a job, she described the frustration:

I started looking for hotel job like in this area, and I was looking for a good eight months, and I wasn't getting anything. Not after 15 years of experience… and it didn't, it didn't help me at all. I would not even been called; I wasn't getting like a consideration. Um, I think I got a few emails like no, like rejections. And so, I was like, come on, like what am I gonna do like I gotta do something.

She also recalled, in her former position, "there was so many opportunities to like to move up at this at this hotel but because I had no degree, I had no certification, I had, I just graduated high school, that's it," she knew that additional training or a certificate would be necessary. Nina met a friend while participating in group therapy who was also a parent and battling addiction, she was taking courses at the local community college and encouraged Nina to join her, Nina shared about her friend's invitation:

> She told me "You can go to school and be there, a year, not even a year, and you can walk out with a diploma or some kind of not a diploma, but some type of certification to get you in in the door of a job"

Nina shared how her friend's initial invitation was a seed of education that she planted. Her decision to enroll in her community college course came shortly after that experience.

Lorena's education pathway included difficulties in high school as a young girl moving out of state, she described she was "supposed to be a junior [with] credits of a freshman" she was not always certain of her educational goals. After high school, Lorena became a primary caretaker of her younger siblings and needed to work to provide for her family. After being visibly upset and needing to pause in the interview to gather her emotions, Lorena described caring for her siblings:

> They have always been my kids. (pause) So. So, because of it, I didn't pursue college. I find it was not something I could do, I needed to work to

be able to help them, get through high school themselves, be able to put shoes on them, be able to dress them, be able to make sure that they had food and were fully clothed.

Not until many years later when she was a mother of two of her own, she had some colleagues at work encourage her to pursue education. Lorena enrolled in her first community college course but unfortunately, she did not find family support as she explained "when my ex-husband at the time, he was not happy about it, his point of view is he's Mexican very machismo" which also created tension in their marriage. It was her work colleague who offered her a room for her and her girls to stay while she continued to take courses. As a newly single parent, Lorena took a few semesters of coursework and then stopped attending. She described the challenge:

The second semester, I did it and then after I was just like this is taking a toll on me personally, mentally, physically and I said I can't continue school and work and not be able to see my girls, this is, this is very hard.

This pause in enrollment became quite a common decision for the participants. They each shared their educational pathway and journey through the transfer process which consisted of multiple enrollments and re-enrollments.

Re-Enrollment

The participants shared their stories of re-enrollment to the community college after a period of pause. Some were short pauses of a semester or two and others may have had years between enrollments. Each time it was clear that

re-enrollment goals included the possibility of transfer. For some, it included an academic or interpersonal validating agent (Rendón, 1994) to support the re-enrollment process. Georgina re-enrolled after years away from a classroom and focusing on raising her son, she decided to again pursue education after a validating experience at her son's school where she was volunteering. She explained how her son's teacher encouraged her to apply for a staff position at the school after she had been so involved and giving of her time. After this urge from the teacher, she said she "felt encouraged and rewarded" which validated her belief in returning to school to pursue a degree and teaching credential.

Zoila explained her experience of re-enrollment sharing "I had my third [child] and I, well, between two and three I went back to community college" speaking to the balance of being a mother and pursuing education. Her *comadre* recommended that she to enroll again but this time for a specific program for clerical skills such as using the 10-key, typing and faxing. She was determined to prove to herself and to others that she "was capable and not dumb" especially after her first experience. After completing her three-month program, she was interviewed for additional on the job training programs and secured gainful employment.

Gigi decided to re-enroll in her local community college after a missed job opportunity. Her boss questioned why she had not applied, and she shared "It was ignorance that got the best of me, I didn't know I just assumed I was automatically disqualified because I don't have that paper that says that I know

108

stuff so, I didn't apply" so she investigated course opportunities. Attending the community college allowed her to enroll part time and explained that it "did take me a couple of years going and then stopping and that kind of thing". a recent break before being eligible for transfer was when she became pregnant and had three boys, triplets. She describes that pendulum of desires for pursuing her degree:

> They were the reason I stopped and my motivation to go back again once I was able to move, I, I noticed that when I feel like someone has to depend on me, I, I go, I have to move. So, with the boys, and my daughter.

> Isabela's re-enrollment journey included attending two community colleges at the same time, she shared "I started back up again with [community college] and I finally felt like my son was old enough that I could you know, be able to be in school, and he could be self-sufficient. However, she had challenges getting enrolled into needed coursework. She informed that another nearby community college offered a larger selection of online courses. She explained:

> It was all online, which was a big piece that I wanted, while I took one class in person at [community college] … I came to the realization that online would be easiest for me because of my kids and my job, and you know everything else.

> While she was dual enrolled at both institutions, she was able to complete all needed coursework for transfer.

Kat's community college enrollment was on and off over the years because she felt unconnected with coursework that would connect to a future career. She had interests in forensic psychology, and she described:

> I thought it was gonna be like on the TV you know where the crime scenes were kind of clean and stuff but after I talked to the professor he was just like, no, it's you know you see some pretty messed up stuff, so I changed my mind and I stopped going for a couple years.

After having her first child, she wanted to set the example for her son and returned to her local community college for another period of re-enrollment.

When Marilyn was considering re-enrolling after becoming a mother, there was a fear of returning to school. Her concern was based on having done well academically the first time; she described this worry:

> After I had my kid, I was like how am I going to do it? It's so much work, because I'm so used to having good grades, and then I felt like I wasn't going to be able to have that again.

This fear initially created a barrier to her re-enrollment. However, after encouraging experiences with the community college counselors who guided her toward campus resources and programs specifically for Latina students she felt at ease.

Pre-Transfer

Barriers existed for many of the participants in their re-enrollment and pre-transfer processes. Eugenia described the years long barrier and multiple

110

attempts at completing transfer level math. After five attempts, she described the desire to simply "make peace" with the idea that she would not complete the requirements for transfer. Through her volunteer work in the community with a young women's group, Eugenia found herself staying up to date with things occurring in the education field. She shared when she learned the great news of some math requirement changes in 2018:

I think I saw it in the newspaper or, there were something that I came across and it was about maybe not having to take that type of math if I was in social science, I could take the statistics instead … so I went down and I talked to a counselor and I said, I don't have to take the math?

After receiving confirmation from the local community college counselor that a statistics class fulfilled the math requirement for transfer and a few other courses she needed to take, Eugenia felt validated that she would be capable of meeting the requirements to transfer.

Georgina faced issues with some of the application processes including transcripts. She explained that this delay in receiving documents required to reapply to the university. It was a challenge because "every school uses a different program, they're not uniform" so from institution to institution she had to navigate the nuances and differences. She used this additional time to take course that benefited her professionally. However, there were other sacrifices including the time with her family which was previously shared in the theme of motherhood.

Other participants had experiences that were more positive in their pre-transfer process. Lorena remarried a man who was incredibly supportive of her desire to pursue higher education and was able to re-enroll at her local community college. After not attending school for such a long time, Lorena had a positive experience after her first summer term of an intense eight-week term in which she did well, and she explained, "I exceled so I was like Okay, I could do this. I was still working full time and going to school at night" she continued taking courses over the next few years and shared that she was "taking at the most like two classes, at a time, and so it took me five years to finish, but I finished with my associates" and eventually completed multiple associates degrees within that five-year timeframe.

Preparing for the transfer process, Kat recalls meeting with counselors in the community college transfer center who held events and workshops to guide students through the application process. She described the several types of counselors she encountered from those who were "just kind of just doing their job and they weren't too concerned" or were "I kind of felt like they were annoyed if you were asking any more questions." Then she clarified that if you "got lucky and you were able to talk to one that like really looked at your credits and what classes you need." In one of these lucky experiences, she explained:

> The counselor said, oh you know you can fill out this paper and it'll take the F off from your transcripts, so it won't show up. And I though oh my

gosh I didn't even know you could do that; she was like yeah… it will come up on your transcript, so you'll get a better GPA.

She then used her transcripts to see a transformation of her academic ability from early coursework to the most recent courses and she shared:

This is like big difference from where I was at to now and I was a little proud of myself I was like okay, I was like I can get good grades, capable of it right yeah and I was like, even with the two kids I was like I can do it, you know.

This insight gave her the encouragement that she would succeed at the university after transferring.

<u>Post-Transfer</u>

The transition from the community college to the university was both similar and different for each participant. There was support from university programs that supported the change in institution and there was support from friends and family. Participants shared their experiences as they transferred to SSU.

Gigi spoke about combating imposter syndrome and "negative intrusive thoughts" that occurred as she was preparing to transfer. Her family was supportive and celebrated with her as she graduated from the community college but still had to recall the skills learned from her psychologist colleagues that she does indeed belong in these spaces of higher education. She shared that moment,

113

I remember opening up the packet and it says, 'Congratulations' and I just

started crying. And I remember jumping up and down and going, oh my

god I got it and everyone around me was like of course you're going to get

in

In the transfer process, Gigi found the orientation at the university to be most

helpful. She recalls the specific orientation for transfer students:

They had the transfer orientation. It was specifically geared towards

people like me. And that was helpful, and I attended that twice I think just

to understand the culture understand what it is that I needed to do in order

to be successful at [SSU].

She describes her current experience as a transfer student by "whenever there's

any outreach from the school, I pay attention to it I read it, I try to participate in

whatever I can participate" which is also how she came across the invitation to

participate in the study and was eager to take part.

When comparing the experience at the university with the community

college, Kat describes their difference in size and feeling as she explained,

"obviously [SSU] feels just very big compared to [the community college] ". More

importantly than the physical size, Kat describes the easy navigation of the

community college then needing to learn an entirely new system. She explains

this challenge as

I kind of knew how to navigate like, like the website if I wanted to look for

something else like oh I'll know where to look, it's not like 20 different

places that I need to go to get to one place to look for one thing.

Kat encountered challenges upon transferring to the university were with

navigating various offices was explained:

I've had a lot of questions about the financial aid and again it's like, oh no

you need to talk to this person and this person was like oh no I don't

always send you here you need to talk to that person. So, it's just a lot of

like, you know, then everything is pretty much the email so then I'm

waiting like one day to hear from another person that another day to hear

from another person. So, it's just kind of frustrating in that sense.

Kat went on to attribute some of this frustration to the Covid pandemic and not

being able to walk into offices in person to ask questions. Kat also expressed a

desire for SSU to offer events and workshops in the late afternoon or evening so

someone like her, who works full time, could potentially attend. She sensed the

university's priority of offering morning and mid-day activities that she sees being

offered "that looks super fun to do and would love to do that, but you can't" due to

the time it is offered.

After she transferred, Lorena had a very validating experience at the

university. Lorena made it to the dean's list in her first semester at SSU with a

3.3 GPA. Her husband explained how it would appear on her transcript and she

described her husband's concern when he asked, "why are you downplaying it

he said, I'm not downplaying it, I'm just I don't know if I'm still in shock that I'm like, finally making a dream come true."

Nina describes preparing for her first semester at the university and shared about a campus resource, she took advantage of, "I got an email like in the summer before starting the fall semester and it was saying about mentors are available and I was like, Oh, what is this this sounds interesting" she went on to explain the benefit of the mentor who helped her both in the fall and spring:

> So, I had her in the fall and I and I was able to keep her for the spring
> semester too. And, and that, that made such a difference. I mean such a,
> such a big impact that in the spring I got all five A's.

This validating experience of receiving straight As in her second semester was further validation by her mentor who provided encouragement. Nina took advantage of different support services at the university, she described getting help with notes as a student with a disability and joining a program that supported some of her tuition fees and well as the psychological counseling services because she knows they are free services included with her tuition. As she is nearing the end of her requirements for her bachelor's degree, Nina shared one regret about not transferring sooner because she has maxed out her time for financial aid eligibility and will need to pay her final two semesters out of pocket.

Programs and resources offered by both the community college and university were key to the success of many participants (Jain et al., 2011).

Marilyn, who was in the foster care system, found the Extended Opportunity

Programs and Services (EOPS) program at her community college that provided

services for former foster youth. The program helped pay for school supplies and

books. There was also a corresponding program at the university that also

helped foster youth and the staff and the community college connected her with

the staff in the program at the university, so it was a seamless transition which

allowed her to continue to receive those benefits to cover the cost of her

textbooks. Marilyn learned about one of these support programs, EOPS, at the

community college through social media. She describes the desire to have the

sash at her graduation:

> It's actually very interesting because I found about the EOPS through an
>
> Instagram photo of a girl, she posted her graduation photo and she had an
>
> EOP sash that really caught my attention and I was like what is EOPS,
>
> what is that? So, I was like you know, I want to graduate with that too.

The support programs provided were, as Marilyn describes a main factor in her

success in graduating with five associates degrees:

> Those two programs really pushed me out of my comfort zone and
>
> respectfully and a really helped me finish on time, instead of being there
>
> for many more years because, as I mentioned, I started 2014 and to
>
> graduate in 2020 so that's a lot of years there I even joke around like it's
>
> like if I got one degree per year.

As Marilyn was preparing to transfer, she was expecting her second child and missed her orientation session. She shares how this created a challenge and delayed her registration creating much frustration:

> So, I had to go and reapply pay the fee again so that really affected my ability to register on time, so I wrote to ask permission to be able to register for classes, because of that. Even though I had a good reason, but they still wanted me to attend the orientation which kind of sucks, but I had to do what I had to do.

Marilyn recommends Latina student mothers like herself should take full advantage of programs and services like she did both at the community college and university. She also described wishing she had started using the services of the Counseling and Psychological Services at the university sooner than she had, she felt they supported in her transition as a transfer student. She shares this was most beneficial for feelings of "imposter syndrome, which is something big for mothers, or mother's guilt." She encourages mothers to research what services are available specific to parents such as free daycare or financial support for books and tuition (Jain et al., 2011).

The first enrollment experiences varied from each participant demonstrating the multiple routes student parents take to begin their educational journeys through the transfer pipeline. Their re-enrollment marks a cycle of an ongoing relationship with their educational institutions. I attribute this re-enrollment cycle to the leaky pipeline and broken trickle found in the literature for

Latino/as in the transfer process (Pérez Huber et al., 2006, 2015). Through their pre-transfer and post-transfer experiences, each woman shared their story and how they persist with their educational goals for themselves and their families.

<center>Health: Physical, Mental and Emotional Wellbeing</center>

Another theme that presented itself during the analysis of the data was the impact of health for the participants and their families. The Latina student mothers discussed their physical health, their mental health, and their emotional wellbeing during their transfer journey. Some of their stories are experiences of health barriers that prevented them from either beginning or continuing their enrollment (Gault and Reichlin, 2014) however, each woman demonstrated resiliency (Santamaria et al., 2013) and persistence (Navarro-Cruz et al., 2020).

Georgina was diagnosed with Lupus at age 20 shortly after she had her son. She described the challenge of being away from her baby as it took over a year for doctors to provide a diagnosis for what was going on with her body:

> I was in and out of the hospital. It was, it was horrible, horrible you know having a little baby that you can't hold because your hands were so stiff, and I could not even get up on time to make it to the restroom because my joints were all stiff and I was just in horrible pain.

During a difficult time in her marriage, due to the strain on her physical health, Georgina described how her spiritual health was nurtured by her church which she explained the benefit for her and her husband, she stated "we started going to church and that helped us to get though it … we couldn't handle it

<center>119</center>

anymore we were going to divorce each other". Georgina held strong to her faith which helped her persist in both her marriage and her educational journey despite physical health.

According to the Lupus Foundation of America (2016), 90% of people living with lupus are women of childbearing age, typically. This is information I looked up after interviewing both Georgina and Zoila who each disclosed their diagnosed with lupus in our interviews. This autoimmune disease is found two to three times more in women of color when compared to White women, including Latinas (Lupus Foundation of America, 2016). A life with lupus is a lifelong disease which Georgina, Zoila and their families are coping with.

Zoila's experience with Lupus created numerous challenges for her life. After her diagnosis, she was placed on permanent disability and was no longer able to work. There was a financial burden for her family and without work she found it difficult, she described her mental health at that time, "So I went through a deep depression … it's just, it was really hard." Her medical condition also became precarious during the Covid pandemic creating additional isolation from her family due to mandated quarantine.

Gigi shared her challenges with mental health as she experienced postpartum depression after the birth of her daughter. She found herself working in the medical field, specifically a psychiatry call center, and often was the first point of contact for patients. She described this experience, "I remember people calling in English and in Spanish and their reaction to when I would tell them that

they were calling the mental health department was that they were crazy … or being in the wrong place." This gave her the desire to serve the Latino community to help combat the stigma around mental health services especially with her own personal experience of postpartum depression. She views education as the pathway toward her goal of being a mental health therapist.

Jyn described her career as an emergency dispatcher and explained how it led to her mental health crisis and the "harsh realization" that her job was mentally unhealthy for her. She described in detail the negative impact that chasing the "capitalistic dream" can have on a woman as she continually had to desensitize herself to the feelings created by the work. She explained:

First response teaches you to have an abnormal response to abnormal situations. So, every call I would take or every situation I was in is an extreme someone's worst day of their life, or the worst moment right then right there… you try really hard to switch it back on when you're with family but it's hard to go back and forth and, you forget how to be human.

If she revealed these pressures taking a toll on her mental health, she would have put her job at risk if a counselor determined she was "not mentally fit for duty." She and her family then made the decision to leave her job and refocus on what was important in her life and continuing her education was a desire that had previously been "put on the backburner" as she described it that she was now able to consider resuming. Jyn described her mental health crisis is a large contributing factor for her decision to return to higher education. The pressure of

maintaining the appearance of being mentally and emotionally well and described by Jyn as having a "Superwoman mentality" that she must do it all.

Nina shared her experiences with depression during her abusive relationship with her son's father. After she left the relationship, she sought help from her sisters but with strained families ties she felt rejected from her siblings and then began a battle with alcoholism. Seeking help, she found participating in group counseling sessions helpful to work on herself and be a better parent and a better person. Nina shared about that experience:

> I was able to talk to you know, little by little it took some time it did, it took some time some listening a lot of listening, listening when my heart and not just with my ears, and participating I was, I was really engaging with, you know, they put me in group counseling with people in my same situation single parents with addiction on their own, trying to begin, trying to start over. You know, those were the goals that I was, and I was starting to grow.

The trauma she experienced in Nina's life led her to seek out services which in turn then led her to the opportunity of education. Nina now describes herself as a Christian who has battled alcoholism and proud to be sober for the last six and a half years and looking forward to completing her bachelor's degree next year.

Eugenia also shared her battle with her physical health describing her fight with stage three breast cancer. One of her educational milestones occurred

shortly after she had surgery and was finishing chemotherapy. Eugenia

connected with a group that likened itself to a historical society that preserved the

history of the Mexican American families of the region. She described wanting to

make the most of the time in her life, "the prognosis was maybe I'm going to get

ten years is about what I'm looking at" so, giving her time to a meaningful cause

for her family history was important. After an invalidating experience from

national museums and their traveling historical society, she knew returning to the

community college to further her career was her next goal.

These experiences of navigating physical and mental health concerns did

not deter the women from persisting in their transfer journeys (Navarro-Cruz et

al., 2020; Santamaria et al., 2013). The stories they shared included physical and

emotional pain, trauma, and fear but most compelling were the people supporting

them. A community of support consisted of friends, families, church members

and co-workers who all rallied to provide space for healing. These communities

of support created more of an impact on the journeys which allowed these

women to have the strength to work toward their goals. The idea of being healthy

or focusing on wellness were challenged in March of 2020 at the onset of the

Covid-19 global pandemic began. Each of the participants next shares her

journey of navigating education and the transfer process during the pandemic.

Learning in a Pandemic

Interviews for this study were conducted approximately fifteen months into

the Covid-19 global pandemic during the summer term of 2021. Several of the

women participating were enrolled in summer courses, but the majority were enjoying their time off from classwork to be with their families. Courses offered at SSU were being conducted virtually with tentative plans to return in-person for the fall semester. As mentioned, all interview data was collected virtually. As the researcher, I was able to peek into their home environments. Notes from my researcher journal remind me of the moments I observed family members walking by in the virtual background, knocks on doors asking what the women were doing and the ever present ask for 'mom' in the nearby distance. Lorena's son needed help opening his popsicle during our interview. This snapshot was also a window into the life of a student parent in a virtual setting. Learning at home in a pandemic was both a challenge and an unexpected, pleasant surprise for several of the women.

This theme of learning at home during a pandemic was unavoidable to discuss for the participants. When asked about the transfer experience challenges, many participants such as Georgina expressed frustration due to a lack of in-person services explaining "not having that communication with people… that human connection because of the online, it was difficult." Nina was not fond of learning in an online format and preferred in-person class experiences. Two participants, Eugenia, and Rosie, both described their fears of working more closely with technology when Rosie described herself as "not computer savvy" and Eugenia not as comfortable with certain software like PowerPoint. Zoila revealed the challenges of having her youngest, age eleven,

simultaneously doing schoolwork at home as well. As a child who has a learning disability, Zoila described how this created a challenge while she was also attempting to complete her own classwork:

> I had my, my, my little one sitting next to me doing his virtual stuff. And he has ADHD, so I had to be here on my computer and my other one is also coming in, Mom. Mom. Mom. Yeah, and I am so focused on my school and trying to do well.

The pandemic and nationwide lockdowns were in full effect when many of the participants were completing a monumental educational milestone of completing their associate degrees and graduating from their community colleges. Isabela highlighted the joy of participating in a unique graduation ceremony:

> I did a graduation celebration drive through. And I went because I was eligible because I got my degree, you know, during the pandemic. And I sobbed, I ugly cried driving through and my kids were in the back. I wanted them to experience it, I was like you know, and I just cried and cried, and my daughter was taking video. And you know they were just so hyped up you hyping everybody up driven through.

In addition, learning from home during the pandemic was an unexpected benefit for many of the participants. Despite the challenges, the hidden benefits of being at home were clearly revealed such as spending time with their children, managing their job workload, and eliminating travel. Gigi shared:

This pandemic has been horrible for very many people but for the working student it's been amazing, putting everything online and bringing things as far as convenience goes has been probably the only reason why I was able to finish school.

This sentiment was shared by Isabela who had initially sought online courses from her community college before the pandemic and had hoped to continue with an online degree program at SSU. Isabela further explained:

That time that I got with my kids was priceless you know the time that I was able to stay home and do things that you know I couldn't otherwise do is. You know there's nothing like that, and I, you know I've had, I had a lot of family that passed away because Covid, and just that time was family was you know. It was, unlike anything else honestly.

Completing coursework from home was especially beneficial for Jyn, who attended the branch campus. She shared how she was initially concerned about the required coursework at the main campus since the branch campus did not offer all her required courses. She described initial travel plans to use the complimentary bus service, "it's gonna be a 12-hour day so I'm going to be on that bus that it picks up in where I live … which is some awesome right, but it's at 5:20 in the morning" which, she was able to avoid for a few semesters due to the pandemic providing the courses online.

Taking online courses during the pandemic was especially impactful for Marilyn, who was preparing to give birth to her second child. As a

pregnant woman, she also tested positive for Covid during the semester. Focusing on schoolwork became extremely challenging, she shared on how she was planning to manage her schedule knowing she would have a baby during the semester:

I gave birth in February [2021], so in the beginning it was barely like three weeks into the semester. And I had to let my professors know early that I was having a baby so, that really benefited me to be able to stay in school. I actually had to plan ahead if I could attend these classes or not. I had to get my counselors involved and question financial aid if I could do part time if I could do full time, so I stuck to full time and I decided to have four classes during the semester when I had my baby and I also had my kid, my four-year-old.

Marilyn also explained the benefit of learning in an online environment during this time of having her second child. Although she "never stepped foot on campus" she was grateful of the asynchronous opportunities. She shared:

It really helps me out because especially those classes are only online helps me out. I could use like if I wanted to take the classes in the morning, to take it at night or in the afternoon or taking my exam at a certain time when they're taking a nap and not have to worry about their waking up or anything like that.

In summary, this theme demonstrated how there were both negative and positive experiences associated with learning at home in a pandemic. In a time of

uncertainty, both institutions and students quickly had to pivot to new environments. These Latina students, who cared for children and their families, found ways to persist in their educational experiences.

<div align="center">Embracing Cultural Heritage</div>

As each woman was introduced in the beginning of this chapter, and their self-described ethnic identity. It is clear from their expressions of identity; they each have varying unique connections to their cultural and ethnic identities. A common theme among the different participants was the embracing of their cultural heritage and how their educational experiences created an opportunity for them to do this (Garcia and Okhidoi, 2015; Garcia, 2016). Considering research question three, "What influence, if any, does attending a Hispanic Service Institution have on the transfer experience of Latina student mothers?" each participant was asked if they knew what a Hispanic Serving Institution or HSI was. Unfortunately, none had a full understanding of the federal designation; however, a few participants, Eugenia, Georgina, and Jyn, seemed to have some recognition of the term in the fact that they acknowledged their institution hosted events recognizing the Latino/a cultures. These acknowledgements of their cultural identity by the institutions became a marker of being welcomed by the institution.

Eugenia shared that she recalls at the community college, "I saw what I think would be typical for the student body life, you know, with a Cinco de Mayo celebration" which she did not find surprising since the local school districts near

her home are well over 90% Hispanic. Georgina recognized the term HSI and explained after she transferred to SSU she attended an online event where the University President attended. She recalled him speaking and being surprised, she shared, "it was really good because you would think that a president wouldn't answer but he did… and they were talking about [SSU] is designed to help local Hispanic students." She shared how she uses social media to keep engaged with SSU on the different pages for university departments that host events targeted at supporting Latino/a students. When asked about the HSI designation, Jyn recalled reading about SSU student demographics and seeing the sizeable percentage of Latino/a students enrolled, especially at the branch campus. The designation did not surprise her, but she explained she was not sure how it was implemented. After hearing more, it was clear Jyn benefited from SSU being a true Latino/a serving institution (Garcia, 2016), without being aware of the federal designation. Jyn explained that in the region of the branch campus there are a lot of "migrant families" and a professor she worked with was interested in researching the "medical and health needs of the migrant families in the area." She described participating in this research project and helping the kinesiology professor understand some of the specific needs of the families explaining, "a reason people in the community might not do regular exercise … they're working very labor-intensive jobs all day long, out in the fields or cleaning houses" and this research experience helped confirm her goal to use her degree to support the marginalized immigrant families in her community. Gigi was unsure what an

HSI designation meant for her institutions however, she did feel there was an emphasis on diversity at SSU recalling "stuff about diversity in big bold letters on the website one time." Other participants had similar responses stating that the designation sounds like it makes sense based on their understanding of the student population in their region but not necessarily connecting it to themselves as students and how they can be served based on their ethnic identity.

Challenges to Traditional Gender Roles

In addition to their cultural heritage begin recognized and acknowledged by their institution, some women used their educational experiences to challenge traditional cultural gender roles. Attending courses at their local community college became a symbol of their independence. Nina discussed how her family had little expectations for her education especially since she left her home before graduating from high school and a mother who she described as someone who "never encouraged school." Nina grew up in what she described as a "traditional Hispanic family" but with its problems including an alcoholic father who had difficulty showing love. Fortunately, she received support and love from her grandmother who she called mom and learned from her how to be independent woman who did "not rely on a man." Nina considered this as a challenge to some of the traditional cultural expectations of her Hispanic home. It was her grandmother who encouraged her to continue with high school and, although she had no personal desire herself, she completed high school and received her

diploma "for her grandma" who always encouraged her and told her she could do it.

Rosie described her first marriage that ended while her children were young as something extremely difficult due to some cultural expectations around marriage. She shared the dilemma:

We had like a lot of problems, since we kind of started. I dealt with a lot; he was such a *machismo* during our lives together. He was really rough, tough, and he was in with the family, all the time, so it was really hard to you know, like to live with him. And also in another way, we're Mexican, so I wanted to have like a husband that is my kid's dad with me, because I thought it was the way, the right way to do things you know and like raise a family.

Rosie expressed the duality of a desire to raise her children in culturally traditional Mexican home but the barrier her marriage created for her educational goals. She further explained her husband was "a very macho person that he wouldn't let me go to school, … so he kind of like killed my dream" which was one of the many problems that led to their divorce. Leaving her relationship, despite the break from cultural norms around marriage, allowed her to continue her pursuit of higher education.

Georgina described the personal challenges with her physical health which were described in theme three, but she used this opportunity to share with the young women in her church what it means to be a woman. She explained the

considerable number of Latino/a members of her Christian church tend to have more traditional ideas of women being mothers and staying at home, but she wanted to challenge that idea. Georgina explained that a woman could be more than the expected gender role, she described "we can be that gentle, mother but then we can also be that strong, you know, career woman as well." Georgina's expressions were passionate and a clear representation of how her educational journey and ethnic identity have shaped her pathway.

<u>Immigrant Experiences</u>

It is important to note that in the findings related to cultural identities, many women expressed how they embraced their Latino heritage through the stories of immigration. The women discussed their own recollection of coming to this country or the stories of when their families came. As the participants shared their background, they made it clear how different moments of the experiences formed a foundation for their ability to purse their educational journey.

Georgina recalls her early life being born in Tijuana, Mexico, and her immigration to the US as a young girl with Spanish being her first language. She described her experience after high school and working without a social security card and her experience of being undocumented. She has since been able to use her language skills in jobs and in her volunteer with parents and families to help her community. These experiences have helped her validate her educational goals to pursue a teaching credential.

Zoila vividly recalls her parents' experience applying for their US citizenship after immigrating from El Salvador. It was an impactful experience she recalls, "at the time, you know, a few years later Reagan allowed for immigrants to, you know, apply for citizenship or residency and then, then years later they filed for the citizenship." Her parents had her a few years after the immigrated but the process for US citizenship was prominent in her families' daily lives she recalls as a young child.

Gigi also shared the story of when her parents immigrated to the US from Mexico in the 1980s. They came to the US with limited educational experiences which is why she had "little guidance" on what steps to take after high school for education. She recalled the attempts her high school made with meetings for parents, she explained:

> I remember having to go to these meetings because they were trying to prep us for high school, but I believe they all worked under the assumption that I knew what they were talking about, or that my parents knew what they were talking about when in reality. We were completely ignorant to how everything worked. And I think that really created a little bit of a struggle for me to understand where I needed to start.

It was clear to Gigi that despite her parent's little understanding of the US educational system, she was still determined to learn about the higher education process.

Isabela's journey she shared was about her father who was born and raised in Mexico and immigration to the US, first to Texas then California. Isabela's first language was Spanish however, after some cousins who moved in with her family who were more assimilated or as she described as being "whitewashed," the opportunities to continue using her Spanish became limited. She now has an opportunity to use more Spanish with the parents and families of the children who attend the school she works at.

Like Gigi, Kat's parents both immigrated from Mexico with limited educational experiences. When Kat transferred from her community college to the university, her parents of course congratulated her however they did not seem to understand the transfer process and the accomplishment she had completed. Her parents are supportive, but their encouragement is described as, "get a good paying job and… follow the American dream" so completing her associates degree and moving on to the university for a bachelor's degree is how she is planning to do just that.

Many of the women have used these stories of immigration as examples of perseverance in situations that were not easy. Being asked about their background created an opportunity for the women to reflect on what it means to come from an immigrant family and connect it to their educational journeys of transfer. These women shared their personal connection to stories of immigration and ethnic identity however, it was not until they entered a classroom where they

134

were able to learn the historical experience of Latinos in the US and articulate the impact for them and their families.

<u>Learning About Cultural History</u>

A few of the participants described taking courses such as Ethnic Studies or Chicano/a Studies which allowed them to learn and embrace their cultural heritage through historical events they had never learned about. Kat described how a Chicano history course influenced her decision to become a teacher, specifically a history teacher. Kat spoke of learning about moments in history such as the Chicano/a movement and segregated schools for Mexican American children in California as an experience that helped inform her decision as she explained, "I think history is so important and I, that's what I'd like, you know want to teach because I want to let these young kids know you know like there was people that had to sacrifice". Kat discussed how taking the Chicano history class also helped to consider how she could give back to her community as she explained how she contemplated "I want to do something that is, you know, good for our community" and she decided "what better way to do that than teaching."

Lorena's mother and her family immigrated from Mexico to Texas and her father's family immigrated from El Salvador. She describes him as the "definition of a bad immigrant" based on terminology from a sociology course the previous semester where they discussed the topic of a good immigrant versus a bad immigrant. With a history of encounters with the law and driving under the influence, her family moved out of state for some time. Lorena describes her

family as not having much pride in their cultural heritage and it is not regularly discussed. Coming from a mixed El Salvadorian and Mexican heritage she is learning more as an adult she explains how the Sociology course titled, The Latino Experience, allowed her to better consider her dad's experience. She also enjoyed learning from other classmates who celebrate and honor their cultural identities when she shared "I do have friends that say that have recently graduated where they have both of their on their Grad caps, it has the American flag and the Mexican flag." Lorena looks forward to participating in the Latinx graduation celebration at SSU and is interested in volunteering with the hosting organization for cultural events.

Rosie described being required to take a history course at her community college and when presented with the options listed in the class schedule, she chose a course based on her ethnic identity. She explained the course, "it was a Hispanic, a Chicano class, and I think it was very, very interesting" which she shared how surprised to she was learn about these historical events such young people being activist and protesting issues of segregation. Rosie was not aware of that schools in California were segregated by both racial and ethnic identities until the course, she described it, "I mean they had to fight, I guess… the government, so we could have the right to further our education." She explained how the course exposed her to historical events she had not been aware of prior, "I didn't really realize that Hispanics in the US, you know, our background we went through the same thing as African Americans and it was very sad to learn

136

because this is our country." Rose also sharing the information she learned with her children explaining she was surprised to learn about their experiences. It was clear Rosie had a sense of pride in her cultural heritage and wanted to pass the importance of understanding how educational access for her people came to be onto her children.

This theme of embracing cultural heritage was linked to research questions related to participants attending institutions designated as Hispanic Serving Institutions. Considering the work of Garcia and Okhidoi (2015) and Garcia (2016, 2019) with their work on HSIs, the findings suggest that although students are not aware of the federal designation, they are engaging with institutions that have a Latina/o-serving identity.

Summary of Findings

To summarize the findings, there were five key themes presented as a result of this Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis; 1) Motherhood: Being the Example for Future Generations, 2) The Enrollment Cycle: Enrollment and Re-enrollment, 3) Health: Physical, Mental and Emotional Wellbeing, 4) Learning in a Pandemic and 5) Embracing Cultural Heritage. In response to research questions one and two, 'How do Latina student mothers describe the transfer experience from a Hispanic Serving community college to a four-year university also designated as an HSI?' and 'How does an intersecting identity of student and mother impact, if at all, the transfer experience?' the themes presented each demonstrate how participants describe their experiences as mothers. They had

stories of challenges and triumphs that will certainly add to the body of literature on Latina students who are parents and pursuing a bachelor's degree. Additionally, it is not surprising that research question three 'What influence, if any, does attending a Hispanic Service Institution have on the transfer experience of Latina student mothers?' had a unique answer in that participants engaged with HSIs that had Latina/o-serving identities yet were not aware of the federal designation. These themes, especially about HSIs will be explored in the following chapter. In chapter five, I present a discussion on these findings, recommendations for leaders in higher education and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Characteristics of who today's college student is has drastically changed over the years with more students over age 25, may have dependents, employed full-time, attending school part time and likely a parent. These students, who are described as post-traditional students, now make up 85% of undergraduates nationwide (PNPI, 2018; Soares, 2013) with more than one in five college students being a parent (Lewis and Haynes, 2020). Additionally, Latina students, who are mothers, are overrepresented in community colleges and underrepresented in baccalaureate degree attainment (Bensimon and Bishop, 2012; Herrera and Jain, 2013; Pérez Huber et al., 2006; 2015).

Despite the growing number of Latina post-traditional students pursuing baccalaureate degrees, and universities designated to serve them, there is an absence of commitment to creating a receptive culture for transfer students, which is contributing to this disproportionately low degree attainment (Bensimon and Bishop, 2012; Herrera and Jain, 2013; Pérez Huber et al., 2006; 2015). Additionally, the growing number of student parents on college campuses across the US remain an invisible student population where 40% feel isolated as a parenting student on a college campus (Lewis and Haynes, 2020).

This interpretative phenomenological study aimed to understand the experiences of Latina students, who are mothers, and have successfully transferred from a community college to a university for a bachelor's degree. There were eleven Latina student parents that participated in this study. Women were recruited through emails and social media posts through various centers on the campus that support adult students, parents, and transfer students. Participants completed a survey to confirm they met the selection criteria that they were a mother, identified as Latina and had transferred to pursue their bachelor's degree. The women had varying descriptions of their ethnic identities which demonstrated their diverse identities within the Latina/o culture. They used Chicana, Mexican American, Salvadorian, and Hispanic. Each participant utilized the transfer function from a California community college to the university with both institutions federally designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). This chapter provides a discussion of the findings, recommendation for higher education leaders with a section on advice from the participants and future research opportunities. The chapter will conclude with my concluding thoughts on the study.

Discussion of Findings

This discussion will include how the pandemic influenced the educational journey of participants as interviews were conducted virtually in the summer of 2021 amidst the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The research questions focused on the student experience and understanding how the Latina students, who are

mothers, made meaning of their transfer process from a community college to university. The second research question aimed to further explore the intersecting identity of both mother and student and what that impact was on the transfer process. Lastly, the third research question considered the influence of attending an HSI had on their transfer experience.

These questions were developed based on the reviewed literature and the conceptual framework of both Laura Rendón's (1994) Validation Theory and the concept of transfer-receptive culture from Jain, Herrera, Bernal, and Solórzano (2011), which are informed by Critical Race Theory. As critical conceptual models that center on issues of race, ethnic equity and the structural racism in higher education, this framework emphasizes the role of both the community college and four-year universities as well as the validating members of the institutions as key in facilitating the transfer function for Latina students who are mothers.

Finding 1: Motherhood: Being the Example for the Future Generations

In this first theme, the participants explained how their identity of motherhood shaped and often became the reason for their pursuit of higher education which was consistent with existing literature (Navarro-Cruz, Dávila, and Kouyoumdjian, 2020). Jiménez and Oliva (2017) described magnified challenges for student mothers based on their role as both student and mother. While participants did express challenges, they also spoke about their role of student allowing them to set an example to their child and demonstrate through

141

their actions the value they place on education. It was critical for participants, like Nina, to impart skills and knowledge she learned in her education experience to her son. Many women spoke of the moments they did homework together with their children finding commonality which linked their experiences and more importantly connecting with them in this duality of being both their mother and a fellow student. It was clear the Latina student mothers were unable to separate their identities of mother and student, their identities were interwoven and reliant upon one another.

Using IPA by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009), allowed me to "stand alongside the participant" (p. 36) to understand how they make sense of their personal and social world. The theme of motherhood resonated most with my own experience and what an influential impact being a mother and a scholar can have on an educational experience. The most striking theme in this study was their desire to both care for their child and be the example to them, which created a spark for their decision to pursue higher education. Santamaria Graff et al. (2013) described as a chasm between goals to improve life and fulfilling the expected role of a good Latina mother; it was this balance between both worlds and a desire to better their lives and the lives of their children that fostered their academic success.

Finding 2: The Enrollment Cycle: Enrollment and Re-enrollment

The second theme presented in the findings of this study was the cycle of enrollment and re-enrollment for participants into various institutions at multiple

stages in the pipeline for transfer. With the use of a term such as Enrollment

Cycle, I present the idea that a regular occurrence of pausing and re-enrolling

should be expected and reframed as an appropriate pathway for student parents

without the negative connotation that they are in anyway late, slow, or behind in

their educational attainment. This term is like the use of the annual cycles in

higher education for planning applications, admission numbers, melt and overall

enrollment management (Huddleston Jr., 2000) however, this differs in that the

cycle is a unique timeline for each student parent. There is a natural occurrence

for the post-traditional student population to have this cycle of enrollment rather

than a direct line of entrance enrollment then completion (Gault and Reichlin,

2014; PNPI, 2018). This natural Enrollment Cycle should be discussed with

students to help normalize the situations. I liken this new language to the efforts

made by Soares (2013) who encourages the elimination of the term non-

traditional, which possess negative connotations and along with it assumptions

that students who do not attend college right after high school are somehow

lacking, frame students in a deficit lens. Similarly, Enrollment Cycle and Post-

traditional as new descriptors expand the idea of who these students are in a

more diverse way to capture their broad range of backgrounds, experience, and

identities (Soares, 2013).

　　　　While there are students like Rosie who stated she "never thought of

myself transferring" when she started taking courses at her community college

for a certificate program, many participants began enrollment in higher education

with the intention of earning a degree. The participants described their first enrollment whether it was at a private for-profit university, their local community college, or an adult school to complete their GED. Additionally, participants discussed when they decided to enter the workforce rather than pursuing higher education after high school and their reasons behind those decisions. Understanding their educational pathway was essential for me to help make meaning of their eventual transfer process (Bhattacharya, 2017; Creswell, 2014; Smith et al., 2009).

As part of their Enrollment cycle, participants discussed their pre-transfer experiences (Jain et al., 2011). Pre-transfer experiences came with challenges that typically included a pause in enrollment. These moments of pause contribute to what Pérez Huber et al. (2006) found to be a "broken trickle" at every step of the transfer pipeline for Latino/a students (p. 2). The reasons for participants were often personal in nature such as having a child. There were also institutional barriers such as course requirements or application difficulties. Despite the obstacles, each woman was successful in the transfer process and frequently attributed their success to validating agents both academic institutional and interpersonal family and friends (Rendón, 1994).

Additionally, there were a number of academic validating agents from the sending and receiving institutions during the transfer experience. Participants described support programs that provided additional counseling and advising as well as financial assistance. Validating experiences included attending

graduation ceremonies at the community college, receiving academic grades that were higher than expected resulting in being on the dean's list.

The Enrollment Cycle varied for each participant representing the diverse pathways involved in the transfer experience for Latina student mothers. Their re-enrollment marks a cycle of an ongoing relationship with their educational institutions however, it was not demonstrated in the data collection process that the participants felt their institutions understood their journey or actively sought out supporting them based on their identity as student parents and where they were at in the timeline of their enrollment cycle.

Finding 3: Health: Physical, Mental and Emotional Wellbeing

The third finding in this study was the impact of health for the participants throughout their educational journey and the transfer pipeline. The women shared experiences with difficulties regarding their physical health, mental health, and their overall wellbeing. These experiences of navigating physical and mental health burdens did not extinguish the resiliency the women had from persisting in their transfer journeys (Navarro-Cruz et al., 2020; Santamaria et al., 2013). Jyn described the mental battle of combating gendered ideals of who the perfect mother and woman is with the "superwoman mentality." She explained this as being a woman and having to shield her loved ones from personal stressors in her life if they were related to her job or school. Despite these types of struggles, the participants shared their moment of success in turning those challenges into catalysts for change and seeking higher education. Gigi is now pursuing a career

as a mental health therapist based on her personal experience with postpartum depression and will purse graduate school after her bachelor's degree and a doctoral degree.

Physical health created barriers for participants along the journey. I learned about the autoimmune disease Lupus while collecting data for this study There were experiences of living with substance abuse and a participant who is a survivor of stage three breast cancer. The stories they shared of physical and emotional pain, trauma and fear was each accompanied by a support system that aided in their wellbeing. Communities of support consisted of friends, families, church members and co-workers who all rallied to provide space for healing. These stories of health impacting the educational pathway of the Latina student mothers demonstrates the influences in the transfer process that are not linked to classroom content or academic requirements. In each of the experiences of physical, mental, and emotional health few of the participants discussed institutional agents that supported them. Marilyn shared a feeling which was common among participants that she wished she had utilized campus resources for counseling and psychological support sooner once she realized they were available.

Finding 4: Learning at Home in a Pandemic

The fourth finding of this study is a result of the Covid-19 pandemic which began 18 months prior to the interviews. This topic was an inevitable discussion based on the significant impact it had on the transfer process. In

addition to being able to learn about the participants lives during the interviews, I felt as though I had a window into who they were with the technology of the Zoom conference platform. If there was not a global pandemic, it would be like likely that interviews would take place in-person on the university campus. Due to interviews being conducted virtually, I was able to meet participants as mothers in their home and had the occasional glimpse of their life as family members walked by in the background, as they sat in their bedroom/study space or when their children came in asking for mom's attention. I was fortunate as the researcher to have this unexpected experience.

Another surprising finding as a result of learning at home in a pandemic was how positively this impacted the student's educational experience. The women shared how they had invaluable moments with their families as they all completed school, work, and class assignments together in the living room or kitchen. Isabela explained that the convenience was a contributing factor to why she was able to complete her requirements for transfer. Additionally, she described "that time that I got with my kids was priceless" almost feeling guilty for expressing such happiness with the situation knowing that Covid-19 also caused many deaths. The pandemic created an opportunity for the participants' families to see them at home on a regular basis rather than being away for class. This also made it clear that there are great benefits to asynchronous learning opportunities for student parents. Marilyn would not have been able to succeed in some of her first courses at the university without this option since she was also

caring for a newborn baby. Some participants had not realized the benefit of online learning until being compelled to due to the pandemic. Although a fully online learning environment was not ideal for all participants in this study as many also preferred the "communication with people… that human connection" as Georgina described it. The overall response was a combination of in-person and online coursework and experiences at the institutions would benefit the student parent demographic.

Finding 5: Embracing Cultural Heritage

The final theme identified in this study was about the embrace of participant's cultural heritage. This finding helped to answer the third research question about the influence of attending a Hispanic Service Institution (HSI) on their transfer experience. As discussed in the literature review, Latino/a students are more likely begin their educational journey at a community college which is frequently designated as an HSI college or university (Núñez et al., 2011; Pérez Huber et al., 2015; Rivas et al., 2010; Santiago, 2006) however, the results of this study suggest students are unaware of the federal designation. Despite being unaware of designation, it did not prevent the participants from experiencing how institutions demonstrate servingness (Garcia, and Okhidoi, 2015). Participants shared about their observations of campus life, online or in-person, which reflected ethnic identity, cultural celebrations, and an emphasis on the various Latin American countries of their heritage.

Participants also described how they challenged traditional gender roles that are often found in the Latinx community. Nina's explanation of the "traditional Hispanic family" included the various problems her family dealt with which became more important than educational goals. She described her machismo father as someone who did not encourage or support pursuing education. Similarly, Rose's ex-husband did not support her pursuing higher education after becoming a mother. Marriages and relationships occasionally became strained in the participants educational pathway and in some instances caused the relationship to end. The notion that a woman in the Latinx community could not have a successful career, be a good mother and pursue higher education was an idea that each of the participants rejected and were proud to help dismantle.

The Latina student mothers also shared stories of immigrant experiences. Many participants shared their personal story of coming to the United States as a young person or describing the challenges their parents and grandparents encountered as they crossed the Mexico-US border coming from the Central America region or Mexico. Participants explained there were language barriers or being, difficulties due to an undocumented status and limited understanding of the US education system. Being asked about their background created an opportunity for the women to reflect on what it means to come from an immigrant family and connect it to their educational journeys of transfer.

Learning about historical discrimination of the Latinx community in the US, especially in California, was significant to this finding of participants embracing

149

their identities as educated Latinas. Participants described being more appreciative of their families' experiences after classroom encounters with this cultural history. There was excellent value in the institutions offering impactful Ethnic Studies and Chicano/a Studies courses at the community college and university settings, which was another example of the institution's identity of servingness to the Latino/a community (Garcia, and Okhidoi, 2015). This again was not due to the participants awareness of an HSI designation but institutional agents who constructed a meaningful identity of serving (Garcia, 2016).

Recommendations for Higher Education Leaders

This section provides recommendations for leaders in the field of higher education which includes administrators with formal leadership roles, faculty, staff, and practitioners who interact with student parents and/or the post-traditional student population. There are specific recommendations for HSIs, and how to advance the critical concept of transfer-receptive culture at receiving institutions to continue to use the transfer function as a social justice tool. Lastly, I share recommendations for policy around data collection of the post-traditional student demographic.

Hispanic Serving Institutions

Considering the work of Garcia and Okhidoi (2015) and Garcia (2016; 2019) with their work on HSIs, the findings suggest that although students are not aware of the federal designation, they are engaging with institutions that have a Latina/o-serving identity. The multiple dimensions identified by Garcia (2019)

on what it means to have a servingness identity is a great metric for intuitions to use in understanding their identity as HSIs. This creates a question to grapple with for leaders at HSIs, is it important for students attending the institution to be aware of the federal designation and any programs funded with the grant money received? Or is it more important for faculty, administrators, and staff to be aware that they are engaging in practices that support an institutions servingness identity with their teachings and campus life activities? I argue, based on the results of this study, emphasis should be placed on challenging institutional agents, regardless of their direct or indirect interactions with students in this population or not. If there is an emphasis at the institution to create awareness for faculty, staff, and administrators on how to engage with these dimension and reframing practices within the institution there are more opportunities for the institution to serve Latina/o students and transition from "serving to justice and liberation" (Garcia, 2019, p. 136).

For example, the process for applying for funding has become more competitive and rigorous with the increasing number of institutions that now qualify as an HSI and the newly created emerging category (eHSI) for institutions that will soon become an HSI (*Excelencia*, 2022; Fosnacht and Nailos, 2016). If more institutional agents work toward reframing their HSI identity of servingness, for instance through grant writing, more resources could be allocated to this specific population of Latina/o student parents and other Latina/o students with post-traditional characteristics.

Next Steps for Advancing Transfer-Receptive Culture

      Jain, Herrera, Bernal and Solorzano (2011) present the challenge with

their critical concept of transfer-receptive culture to view the transfer function as

being the responsibility of both the sending community college and the receiving

university to provide a two-way method of institutional commitment to the transfer

student. To continue to advance the mission of this concept, I ask how can

institutions help reframe who a college student is and transform the culture of

higher education's idea that a student must complete their degree in a specific

timeframe? This reinforces that a pause in enrollment as a negative set-back

placing a student in a position of failure. We know from the literature that 39% of

women in community colleges are raising dependent children (Gault and

Reichlin, 2014) and that student parents are more likely to leave their institution

without a degree (PNPI, 2018) indicating they may be on a long-term pause.

These notions of degree timelines need to be dismantled because a culture of

perceived failure if completion is not in two or four years becomes inherently

problematic, especially for post-traditional students. I summarize this unfortunate

culture in higher education with a quote from Jyn who described herself, "I am a

non, once one professor one of my classes called a non-traditional age student,

and she did that with the whole class of traditional age students and I was like

the only one so [laughs and sarcastically says] thanks for spotlighting me, I

appreciate that" which emphasized her differences compared to other students

in the classroom. It was clear from Jyn's facial expression and later conversation

that this comment from the professor, which may have been well meaning, created a feeling of being unwelcomed for Jyn, which goes against the ideals of transfer-receptive culture.

Transfer as a Social Justice Tool

I recommend higher education practitioners to engage with transfer-receptive culture tenants and use it as intended by Jain et al., (2011) as a tool for social justice within the transfer student community. This speaks specifically to students of color and how low-income students to use the transfer function to achieve upward mobility for themselves and their families through degree attainment (Jain et al., 2011). Some examples of what this might look like is institutional agents such as the enrollment management team collaborating across divisions and working with the student engagement teams to provide academic resources and services evaluating the needs of student parents. This involved the creation of a taskforce provide and evaluate efforts on an annual what the needs are of transfer students who are parents Taskforce members should be representative and include all groups for shared governance efforts such as administrators, faculty, staff, and students with paid roles assigned to their duties and responsibilities. For the evaluation of post-traditional student needs, I refer specifically to their needs of pausing enrollment and the Enrollment Cycle. Institutional agents could assess campus practices of how students are able to easily notify of a pause in which the institution could schedule regular check-ins on the students' personal life status. This could help in overall

enrollment planning at the institution and allow the student to feel like they matter

to the staff at the institution even if they are not a currently enrolled student. This

working group or taskforce could conduct an annual assessment of their efforts

and work toward improvement.

<u>Policy</u>

The final recommendation for higher education leaders is to improve data

collection on post-traditional students, especially those who are parents. As

revealed by Gault, Holtzman and Reichlin Cruse (2020), the lack of data

collected on student parents prevents institutions from begin held accountable for

supporting this student population. Related to the previous recommendations to

promote a transfer-receptive culture through a post-traditional student taskforce

or working group, in these policy recommendations I ask institutional leaders to

consider how easy and accessible is data on students who have paused

enrollment is? Additional questions to consider:

- Do institutional policies around a leave of absence consider situations

  such as work promotions, birth of children or loss and death?

- If a student is on an approved leave but does not return at the expected

  return date, does the institution follow up with the student?

- If so, how long are these efforts kept up?

- What type of outreach is involved with follow up to students who have

  paused enrollment? Emails, mailed letters, phone calls?

- Does the institution make it clear they are ready to receive the student whenever the student is ready?

- Taskforce, department, or office with permanent paid staff positions focused on supporting students who pause enrollment.

Additionally, better data collection could increase the support practitioners are able to provide including resources that assist student parents such as connecting them with alumni groups, counseling services designed for student parents and access to basic needs services.

Recommendations from Latina Student Mothers

There is immense value in receiving peer support or learning from a fellow student about their experience. The literature has demonstrated that Latina/o students often made decisions about their educational experience based on advice and feedback from other students who are often friends or relatives (Bensimon and Dowd, 2009; Jabbar et al., 2019; Pérez and Ceja, 2010; Sapp et al., 2016). For the post-traditional student population, reliance on information from other students in similar situations is key to decision on enrolling or re-enrolling as demonstrated by participants in this study. Lorena shared the thought process behind returning to school as she explained, "having an internal battle went to start [school], when is the right time and to be honest it's never the right time because you always tell yourself like it's not the right time to start it's never going to be because your main priority is always as a parent as a mom" which exemplified the challenge student parents experience as they determine

how to make pursuing education a priority in their life. To understand this better, each participant was asked a concluding question about advice they would share with a woman with similar experience to their own considering the transfer pathway for their educational journey. To some of the women I asked this question and tailored it to their situation, for example I asked Gigi, "what advice would you give to a mother of four like yourself who had various pauses in enrollment but considering perusing a bachelor's degree through transfer as you did?" Each of their messages were positive affirmations and words of encouragement, here is what they shared:

Eugenia: Never discount your experiences. You don't know when that might be something you reflect on that helps you make a decision later on.

Georgina: I think it's definitely important as a woman, to encourage other women.

Gigi: Commit. Even going one class at a time is better than nothing. Because once I started, I fell in love with learning.

Isabela: Stop thinking about it and just go for it.

Jyn: Remember our older generations and remember where we came from. [Our education] is an opportunity where we can thank them and honor them and respect the work that they did.

Kat: I would say to just keep working on it and not to give up and it's hard but it's worth it.

Lorena:	[Your kids] are looking up to you whether you see it or not, they will follow your footsteps whether you realize it now or later. They will be your inspiration in your motivation. But do not give up just keep pushing through.
Marilyn:	My advice to her would be not to give up and to keep going.
Nina:	Take full advantage of every opportunity.
Rosie:	Just do it and do not think too much about it regardless of how long you've been out of the classroom.
Zoila:	Don't listen to those people that discourage you. Do not listen to those people, prove them wrong. You know, make yourself proud. Forget about what anybody says and just do it for yourself.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are many opportunities for future research on this topic of understanding Latina student parents. While this study aimed to understand the transfer experience from the student perspective, it should also be explored from the perspective of the higher education institutional agents including faculty, staff, and administrators. Like the research conducted by Garcia and Okhidoi (2015), a case study of a single or multiple HSIs could be conducted exploring the institutional servingness from the perspective of employees of the university. This case study could aim to understand how they serve Latino/a students' who are transfer students and student parents. I recommend this type of study include interviews with enrollment management staff, among other campus staff, to

understand practices on data collection of post-traditional students who are parents. Another component of this study could include observations at the institution of various centers and events that support the student transfer process, an orientation for student parents, if one existed. Additionally, this potential study should collect artifacts such as email communication to students from the receiving institution prior to the transfer process as well as flyers for events or workshops aimed to support the transfer student population of Latino/a student parents.

A second recommendation for future research would be a longitudinal study that could begin with Latina student mothers early in their educational pathway, in their first enrollment at the community college, and follow them through the transfer process checking in on them with a qualitative data interview on an annual basis. Although this may be challenging for any participants such as those in my study who had many pauses in enrollment. However, understanding the participants while they may have had an experience of pause due to whatever reason can help better capture how they make meaning of their experience to fully study the phenomenon. This study captured the stories of these women while they were so near to the finish line of a long journey so, it would be beneficial to capture those early experiences.

Lastly, a recommendation for additional research is for a quantitative in nature study that aims to map out a larger national wide picture of post-traditional students. As discussed in the literature review and in the recommendations for

158

higher education leaders' section of this chapter, data on the student parent

population is often limited or incomplete (Eckerson et al., 2016; Gault et al.,

2020; Schneider and Deane, 2014). Therefore, I recommend a large scale muti-

institutional quantitative study to assess the types of data institutions collect on

their student parents. The study could be furthered by utilizing the existing data

sets from the various sources of national datasets such as the Integrated

Postsecondary Educational Data System (IPEDS), Nationally Representative

NCES data including the National Postsecondary Students Aid Study (NPSAS),

the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BSP) and the

Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study (BandB), the Community College

Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and data from questions related to

dependents on the Free Federal Application for Student Aid (FAFSA). These

data sets, when combined, could help provide a better understanding of the

characteristics of who post-traditional students are in higher education

institutions.

<p style="text-align:center">Limitations of Study</p>

Limitations of this study included constraints due to the Covid-19 global

pandemic. Although it is uncertain how much more of an enhanced data

collection experience there could have been outside of the restrictions to a virtual

environment, interviews were conducted to the best of my ability. Additionally, the

type of participant in this study was a limitation as the research relied on the

participants to take the time, which many in this post-traditional student

<p style="text-align:center">159</p>

population clearly stated there was little of time they could give. I would describe the women who agreed to participate in this study as eager to take advantage of opportunities. Nina explained it best sharing "That's how I've been my whole life, like if I'm given the opportunity, I'm going to take it. That's why I clicked on you, about accepting doing an interview" viewing the participation in research as an opportunity that would enhance her college experience. There was a total of seventeen women who scheduled an interview but only eleven who attended and participated in the interview process. It is unclear if this could solely be attributed to the lack of time the student mothers had or if it were due to the Covid-19 pandemic or perhaps a combination of both however, it remained a limitation to this study.

Conclusion

To conclude this study, I would like to emphasize the most significant finding of motherhood. Participants in this study had interwoven identities of both student and mother which represents this student population to the fullest. To increase the degree attainment for Latina students who are mothers, institutions of higher education must look to transfer-receptive culture as a tool for promoting equity and social justice. Barriers to enrollment will always present themselves but better understanding the natural cycle of enrollments for Latina student parents, educators can shift from a deficit lens of failure for this student population toward a more broad and diverse understanding of who the college student is today. Additionally, I want to honor the strength and resiliency that the

Latina student mother participants demonstrated which will allow them to persist and earn their bachelor's degree and support the needed growth in degree attainment for this student population. As a Latina and a student mother while I pursued my undergraduate degree, I can attest to the findings that there is such value in interactions the validating institutional agents who have care and consideration for the student experience which directly contributes to the academic success of completion.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

TRANSFER EXPERIENCES OF LATINA STUDENT MOTHERS: AN INTERPRETATIVE
PHENOMONOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Participants will be instructed to complete a Qualtrics survey to verify they meet the five eligibility criteria, which are:

1. Transfer and enrollment status as a current student,
2. Female,
3. Latina,
4. Have one or more children, and
5. Are age twenty-five or older.

Once the survey is completed and all eligibility criteria are marked as yes, then the researcher will contact participants to schedule an individual interview that will be semi-structured and in-depth. The interview will be scheduled to last approximately 60 minutes and will occur at a time convenient to the participant. Interviews will take place online through the web conferencing platform, Zoom, which all students have access to through their free university account.

The Qualtrics survey will also notify participants of the option to continue participation in the research data collection process after the individual interview through a focus group. The focus group will consist of any participants in the individual interview process that would like to continue participation. Participants in the focus group could number from three to six.

Participants will be contacted by the researcher through email and a phone call to confirm the individual interview appointment date and time. In the phone call, the researcher will invite participants to consider bringing a photo to the interview that may help invoke memories and help recall their transfer experience and their identity as a Latina student mother. This photo will not be collected by the researcher. Additionally, in the phone call the researcher will remind the participant of the option to participate in the focus group.

INDIVIDIAL INTERVIEW

Date:

Participant Name:

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. I would like to share with you briefly about my identity and why I am interested in researching the transfer experiences of Latina student mothers, so you are aware of how I am approaching this work. I also identify as a Latina. I identify as Mexican American and as a Chicana. I became a mother while I was pursuing my undergraduate degree and have experienced challenges due to the complex identity of being a student parent. There are often demands that compete with each other between schoolwork, family and jobs. I did not begin my academic journey at the community college, but I know many student parents enroll in the community college as part of their educational pathway. I am greatly interested in understanding that transfer experience and view your experience as a transfer student, and a parent, as being successful in the transfer pipeline.
Your participation in this research study will contribute to the research on the population of Latina student mothers who have experienced the transfer process which can provide data to universities to consider how they might better serve student parents at their institutions.
Now that you know a bit about me and why I am conducting this study, I have a few more items I would like to confirm with you. If at any time you feel uncomfortable during the interview process, please let me know. We can either take a break from the interview or terminate the interview if necessary. I will be taking notes of your responses and ask follow up questions for clarification. As mentioned in the informed consent form, I will be using Zoom to digitally record the interview. If you are uncomfortable being recorded, please let me know. I can stop the recording at any point during the interview process and, with your permission, take handwritten notes. Any quotes from this interview may be used in the dissertation publication. Through the use of a pseudonym, your identity will always remain anonymous and confidential. Do you have any questions about the consent items I have reviewed? Having reviewed these consent items, do you still agree to be a part of the study? If so, may I begin recording?

[Start recording]

I would like to begin by getting to know the story of who you are, your educational trajectory, your family, and your community. I will start with this question:

1. Tell me about yourself, who you are, and your educational pathway.
2. Would you like to discuss the photo/image that you have selected to help recall your transfer experience?
3. Please describe a timeline of the critical educational milestones in your life and describe them.

4. Are you aware of the designation of your community college as a Hispanic Serving Institution?
5. Please describe what the transfer process was like for you beginning with all the decisions about when and where to transfer to up until you were accepted as a transfer student.
6. How is your experience in (pseudonym for the four-year university) compared to the community college?
7. Please speak about your experiences as a student pre-COVID vs. the current virtual instruction environment due to the global pandemic.
8. Are you aware of the designation of your four-year university as a Hispanic Serving Institution?
9. If you could have anything different as part of your transfer experiences, what would it be and why?
10. What advice would you give to another Latina student mother, like yourself, who was considering pursuing a bachelor's degree?
11. Is there anything else you would like to add?
12. To ensure your anonymity, I will change your name to a pseudonym. Do you have a preference for which pseudonym you would like me to use?
13. Would you be willing to review the transcripts from this interview for accuracy within in a 2-week timeframe? If I do not receive your feedback or request for any changes within the 2-week timeframe, I will proceed with the information as is.

Interview protocol created by Aurora Vilchis for the purposes of this study.

APPENDIX B

RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Appendix B

Recruitment Email

Hello [Center name] students!

My name is Aurora Vilchis, and I am a doctoral candidate in California State University, San Bernardino's Educational Leadership program. I am inviting students to participate in a research study. My dissertation is titled: *Experiences of Latina Student Mothers in the Transfer Pipeline* and I seek to understand the experiences of students who identify as Latina, are mothers aged 25 or older and pursuing their bachelor's degree.

If you are interested in sharing your story, please complete this Qualtrics inquiry form https://bit.ly/2021_LSM.

Based on your response, I will then schedule a time at your convenience to conduct a recorded Zoom interview that would last approximately 60 minutes.

Participation in this is completely voluntary. If you have any questions about the study, please email me at vilchis@csusb.edu.

I thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Aurora Vilchis, Doctoral Candidate
CSU, San Bernardino
Cohort 10, Educational Leadership
College of Education

This study has been approved by the CSUS Institutional Review Board (IRB Approval#-FY2021-209)

Qualtrics Survey direct link:
https://csusb.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_e5abzlLbl14hhie

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT

The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to understand the experiences of transfer students who identify as Latina and who are mothers. This study is being conducted by *Aurora Vilchis, Ed.D. candidate*, under the supervision of *Enrique G. Murillo, Jr., Ph.D., Professor of Education, California State University, San Bernardino*. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board, California State University, San Bernardino.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of Latina students, who are mothers, and have successfully transferred from a two-year community college designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) to a four-year public higher education institution also designated as an HSI. This study seeks to share the voices of the students in this particular population and share how they make meaning of their experience in the educational pipeline. Transfer students and students who are parents are growing populations across the United States. This project will highlight implications for practice and policy and make recommendations for higher education professionals and administrators.

DESCRIPTION: You will be invited to participate in one individual interview that will be approximately 60 minutes. This interview will take place online using your university Zoom web conferencing account. The time and location of the interview will be scheduled based on your convenience. Additionally, you will be invited to a focus group after the individual interview has concluded if you wish to continue the discussion with other participants who also identify as Latina and are mothers who have experienced the transfer process. The date and time will be based on all participants' availability. It is anticipated that four to six women would participate in the focus group, which will also occur online utilizing Zoom. With your permission, all interviews will be audio recorded.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may decide not to answer all or specific questions in the interview, even if you have confirmed this consent. You may freely withdraw from participation at any time. Your decision not to participate will have no consequences whatsoever.

CONFIDENTIAL: To maintain confidentiality, I will use pseudonyms for the name of the college and all participants. Your name will not be used, and utmost care will be taken to protect your confidentiality. The records of this study will be kept strictly confidential.

Research records, including notes, transcripts, and audio recordings will be saved digitally on the password protected OneDrive managed by the University's IT.

DURATION: Individual interviews will last approximately 60 minutes. However, you can end the interview early, if needed and do not have to answer every question. If you decide to continue participation into the focus group with other participants, that group interview may also be approximately 60 minutes.

RISKS: There are no anticipated risks or discomforts for participating in this study as you and CSUSB will not be identifiable by name. However, you may experience some discomfort at completing the interview or you might be inconvenienced from taking time out of your schedule to participate in the interview.

BENEFITS: You may not directly benefit from participating in this study. However, you will be contributing to the research on the population of Latina student mothers who have experienced the transfer process.

AUDIO: As part of this research project, and to ensure accurate data collection for later review, I will be making a digital recording of you during your interview. Continuing in this online survey will indicate you are willing to consent. In any use of this digital recording, your name would not be identified. If you do not want to be recorded, I will only take handwritten notes.
Moving forward in this Qualtrics survey will indicate you understand this research will be Audio Recorded.

CONTACT: If you have any questions about this study and/or research subjects' rights, please contact:
Aurora Vilchis, Ed.D. Candidate, at (909) 537-4457 or vilchis@csusb.edu or Dr. Enrique Murillo, Jr., Professor, EMurillo@csusb.edu. You may also contact California State University, San Bernardino's Institutional Review Board Compliance Officer, Michael Gillespie at (909) 537-7588 or mgillesp@csusb.edu.

RESULTS: The results of the study may be obtained through the CSUSB ScholarWorks library website: https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/

CONFIRMATION STATEMENT:
I have ready and understand the procedure described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I am over the age of 18 and agree to participate in your study. By typing my full name below, I consent to participate in this study.

SIGNATURE:

Signature: _____   Date: _____

APPENDIX D

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

California State University, San Bernardino logo

April 30, 2021

CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Expedited Review
IRB-FY2021-209
Status: Approved

Prof. Enrique Murillo Jr and Ms. Aurora Vilchis
Undergraduate Studies, COE - TeacherEducandFoundtn TEF
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Prof. Murillo and Ms. Vilchis:

Your application to use human subjects, titled "Experiences of Latina Student Mothers in the Transfer Pipeline" has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of CSU, San Bernardino. The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk and benefits of the study except to ensure the protection of human participants. Important Note: This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional campus approvals which may be required including access to CSUSB campus facilities and affiliate campuses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Visit the Office of Academic Research website for more information at https://www.csusb.edu/academic-research.

The study is approved as of April 30, 2021. The study will require an annual administrative check-in (annual report) on the current status of the study on April 30, 2022. Please use the renewal form to complete the annual report.

If your study is closed to enrollment, the data has been de-identified, and you're only analyzing the data - you may close the study by submitting the Closure Application Form through the Cayuse IRB system. Please note the Cayuse IRB system will notify you when your protocol is due for renewal. Ensure you file your protocol renewal and continuing review form through the Cayuse IRB system to keep your protocol current and active unless you have completed your study. Please note a lapse in your approval may result in your not being able to use the data collected during the lapse in your approval.

You are required to notify the IRB of the following as mandated by the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) federal regulations 45 CFR 46 and CSUSB IRB policy.

The forms (modification, renewal, unanticipated/adverse event, study closure) are located in the Cayuse IRB System with instructions provided on the IRB Applications, Forms, and Submission Webpage. Failure to notify the IRB of the following requirements may result in disciplinary action.

- **Important Notice: For all in-person research following IRB approval all research activities must be approved through the Office of Academic Research by filling out the Project Restart and Continuity Plan.**
    - **Ensure your CITI Human Subjects Training is kept up-to-date and current throughout the study.**
    - **Submit a protocol modification (change) if any changes (no matter how minor) are proposed in your study for review and approval by the IRB before being implemented in your study.**
    - **Notify the IRB within 5 days of any unanticipated or adverse events are experienced by subjects during your research.**
    - **Submit a study closure through the Cayuse IRB submission system once your study has ended.**

The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risks and benefits to the human participants in your IRB application. If you have any questions about the IRBs decision please contact Michael Gillespie, the IRB Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application approval number IRB-FY2021-209 in all correspondence. Any complaints you receive regarding your research from participants or others should be directed to Mr. Gillespie.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Nicole Dabbs

Nicole Dabbs, Ph.D., IRB Chair
CSUSB Institutional Review Board

ND/MG

REFERENCES

Acevedo-Gil, N., Santos, R., and Solórzano, D. (2014). Examining a rupture in
the Latino/a college pipeline: Developmental education in California
Community College system. *Perspectivas: Issues in Higher Education
Practice and Policy*, 3, 1-20.

Agee, J. (2009). Developing qualitative research questions: A reflective process.
International journal of qualitative studies in education, 22(4), 431-447.
https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390902736512

Bensimon, E. M. and Bishop, R. (2012). Introduction: Why "Critical"? The Need
for New Ways of Knowing. *The Review of Higher Education* 36(1), 1-7.
Johns Hopkins University Press. DOI:
https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2012.0046

Bensimon, E. M., and Dowd, A. (2009). Dimensions of the Transfer Choice Gap:
Experiences of Latina and Latino Students Who Navigated Transfer
Pathways. *Harvard Educational Review*, *79*(4), 632–659.
https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.79.4.05w66u23662k1444

Bhattacharya, K. (2017). *Fundamentals of qualitative research: A practical guide.*
Taylor and Francis.

California. Liaison Committee of the Regents of the University of California the
State Board of Education. (1960). *A master plan for higher education in
California, 1960-1975.* Sacramento, Calif.: Assembly of the State of
California.

Callan, P. M. (2009). California Higher Education, the Master Plan, and the

    Erosion of College Opportunity. National Center Report# 09-1. *National*

    Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.

Carney-Crompton, S., and Tan, J. (2002). Support systems, psychological

    functioning, and academic performance of nontraditional female students.

    Adult Education Quarterly, 52(2), 140-54.

Castro Samayoa, A., Gasman, M., Gonzalez, N., and Milian, P. (2018).

    Academic mestizaje: Embracing Hispanicity in the humanities at Hispanic

    Serving Institutions. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 1–15.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2018.1472601

Cohen, B., Brawer, F. B., and Kisker, C. B. (2013). The American Community

    College, 6th Edition. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Chao, R., and Good, G. (2004). Nontraditional students' perspectives on college

    education: A qualitative study. *Journal of College Counseling*, 7(1), 5-12.

Coker, A. D. (2003). African American female adult learners: Motivations,

    challenges, and coping strategies. *Journal of Black Studies*, 33(5), 654-

    674. doi: 10.1177/00219347030330050

Contreras, F. E., Malcom, L. E., and Bensimon, E. M. (2008). Hispanic-serving

    institutions: Closeted identity and the production of equitable outcomes for

    Latino/a students. In M. Gasman, B. Baez, and C. S. V. Turner (Eds.),

    Understanding minority-serving institutions (pp. 71-90). Albany, NY: SUNY

    Press.

Cooper, M. (2018). Single Mothers and the Rise of Non-Traditional College

    Students [LinkedIn page] Retrieved June 10, 2019. from

    https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/single-mothers-rise-non-traditional-college-

    students-marianne-cooper/

Corey, M. S., Corey, G., and Corey, C. (2010). *Groups: Process and practice*. 8th

    Edition, Cengage Learning.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed*

    methods approaches (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J. and Poth, C. (2017). *Qualitative inquiry and research design:*

    Choosing among five approaches (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Davis, K. (2008). Intersectionality as buzzword: A sociology of science

    perspective on what makes a feminist theory successful. *Feminist Theory*,

    9(1), 67–85. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700108086364

de Los Santos, A. G. and Cuamea, K. M. (2010). Challenges Facing Hispanic-

    Serving Institutions in the First Decade of the 21st Century. *Journal of*

    Latinos and Education, *9*(2), 90–107.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431003617798

Duquaine-Watson, J. M. (2017). *Mothering by Degrees: Single Mothers and the*

    Pursuit of Postsecondary *Education*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University

    Press. Retrieved from https://muse.jhu.edu/book/51941

Education Trust-West. (2017). *The majority report: Supporting the educational success of Latino students in California*. Oakland, CA. https://west.edtrust.org/resource/the-majority-report/

Eggleston, L. E., and Laanan, F. S. (2001). Making the transition to the senior institution. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, *2001*(114), 87. https://doi-org.libproxy.lib.csusb.edu/10.1002/cc.23

Eckerson, E., Talbourdet, L., Reichlin, L., Sykes, M., Noll, E. and Gault, B. (2016). *Child Care for Parents in College: A State-by-State Assessment*. Institute for Women's Policy Research.

Emrey-Arras, M. (2019). Higher Education: More Information Could Help Student Parents Access Additional Federal Student Aid. Report to Congressional Requesters. GAO-19-522. In US Government Accountability Office. US Government Accountability Office. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED600135

Espinoza, R. (2010). The good daughter dilemma: Latinas managing family and school demands. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 9(4), 317–330. https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192710380919

Excelencia in Education (2020) analysis using U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, 2018-19 Institutional Characteristics and Fall Enrollment Surveys. Growth in HSIs - Excerpt from HSIs: 2018-19 At a Glance. https://www.edexcelencia.org/research/fact-sheets/hispanic-serving-institutions-hsis-2018-19-glance-growth-over-years

Excelencia in Education. (2022). Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) Fact Sheet: 2020-21. Washington, D.C.: *Excelencia* in Education. https://www.edexcelencia.org/research/fact-sheets/hsis-fact-sheet-2020-21

Flores, S. and Jiménez Morfin (2008) Another Side of the Percent Plan Story Latino Enrollment in the Hispanic-Serving Institutions Sector in California and Texas. In Turner, C. S. V., Baez, B., and Gasman, M. *Understanding Minority-Serving Institutions* (pp. 141-155). SUNY Press.

Fosnacht, K., and Nailos, J. N. (2016). Impact of the environment: How does attending a Hispanic-Serving Institution influence the engagement of baccalaureate-seeking Latino/a students? *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 15(3), 187–204. https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192715597739

Fry, R., and Lopez, M. H. (2012). Hispanic student enrollments reach new highs in 2011. Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center.

Gándara, P. C., and White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, issuing body. (2015). *Fulfilling America's future: Latinas in the U.S., 2015*. White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics.

Garcia, G. A. (2019). *Becoming Hispanic-Serving Institutions: Opportunities for Colleges and Universities*. Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Garcia, G. A. (2016). Complicating a Latino/a-serving Identity at a Hispanic

Serving Institution. *The Review of Higher Education*, 40(1), 117–143.

https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2016.0040

Garcia, G., and Okhidoi, O. (2015). Culturally Relevant Practices that "Serve"

Students at a Hispanic Serving Institution. *Innovative Higher Education*,

40(4), 345–357. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-015-9318-7

Gault, B., Holtzman, T., and Cruse, L. R. (2020). Understanding the Student

Parent Experience: The Need for Improved Data Collection on Parent

Status in Higher Education. IWPR #C485. Retrieved from

https://iwpr.org/iwpr-issues/student-parent-success-

initiative/understanding-student-parent-experience-need-improved-data-

collection/

Gault, B. and Reichlin, L. (2014). Community College Students Need Fair Job

Scheduling Practices. Fact Sheet, IWPR #C420. Washington, DC:

Institute for Women's Policy Research

Glesne, C. (2016). *Becoming qualitative researchers* (5th ed.). Boston, MA:

Pearson.

Gonzales, L. D. (2015). The Horizons of Possibilities How Faculty in Hispanic-

Serving Institutions Can Reshape the Production and Legitimization of

Knowledge Within Academia. In Nunez, A., Hurtado, S., and Galdeano, E.

C. (Eds.), *Hispanic-serving institutions: Advancing research and

transformative practice* (pp. 121-135). New York, NY: Routledge Press.

Herrera, A. and Jain, D. (2013). Building a Transfer-Receptive Culture at Four-
Year Institutions. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 2013: 51-59.
doi:10.1002/he.20056

Huber, Lindsay Perez, Ofelia Huidor, Maria C. Malagon, Gloria Sanchez, and
Daniel G. Solórzano (2006). *Falling through the Cracks: Critical
Transitions in the Latino/a Educational Pipeline. 2006 Latino/a Education
Summit Report. CSRC Research Report. Number 7*. UCLA Chicano
Studies Research Center.

Huddleston, T., Jr. (2000), Enrollment Management. *New Directions for Higher
Education*, 2000: 65-73. https://doi.org/10.1002/he.11107

Jain, D., Herrera, A., Bernal, S., and Solórzano, D. (2011). Critical Race Theory
and the Transfer Function: Introducing a Transfer Receptive Culture,
Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 35:3, 252-266,
DOI: 10.1080/10668926.2011.526525

Jiménez, and Oliva, N. (2017). Latina Student Mothers' "Trenzas de Identidades"
in the Community College. *Association of Mexican American Educators
Journal*, 11(2), 111–. https://doi.org/10.24974/amae.11.2.352

Laden, B. (2001). Hispanic-Serving Institutions: Myths and Realities. *Peabody
Journal of Education, 76*(1), 73-92. Retrieved from
http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.lib.csusb.edu/stable/1493006

Ledesma, M. C., and Burciaga, R. (2015). Faculty governance at Hispanic-
serving institutions through the lens of critical race theory. In Mendez, J.

P., Bonner, I. F. A., Méndez-Negrete, J., and Palmer, R. T. (Eds.),
*Hispanic-serving institutions in American higher education: Their origin,
and present and future challenges* (pp. 40-57). Stylus Publishing, LLC.

Lin, X. (2016). Barriers and Challenges of Female Adult Students Enrolled in
Higher Education: A Literature Review. *Higher Education Studies*, 6(2),
119-126.

Lewis, N. L., and Haynes, D. (2020). Uncovering the Student-Parent Experience
and Its Impact on College Success. National Student-Parent Survey
Results and Recommendations. Generation Hope, Imaginable Futures
and Chegg.org. Research partners included the Institute for Women's
Policy Research and the Hope Center for College, Community, and
Justice. http://supportgenerationhope.org/student-parents-report

Love, B., Vetere, A., and Davis, P. (2020). Should Interpretative
Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) be Used With Focus Groups?
Navigating the Bumpy Road of "Iterative Loops," Idiographic Journeys,
and "Phenomenological Bridges." *International Journal of Qualitative
Methods*, 19, 1609406920921600.
https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406920921600

Lupus facts and statistics (2016). Lupus Foundation of America. Retrieved from
https://www.lupus.org/resources/lupus-facts-and-
statistics#:~:text=How%20common%20is%20lupus%20and,and%20teena
gers%20develop%20lupus%2C%20too.

Martinez, S., Torres, V., Wallace White, L., Medrano, C. I., Robledo, A. L., and

    Hernandez, E. (2012). The Influence of Family Dynamics on Ethnic

    Identity Among Adult Latinas. *Journal of Adult Development*, 19(4), 190–

    200. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10804-012-9146-2

McDonough, P. M., and Fann, A., (2007). The Study of Inequality. In Gumport,

    P., *Sociology of Higher Education: Contributions and their contexts*.

    Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Navarro-Cruz, G. E., Dávila, B. A., and Kouyoumdjian, C. (2020). From Teen

    Parent to Student Parent: Latina Mothers' Persistence in Higher

    Education. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 1538192720980308.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192720980308

Núñez, A. M., Crisp, G., and Elizondo, D. (2015). Hispanic-Serving Community

    Colleges and their Role in Hispanic Transfer. In Nuñez, A. M., Hurtado, S.,

    and Galdeano, E. C. (Eds.), *Hispanic-serving Institutions: Advancing

    research and transformative practice* (pp. 47-64). New York, NY:

    Routledge Press.

Núñez, A. M., Crisp, G., and Elizondo, D. (2016). Mapping Hispanic-Serving

    Institutions: A typology of institutional diversity. *The Journal of Higher

    Education*, 87(1), 55–83. doi:10.1080/00221546.2016.11777394

Nuñez, A. M., Hurtado, S., and Galdeano, E. C. (Eds.). (2015). *Hispanic-serving

    Institutions: Advancing research and transformative practice.* New York,

    NY: Routledge Press.

Núñez, A.-M., Murakami-Ramalho, E., and Cuero, K. K. (2010). Pedagogy for

    equity: Teaching in a Hispanic Serving Institution. *Innovative Higher*

    Education, 35, 177–190. doi:10.1007/s10755-010-9139-7

Peshkin, A. (1988). In Search of Subjectivity. One's Own. *Educational*

    Researcher, volume 17, no. 7 (October., 1988), 17 – 21.

Pérez, P. A., and Ceja, M. (2010). Building a Latino/a Student Transfer Culture:

    Best Practices and Outcomes in Transfer to Universities. *Journal of*

    Hispanic Higher Education, 9(1), 6–21.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192709350073

Pérez Huber, L. P., Huidor, O., Malagon, M. C., Sanchez, G., and Solórzano, D.

    G. (2006). *Falling through the Cracks: Critical Transitions in the Latino/a*

    Educational Pipeline. 2006 Latino/a Education Summit Report. CSRC

    Research Report. Number 7.

Pérez Huber, L., Malagón, M. C., Ramirez, B. R., Gónzalez, L. C., Jimenez, A.,

    Vélez, V. N. (2015). *Still Falling Through the Cracks - Revisiting the*

    Latino/a Education Pipeline. University of California Los Angeles, UCLA

    Chicano Studies Research Center. Los Angeles: UCLA.

Pew Research Center's Hispanic Trends Project. (2014). Hispanic Student

    Enrollments Reach New Highs in 2011: Now Largest Minority Group on

    Four-Year College Campuses;2014 SRI R8587-56. In *Hispanic Student*

    Enrollments Reach New Highs in 2011: Now Largest Minority Group on

    Four-Year College Campuses;2014 SRI R8587-56.

Postsecondary National Policy Institute (PNPI). (2018, September 26).

    Factsheet. *Post-Traditional Students in Higher Education*.

    https://pnpi.org/post-traditional-students/

Plano Clark, V. and Creswell, J. (2010). *Understanding Research a Consumer's*

    Guide. Upper Saddle River, NJ. Pearson Education, Inc., publishing as

    Merrill.

Ravitch, S. M., and Riggan, M. (2012). Reason and rigor: How conceptual

    frameworks guide research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Rendón, L. I. (1994). Validating culturally diverse students: Toward a new model

    of learning and student development. *Innovative Higher Education*, *19*(1),

    33–51. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01191156

Rendón Linares, L. I., and Muñoz, S. M. (2011). Revisiting validation theory:

    Theoretical foundations, applications, and extensions. *Enrollment*

    Management Journal, 2(1), 12-33.

Rhoads, Robert A; Wagoner, Richard L; Ryan, Edward (2009). The American

    Community College and the Neoliberal State: A Critical Analysis of the Case of

    California. *Education and Society. James Nicholas Publishers*. (Volume 27,

    Number 1, 2009, pp. 5-33) https://doi.org/10.7459/es/27.1.02

Rivas, M. A., Perez, J., Alvarez, C. R., and Solórzano, D. G. (2007). *An*

    Examination of Latino/a Transfer Students in California's Postsecondary

    Institutions. Latino Policy and Issues Brief. Number 16.

Saldaña, J. (2015). Thinking qualitatively: Methods of mind. Los Angeles, CA:

    Sage.

Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.).

    Thousand Oaks, CA.

Saldaña, J. (2016). Coding and Analyzing Qualitative Data Workbook.

Santamaria Graff, C. S., McCain, T., and Gomez-Vilchis, V. (2013). Latina

    Resilience in Higher Education: Contributing Factors Including Seasonal

    Farmworker Experiences. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 12(4),

    334–344. https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192713494212

Santiago, D. A. (2006). *Inventing Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs): The*

    Basics. Excelencia in Education. Retrieved from

    https://eric.ed.gov/?q=title%3aInventing+Hispanic-

    Serving+Institutions+(HSIs)%3a+The+Basicsandid=ED506052

Santiago, D. A. (2008). *Choosing Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs): A Closer*

    Look at Latino Students' College Choices. Excelencia in Education.

    Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?q=title%3aChoosing+Hispanic-

    Serving+Institutions+(HSIs)%3a+A+Closer+Look+at+Latino+Students%27

    +College+Choicesandid=ED506053

Sapp, V. T., Kiyama, J. M., and Dache-Gerbino, A. (2016). Against All Odds:

    Latinas Activate Agency to Secure Access to College. *NASPA Journal*

    About Women in Higher Education, 9(1), 39–55.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/19407882.2015.1111243

Schneider, M. and Deane, K. (Eds.). (2015). T*he University Next Door: What Is a Comprehensive University, Who Does It Educate, and Can It Survive?* New York, NY: Teachers College Press, Columbia University.

Shapiro, D., Dundar, A., Wakhungu, P. K., Yuan, X., Nathan, A., and Hwang, Y. (2017). Completing College: A State-Level View of Student Attainment Rates (Signature Report No. 12a). Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?q=title%3aCompleting+College%3a+A+State-Level+View+of+Student+Attainment+Rates+(Signature+Report+No.+12a)andid=ED580303

Sipe, L. and Constable, S. (1996). A chart of four paradigms: Metaphors for the modes of inquiry. Taboo: *The Journal of Culture and Education*, 1, 153-163.

Smith, J., Flowers, P., and Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*. SAGE Publications Inc.

Soares, L. (2013). *Post-traditional learners and the transformation of postsecondary education: A manifesto for college leaders* (pp. 1-18). Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

Solórzano, D. G., and Bernal, D. D. (2001). Examining Transformational Resistance Through a Critical Race and Latcrit Theory Framework: Chicana and Chicano Students in an Urban Context. *Urban Education*, 36(3), 308–342. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085901363002

Stanley, C. A., and Slattery, P. (2003). Who Reveals what to whom? Critical

Reflections on Conducting Qualitative Inquiry as an Interdisciplinary,

Biracial, Male/Female Research Team. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 9(5), 705–728.

https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800403253004

Stevens, E. P. (1973). Machismo and marianismo. *Society*, 10(6), 57–63.

https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02695282

Title V Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program - Definition of an HSI --

Printable. (n.d.). Retrieved from

https://www2.ed.gov/print/programs/idueshsi/definition.html

Torres, V. and Hernandez, E. (2007). The Influence of Ethnic Identity on Self-

Authorship: A Longitudinal Study of Latino/a College Students. *Journal of*

College Student Development 48(5), 558-573. Johns Hopkins University

Press. Retrieved from Project MUSE database. DOI:

https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2007.0057

Tracy, S. J. (2010). Qualitative Quality: Eight "Big-Tent" Criteria for Excellent

Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 16(10), 837–851.

https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800410383121

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES),

National Postsecondary Student Aid Study: 1986-87 (NPSAS:87), 1989-

90 (NPSAS:90), 1992-93 (NPSAS:93), Data Analysis Systems.

187

U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Nontraditional Undergraduates / Definitions and Data. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/pubs/web/97578e.asp

U.S. Congress. Government Accountability Office. (2019). Higher Education: More Information Could Help Student Parents Access Additional Federal Student Aid. Congressional Publications.

van Manen, M. (2016). *Phenomenology of practice: Meaning-giving methods in phenomenological research and writing.* Routledge.

Vega, W. A. (1990). Hispanic Families in the 1980s: A Decade of Research. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 52(4), 1015–1024. https://doi.org/10.2307/353316