

**STARTING WITH THE END IN MIND: A CASE STUDY OF UNDER-
REPRESENTED, TEACHER EDUCATION, COMMUNITY COLLEGE
TRANSFERS IN A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTION**

A Dissertation

by

DAVID ARTHUR BYRD

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2011

Major Subject: Education Administration

Starting with the End in Mind: A Case Study of Under-Represented, Teacher Education,
Community College Transfers in a Predominantly White Institution

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ABSTRACT

Starting with the End in Mind: A Case Study of Under-Represented, Teacher Education,
Community College Transfers in a Predominantly White Institution.

(August 2011)

David A. Byrd, B.A.; M.S., Texas A&M University

Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Fred A. Bonner

This dissertation examined the experiences of African American and Hispanic community college transfers studying in a predominantly White institution (PWI) teacher education program. Extant literature has demonstrated that there is an increasing shortage of public school teachers of color. To address this pervasive crisis, universities must recruit larger numbers of under-represented students from America's community colleges to fill the gap. Additionally, under-represented students in predominantly White institution (PWI) teacher education programs must be retained and graduated in higher numbers to impact teacher production. To understand the needs and experiences of these students, three African American and four Hispanic students successfully studying in the College of Education and Human Development at Texas A&M University were interviewed to examine their experiences as they transitioned into and through the pre-service teacher education program.

This study utilized a case study analysis and data collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis were analyzed utilizing constant comparative techniques. Key themes that emerged through data analysis included (1) Student

Perceptions of the Transfer Process, (2) The Role of Intimate Support Structures, (3) The Role of Institutional Support Structures, (4) Situational Factors Faced by Under-represented Transfers, and (5) Strategies Employed by Under-represented Transfers in a Predominantly White, Teacher Education Program.

Findings from this study suggest that Texas A&M University should improve the marketing of academic support resources and provide narrowly tailored services to meet the needs of under-represented transfer students. Additionally, Schlossberg's Transition Theory is amended to better represent the assets and liabilities utilized by these populations in this particular PWI.

DEDICATION

To Kyle, Katie, and Kenzie

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I cannot imagine beginning any acknowledgement without first thanking my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13). I would next like to thank my committee for their guidance and patience. To Dr. Kelli Peck Parrott, thank you for the theoretical framework and your thoughts on student development theory. To Dr. Chance Lewis, mahalo, my friend – you have been an inspiration and have motivated me to continue publishing and presenting. To Dr. James Kracht, thank you for making me want to become a better administrator, a better advocate for students, and a better person. Your mentorship and advice will never be forgotten. To Dr. Fred Bonner, you have been the light to my path as I attempted to navigate my doctorate and words fail to give justice to the role you have played in my life.

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NOMENCLATURE

AACTE	American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
AAEE	American Association for Employment in Education, Inc.
CEHD	College of Education and Human Development
EPSY	Department of Educational Psychology
GPA	Grade Point Average
GPR	Grade Point Ratio
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
NCLB	No Child Left Behind Act of 2001
NCTAF	National Center for Teaching and America's Future
PWI	Predominantly White Institution
SACQ	Student Adaptation College Questionnaire
SBEC	State Board for Educator Certification
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
TAMU	Texas A&M University
TLAC	Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture
USDE	United States Department of Education

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

To sustain our competitive economic advantage, American schools must be transformed to provide increased attainment for under-represented populations. More specifically, P-16 initiatives must encourage students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and racial and/or ethnic minorities to graduate from high school, succeed in higher education, and seek high-demand career paths. As Hagedorn and Tierney (2002) postulated, “If the United States is to maintain a competitive edge in the present era of the ‘global economy,’ an educated workforce is more important than at any other time in our history” (p. 2). This argument was furthered by Chickering and Reisser (1993) when they wrote:

Coping with diversity in academic preparation, socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, national origin, age, and gender has become our most significant challenge. ... It is clear that diversity will only increase in the years ahead. It is also clear that if we are unable to deal with it, we are likely to face increasing social conflict, a two-tier society, and economic stagnation. (p. 473)

Texas, as well as most states in our union, faces a critical shortage of teachers of color (Tenore, Dunn, Laughter, & Milner, 2010). Diverse teachers have a dramatic impact in increasing the cultural competence of our classrooms and serve as a role model

This dissertation follows the style of *The Review of Higher Education*.

for our increasingly diverse school children (National Education Agency, 2004). With our schools becoming increasingly diverse, the question must be raised, who is teaching our children and what can be done to diversify our teaching force? The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2004) found that in the 2003-2004 academic year, 83.1% of all teachers were White, 7.4% were Black, and 6.2% were Hispanic. The data are shockingly clear that teachers rarely look like the students they instruct. This study sought to find a possible solution to this catastrophe.

The teacher production pipeline contains many leaks. Colleges of education can struggle to find qualified students and can lose students due to attrition once they are in the pre-service training program. Additionally, students can either fail to gain certification after graduation, or, more often, these graduates will leave the profession rather early in their career. Research has demonstrated that there is a shrinking pool of qualified under-represented students applying for admission into four-year universities. These populations are more commonly found in America's community colleges (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Of note to this study is the research that indicates these populations can suffer transfer shock once they matriculate to the university setting and this can cause increased attrition (Berger & Malaney, 2003).

As under-represented students matriculate from the community college environment to a four-year university, they are forced into a transition in their life that can be analyzed and interpreted through Schlossberg's et al., (1995) Transition Theory (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010). It is through this theoretical framework that I decided to analyze student perceptions of their own transitions into, through, and

out of the university environment. This study was designed to address the lack of research regarding the success of under-represented pre-service teachers who transfer into predominantly White universities.

Research Questions

The research questions for this project were:

- How do under-represented transfer populations attending a predominantly White pre-service teacher training program perceive their educational environment and what are their perceptions of the services provided by the university to ensure their academic success?
- What are the criteria that must be in place for students of color to succeed in a predominantly White pre-service teacher training program?

Origin of the Problem

Although there is a significant quantity of literature regarding student persistence and transfer shock (See Table 2.1), there is a specific void in the applicability of this information to the pre-service teacher population. Most published articles and books describe the shortage of under-represented teachers in great detail, but few suggestions are typically proffered on how to mitigate and correct this problem (Lewis, Bonner, Byrd, & James. 2008). Extant literature also discussed transfer student persistence and attrition (Frederickson, 1998; Cohen & Brawer, 2008), but again, data and research of how transfer students perform in teacher production programs is in short supply.

Transfer shock was first introduced to the mainstream literature in 1965 through the work of Hills. The author researched the progress of transfer students from junior

colleges to four-year institutions from 1928 to 1964 and concluded that transfer students should expect to suffer an “appreciable drop in ... grades” after the student transfers to the receiving university (Hills, 1965, p. 209). Although the more orthodox form of measuring and defining transfer shock is the drop in GPA performance from the sending institution to the first semester at the four-year university, my study seeks to redefine transfer shock. The intent of my study is to research other variables and situations that students may experience that could lead to attrition from teacher education programs. It is through the narratives of under-represented teacher-education transfer students that we can appreciate the transitions and increased demands placed on these vulnerable students as they attempt to become professional educators.

Significance of the Research

This study seeks to contribute to existing literature on higher education student persistence and graduation success, as well as the literature regarding teacher preparation. The case study presented in this report was conducted in the College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) at Texas A&M University (TAMU). The CEHD at TAMU is the largest producer of teachers in the high-need fields of Math, Science, and Bilingual Education in Texas (Table 1.1). TAMU is the oldest public university in Texas and is a Tier I research institution located in College Station, Texas – a city that with its sister municipality of Bryan has a combined population of roughly 185,000. Texas A&M University is the flagship campus of the Texas A&M University System.

Table 1.1
2009-2010 Teacher Production at Texas A&M University by Field

Subject Area	Undergraduate	Alternative
Chemistry 8-12	6	3
Life Science 8-12	4	10
Mathematics 8-12	15	5
Mathematics/Science 4-8	81	n/a
Physical Science 8-12	4	2
Physics/Mathematics 8-12	n/a	2
Science 8-12	4	1
Special Education EC-12	41	n/a
Bilingual Generalist EC-4	13	n/a
ESL Supplemental	327	n/a

(CEHD, 2011)

The CEHD at TAMU celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2009 and has a current enrollment of approximately 3,800 undergraduate students. The vast majority of the students are from Texas and its undergraduate student body composition in spring of 2010 was comprised of 81.7% White, 11.9% Hispanic, 2.9% African American, and 2.2% Asian (Office of Institutional Studies and Programming, 2010). In the fall of 2009 and spring of 2010, the College of Education and Human development admitted 157 new transfer students (Table 1.2) into its teacher training program (College of Education and Human Development, 2010a). For comparisons sake, the total demographics of students pursuing teacher certification in the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture and the Department of Educational Psychology in the spring of 2010 are listed in Table 1.3.

Table 1.2
New Transfers in Teacher Preparation Majors, 2009-2010

Race/Ethnicity	Total
African American	2
American Indian	2
Asian	3
Hispanic	17
White	133
Total	157

(CEHD, 2010a)

Table 1.3
Headcount by Ethnic Origin for Teacher Preparation Majors, Spring 2010

Race/Ethnicity	Total
African American	30
American Indian	6
Asian	26
Hispanic	165
White	1304
Total	1542

(OISP, 2010)

The CEHD afforded the opportunity to research under-represented populations studying in a PWI environment. The campus included a large and robust teacher preparation program that relied on transfer populations to increase its teacher production. Although transfers into this college do not typically see a dip in academic performance after transfer, this finding is contrary to extant higher education literature. Additionally,

the student GPA is only a statistical representation of performance and does not fully convey the reality in which students operate. Through the thick description of student narratives, one can fully appreciate and respond to the needs of this population.

Researching under-represented students in this program added to existing literature regarding the services that can be provided to effectively mitigate transfer shock and the threat of attrition that can follow.

Researcher's Relationship to the Problem

My interest in this topic was primarily driven by my experience in navigating the higher education waters. I was not admitted as a freshman into the college of my dreams. It was only through hard work and the guidance of a few caring individuals that I was able to successfully transfer into my first-choice college. In the second year of my undergraduate career, I matriculated to Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas, and experienced transfer shock. While I performed well in my freshman year – posting a 3.6 grade point in both semesters, my GPA fell to a 3.2 at my new institution. Although I was able to rebound in the following semesters, the transition and its impact on my academic performance continued to intrigue me.

After graduating with my undergraduate degree, I immediately completed a Master's program in Agricultural Education and began my career in higher education. I started by working in the Office of Admissions and Records as an admissions counselor and recruiter. In 1999, the Texas A&M University System received a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) titled the Regents' Initiative for Excellence in Education – a multi-year grant to recruit teachers and improve teacher training programs

in Texas. Through this grant, I was offered an opportunity to recruit teachers for the College of Education and Human Development at Texas A&M University. For the past decade, I have worked to increase teacher production by recruiting high school and community college students into our pre-service teacher training programs.

My specific interest in how under-represented students experience the transition from the community college to the university environment was deepened through my professional experiences. Early in my career, I recruited an African American male from St. Philip's College in San Antonio, Texas into the Middle Grades Math/Science degree program at Texas A&M University. St. Philip's is classified as both a historically Black college and a Hispanic-serving institution (www.alamo.edu/spc). The student in question – we will refer to him as Mike – transferred from the community college to Texas A&M and performed at an acceptable academic level. However, Mike ultimately withdrew before graduating due to a failure to successfully transition into the new university environment.

The traditional indicator of academic success, the GPA, did not demonstrate his failure to transition. Mike was struggling with a litany of issues that included being a single father, not having family or friends in the College Station area, and adapting to a new, predominantly White education environment. These problems did not become apparent until Mike had decided to leave because his grades reflected a student who was succeeding rather than struggling. It then became clear to me that it may be necessary to re-define transfer shock and explore the criteria that allow students of color to succeed after transferring to a PWI environment. It is through these experiences that I have

developed a passion for this topic and a commitment to helping students wishing to pursue teaching as a career.

Limitations

The sampling procedure of this study limits the transferability of the findings. The case study was limited to under-represented transfer students in a single teacher education program at a PWI. For this study, transfer shock was measured through qualitative responses rather than the more germane quantitative GPA measurement. These findings may be transferable to other institutions and contexts, but is not intended to be a generalization of the issue of transfer shock in higher education.

The study was also limited to transfer populations and the perceptions expressed by the participants should not be applied to all college populations – traditional freshman students may not view the teacher education program through the same lens as our transfer populations. The study was limited to students admitted into a pre-service teacher training program and the influence of other majors could alter the findings if the study were replicated. Finally, this study was limited to a research-intensive university. Regional institutions or smaller Liberal Arts focused universities may have different findings based on their own campus contexts.

The institution in which the research was conducted is located in the South and certain limitations may apply to this research project due to the cultural differences in place with student populations as it relates to careers in education. Another limitation of this study is that all but one of the participants were female. Although a search was conducted for more male students who met the research parameters, once the males were

identified, I determined that I had previously worked with most of those individuals to help them transfer into the university and they were removed from consideration for the study.

Being a White male researcher is a limitation for this study because of the inherent differences and the lack of prior relationship between me and the participants. Although race and ethnicity is a factor in the ethnographic inquiry, participants may have been cautious discussing issues of institutional racism with a White administrator at the university they attend.

Delimitations

I delimited my study by focusing on under-represented transfer populations in PWI teacher education programs. Although these findings are not intended to be transferred across institutions, I felt the data contained in the study contributed to the literature by highlighting the perceptions of a population that has been voiceless to date. Although many studies have been conducted to determine the causes of transfer shock and the influence the transition to a major university can have on under-represented students, very few studies have been conducted using qualitative methods that would allow students to present their own perceptions of the transition to a PWI environment. Transfer students to Historically Black Colleges and Universities or students in Hispanic-serving institutions will have different experiences from the experiences of the students who participated in this study and their views are not expressed by the chosen sample population. The sample was further restricted to senior-level students who are nearing the completion of their pre-service teacher training. This restriction was imposed

so students would be able to reflect on the various phases of their academic career as viewed through the theoretical framework of Schlossberg's et al., (1995) Transition Theory (Evans et al., 2010).

Definition of Terms

- (1) Adaptation - Schlossberg's (1981) definition of adaptation was utilized for this study. It states that "adaptation to transition is a process during which an individual moves from being totally preoccupied with the transition to integrating the transition into his or her life" (p. 7).
- (2) Articulation – Articulation refers to the transfer of courses from a community college to a four year university. This can include agreements that have been articulated between the two institutions, or as is more often the case, courses that have been articulated through a state-wide understanding such as the Texas Common Course Numbering System (Tinto, 1993; Cohen & Brawer, 2008).
- (3) CEHD – The College of Education & Human Development at Texas A&M University (See: <http://www.cehd.tamu.edu>).
- (4) First-Generation Student – A first-generation student is classified as any student whose parents or legal guardians did not graduate from a four-year college or university (Striplin, & ERIC Clearinghouse for Community Colleges, 1999; Thayer, 2000).
- (5) High-need Teaching Fields – For the purpose of this study, the high-need teaching fields were identified as Mathematics, Science, Special Education, Bilingual Education, and English as a Second Language. These are the fields most in demand in

Texas and have been identified as needed areas by the United States Department of Education (2010).

(6) Matriculation – Matriculation refers to the act of enrolling into a four-year university after being admitted for transfer admission (Kemp, 1990).

(7) Native Students – Students who did not transfer into the institution – typically these students matriculate to the four-year university through a freshman admissions process (Knoell & Medsker, 1965).

(8) Predominantly White institution (PWI) – Institutions in which the undergraduate enrollment majority is predominantly White (Bennett & Okinaka, 1990).

(9) Pre-Service Teacher – Candidates within a teacher education program who have been admitted for study but not yet certified to teach by the State Board for Educator Certification (Milam, 2010).

(10) SBEC – State Board for Educator Certification – the Texas agency responsible for issuing teacher credentials (See: <http://www.sbec.state.tx.us>).

(11) TAMU – Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas (See: <http://www.tamu.edu>).

(12) Transfer Shock – While transfer shock is typically defined in the literature as a drop in academic performance as noted by the Grade Point Average (GPA) or Grade Point Ratio (GPR) after a student matriculates from the community college to a four-year university (Hills, 1965), this study instead used a definition of any decrease in personal performance as perceived by the individual student throughout their higher education career (Townsend, McNerny, & Arnold, 1993; Pennington, 2006).

(13) Transition – This study utilized Schlossberg’s (1981) definition of transition which arose from crisis theory. Schlossberg wrote that a transition occurs “if an event or non-event results in a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one’s behavior” (p. 5).

(14) Under-represented populations – This includes racial and ethnic minority students who typically identify themselves as African American, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, or Other (AACTE, 1999; Swail & Perna, 2002).

(13) USDE – United States Department of Education (See: <http://www.ed.gov>).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Calls for Higher Education Reform

Extant higher education literature often demonstrates the waning of the American education advantage over competing nations (Douglass, 2006; Friedman, 2007). There has been a noticeable decrease in government support for higher education and an increased burden placed on students to achieve post-secondary credentials. Over the past two decades, it has been argued that higher education has gone from being a public good that supports the nation's economy to a private good that more benefits the consumer of knowledge (St. John, 2006). To complete an undergraduate degree in America, today's student will on average incur a debt of close to \$20,000 (Douglass, 2006). Such an expensive proposition for an undergraduate degree will continue to make it difficult to recruit students into traditionally lower paying careers like teaching. To compete in the global economy it remains clear that access must be improved to under-represented populations or the United States will slip further behind other industrialized nations.

Loss of America's competitive advantage. America is on the verge of relinquishing its competitive advantage as the leader in the world's economy. Friedman (2007) referred to this loss as the *quiet crisis* when he wrote, "There is nothing about the flat world – nothing – that Americans cannot handle, as long as we roll up our sleeves, educate our young people the right way for these times, and tend to and enrich the secrets of the sauce" (p. 336). This includes addressing the higher education access gap

by improving the retention and graduation rates of our under-represented populations and supplying qualified diverse teachers for our lowest performing public schools.

Without a diverse teaching force, K-12 students of color will continue to suffer from a lack of role models, educational opportunities, and career limitations (AACTE, 1989). Unfortunately, as one group of authors found, “an overwhelming majority of teachers are White, female and from the lower middle class socioeconomic strata, while their students in many urban educational settings have become more racially and ethnically diverse from the lower socioeconomic strata” (Lewis et al., 2008, p. 226).

The contemporary context in which colleges and universities operate is a nation of increasing disparities between those with access to higher education and those with dissimilar opportunities. Douglass (2006) highlighted that “... Participation and degree attainment rates have leveled off and are showing signs of decline – seemingly more than just a bump or short-term market correction ... we find these disparities are growing” (p. 3). Douglass continued to demonstrate that while the access gap was growing in America, the majority of other economic super-powers have worked to exceed the participation rates in the United States and have successfully found a way to “integrate higher education into national economic and social policy” (p. 3).

Perhaps most concerning is the loss of the advantage the United States enjoyed in the production in the “STEM” majors – Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. Funded research in Science and Technology is also a pressing concern (Fuller, 2009; Committee on Prospering in the Global Economy of the 21st Century, 2005). Douglass (2006) stated that “In 2004, China had six times the number of college

graduates in engineering as the United States” and “India and China produced approximately one million engineering graduates a year, with the U.S. and Europe producing only 170,000 combined” (p. 7). Douglass found that “of the articles in the world’s top physics journal published in 1983, 61% were authored by scholars in American universities; in 2003 that proportion dropped to 29%” (p. 7). Literature points two to primary causes for this decline in these fields – the lack of college-prepared students graduating from America’s public high schools, and the shortage of qualified teachers in the STEM fields.

Demographics in American public schools have changed significantly in recent decades and education policy has not kept pace with the lack of access suffered by urban populations, low socioeconomic students, and students from under-represented racial and ethnic backgrounds (Kozol, 1991; 2005). Douglass (2006) provided a keen overview of this situation:

Low access and degree rates mean, of course, a long-term exclusion from the mainstream of American economic and social life – a pattern experienced, for a variety of causes, by a significant portion of African Americans. Nationally, only 14.7% of Chicano/Latinos have earned either an associate or higher degree; for African Americans, the number is 20.0%; and for Asian Americans and Euro-Americans the number is 50.5% and 33.6% respectively. (p. 9)

These numbers are particularly concerning when one considers that all certified teachers in the United States must first complete an undergraduate degree. To address the critical

shortage of under-represented teachers, we must first address the higher education access gap.

United States teacher shortage. It was reported in 2003 that the United States would need to hire 2.2 million new teachers in the next decade (Howard, 2003). Howard cited increasing retirements of current teachers, a growing student population, the development of new classroom policies such as mandated class sizes, and the attrition rates of many certified teachers as the primary causes for the proposed teaching shortage. However, many of those estimates either fell short or never developed because a beleaguered economy prevented many of the retirements from occurring.

Many researchers would have the public believe that there is in fact not a teaching shortage. At the 2002 Symposium of The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF), the Commission published that the problem with teaching shortages is more a problem with attrition of prepared teachers than the recruitment of new pre-service teachers (NCTAF, 2002). A major criticism of this report is that it makes bold statements that the supply of new teachers is adequate to meet the existing demand, but it does not address the shortage of teachers of color or the lack of teachers pursuing certifications in the high need fields of Math, Science, Special Education, or Bilingual Education.

The American Association for Employment in Education, Inc. (AAEE) (2008) demonstrated that there was a critical shortage in Special Education, Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, and Bilingual Education nationwide. Additionally, they stated that "*No Child Left Behind* and 'highly qualified teacher' requirements continue to negatively

impact the supply of special education teachers (AAEE, 2008, p. 1). At a time where it has become difficult to identify students interested in becoming a teacher, these federal regulations demand additional requirements that complicate the teacher education process more than they enhance instruction. Additional analysis of contemporary literature related to teaching shortages demonstrates that teaching shortages have the most detrimental impact on urban low-performing schools (Howard, 2003). As the author wrote, “What has not been as widely reported is that teacher shortages and low-quality teaching will have the most deleterious effect on student populations and communities that can least afford them” (pp. 142-143). To take the point further, the lack of qualified teachers in urban schools will lead to a dwindling of the pool of competitive diverse applicants for higher education which will lead to a further shortage of diverse teachers seeking certification. Addressing the critical shortage of under-represented teachers may be the best option for addressing the higher education access gap.

A lack of teachers of color serves as a detriment in our increasingly diverse schools in a variety of ways. Teachers of like ethnic or linguistic characteristics as their students contribute greatly to the academic performance of their pupils (Howard, 2003). A diverse teaching force provides positive role models for students of color and provides positive personal attitudes regarding social justice issues such as power and privilege in contemporary America (Howard, 2003). Developing a sense of equity and opportunity in America’s school children is critical to produce a population prepared to address the shortcomings of our modern society (Hill-Jackson & Lewis, 2008; Hill-Jackson & Lewis, 2010). As Landsman and Lewis (2006) wrote:

In the next ten years, the majority of our students will be of color. Our job, then, as educators and change makers, is no less important than the healthy future of our young people. And lest it be forgotten, White students as well as those of color have a great amount to gain from equity for all. For the sake of all our children, we must follow up our reading with action, our contemplation with change. (pp. 9-10)

In Texas, the lack of a diverse teaching force can be viewed from the perspective of teachers who were certified in a cohort from September of 2009 to June of 2010. During this time, the Texas State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) reported that only 8.9% of the teachers who were certified were African American and only 26.2% of the teachers were Hispanic. White teachers who were certified during this time frame accounted for 60.3% of the population (State Board for Educator Certification, 2010). In the previous academic year, it was reported that 14.1 % of Texas public school children were African American, 47.9% were Hispanic, and only 34% were White (Texas Education Agency, 2009). Clearly, there continues to be a divide between the demographics of the teachers we prepare and the students they serve.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2007), one-third of America's student population in public schools in 2005 was a racial or ethnic minority. Hispanics accounted for 14% while 12% of students were African American. NCES predicts that by the year 2020, the minority population in schools will increase to 39% of the total population. Additionally, as Lewis et al. (2008) reported, "the research literature reports that African American males comprise approximately 2% of those

enrolled in the 1,300 teacher preparation programs across the country (American Association for Colleges of Teacher Education [AACTE]), and 1% of the United States K-12 teaching force” (p. 225).

Gordon (2000) conducted research on why there is a shortage of teachers of color. Her qualitative study analyzed data collected from urban schools in Seattle, Long Beach, and Cincinnati. It included 116 interviews of teachers of color who were asked to reflect on their undergraduate training and the causes for the shortage of teachers of color. Her report revealed that African American teachers felt students were not choosing teaching as a career due to “economic, educational, and social/cultural” reasons (p. 23). The teachers indicated that the pay was too low, there was too much education required for the low financial return on the investment, and African American college graduates have too many better paying options to choose a career in education. The teachers also indicated that students of color have had too many negative experiences in K-12 education to choose teaching, that there is not enough academic support in college, and the university environment is negative for students of color. Of those teachers interviewed, close to 75% did not recommend teaching as a career to their students, friends, or relatives.

The story was not very different for Latino teachers. Gordon found that Latino teachers felt that there was academic under-preparation that prevented Latino students from pursuing careers as teachers. Along with the causes for the shortage theorized by African American teachers, Latino teachers also indicated that there was a lack of encouragement from “parents, teachers, counselors, peers, the media, and community

people” to consider teaching as a viable career choice (p. 43). The author suggested that colleges of education should more adequately prepare graduates to work in diverse urban schools instead of the utopia suburban setting. Perhaps the most relevant suggestion for this study was to “provide greater access to higher education and support once there” (p. 87). She believed students of color would be more likely to choose teaching as a career if urban schools were improved, students were more supported in their career choice, and adequate higher education reforms were made to enhance under-represented student access.

Spellings Commission Report and *No Child Left Behind*. To fully understand the context in which this study is being conducted, there must first be an explanation of the federal policies that have recently been enacted and their impact on recruiting and retaining new teachers. In September of 2006, a pre-publication of a report by a special commission on higher education was released. Then Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings, commissioned the study to better understand the current status of higher education in America and to develop policy suggestions for the immediate future. The primary findings of the report focused on improving college access, making higher education affordable, improving financial aid, and innovating postsecondary institutions (USDE, 2006).

The Commission’s report holds particular implications on the populations within this study. The report stated, “While about one-third of Whites have obtained bachelor’s degrees by age 25-29, for example, just 18 percent of Blacks and 10 percent of Latinos in the same age cohort have earned degrees by that time” (USDE, 2006, p. 1).

Additionally, the Commission found “that our financial aid system is confusing, complex, inefficient, duplicative, and frequently does not direct aid to students who truly need it” (p. 3) and “by failing to provide financial and logistical support for lifelong learning and by failing to craft flexible credit-transfer systems that allow students to move easily between different kinds of institutions” (pp. 3-4), the United States system of higher education has continued to fall behind countries that have dedicated more resources to post-secondary education. On a final note, the Commission criticized both policy makers and higher education institutions for a lack of innovation in the delivery of lifelong learning to an increasing number of under-served populations.

To summarize the Spelling’s Commission report, both policy makers and colleges and universities have been put on notice that they are not meeting the needs of the students they serve, and more importantly, they are failing to keep pace with the post-secondary education systems of other competing nations. Four-year universities must realize the importance of ensuring the success of vulnerable populations which often include first-generation college students who matriculate to the campus via the American community college.

Another important federal policy that impacts the current context is the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB). This act was presented with the goal of ensuring “that every child, regardless of race, ethnicity, class, disability, or English proficiency, is taught by well-prepared, highly qualified, new teachers” (Spradlin & Prendergast, 2006, p. 1). To become *highly qualified* under NCLB, teachers must have a bachelor’s degree, be fully certified or licensed through their state education agency, and demonstrate their

competence in their subject area as defined by their state standards. Researchers have recently taken notice that “Students in high poverty and high-minority schools are disproportionately more likely to have non-certified and inexperienced teachers” (p. 1).

Spradlin and Prendergast’s (2006) report indicated that the attrition of teachers has increased since NCLB because of “the increasing pressures of accountability” (p. 5). Additionally, it has been found that only about 60% of the teachers trained nationally actually take a teaching position after college and “almost half of new teachers leave the profession within their first five years of teaching” (p. 3). With such staggering losses of qualified and trained educators, work must be done to ensure that colleges of education learn to operate in this modern context. Instead of worrying about *No Child Left Behind*, perhaps the time has come to be concerned that *No Pre-service Teaching Candidate Be Left Behind*.

To recruit and admit students of color, research intensive universities are being forced to identify new strategies to increase their under-represented student enrollment (Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002; Carnevale & Rose, 2004). On one hand, universities are fighting to keep their U.S. News and World Report rankings high through a low acceptance rate that indicates fierce competition for limited freshman admission spots. On the other hand, public institutions face increasing pressure to open access to diverse student populations and improve the cultural and ethnic diversity of their incoming classes.

The struggle is highlighted when looking at the competitiveness of students when sorted by ethnicity. While many institutions utilize the SAT as their primary admission

criteria, African American and Hispanic students continue to struggle with this standardized exam. Of Texas SAT participants in 2009, the mean SAT score for African American students was an 862 on Critical Reading and Mathematics, and Hispanic students compiled a mean of 923 on the same two exam components. Conversely, White students scored a mean of a 1069 (College Board, 2009).

Standardized tests such as the SAT and ACT do not accurately predict the success of students of color in higher education (Schmidt & Camara, 2004; Zwick, 2004; Baez, 2006). Bonner (2000) wrote, standardized tests often “become a measure of which students have a better grasp of White, middle-class culture – not what knowledge and information they have acquired” (p. 646). Although the score is standardized, and the criteria for admission are the same for all, the chances of being admitted to a top-tier university clearly are not equitable for all applicants. At Texas A&M University, the freshman class admitted for the fall of 2010 proved this point further. In this cohort, 9,664 of the 14,370 White applicants were admitted into the freshman class, or 67.25%. In the same class, only 1,523 of the 2,867 (53.12%) Hispanic applicants and 565 of the 1,681 (33.61%) African American applicants were admitted (Office of Admissions and Records, 2010). The solution to diversifying our student bodies may be found in areas other than the freshman class such as the increased matriculation and graduation of external transfer students from community colleges. Community colleges teach a more diverse student enrollment and may hold the solution to increasing the production of under-represented teachers.

Demographics of the American Community College Student

Increasingly, students of color are beginning their collegiate careers at the community college due to increasing costs and a lack of preparation in urban public schools (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Universities must be concerned with the transitions these diverse students make to ensure their success and improve retention and graduation rates. This study explored the realities of these vulnerable populations so retention programs can more specifically address the needs of our community college transfers.

The population defined. The exponential growth of community college enrollment in America was well chronicled by Cohen and Brawer (2008). The authors demonstrated that “enrollment increased from just over five hundred thousand in 1960 to more than two million by 1970, four million by 1980, nearly 5.5 million by the end of the 1990s, and over six million by 2005” (p. 43). The authors pointed to several causes for this dramatic increase in enrollment: there has been an increase in college-aged populations, there is more financial aid available for minority and economically disadvantaged students, and there are more students wanting to work and enroll part-time than years past. Regardless of the cause, the fact remains that “In 2003, 43 percent of all students beginning postsecondary education enrolled first in a two-year college” (p. 50).

Frederickson (1998) conducted a study of transfer students in North Carolina to identify the characteristics of this population. She found that the typical transfer student was a 26 year old female who was enrolled at the community college part-time. Her study of these students indicated that “When enrolled at two-year colleges, they

frequently balance part-time academic loads with part-time employment” and “They are successful following transfer and they persist in large numbers” (p. 53).

Eggleston and Laanan (2001) wrote, “Transfer students are a very diverse group of students; they vary in age, gender, racial and ethnic background, academic preparation, and employment patterns – among other things” (p. 95). To attempt to lump all transfer students from community colleges into one category would be a misguided practice for universities, however, work must be done to address common concerns faced by this unique sub-population on our campuses. As the authors mentioned, “Senior institutions are only just beginning to develop programs especially for transfer students. There is a strong need for senior institutions to continue to develop support programs for transfer students to enhance their retention and persistence” (p. 95).

Transfer student growth is not expected to decelerate in the near future. Cohen and Brawer (2008) estimated that by 2015, American community colleges will enroll 7 million students which will account for almost 43% of all students in post-secondary institutions. The authors postulated that “Assuming that financial aid availability for middle- and upper-income students does not increase sufficiently so that tuition differentials are offset, the community colleges will get an even greater share of the students as tuition at four-year colleges and universities continues its rapid rise” (p. 455).

Under-represented populations. America’s community colleges provide a great service in opening access to higher education for populations that have typically been left out of the halls of post-secondary education. Cohen and Brawer (2008) stated that “More so than in the universities, the community college student population tends to

reflect the ethnic composition of the institution's locale" (p. 55). For an example, one can look at the state demographics and enrollment in Texas community colleges. In 2003, African Americans comprised 12% of the state population, and 11.8% of Texas community college enrollments. Similarly, Hispanics accounted for 29.2% of the state population and 27.6% of the community college enrollments (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

When comparing this data with the flagship universities in Texas in 2003, the stark contrast in diversity enrollment becomes clear. In 2003, African American students accounted for 2.3% of the undergraduate enrollment at Texas A&M University while 9.3% of the undergraduates identified as Hispanic (Office of Institutional Studies and Planning, 2003). Cohen and Brawer (2008) emphasized that the enrollment of underrepresented populations in America's community colleges are increasing without signs of slowing. They stated, "In 2004, minority students constituted 36.5 percent of all community college enrollments nationwide, up from 20 percent in 1976" (p. 53).

Lewis and Middleton (2003) provided an overview of articles related to African American experiences in community colleges. By reviewing a decade of relevant articles, the authors found that although African Americans have often used community colleges as their conduit to higher education, several barriers have prevented their persistence to a bachelor's degree. The primary factors were centered on the themes of environmental factors – such as economic conditions and family constraints – and the need for a more diverse community college faculty. The authors pointed out that an issue that prevents the diversification of community college faculty is "the perceived notion of the unavailability of African Americans in technical, math, and science fields" (p. 792).

The point is made that institutions of higher education must take a more active role in breaking down the barriers that prevent African American student success – whether it is providing additional support to address the external influences, or in the removal of racism in hiring practices that prevent the hiring of faculty of color.

Lujan, Gallegos, and Harbour (2003) provided a similar overview of articles related to the Latino experience in community colleges. Among their findings from the literature, the authors demonstrated the oppressive force of what has been termed the “third border” (p. 809) or *la tercera frontera*. The third border is described as policy and practice by the majority culture that “discriminates against Latinos in instruction through teaching and learning practices that discount their culture and experiences outside the dominant culture (e.g., in humanities and social sciences courses)” (p. 809). They continued that these same policies that negatively impact Latino community college students “also function as a barrier to Latinos in institutional hiring and promotion decisions” (p. 809). Both the Lewis and Middleton (2003) and Lujan et al. (2003) articles serve to demonstrate the numerous challenges faced by higher education as we work to expand opportunities and access for students of color.

Flowers (2006) researched the effects of two-year college attendance on the social and academic integration of African American males in the first year of college. His study quantitatively researched the integration of 467 African American males who were chosen from the 1996 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study. His study reported that four-year students were more likely to engage in academic sessions outside the classroom and have informal contact with their advisor or faculty members. These

students were also more likely to be involved in extracurricular activities such as student organizations and more likely to attend fine arts activities. From these observations, Flowers concluded that two-year colleges must provide more effort to successfully engage African American males in their freshman year so these students will more fully be academically and socially integrated into the college environment, thereby improving the retention and graduation of this diverse population.

University administrators must realize that under-represented populations are – and will continue to be – concentrated in community colleges. Any effort to increase diversity enrollment in the four-year university that does not adequately address community college transfers will be misguided and ineffective. Cohen and Brawer (2008) eloquently summarized this point when they wrote, “For most students in the two-year institutions, the choice is not between the community college and a senior residential institution; it is between the community college and nothing” (p. 58).

Defining Transfer Shock

Transfer shock as a phenomenon has been studied at length throughout the past 50 years. However, the findings from the mostly quantitative studies remains as mixed as the locations the studies took place. Some find that transfer shock exists, while others could not prove that transfer shock was a concern from a statistical viewpoint. Several indicate that although transfer shock exists in the immediate semester after a student transfers, the quick recovery of the GPA leads researchers to believe that transfer shock is not a major issue for which university administrators should be concerned.

Historical studies related to transfer shock. It can be argued that transfer shock has been researched *ad nauseum* throughout the Twentieth century (See Table 2.1). However, transfer shock research has typically been limited to an investigation of student performance as measured by GPA. Hills (1965) defined transfer shock as “an appreciable drop in his [sic] college grades when he [sic] transfers” (p. 209). From this seminal work, most researchers continued to study transfer shock by simply comparing GPA performance before and after matriculation to the university environment.

Findings throughout the 1960s and 1970s were typically grouped into two categories. One group of findings supported Hills’ research by stating that transfer shock exists, student performance decreases in the first semester at the university, and the long-term effects include higher attrition rates or lengthened time to graduation (Melnick, Lichtenstein, & Schubert, 1970; Anderson, 1977; Martinko, 1978). Other researchers of this period found that although an initial dip in GPA may be experienced, these students often rebounded and had limited or no long-term impact on their university career (Knoell & Medsker, 1965; Nickens, 1975; Nolan & Hall, 1978; Moughamian, and others, 1979).

Table 2.1 provides a brief listing of some of the more prevalent studies conducted over the past 50 years. This table contains a condensed representation of studies identified in Diaz’s (1992) meta-analysis, and expands on the findings from each study. Other more recent and qualitative studies have also been included.

Table 2.1
Historical Studies of Transfer Shock

Study	Location	Summary of Findings
Martorana & Williams, 1954	WA	This study revealed that junior college transfers performed academically at the same level as native students who did not transfer to the four-year university when high school academic performance is constant between the two groups. The authors concluded that students who transferred from the junior college were adequately prepared to handle the rigors of the four-year degree.
Hills, 1965	FL	The author analyzed 33 different data sets to conclude that transfer students should expect a dip in GPA performance at the four-year university, but typically there is some form of recovery. Additionally, the study indicated that junior college transfers typically do not perform as well as native students in upper-division courses.
Knoell & Medsker, 1965	National	The authors studied over 7,000 junior college students who transferred to forty-three four-year colleges in ten states. They found that transfer students perform at a comparable level to native students when academic ability is comparable. In total, 62% of the students received a bachelor's degree within three years of transfer and an estimated 75% of the participants eventually completed their degree. There was a 0.3 GPA reduction in the first semester, but most showed steady improvement.
Melnick, Lichtenstein, & Schubert, 1970	NY	This study focused on transfers into Hofstra University and found that transfers from two-year institutions performed at a lower GPA (.19) than native students entering their 3rd-year of their undergraduate program. Additionally, the study found that transfers from four-year institutions performed at a comparable level to native students.

Table 2.1 Continued

Williams, 1973	CA	<p>Although this study was not listed in Diaz (1992), it demonstrates an example of an early qualitative study of the transfer phenomenon. Williams asked questions of a student panel that included five transfers from two-year institutions who had matriculated to four-year universities in the Los Angeles area. The author found that students generally felt <i>lost, under-prepared, and frustrated</i>. Often the information the students obtained regarding their guidance came only through trial and error. The author reported that one student "felt that if the purpose of education was to provide the quality of person who can think critically and make intelligent choices, then this would result in spite of the university education rather than because of it" (p. 321).</p>
Nickens, 1975	FL	<p>Nickens (1972) first coined the term "transfer ecstasy" to describe the observed recovery in GPA following the first semester dip known as transfer shock. This 1975 study was a follow up to the 1972 work and researched the academic progress of over 26,000 community college transfers in Florida. The author reported that most students in most universities were successful after transfer with the exception of majors in Agriculture, Business, Engineering, and Science.</p>
Smalley, 1975	MO	<p>This longitudinal study researched 235 students who matriculated to the University of Missouri - Kansas City from six different junior colleges. The study found that all students on average suffered transfer shock in their first semester and students who transferred with fewer hours were more likely to experience transfer shock.</p>

Table 2.1 Continued

Anderson, 1977	IL	This longitudinal study researched two-year transfers, four-year transfers, and native students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The study found that the two-year transfers experienced greater academic difficulty and faced probation and attrition at higher levels than the four-year transfers and the native students, but over two-thirds of the two-year transfers graduated and were retained after transfer.
Miller, Janawsky, & Katz, 1977	NJ	The authors studied over 2,700 two-year transfers in senior institutions in New Jersey. The study found that transfers from two-year institutions in the state performed comparably to the native population after transfer. Additionally, it was found that students who performed better at the two-year institution performed at a higher level at the senior institution.
Martinko, 1978	PA	This Pennsylvania study surveyed over 2,000 two-year transfer students who had matriculated to senior institutions. The study found that "12% raised their GPA by more than 0.5, 35% dropped their GPA's by more than 0.5, and 53% maintained their GPA's within 0.5" (p. 13). The study also found that 58% of transfers from four-year institutions improved their GPA at the receiving institution.
Nolan & Hall, 1978	VA	This study utilized correlation tests to determine the relationship between grades at the two-year community college and the senior institution for 204 transfer students. The researchers found a high degree of correlation between the two grades and also observed an average drop of 0.26 in GPA after transfer, but also witnessed the phenomenon of transfer ecstasy as reported by Nickels (1972).

Table 2.1 Continued

Moughamian, and Others, 1979	IL	<p>The authors in this longitudinal study researched over 10,500 community college transfer students who matriculated to Illinois public four-year universities. The study discovered that students on average experienced a transfer shock in the first semester of 0.16, but fully recovered by the second year on the university campus. The transfer average GPA at the community college was reported as a 2.8, the average at the end of the first year after transfer was a 2.65, and the fourth-year GPA was an average of a 2.8. The study confirms the phenomenon of both transfer shock and transfer ecstasy for Illinois community college transfers.</p>
Johnson, 1987	CA	<p>This author utilized the theoretical framework of causal modeling in a survey of 271 community college transfer students to determine the most salient factors that affected transfer student persistence in the four-year university environment. The results of this study were that male students indicated that their persistence was correlated to their "perceived practical value" (p. 328) of their program, while female students, their persistence was correlated with their "perception of being academically integrated" (p. 328) into the institution. Additional findings indicated that students' decision to return to the institution was directly correlated to their academic success.</p>
Hughes & Graham, 1992	MO	<p>The authors developed a survey that was administered to 348 community college transfers in a major research university. This study is unique because it discriminated data based on family's education level and the family's financing of the student's education. The author indicated that "the results of this study suggest a need for programs that assist transfer students in making the transition to a large university" and "many of these students are capable academically, yet they may need assistance in succeeding in a</p>

Table 2.1 Continued

		<p>very different environment" (p. 43). Most concerning from this study was that 42% of the respondents of this survey either performed at an unsatisfactory level or dropped out of the university environment at the end of the first semester.</p>
Best & Gehring, 1993	OH	<p>This study researched 90% of community college transfers into a university environment. The authors utilized <i>t</i> test and chi-square statistics to determine if there is a difference in academic performance between students who transfer with over 60 hours and those who transfer with fewer. The data indicated that students who transferred with fewer than 60 hours performed at a significantly lower level than those transferring with over 60 and those with over 60 had a mean GPA that was not significantly different from the native student mean. The report did indicate, however, that native students were more likely to graduate at a higher rate than the transfer students. The study did find that native students graduated at a significantly higher rate than the transfer students. Unfortunately, this study was not sorted by race and/or ethnicity, which the authors admit would likely provide different results.</p>
Cejda, Kaylor, & Rewey, 1998	Midwest	<p>This study took the approach of researching transfer shock from the perspective of the academic discipline to which the student transferred by utilizing quantitative techniques to determine if there was a difference between Fine Arts/Humanities majors, Math/Science majors, Professional majors that included the field of Education, and students in the Social Sciences. The results were not sorted or differentiated by race and/or ethnicity. The authors concluded that there was a significant difference in GPAs amongst the different majors. Most interesting is the authors brought into question the true definition of both transfer shock and transfer</p>

Table 2.1 Continued

		ecstasy by demonstrating that only Math and Science majors suffered a shock that was statistically significant.
Ehrenberg & Smith, 2002	NY	The authors in this study took an economic vantage of the transfer phenomenon. The researchers developed a statistical methodology they felt could be employed to (1) determine how well community colleges are preparing their students for the four-year university and (2) discover which universities are successful at graduating community college transfers.
Glass & Harrington, 2002	NC	The researchers in this study focused on College of Arts and Sciences transfers in the University of North Carolina System by studying six variables that included GPA at various stages of the student's career and compared the progress of 100 community college transfers and 100 native university students. The study found that transfer students had an equal chance to perform on the level of native students after the sophomore year. Although there was a significant reduction of GPA for transfers - or transfer shock - the data also showed the students recovered fully in the following semester.
Berger & Malaney, 2003	MA	The authors studied 392 transfers to the University of Massachusetts at Amherst through a survey designed to "examine the factors that influence community college students' level of success" (p. 5). The study found that students who had most prepared for the transfer process were the students found to be most satisfied with their decision and this ultimately led to them being more successful academically. The study did disaggregate the data based on race and/or ethnicity and found that White students were more likely to receive higher grades and are more satisfied with their decision. The authors suggested universities work to create a more supportive environment for transfer students of color.

Table 2.1 Continued

Pierson, Wolniak, Pascarella, & Flowers, 2003	National	This longitudinal quantitative research project examined the responses of 3,840 students using the National Study of Student Learning (NSSL) and a follow-up study of the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ). The authors concluded that students who attended two-year institutions did not have net changes in learning orientations as compared to their four-year student counterparts. Additionally, the student indicated that students who attended two-year schools demonstrated higher levels of internal locus of academic attributes and were more open to measures of diversity appreciation and learning for self-appreciation. The authors hypothesized that many of the differences could be attributed to the greater diversity found in the two-year colleges as compared to four-year institutions.
Melguizo & Dowd, 2009	National	The researchers analyzed 250 transfers and 790 rising native juniors to understand the effect of socioeconomic status (SES) and institutional selectivity on degree completion for these two groups using the National Education Longitudinal Study. The most interesting findings from this study were that low-SES students were not hampered from obtaining a bachelor's degree by beginning their college career at a community college so long as the students had the aspiration of bachelor's completion when starting college.

Diaz (1992) provided a meta-analysis of transfer shock as found in the literature. She started her study with a 1927 Stanford University study and continued through the early 1990s. Her study found that “transfer students in 79% of the studies experienced transfer shock” (p. 285) as defined by a dip in grade point after matriculating to the four-year university. She also identified that “Many studies offered reasons for transfer shock,

ranging from a change in grading practices to adjustment to life at a large, senior institution” (p. 286). Diaz concluded her analysis by stating that “Unfortunately, the transfer student is often not the preferred student and is ignored regarding orientation, advising, and so on” (p. 287). This statement was as prophetic in 1992 as it is relevant today. Transfer students are often seen as second-class citizens and more research must be dedicated to this unique population’s needs.

It should be noted that Diaz provided a meta-analysis of mostly quantitative research studies. Few if any historical studies approach the issue from a qualitative perspective that provides the opportunities for the participants in the studies to provide their own definitions of transfer shock. While a student’s GPA may not suffer after they matriculate to the four-year university, this does not indicate the emotional and personal stress the students may be facing as they make the transition from one collegiate environment to the next.

Although their study did not question the impact of transfer shock, Melguizo and Dowd (2009) analyzed the National Education Longitudinal Study of the senior class of 1992 and utilized logistical regression to study the difference in degree attainment between transfer students in a university environment and rising college juniors. The primary conclusion from this study was that there was no significant difference in degree completion between low-SES students who began at a community college and low-SES students who began in the university environment. According to the authors, “our results indicate that traditional-age students who arrive at 4-year colleges through community colleges are not at a disadvantage in completing their bachelor’s degree” (p. 79).

Additionally, the authors discovered that “the study also provides evidence to elite institutions that they can turn to community colleges to increase their socioeconomic diversity without decreasing their institutional effectiveness of graduating students” (pp. 79-80). One could make the logical determination that if community colleges can provide a source of socioeconomic diversity, then two-year institutions may equally contribute racial and ethnic diversity – especially for fields like education that face a desperate shortage of diverse professionals.

Carlan and Byxbe (2000) conducted a study of 487 transfers to a large university over a period of three years and compared their performance to 230 native university students. Their regression analysis found that there was not a significant difference in the performance of transfers compared to native students. However, the authors did find that GPA was a predictor of success for transfer students – those who had high GPAs at the community college were likely to continue with academic success after transfer. The unique and interesting finding from this study was that race was found to be a larger predictor of performance for native students than for community college transfers. The authors argued that community colleges play an important role in expanding access for under-represented populations because the nurturing provided increases the odds that these students will advance to their junior year because of the confidence that was built on the two-year campus.

Unfortunately, there is a glaring void in the literature regarding the impact of the transition from the community college to the four-year university for students of color beyond the quantitative analysis of academic performance. This study was conducted

with the intention of filling that void by giving voice to this population and allowing their narrative to contribute to our existing knowledge on the transfer process and transition.

Transfer student adjustment and transition. Cuseo (1998) examined much of the research on transfer shock and the transition community college students undergo after matriculating to the four-year university environment. He examined the works of Astin (1975), Richardson and Bender (1987), and Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) to postulate on the first-year experience of transfers in the university environment. His review of research found that transfer students were reported to suffer transfer shock and “have an attrition rate that is 10-15% higher than native students” (Cuseo, 1998, p. 8). He also highlighted Pascarella and Terenzini’s (1991) findings that African American male transfers are more inhibited from obtaining a bachelor’s degree after transfer to a four-year university.

From these findings, Cuseo recommended curricular changes that included greater collaboration between the university and community college administrators, improved academic advising, and stronger orientation and support programs that are specifically focused on this sub-population’s unique needs. Finally, the author advocated for increased faculty involvement – including collaborative programs that unite community college and university faculty – and more effective institutional research and assessment to track transfers and identify areas of campus that can be improved to address transfer issues (Cuseo, 1998).

Laanan (2001) provided a concise overview of research related to the transition of community college transfers after they gained admission to four-year colleges and universities. He specifically reviewed the research of Tinto (1975), Bean and Metzner (1985), Pascarella, Smart, and Ethington (1986), Bennett and Okinaka (1990), Hurtado (1992), and Hurtado, Carter, and Spuler (1996) to identify the transitional factors transfer students undergo after matriculation. The research was sorted into several themes. These included “Personal, Demographic, or Environmental Characteristics” (p. 8), and “Psychological Approaches” (p. 9) to the college adjustment, environmental concerns, and campus climate issues. Laanan (2001) found that “transfer students are likely to experience a complex adjustment process – academically, socially, and psychologically – because of the environmental differences between two- and four-year institutions” (p. 11). It was these academic, social, and psychological transitions that this study sought to investigate from the students’ point of view.

In a previous study, Laanan (1996) researched the persistence and attrition of transfer students who enrolled in the Transfer Alliance Program (TAP) at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA). The author explained that the study “had two purposes: (a) to investigate how students who transferred from California community colleges to UCLA ... performed academically, and (b) to explore the nature of the students’ experiences in adjusting to UCLA” (pp. 70-72). The quantitative study revealed that TAP students were more likely to be in the honors program at UCLA, had a higher mean GPA, and were more engaged with university faculty than non-tap students. The author indicated in his discussion that “The GPA indicator of a student’s

academic performance is important. Nevertheless, exploring and understanding this complex process beyond the GPA indicator is an equally important research goal” (p. 81). Qualitative research that has been missing from the existing literature and focuses on the student transition as viewed from the psychological, environmental, and campus climate perspectives greatly complements the existing quantitative data that has been collected throughout the years.

The transition process is inherent as students transfer from a two-year community college to a senior four-year institution. This transition was studied utilizing qualitative methods by Flaga (2002). She studied first-year transfer students at Michigan State University and ultimately developed five dimensions of transition in a higher education environment that transfers undergo. These dimensions included, “Learning Resources, Connecting, Familiarity, Negotiating, and Integrating” (p. 3). Flaga’s work extended the foundational work of Townsend (1995) and Laanan (1998). The study longitudinally constructed the experiences of 35 community college transfers at the beginning and end of their second semester on the university campus. The students’ experiences were studied utilizing Flaga’s five dimensions through three campus environments – academic, social, and physical.

Flaga’s study discovered that there was a lack of formalized resources available to assist transfer students with the transition to the university environment. According to the author, “Initiative is a key component. Students in the study were clear that transfer students must seek out and utilize resources on their own” (p. 17). The author demonstrated that there were many points made by students that university

administrators could utilize to develop transition programs that would improve student success. Additionally, Flaga demonstrated that her study did not “look at similarities or differences of experience or transition based on gender or ethnicity” (p. 17). She concluded her article by making a plea for a qualitative approach to be taken to study the transition of transfer students at other four-year universities to “further establish the transition process as a developmental model with identity transformation implications” (p. 18).

Influences on student success. Many studies on student attrition and success have attempted to diagnose the specific factors that most influence student persistence. Research has found that students leave college for a variety of factors, but some have been found to have a greater impact on influencing the student’s decision. Colleges and universities can tap into the findings from these studies to create retention programs that accentuate the positive influences on student persistence and mitigate the negative factors that cause students to leave.

Hurtado (1992) analyzed responses to a longitudinal study that included responses from over 20,000 college students in the mid- to late-1980s. Her analysis found that students on college campuses still perceived racial discrimination as a problem and roughly one-quarter of respondents felt there was “considerable racial conflict” (p. 551) on college campuses, and increased to one-third when analysis focused on the university environment. The study also found that “institutional commitment to diversity can substantially improve minority and, to some extent, white [sic] student perceptions of race relations on campus” (p. 558). The author concluded that there are a

variety of factors that join together to produce racial tensions on campus that can cause students of color to not feel supported in the university environment.

Hurtado, Carter, and Spuler (1996) studied the transitions faced by Latino students in the college environment. The authors utilized Baker and Siryk's (1984; 1989) Student Adaptation College Questionnaire (SACQ) which gathers data associated with students' academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and their institutional attachment (Hurtado et al., 1996, p. 141). The authors administered the SACQ to 203 Latino students who had been selected from PSAT test-takers. The survey revealed that:

Experiences of discrimination have a depressing effect on Latino students' feelings of attachment to the institution, and (to a lesser extent) adjustment in the academic and social arenas. Thus, it is not just the overt experiences of discrimination that require our attention, but rather attention to the more subtle forms of intergroup dynamics that can undermine all forms of college adjustment for Latino students. (p. 151)

The authors also suggested that the findings of the study "emphasize the need to direct further college programs toward monitoring of student resource management, academic workloads, and assisting students in becoming familiar with the campus environment" (p. 152).

The open-ended qualitative data that was collected demonstrated a strong connection with family as important in the student transition. This article concluded with the authors stating that "those who wish to improve college adjustment, however, must

also look beyond individual factors to consider aspects of the campus climate that may need improvement for the success of valuing of all students” (p. 154). It is for this reason that this study included both the coping resources found in Schlossberg’s (1981; 1987; Schlossberg, Lynch, & Chickering, 1989; Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995) Transition Theory and the institutional resources available for under-represented transfer students in the research protocol (Appendix E).

Astin (1993) approached the transition in college from a different perspective. He found that “unfortunately, much of the literature on college impact looks merely at *change or growth* in students rather than impact as such” (p. 5). Astin’s primary argument was that most research on how college impacts students could not differentiate between the change students undergo naturally because of maturation or non-college external forces and the changes that are influenced by college attendance. The author developed the input-environment-outcome (I-E-O) Model (Astin, 1962, 1970a, 1970b, 1977, 1991) in his attempt to study how students are developed in college. According to the author:

Inputs refer to the characteristics of the student at the time of initial entry to the institution; *environment* refers to the various programs, policies, faculty, peers, and educational experiences to which the student is exposed; and *outcomes* refers to the student’s characteristics *after* exposure to the environment. (Astin, 1993, p. 7)

Astin’s study reviewed the overall college impact on students by examining 192 environmental measures on university students that included institutional characteristics,

curricular measures, faculty environment, peer environment, and individual involvement. From this study, the author was able to glean information regarding the college student's behavior patterns, major and career choice, academic performance, and find correlations amongst the 192 measures.

When reviewing correlations for predictors for choosing teaching as a career, Astin found that "students' degree of commitment to raising a family, being a born-again Christian, being White, and being a guest in a teacher's home during high school" (p. 262) were all positive. His findings that being a student of color was a negative predictor of teaching as a career are particularly relevant to this study. If students of color are less likely to choose teaching as a career, greater work must be done to retain those few students who choose this path to ensure the field diversifies in the future.

Astin's work also identified the factors that have the greatest impact on academic performance and retention. Among these findings was that frequent interaction with faculty and with fellow students led to "student satisfaction, undergraduate GPA, and retention" (p. 311). Additionally, student development was found to be facilitated at a higher level "if the student spends a considerable amount of time studying, attending classes, and using a personal computer, as well as engaging in academically related activities that would be inclined to elicit a high degree of student involvement" (p. 382). Although one would logically assume that the more time spent on academic activities would lead to increased performance, Astin's study supplied quantitative data to support the assumption. He concluded his research on the effects of involvement by stating, "Learning, academic performance, and retention are positively associated with academic

involvement, involvement with faculty, and involvement with student peer groups” (p. 394). It should be noted that Astin’s 1993 study did not include community college students in his population.

Tinto (1993) examined the National Longitudinal Survey of college students along with ACT data for his study of student attrition. The broad interpretation of his findings was that “individual departure from institutions of higher education arises from several major causes or roots. These have been described here as intention, commitment, adjustment, difficulty, congruence, isolation, obligations, and finances” (p. 81). He also indicated that students leave college in two primary ways, either due to “academic dismissal” or “voluntary withdrawal” (p. 81).

The quantitative studies aforementioned in this chapter have demonstrated that transfer shock has traditionally been studied using student academic performance indicators – usually the student’s GPA. As Tinto demonstrated, it is not uncommon for students to leave college through voluntary withdrawal. These students may be performing at an acceptable level, but choose to leave because of non-academic influences such as family or financial pressures. These indicators of attrition causes would be more likely to be identified through the use of qualitative means when studying the transition to college faced by community college transfers.

For his theoretical framework, Tinto utilized Van Gennep’s (1960) *Rites of Passage* to examine student transitions in college. This theory states that there are three primary stages in the rites of passage for any event which include “separation, transition, and incorporation” (p. 92). According to Tinto’s explanation:

Van Gennep believed that the concept of rites of passage could be applied to a variety of situations, especially those involving the movement of a person or group from one place to another. In that movement, the individual or group leaves an old territory or community (separation), in some fashion crosses a border, whether it be physical or ceremonial, to a new setting (transition), and takes up residence in the new location or community (incorporation). (Tinto, 1993, p. 93)

Van Gennep's rite of passage theory is similar to Schlossberg's (1981) Transition Theory in that it provides a way to observe an individual's reaction to events across time. However, it fails to contribute the coping mechanisms that are a primary component to Schlossberg's theory.

From his observations utilizing Van Gennep's theory, Tinto created the *Longitudinal Model of Departure from Institutions of Higher Education* (pp. 112-118). The author described the model by stating:

Broadly understood, it argues that individual departure from institutions can be viewed as arising out of a longitudinal process of interactions between an individual with given attributes, skills, financial resources, prior educational experiences, and dispositions (intentions and commitments) and other members of the academic and social systems of the institution. The individual's experience in those systems, as indicated by his/her intellectual (academic) and social (personal) integration, continually modifies his or her intentions and commitments. (pp. 114-115)

This model indicated that “eventual persistence requires that individuals make the transition to college and become incorporated into its ongoing social and intellectual life” (pp. 135-136) and “A sizable proportion of very early institutional departures mirrors the inability of new students to make the adjustment to the new world of the college” (p. 136).

This study indicated how transfers successfully incorporated themselves into the academic environment of the four-year university and adjusted in such a way that assured their academic success. Tinto argued that “perhaps the most important [observation] is the implied notion that departure hinges upon the individual’s perception of his/her experiences within an institution of higher education” (p. 136). He continued to demonstrate the benefits of utilizing a model that studied student perceptions of their experiences when he wrote, “The model takes seriously the ethnomethodological proposition that what one thinks is real, has real consequences” (p. 136) thereby giving added credence to utilizing qualitative research methods to better understand the student transition and the causes for departure from higher education.

Tinto’s study also contributed observations pertaining to the persistence of students of color which warrant mentioning in light of the desired goals of this study. He found that “programs for students of color commonly emphasize (1) advising and counseling; (2) social support; and (3) community membership” (p. 185). He continued, “At the same time, institutions that have been successful in enhancing the retention rate of students of color have also paid particular attention to issues of diversity and cultural awareness and the development of inclusive campus climates” (p. 185). These findings

support the arguments of Astin (1993) that “the weight of the empirical evidence shows that the actual effects on student development of emphasizing diversity and of student participation in diversity activities are overwhelmingly positive” (p. 431) and “the findings of this study suggest that there are many developmental benefits that accrue to students when institutions encourage and support an emphasis on multiculturalism and diversity” (p. 431).

A major criticism of Tinto’s work is that it failed to adequately address the issue of diversity (Tanaka, 2002). Tanaka argued that Tinto’s theory of attrition – like most theories of the late 20th Century – failed to question the power structure of the Western European dominant majority culture environment of higher education, and instead, attempted to identify how well under-represented students assimilated to the dominant culture. Tanaka recommended that future research on attrition and student success should incorporate questions regarding the student’s culture and how well they were nurtured by the university environment. Such an effort to conduct *intercultural* research will question the power and privilege structure inherent on contemporary university campuses.

Schlossberg’s et al., (1995) Transition Theory

To simply review the GPA performance of our transfers would be a replication of earlier studies and provide limited contribution to our understanding of the transition phenomenon. This study instead investigated the transition process as viewed through Schlossberg’s et al., (1995) Transition Theory (Schlossberg, 1981; 1987; Schlossberg et al., 1989; Schlossberg et al., 1995). Through this theoretical framework, “an examination

of what constitutes a transition, the different forms of transitions, the transition process, and factors that influence transitions” can be deduced (Evans et al., 2010, p. 214).

In its simplest form, transition theory is a model that allows researchers to better understand the process individuals undergo as they move from reaction to an event (transition) to incorporating the event into their life (adaptation). Schlossberg indicates that transition can come in three different forms. These include *anticipated transitions* – predictable changes in one’s life; *unanticipated transitions* – events that occur that were not predicted or scheduled; and *non-event transitions* – expected changes that never actually occur (Schlossberg et al., 1995). Each of these transitions can have profound effects on how one perceives their situation in life and different people will experience the transitions in different ways.

Schlossberg’s model provided a way of appraising the individual’s coping resources which are categorized by the 4 S’s – *Situation, Support, Self, and Strategies* (Schlossberg et al., 1995). The 4 S’s (Figure 2.1) were derived from Schlossberg’s (1981) belief that the ratio of resources to deficits available to deal with the transition determined the rate that an individual will move from the transition to adaptation.

Schlossberg et al. (1995) demonstrated these mechanisms (Table 2.2) when they wrote:

The 4 S model then, rather than assessing a person’s mental condition in terms of health or sickness, employs a ratio of assets to liabilities and allows for changes in the ratio as an individual’s situation changes. This approach partially answers the question of why different individuals react differently to the same type of transition and why the same person reacts differently at different times. The

difference may be that the assets-liabilities balance has changed; assets may outweigh liabilities, making adjustment relatively easy. Or, liabilities may now outweigh assets, so assimilation of the transition becomes correspondingly more difficult. (p. 49)

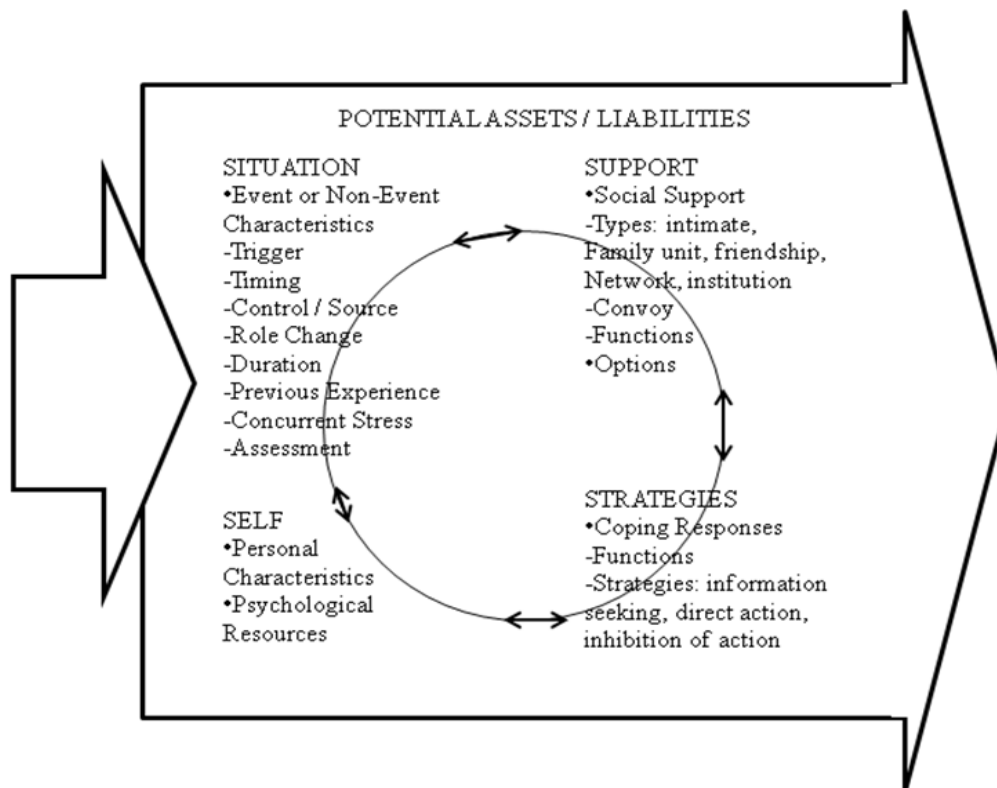


Figure 2.1. Schlossberg's Coping Resources – The Four S's, (Schlossberg et al., 1995, p. 48)

Each of the factors highlighted within the four coping resources in the 4 S model demonstrate the different influences on how the resource will impact the transition. For

example, the author noted that the individual's situation can lead to a transition because of a triggering mechanism such as a heart attack which leads to a desire for a healthier lifestyle or a birthday that causes one to question their own mortality.

Table 2.2
The 4 S Variables

Variable	Question addressed by variable
Situation	What is happening?
Self	To whom is it happening?
Support	What help is available?
Strategies	How does the person cope?

(Schlossberg et al., 1995, p. 47)

The situation factors also include individual assessment – the positive or negative assessment of the situation in which one finds one's self will dramatically impact the move from the transition to adaptation to the change. Each of these factors within each of the four coping resources interacts to impact the move from transition to adaptation.

Particularly relevant to this study, Schlossberg and her team also demonstrated that the assessment and perception of the transition and the associated resources will differ according to one's cultural or racial/ethnic background. The authors wrote:

The history of oppressed groups in this country – African Americans, other ethnic minorities, women, the old – reflects a shift from a time when many individuals accepted that there were no options for their group to a time when the group organized to fight to change the opportunity structure. (Schlossberg et al., 1995, p. 51)

They extended the argument when they demonstrated:

Thus, options can be both objective (at one time there were few professional jobs for African Americans) and subjective (“because I am African American I will not apply to medical school”). A fine line exists between actual options and the perception of actual options. Further, political action groups may assist in the creation of options for some groups, for example, women wanting to be astronauts. Thus, any discussion of options is highly complex, and involves the interaction of the actual world with the individual’s perceptions and actions. (pp. 51-52)

The coping mechanisms found in the 4 S model can take different forms and serve different purposes as students “move in, move through, and move out” (Figure 2.2) of the four-year environment (Schlossberg et al., 1995, p. 44). Schlossberg et al. (1989) described a transition like taking a trip. The authors wrote:

Preparation for the trip, the actual trip, and its aftermath all elicit feelings and reactions. But feelings at the start of a trip differ from reactions to it later. In the same way, reactions to a transition continue to change as the transition is integrated into one’s life. (p. 15)

This book also demonstrated how higher education can be improved by understanding the transition phases adult learners encounter in the higher education environment. They demonstrated that students must come to grips with the transition to the new learning environment at each phase of the transition. They wrote, “Environmental responses need to provide differential opportunities for involving adult learners – that is, for those

entering to learn the ropes, for those moving through to hang in there, and for those moving on to disengage and reinvest” (Schlossberg et al., 1989, p. 32).

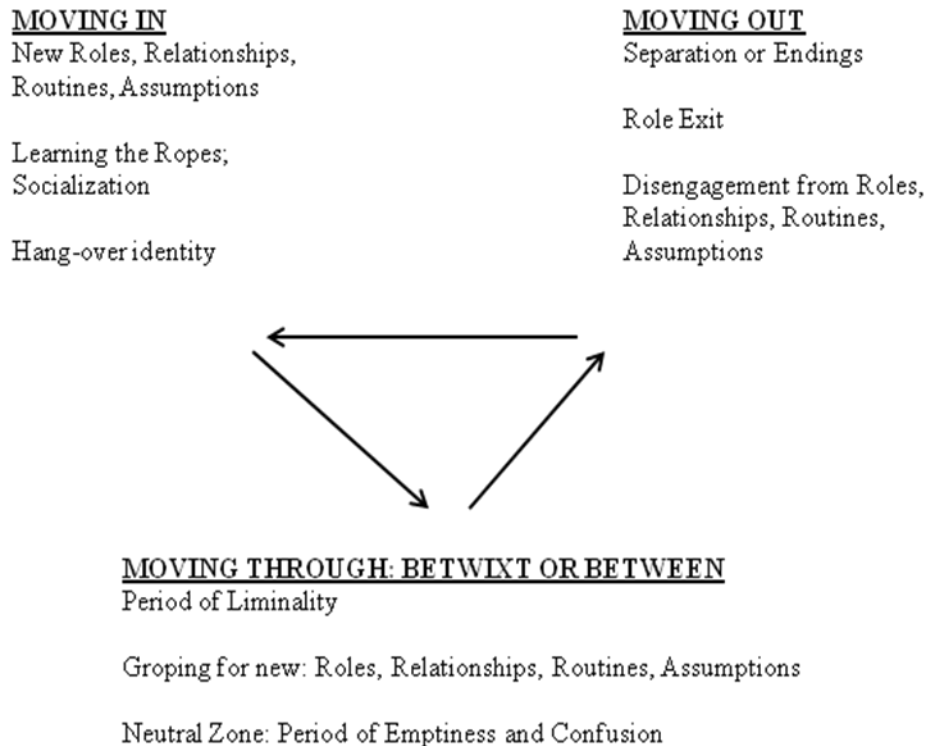


Figure 2.2. Schlossberg’s Integrative Model of the Transition Process, (Schlossberg et al., 1995, p. 44)

Each of the phases of the transition process for college students demand separate responses from higher education administrators and faculty. According to the authors, “We need to approach each of our entering services from an educational point of view and see ourselves as teachers. We need to organize the various group meetings, workshops, and programs as though they were educational activities with clearly

identified outcomes for increased understandings and new behaviors” (Schlossberg et al., 1989, p. 86).

The authors also demonstrated the issues faced by students as they move through the educational environment once they have come to understand the rules, policies and procedures of campus. Like all students in higher education, the authors revealed that adult college students needed to feel as though they belonged and mattered to the university to have academic success (Schlossberg et al., 1989). The authors demonstrated the problems associated with not addressing these demands created by students in transition. They wrote:

Supporting services are essential for helping adult learners remain in our colleges and universities. Without recognition and a sense that they occupy a viable place in the institution, a sense that they matter to the institution, adult learners will not feel that they belong. Administrators, faculty, and student development professionals need to make every effort to provide the support that makes a difference. (p. 145)

The authors concluded their recommendations for colleges and universities by demonstrating the *moving out* phase of the higher education transition. They demonstrated that each student faces the conclusion of their academic career differently and there is no panacea that easily cures the problems these students might face toward the end of their transition (Schlossberg et al., 1989).

The authors summarized the transition through higher education for adult learners and concluded their arguments when they stated:

Adult learners enter colleges and universities if they believe their needs will be met. They stay away if they believe otherwise. Part of their need has to do with the kind of support they receive from the institution. If they feel they matter, they are more likely to remain. Because our adult learners feel that they belong to a group that accepts them, that supports them, they will be likely to get involved and stay. Because they will feel they matter, they will tell their friends, and more adults will enter our colleges and universities. (p. 206)

Summary

This chapter has demonstrated that there is a cause for concern when researching the literature related to the current state of education in America. Increasingly, our competitive educational advantage we once held has slipped away due to a teaching shortage in the STEM fields and the continued failure to address the plights faced by students of color in both K-12 and higher education. The current shortage of teachers of color only exacerbates the problems faced by these vulnerable students.

To mitigate these problems and address the shortage of teachers of color, innovative sources of diverse pre-service teachers must be found. Extant literature demonstrates that America's community colleges may hold the key to both the diversification of four-year institutions and to the production of more teachers of color. However, community college transfers can face obstacles to degree completion after matriculating to the four-year university environment. Although quantitative analyses of transfer student performance has demonstrated a varying degree of transfer shock and transfer ecstasy, this chapter has argued that the transition students must undergo after

being admitted for transfer should be studied utilizing qualitative techniques and transfer shock should be redefined to move beyond the historical analysis that only studies academic performance. Using Schlossberg's et al., (1995) Transition Theory, this study examined the student transition as they navigate into, through, and out of the four-year university environment.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

This study utilized qualitative research methods for data collection and analysis. Lincoln and Denzin (2005) demonstrated that qualitative research is different from quantitative methods in that the social reconstruction of the subject's view of reality is studied using entirely different forms of inquiry from quantitative measure. The authors also demonstrated that qualitative researchers "seek answers to questions that stress *how* social experience is created and given meaning" (p. 10). Within qualitative inquiry, "the phenomenon of interest unfolds naturally in that it has no predetermined course established by and for the researcher such as would occur in a laboratory or other controlled setting" (Patton, 2002, p. 39). The research strategies employed for this study included a thick description of students of color who had transferred into a predominantly White teacher education program.

Statement of the Research Question

This study answered the questions: How do under-represented community college transfer populations attending a predominantly White pre-service teacher training program perceive their educational environment and what are their perceptions regarding the services provided by the university to ensure their academic success? And what are the criteria that must be in place for students of color to succeed in a predominantly White pre-service teacher training program? Within these questions, sub-questions were posed to understand how students of color transition from the community

college to the university environment within the three stages of Schlossberg's et al., (1995) Transition Theory – *moving in, moving through, and moving out*. For example, students were asked how well they felt the community college prepared them for the transition to the university environment, how well they were supported by the university as they progressed through their degree, and what challenges they anticipate as they prepare to graduate and transition into their teaching career. The questions were also framed to understand the four coping mechanisms available to the student, or the 4 S's as described by Schlossberg to allow students to provide a narrative of their efforts to adapt to the university environment (See Appendix E).

Theoretical Tradition

This study relied on phenomenology as the theoretical tradition in which it was conducted. According to Holstein and Gubrium (2005), using philosophical or social phenomenology, “the scientific observer deals with how the social world is made meaningful” and the focus of the study “is on *how* members of the social world comprehend and act upon the objects of their experience as if they were things separate and distinct from themselves” (p. 485). Patton (2002) indicated that “Phenomenological analysis seeks to grasp and elucidate the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of a phenomenon for a person or a group of people” (p. 482). Marshall and Rossman (2006) provided the simplest explanation of phenomenology when they wrote, “Phenomenology is the study of lived experiences and the ways we understand those experiences to develop a worldview” (p. 104).

This study utilized a phenomenological case study design to comprehend the experiences of seven community college transfers who had matriculated into a predominantly White pre-service teacher education program. The phenomenon investigated was the students' relationship with the university to gain an appreciation for how that relationship has helped or hindered the students' transition into, through, and out of the university environment – in other words, did the relationship with the institution assist the students as they adapted to their new environment? The past experiences of the students aided in answering the posed research questions. Merriam (1998) demonstrated that “prior beliefs about a phenomenon of interest are temporarily put aside, or bracketed so as not to interfere with seeing or intuiting the elements of structure of the phenomenon” (p. 16).

Embedded single-case study design (Figure 3.1) was used in this study to develop a thick description that detailed the past experiences of the students who had matriculated into a pre-service teacher education program. According to Yin (2009):

The case study inquiry copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. (p. 18)

The case study approach provided me the opportunity to gain an appreciation for the students' perception of the phenomenon within their environment through participant-observation.

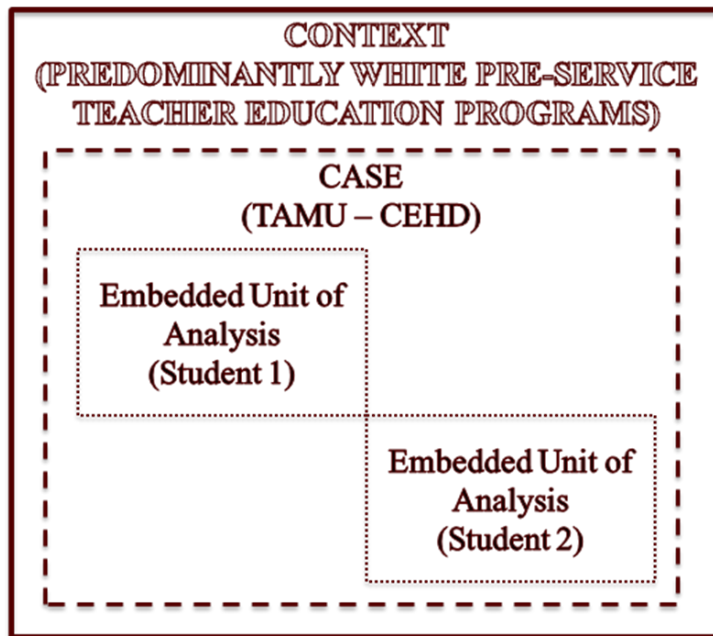


Figure 3.1. Yin's Embedded Single-case Design, (Yin, 2009, p. 46)

The case study approach also provides for a *bounded system* (Merriam, 1998). The bounded system provides for boundaries to be in place in which multiple individuals are researched. For this particular study, the bounded system referred to under-represented community college transfer students who were nearing the completion of their pre-service teacher training at a PWI. These students were interviewed in a variety of formats and the findings from these discussions were analyzed to interpret their experiences as they transition out of the University environment. Seven participants within the case study were selected to provide multiple viewpoints of how under-represented students experience transition in a PWI.

Yin (2009) postulated that case study research can be utilized when the research question includes 'how' or 'why' statements and does not require control of behavioral

events and focuses on contemporary issues. Additionally, case study analysis provides for the inquiry of an event when there are more variables of interest than data points and the researcher intends to utilize multiple sources of evidence during inquiry. This study utilized an *embedded* single-case design (Figure 3.1). Within the context of PWI teacher education programs, multiple units of analysis – the participants of the study – were chosen within a single case – Texas A&M University. Texas A&M University was chosen as the single case because it is a representative or typical case as defined by Yin (2009). Texas A&M University possesses a robust predominantly White pre-service teacher education program with an under-represented Hispanic and African American sub-population.

Site and Sample Selection

This study utilized purposeful sampling to identify the institution and the students to select for the study. Purposeful sampling provides the opportunity to (1) identify participants who can serve as typical representatives of the phenomenon being studied, (2) can also represent the unique representatives of the phenomenon, (3) provide the opportunity for the researcher to hone in on the cases that most closely match the phenomenon wanting to be studied, and (4) present an opportunity to compare the phenomenological event from differing perspectives (Maxwell, 2005).

The selection criteria for the participants and the university were based on predetermined criteria. First, the selection criteria of the students included their GPR at the University, their race/ethnicity, and the status of where the student was in their academic program. Only students in good standing (minimum of a 2.75 GPR), who

identified as African American or Hispanic, and were classified as 'U4' or senior status at the University participated in the study. To fit into the theoretical framework of Schlossberg's et al., (1995) Transition Theory, students were needed who were nearing the graduation stage so they could reflect on their experiences of the *moving out* stage as well as the *moving in* and *moving through* stages. Additionally, students who were not academically qualified to pursue teacher certification due to academics likely would not be available due to probation and dismissal policies of the university. Information about the students was gathered from the students' advisors and professors and institutional records made available to the researcher. Unfortunately, after the students who had previously worked with me were culled out, mostly female students were left as part of my sample. The gender of the research participants was previously listed as a limitation to this study.

The site selected for this study was the College of Education and Human Development at Texas A&M University. This college was chosen because it is the largest producer of teachers for the high-need fields of Math, Science, and Bilingual Education in Texas and TAMU qualifies as a large, PWI. According to the University, Texas A&M was ranked in 2010 as the sixth largest university in America with an enrollment of over 49,000 students (Texas A&M University, 2010). Additionally, the College of Education and Human Development had a spring of 2009 enrollment of 3,822 undergraduate students (College of Education & Human Development, 2010). Of the transfers admitted to the pre-service teacher education program in the fall of 2009 and the spring of 2010, only 1% were African American and 11% identified as Hispanic.

Texas A&M University is located in College Station, Texas which, with its sister city of Bryan, has a combined population of around 185,000. The student to faculty ratio of the university is 19:1 and the vast majority of the student population is Texas residents.

This study was not designed to be a representative study of transfer students into all majors or pre-professional programs, nor was it intended to be utilized by all institutions of higher education. The researcher places the responsibility of the transferability of this information solely on the reader so they may be able to apply and transfer any relevant findings to their own context.

Researcher's Role Management

This study was conducted with the researcher acting as a detached observer. My goal for the inquiry was to research the students while they were currently enrolled in their natural setting of the university campus. According to Patton (1990), "Participant observation necessarily combines observing and informal interviewing." He continued, "Observers need to be disciplined about not assuming they know the meaning to participants of what they observe without checking with those participants" (p. 287). The observational data collected during the inquiry process is important because "If observers put away their seeing and observing selves as soon as a planned, formal activity ends, they will miss a great deal of data" (pp. 285-286).

For this study, I spent the fall and spring semesters with the students in their natural setting by observing them on campus to better understand their interaction with the pre-service teacher training program and the university environment. Interactions included visits with the students and their advisors as they sought academic support and

advice, and interaction in co-curricular environments. This interaction provided the opportunity for a thicker and richer description of their experiences and allowed me to observe the experiences they attempted to describe during the interview process.

Entry. Patton (2002) described the entry into the field in qualitative studies by stating it “involves two separate parts: (1) negotiation with gatekeepers, whoever they may be, about the nature of the fieldwork to be done and (2) actual physical entry into the field setting to begin collecting data” (p. 310). Professional contacts in the college provided the entry necessary to select participants for the study. Marshall and Rossman (2006) demonstrated that entry can become an issue at various stages of the research process and it is best for the researcher to be transparent with the goals of the study and remain themselves while working with both the gatekeepers who can connect the researcher with the participants and with the participants themselves. Key contacts who could provide the connection to participants were identified through my previous professional experiences.

Mr. Justin Smith is the Director of Undergraduate Advising for the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture in the College of Education and Human Development at Texas A&M University. He has been serving as an advisor in this department for close to ten years and typically serves as the primary point of contact for admitted transfer students in the pre-service training program in that department. Mr. Smith was informed of the research question for this study and the parameters in place for the purposive sampling of my population. Based on these criteria, he was able to suggest possible participants for the study. The Department of Teaching, Learning, and

Culture provides teacher certification for Early Childhood (Pre-Kindergarten – 6th Grade), Middle Grades (4th-8th Grade) Math and Science, and Middle Grades Language Arts and Social Studies. Once the students were identified by Mr. Smith, an email was sent to the students that introduced me and provided details of the study. I followed those emails with phone calls.

Another point of contact for this study was Mrs. Christy Porter, the advisor for the Department of Educational Psychology in the College of Education and Human Development at Texas A&M University. Mrs. Porter has been the advisor for this department for six years and works with all admitted transfers in this program. The Educational Psychology department certifies teachers for Special Education (Pre-Kindergarten – 12th Grade) and Bilingual Education (Pre-Kindergarten – 6th Grade). The same selection procedures and contact process was utilized for the students selected by Mrs. Porter.

Reciprocity. According to Patton (2002) the participants in the study must find some benefit to participate in the study to ensure that a mutual exchange of communication occurs. Marshall and Rossman (2006) provided a discussion of reciprocity and ethics when they wrote, “When people adjust their priorities and routines to help the researcher, or even just tolerate the researcher’s presence, they are giving of themselves” (p. 81). They highlighted that the researcher must be reciprocal to these sacrifices – whether of time or convenience – by remaining thoughtful to participant needs and providing any available accommodations that remain “within the constraints of research and personal ethics and of maintaining one’s role as a researcher” (p. 81). To

provide reciprocity to my participants, all participants were provided a copy of the report once the project was completed and all participants were provided the opportunity to review observations and interview transcripts from the interview sessions. Positionality was taken into consideration as I gathered and analyzed data. While I am an administrator in the College in which the students are studying, I attempted to only identify students with whom I had limited previous contact and effort was made to limit my role as an administrator as the interviews were conducted by asking students to identify the location to hold the interview sessions.

Providing transcripts and notes from the observations not only served as a form of reciprocity, but also ensured that participants could give feedback on the data that was being collected. This feedback is termed member checks in naturalistic inquiry. Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined member checks as a process “whereby data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of those stakeholding [sic] groups from whom the data were originally collected” (p. 314). Member checks served the purpose of ensuring there was appropriate risk assessment, confidentiality, and data access and also assisted me in verifying statements when analyzing data. Lincoln and Guba demonstrated that member checking allows the researcher to assess intentionality, allow for the correction of errors by the participants, creates an opportunity to expand on comments by the participant, mitigates investigator error, helps to summarize data for analysis, and allows the participants the chance to confirm their statements and analyze the overall worth of their statements.

Ethics. Marshall and Rossman (2006) indicated that researchers have the inherent duty to ensure the confidentiality of the participants and collect the consent of those being studied. For this inquiry, the participants' confidentiality was protected through the coding of collected data. Additionally, throughout the data collection process and the analysis phase of the study, the interviews and other data collected was not shared with any individuals other than the participant, my dissertation committee chair, and the data transcriptionist. The participants volunteered their time willingly and consent forms [Appendix C] to participate in the study were collected before the interview sessions. No harm was intended nor anticipated in the participation of this study. Pseudonyms were utilized to protect the anonymity of the participants.

Researcher Strategies

The research for my study began by becoming familiar with the transfer requirements necessary for transfer into the pre-service teacher education program at Texas A&M University. This process included gathering relevant information from the University – including the undergraduate catalog – and publications from the College of Education and Human Development. From the gatekeepers – Mr. Smith and Mrs. Porter – and with the permission of the participants, relevant and available background academic information of the participants was collected to provide a thicker description and details that would be added to the data collected during the interview process.

This document and background collection [Appendix D], participant journals, and interviewing triangulated the data that was collected. The academic background information provided a better understanding of the academic credentials of the students.

The interview data contributed the student's description of their past experiences as they adapted to the University environment. Finally, the journals of the students provided their ability to reflect on their experiences after the initial interview to contribute their narrative as they move out of the University environment. The participant journals included weekly prompts [Appendix F] that questioned the participants over various aspects of the study that caused the student to reflect on their time in the program and to comment on aspects of the transition that they were undergoing in their current educational environment. These prompts originated from the participant responses to the informal conversational interview questions and sought information where I felt I needed additional data or further explanations regarding the themes that emerged.

Each of these forms of data made for a thick description of the student experience and ensured the most detailed data possible was collected. According to Patton (2002); "A rich variety of methodological combinations can be employed to illuminate an inquiry question" (p. 248). Maxwell (2005) found that "This strategy reduces the risk that your conclusion will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific source or method, and allows you to gain a broader and more secure understanding of the issues you are investigating" (pp. 93-94).

Although much of the literature on transfer shock has typically only investigated the phenomenon from a quantitative perspective, the historical studies were consulted for this study to gain an appreciation for the theorized causes for low academic performance. Additionally, the literature on student attrition in higher education and the theoretical framework of Schlossberg's et al., (1995) Transition Theory were utilized to

frame the research protocol. My committee was consulted frequently in the design stage to assist in shaping the research protocol and the questions that should be posed to the participants.

After collecting relevant background information on the participants and transfer information published by the institution, I began the individual interview sessions on the University campus. Along with the participants, I interviewed their advisors and others who may have interacted with the students in an academic setting to better understand how the students interacted in the university environment and the possible issues they had overcome as they adapted to their new educational context.

The interviews were standardized open-ended interviews (Patton, 2002). The interview questions were created to ensure they fit within the theoretical framework and reflected the theories found to be relevant during the review of literature. For example, questions were divided along a table that provided the ability to collect data about Schlossberg's et al., (1995) 4 S's at the three phases of the transition process. Early questions in the interview pertained to the student's Situation in the *moving in* stage and concluded by having the participant reflect on their Strategies in the *moving out* stage. The research protocol as shaped by the theoretical framework is included [See Appendix E]. The protocol established the ability to have consistency of "stimuli" between all participants (Patton, 2002, p. 344). Patton also demonstrated that the standardized open-ended interviews allowed the instrument to be reviewed by my doctoral committee before research was conducted, minimized variation between participants, made the best

use of participants' time during the interviews, and made the findings and responses convenient to find and compare.

Following the standardized open-ended interview found in the research protocol, an informal conversational interview was conducted to continue data collection. Patton (2002) described this form of interviewing as "ethnographic interviewing" (p. 342). Although this type of interviewing produces different responses from different participants, it allows the questions to be more personal and allows the questions to be tailored to the immediate surroundings and context in which the participant finds his or her self (pp. 342-343).

The triangulated data provided the opportunity for constant comparison of the findings to help develop my findings into a theory. Merriam (1998) provided a description of the constant comparison method when she wrote:

The development of categories, properties, and tentative hypotheses through the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) is a process whereby the data gradually evolve into a core of emerging theory. This core is a theoretical framework that guides the further collection of data. Deriving a theory from the data involves both the integration and the refinement of categories, properties, and hypotheses. (p. 191)

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) the stages of the constant comparative method include: (1) the comparison of reported incidents that can be applied to the categories of the research, (2) integrating the categories and the properties of each category into the

research, (3) the categories are reduced in size through delimitation of the theory, and (4) the theory is constructed.

Emergent Design

The use of emergent design provides the flexibility to change the design of the study as the researcher identifies new perspectives of the participants that should be researched further. This process was described by Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993) when they wrote:

As the researcher operates within the social context ... he or she will move around the circle of stakeholders many times, sharing constructions and building common understanding and direction. From this process, the final shape of the study and the form in which it will be reported gradually emerge. (p. 68)

This flexibility is required to allow for further and continued inquiry of the participants' experiences as they develop throughout the research process.

This study was designed to allow the data to inform and answer the posed research questions. According to Patton (2002), emergent design provides a flexible process that leads to "Openness to adapting inquiry as understanding deepens and/or situations change" (p. 40). Additionally, he indicated that this flexibility prevents the researcher from "getting locked into rigid designs that eliminate responsiveness and pursues new paths of discovery as they emerge" (p. 40).

Data Collection Techniques

The data that were collected for this study were gathered during ethnographic, open-ended interviews with research participants, the written documents such as

participant journal reflections that were gathered throughout the inquiry process, analysis of documents related to institutional programs, and through persistent observation of the students as they operated within the university environment.

Interviews. Interviews were conducted with the selected participants to develop a construction of the students' experiences as they transitioned into, through, and out of the university environment. As mentioned previously, the interviews utilized the standardized open-ended interview format as described by Patton (2002). This process allows participants to build their narrative utilizing their own words. Maxwell (2005) made a point of demonstrating that "your research questions formulate what you want to understand; your interview questions are what you ask people in order to gain that understanding" (p. 92). Each participant was asked questions from the standardized open-ended interview in the same way. After this interview concluded, additional data was collected utilizing the informal conversational interviewing method.

The informal conversational interviewing technique provides a more flexible format for data collection and allows findings to naturally emerge while engaging in discourse with the participant. As Patton (2002) indicated:

This combined strategy offers the interviewer flexibility in probing and in determining when it is appropriate to explore certain subjects in greater depth, or even to pose questions about new areas of inquiry that were not originally anticipated in the interview instrument's design. (p. 347)

The interviews were digitally recorded and notes were taken throughout the interviews to improve the accuracy of the data transcripts. The permission of the

respondents was obtained before the interview and all materials were kept in a locked office. The interview questions were generated by reviewing the literature on the phenomenon and by consulting with my dissertation committee chair. The use of the existing literature provided theoretical sensitivity which allows one to glean the more pertinent and meaningful data from the inquiry process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Strauss and Corbin demonstrated that theoretical sensitivity has four sources – literature, professional experience, personal experience, and the analytic process. This study utilized a review of literature, my professional experience, and the analytic process itself.

The literature review for this study included an overview of the contemporary education context in which community college transfers are entering the four-year university environment, the teacher shortage – especially emphasizing the shortage of teachers of color, community college student demographics, transfer shock, higher education attrition, and lastly, Schlossberg's et al., (1995) Transition Theory. I have had extensive professional experience working with transfer students in a pre-service teacher training program and applied this experience to the study. A number of questions utilized in the interview process were formulated to focus on and insure trustworthiness.

Informal conversational interviews concluded the interview sessions and provided the opportunity to obtain additional comments and gave participants the chance to expand on previous statements. This also allowed me to seek clarification on any statements that may have been unclear. I followed up with the participants utilizing social media platforms such as Facebook, Instant Messaging, and email. Flowers and Moore (2003) demonstrated that on-line data collection within student affairs can

specifically assist in measuring “students’ perceptions of campus climate” and “study ways to improve the recruitment and retention of diverse and underrepresented students” (p. 4).

Observations. Observational data was collected through the academic year. Merriam (1998) chronicled that observation is a qualitative research tool when it has a formulated purpose, is deliberately planned, there is a systematic process for recording the observations, and there are ways of checking the validity and reliability of the data. These criteria were met by (1) formulating the purpose of using the observations to contribute to the narrative provided through the interview sessions, (2) constructing a timeframe for conducting the observations so there was a sense of deliberateness to the collection, (3) recording the observations in such way so the data could supplement the data collected in interviews, and (4) the observations were shared with the participants as a form of member checks of the observational data.

Students were asked weekly throughout the spring to journal their experiences to reflect on their support and situational structures as they began to transition out of the university environment. These journal entries were emailed to me so the documents could contribute to the thick description of the participant’s experiences in their program. The combination of observing students in their natural setting and the ability to chronicle student experiences in their own words provided a better understanding of the natural world in which the students had their experiences and contributed to my theoretical orientation of phenomenology (Patton, 2002). Student journals were critical for this study because I do not identify as being from an under-represented racial and/or

ethnic group and the lens through which I viewed the student experiences could not possibly be the same as the students'.

Propositions

Yin (2009, p. 28) identified that a case study proposition “directs attention to something that should be examined within the scope of study.” During the design stage of this study, I made the assumption that the support services provided by higher education institutions can help mitigate academic difficulties students most assuredly encounter during their scholastic career. Additionally, the assumption was made that academic support programs that address the different causes of transfer shock would help students progress through a teacher certification program and ultimately help universities increase production of under-represented teachers. The propositions for this study included the belief that institutional resources assist in the transition that students make through college as well as the theoretical orientation that campus climate impacts the perceptions and experiences of under-represented transfer students on PWI campuses. The unit of analysis in this case study is the individual student being interviewed. All subjects were transfer students in a teacher preparation program at Texas A&M University.

Managing and Recording Data

All interviews were recorded digitally and transcribed by the researcher. The files of the digital recordings were saved electronically for future updates and any necessary clarifications. The documents that were collected during the course of the

research were locked in the researcher's office. The researcher assessed all data and analyzed through methods that will be described in Chapter Four of this study.

Assuring Trustworthiness

Patton (2002) argued that an emphasis should be placed on trustworthiness “by being balanced, fair, and conscientious in taking account of multiple perspectives, multiple interests, and multiple realities” (p. 575). Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 290) identified four questions that should be posed to assess trustworthiness:

(1) *Truth Value*: How can one establish confidence in the “truth” of the findings of a particular inquiry for the subjects (respondents) with which and the context in which the inquiry was carried out?

(2) *Applicability*: How can one determine the extent to which the findings of a particular inquiry have applicability in other contexts or with other subjects (respondents)?

(3) *Consistency*: How can one determine whether the findings of an inquiry would be repeated if the inquiry were replicated with the same (or similar) subjects (respondents) in the same (or similar) context?

(4) *Neutrality*: How can one establish the degree to which the findings of an inquiry are determined by the subjects (respondents) and conditions of the inquiry and not by the biases, motivations, interests, or perspectives of the inquirer?

Truth value. To address the first question related to the *truth value*, I used persistent engagement with the participants in the study. Guba and Lincoln (1985)

demonstrated that “prolonged engagement . . . requires that the investigator be involved with a site sufficiently long to detect and take account of distortions that might otherwise creep into the data” (p. 302) and it “is intended to provide the investigator an opportunity to build trust” (p. 303). This study was conducted over the course of an academic year with periodic observation periods spread out over the course of that year. This provided the opportunity to interact with the study participants while learning more about the educational environment in which they studied.

Applicability. *Applicability* was addressed through the transferability of the study. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the application of the findings ultimately must be determined by the reader instead of the original researcher. However, work must be done “to accumulate empirical evidence about contextual similarity” and “providing sufficient descriptive data to make such similarity judgments possible” (p. 298). I leave the decision of which aspects of this study are applicable to other contexts to the reader and provide caution that the study was not designed nor intended to be generalized across all academic disciplines or university settings. This study has only the purpose of describing the experiences of two-year transfer students of color in a predominantly White pre-service teacher training program.

Consistency. To address *consistency*, an audit trail was kept that included “raw data, data reduction and analysis products, data reconstruction and synthesis products, process notes, materials relating to intentions and dispositions, and instrument development information” (p. 320). This audit trail allowed data to be reviewed within

the contexts that they were presented, and conveniently traced the data and its sources for further analysis after collection.

Neutrality. Finally, *Neutrality* was insured through peer debriefing, persistent engagement, and member checks. Peer debriefing was conducted with my dissertation committee chair and fellow students who helped review my analysis. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), peer debriefing “is a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer’s mind” (p. 308).

Persistent engagement and observation holds the purpose of identifying “those characteristics and elements in the situation that are most relevant to the problem or issue being pursued and focusing on them in detail” (p. 304). The process of persistent engagement provided the ability to sort the categories of my findings and seek additional data that was needed to fully describe the experiences of the students. This helped determine the salience and credibility of the data during the analytical stages.

Member checks were the final tool used to remain neutral in the inquiry process. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated this is the process “whereby data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions are tested with members of those stakeholding [sic] groups from whom the data were originally collected” (p. 314). Member checks were conducted every two weeks and after any forms of interview inquiry. Students were regularly emailed to ask if they had any new contributions to the study or if any of their perceptions had changed since we met previously.

Data Analysis Strategies

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) recorded that the works of Geertz (1973; 1983) demonstrated the calls for *thick description* which he described as “interpretations of interpretations” (p. 17). Patton (2002) described thick description as the ability “to open up a world to the reader through rich, detailed, and concrete descriptions of people and places” (p. 438). It was critical for this study to accurately describe the university context in which the students were studying. The primary focus of this study was on transfer students of color in a PWI environment so thick description of the campus climate and environment was provided during the collection and analysis of the data.

This study utilized the *constant comparative* method of analysis as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985). This process allows the researcher to “compare it [recorded incidents collected during the course of research] with the previous incidents in the same and different groups coded in the same category” (p 341). Constant comparative provides the opportunity for themes to develop as incidents are compared and contrasted and connections – be they attributes, cause-effect, or special – can be made between and across the reported incidents. Lincoln and Guba list the four steps of the constant comparative method as “(1) Comparing incidents applicable to each category, (2) Integrating categories and their properties, (3) Delimiting the theory, and (4) Writing the theory” (pp. 339-344).

This study collected and codified data that included the responses during formal interviews, documents, and other forms of observation including the respondents’ journal entries. The responses were recorded onto cards and codified to identify the date

and time of collection, the respondent who made the comment, and the format in which the data was collected. These cards were then analyzed to help develop matching themes and patterns. According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), “Here, the researcher does not search for the exhaustive and mutually exclusive categories of the statistician but, instead, identifies the salient, grounded categories of meaning held by participants in the setting” (p. 159).

Descriptive codes are identified by Miles and Huberman (1994) as “attributing a class of phenomena to a segment of text” (p. 57). During the course of this study, the transition to college was investigated and this phenomenon included the students’ interactions with various administrators, faculty, and advisors.

This study also utilized a conceptually clustered matrix to display the data as described by Miles and Huberman for the descriptive display of data. The authors described the matrix by stating it “has rows and columns arranged to bring together items that belong together” to develop “conceptual coherence” (p. 127). Such a matrix [See Appendices G-K] was utilized to demonstrate student experiences within their four coping mechanisms (or the 4 S’s) at each stage of their transition process in the university environment.

During the analysis and writing phase of the study, the themes that emerged were represented using *in vivo* coding (Charmaz, 2006). *In vivo* coding allows the titles of the themes to be represented using the narrative of the participants. For this study, I identified comments from the transcript that best described the theme that emerged and allowed those comments to represent the theme and sub-themes. For example, my first

theme involved the perceptions of under-represented transfer students and I felt this was best represented through the comment “more good days than bad days” which was how one participant described her experiences studying in a PWI.

Summary

This chapter has demonstrated the qualitative method that was utilized for this study. The theoretical orientation chosen for this study was phenomenology and the constant comparative method was utilized for data analysis of the data collected during the case study research. The study utilized qualitative techniques including member checks, peer debriefing, triangulation, and an audit trail to insure trustworthiness of the findings.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter includes the analysis of the data collected during the course of my inquiry. To contribute to the thick description of my inquiry and findings, I first present biographical participant information and introduce each student participant using a chosen pseudonym and basic background characteristics. I then introduce the five themes that were developed through the data analysis process. These five themes are represented using select phrases from the participant narratives that best explain the theme itself – a process known as *in vivo* coding (Charmaz, 2006). These themes include: *More Good Days than Bad: Perceptions of Under-Represented Transfers, I Don't Know Where I Would be without Their Help: The Role of Intimate Support Structures, Providing All We Need: Institutionalized Support Structures, Challenging but Rewarding: Confronting Situational Factors, and It Takes More Time and Commitment: Employed Strategies by Transfers.*

Population, Sample, and Participants

This study began in November of 2010 by making the initial contact with my gatekeepers, Mr. Justin Smith and Mrs. Christy Porter. These individuals were asked to compile a list of Hispanic and African American students who were senior teacher education majors and in good standing in the department. The initial list of approximately 30 students was then reviewed with the Undergraduate Recruitment Database – a comprehensive list of students who have been recruited by the college over

the past decade. Any students who had made previous contact with the CEHD Undergraduate Recruitment Office were removed from consideration to ensure that no *recruited* students were interviewed. This process was done to ensure that the participants were not influenced to attend the University nor feel coerced into participating in this study. The final list of eligible seniors included 15 students who would later be contacted to participate in the study – only seven agreed to participate.

The participants (Table 4.1) for this study included four Hispanic students and three African Americans. The group included only one male student and the participants ranged in age from 21 to 33. Three of the students were completing degrees in Early Childhood Education, two were studying Hispanic Bilingual Education, one was a Middle Grades Math/Science major, and one was a Special Education major. All but one of the students had parents who had never obtained a college undergraduate degree.

Table 4.1.
Participant Biographical Background Summary

Student	Race/Ethnicity	Age	Gender	Major	Transfer Institution(s)
Amy	Hispanic	22	Female	Early Childhood	Lone Star College & Blinn College
Cindy	Hispanic	21	Female	Early Childhood	Collin County CC & Blinn College
Hope	African American	29	Female	Early Childhood	Blinn College
Julie	African American	22	Female	Middle Grades Math/Science	Victoria College
Lulu	Hispanic	24	Female	Bilingual Education	Blinn College
Mario	Hispanic	22	Male	Bilingual Education	Blinn College
Rae	African American	33	Female	Special Education	Central Texas College & Blinn College

Table 4.2 includes a summary of additional information obtained prior to each student's interview session. To gauge each student's engagement with extracurricular activities – both at the community college and the university level – participants were asked additional questions regarding their organizational involvement.

Table 4.2.
Participant Engagement Summary

Student	Organizations at Community College	Organizations at Texas A&M	Support Services at Texas A&M
Amy	Church Youth Group	Aggie Sisters for Christ, Texas State Teachers Association, Association for Childhood Education International	Writing Center
Cindy	None	Phi Beta Chi	Student Disability Services
Hope	Sigma Kappa Delta	Kappa Delta Pi	None
Julie	Student Government, Church Organizations	ReJoyce in Jesus Ministries, Bible Study at Church	Tutoring and Supplemental Instruction Sessions
Lulu	None	None	Academic Advisor
Mario	Blinn Christian Fellowship	Impact	Student Counseling Services Tutoring Lab
Rae	Church Activities	Veteran's Activities	Student Disability Services, Counseling Center, Byrne Center

Information (Table 4.3) was also gleaned from the participant questionnaire regarding the student's usage of academic support services while at Texas A&M and information regarding financial support and employment history at both the community college and at Texas A&M was also obtained.

Table 4.3.
Participant Financial Support Summary

Student	Work in Community College	Work in Texas A&M	Financial Aid at Community College	Financial Aid at Texas A&M
Amy	Yes, 35 Hrs./Week	Yes, 15-20 Hrs./Week	None	Loans
Cindy	No	No	None	None
Hope	No	No	Title IV Loans and Grants	Title IV Loans and Grants
Julie	Yes, 8-16 Hrs./Week	Yes, 8-16 Hrs./Week	Grants, Scholarships, Loans, Work Study	Grants, Scholarships, Loans, Work Study
Lulu	Yes, 16 Hrs./Week	Yes, 20 Hrs./Week	Grants	Grants and Loans
Mario	Yes, 15-20 Hrs./Week	Yes, 8 Hrs./Week	Pell Grant, Loans	Scholarships, Pell Grant, Loans
Rae	Yes, 20+ Hrs./Week	Yes, 20+ Hrs./Week	Veteran's Affairs (VA) Benefits, Loans, Grants	Veteran's Affairs (VA) Benefits, Loans, Grants

Case Site Summary

The site selected for this study was the College of Education and Human Development at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas. This traditional

teacher education program currently serves approximately 3,800 undergraduate students – approximately half of which are pursuing a teacher preparation major – and is an example of a PWI with a low under-represented population. Over 80% of the students are White, while close to 12% identify as Hispanic and less than 3% are African American. On average, the college admits approximately 150 external transfer students into the teacher education program per semester and consistently has graduated the largest number of teachers in the state of Texas in the fields of Mathematics, Science, Bilingual Education, and English as a Second Language (ESL).

Methodology Summary

The first email was forwarded to solicit participation (Appendix A) on January 13, 2011 and follow up phone calls (Appendix B) were made on January 18, 2011. From these emails and phone calls, nine participants ultimately responded with their willingness to participate. One of the students was removed from participation when I learned that she had utilized my services to be admitted to A&M – I did not want the participant to feel coerced into participation in the study. As students contacted me, I began scheduling the initial interviews and fielded any questions the students had regarding the nature of my study.

The first qualitative interviews were conducted on January 24, 2011 and continued through January 31, 2011. The locations for the interview sessions were chosen at the participant's convenience with the majority choosing to meet on campus and one at a coffee shop off campus. Students were asked to complete a consent form (Appendix C) giving me permission to utilize their responses and a biographical

questionnaire (Appendix D) before the interview began so I could collect additional basic information. All digitally recorded interviews ranged from 45 minutes to one hour and fifteen minutes and followed a set of protocol questions (Appendix E) that provided consistency across sessions. Each session concluded with an informal conversational interview that allowed for the collection of additional clarifying data related to their narrative.

Immediately following each interview, the field notes from the sessions were reviewed and the audio recordings were sent to the transcriptionist so they could be converted to a text format. As these text files were returned to me, I then emailed them to the participant so that member checks could be employed to improve the accuracy of my findings. In the four weeks following the interviews, participants were emailed a question (Appendix F) to create a journal of responses and to provide persistent engagement with the subjects. These data were then coded and printed on note cards so they could be analyzed and compiled into categories until themes emerged. The evidence supporting the themes was placed into a conceptually clustered matrix for both data display and analysis (Appendices G, H, I, J, and K). The themes that emerged demonstrate the perceptions of under-represented community college transfers, the role intimate support structures play for this population of students, the roles played by the support structures provided by the institution, the situational factors faced by under-represented transfers, and the strategies the students utilize to successfully progress in the university environment. Each of these themes will be explored in further detail in the remaining sections.

More Good Days than Bad: Perceptions of Under-Represented Transfers

It became clear as students were interviewed that their perceptions of the transfer process were shaped by the process itself. For students who had difficulty in obtaining information to be successful, the transfer process was seen as a painful and intimidating ordeal. However, for those students who had the forethought to seek out resources at the University, the comments regarding the transfer process are much more positive. The perceptions of these students can best be sorted into four sub-themes which are: *Amazing or Awful: Pre-university Advising, This is Really What I'm Supposed to Be Doing: The Importance of Starting with an End in Mind, I Was Just Lost All the Time: Perceptions of Post-Admission Orientation*, and *It Really Didn't Matter that I was a Transfer Student: Individual Perceptions*. These sub-themes reflect student narratives regarding the advising and outreach they received prior to transferring from the community college to the university, the concept of seeking out new knowledge early to make transfer easier, the student reflections of their orientation to the university environment, and the overall perception of being a community college transfer student at a large university.

Amazing or awful: Pre-university advising. During the course of my inquiry, students were asked to reflect on the professional advising that they received prior to enrolling at the University. For some, the advisors and mentors were positive influences whose guidance was mentioned as the reason for their success. For other students, the advising was described as awful, ultimately causing students to seek out advice from friends instead of community college advisors. In some instances, this process led to increased self-advising.

The students who were most positive about the advice they received tended to be involved with some form of “special advising” beyond the typical community college academic advisors. Two examples of these special advisors and their respective offices include advisors in the Office of Disability Services and advisors in the Veterans Affairs Office. For example, Cindy suffers from dyslexia and often used disability services advisors to help with her communication with her professors regarding needed services. As she mentioned in her interview:

They were actually pretty good. I did not have one at Collin County, but I did have a really good one at Blinn. I can't remember her name, because I went through the disability services office, and they have their own counselors. But she [Blinn advisor] was amazing. She signed me up for all the classes that I needed, she signed me up for the good teachers that would be willing to help somebody like me. (INT-Cindy.1/24/11.p1)

She also described what the advisor meant to her throughout her community college and transfer experience. As she mentioned, “... it was way smoother with somebody else being like, you know, so rather than just going at it on your own and flying solo and having to figure all that stuff out for yourself” (INT-Cindy.1/24/11.pp4-5).

Rae also used a special advisor beyond the typical academic advising office. She is a veteran of the United States Army and was able to have an advisor assigned to her through the Veteran Affairs (VA) office at both Central Texas College and at Blinn College. According to Rae:

It [Blinn College VA Advising] was pretty good. I had a lady by the name of Rebecca over there, and she's gone now, but she was really good. I was able to get close to her to where I could talk to her one-on-one. And whatever I needed, if I went to her, she called Waco and coordinated. (INT-Rae.1/31/11.pp7-8)

Even with these positive comments, Rae was also critical of the way in which she was advised during her time at the community college. As she began working with a new advisor prior to the application process for transfer, she found herself questioning her own abilities and confidence. Her confidence was shaken further through her interaction with the advising office. As she described:

I didn't expect it because a lot of people discouraged me like, "Oh, you're not gonna get in, you're gonna have to reapply." I think I had one advisor say that she didn't think I would be able to get in the first time, because it's normally really hard to get in. And I had several classmates at Blinn who had tried on multiple occasions to get in, and they got denied, so they were like, "No, I don't think you'll get in," or whatever. (INT-Rae.1/31/11.p1)

Beyond these two positive accounts provided by Cindy and Rae, the overall student perception of pre-university advising was consistently negative. These negative comments were best demonstrated through the comments of Mario when he mentioned: "It's [community college advising] awful – it was ridiculous. I just remember going in, and they're like, 'Yeah, you're gonna do this, this, and that' and then I left like feeling I don't really know what I'm doing" (INT-Mario.1/25/11.pp2-3). Mario's reaction to his *bad* advising was to complete a self-advising form and he never returned to the

community college advising office, instead choosing to use the advice of friends and the online information provided by the university.

Amy had a similar negative experience that ultimately cost her time and money as she was advised to take unnecessary courses. She stated:

As far as advising went, they didn't help at all. I went and saw an advisor and told them that I wanted to ultimately end up at A&M, and I was told to take the wrong classes. So then I found an advisor at A&M, and then I talked to them ever since then. (INT-Amy.1/24/11.p1)

Lulu described a similar experience with her community college advisor:

Well, see, I never had one single advisor, like every semester I had a different one. So then whenever . . . there was this lady, I don't remember her name, and she was really bad at advising. At least the other advisors will tell me, "What do you think about this?" And she would just be like, "Here's what you need to take." And then when I told her that I was undecided about either Sam Houston or A&M, she just gave me all the classes for Sam Houston. So whenever I transferred here, they were like, "We cannot take these courses." (INT-Lulu.1/31/11.p2)

Through Julie's narrative, I was able to see her explanation for why community college advisors are not as accurate as they could be. She felt that the diverse missions of the community college lead advisors to influence students toward two-year degree completion or for vocational training. She mentioned:

I think because VC [Victoria College] was a little bit more geared towards like training, so when you get our associate degree, you're right into the job that you apply for. My heart's desire was to eventually attend a 4-year university. And I didn't get a lot of advising on that – it was more like, “Let's finish the 2-year, and then let's get you in a job, and then we can talk about that later.” (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p3)

A possible rival explanation for the perception of the negative advising is that community college advisors are placed in a situation where they must advise students for many different majors at countless numbers of universities. This impossible task may be an explanation for the bad advice that is provided. These students also developed their negative perceptions of the advising experience rather early in their undergraduate careers and subsequently may not have articulated their goals or desires to the advisor. Regardless of the cause of the negative perception, it is clear that as students feel they are being given bad information, they are pursuing alternative methods to become informed of the transfer requirements, course selections, and other necessary information.

It is logical that the earlier a student determines their transfer and/or career goal, the more accurate the advising they will receive. However, many students are determining their career and academic paths after they have given up on the formal advising process. This rival explanation for student perceptions is closely related to the next sub-theme that emerged – the importance of developing a transfer goal early in the undergraduate career.

This is really what I'm supposed to be doing: The importance of starting with an end in mind. Academic advisors are often placed in the unenviable position of guiding students who have no end destination in mind. Advising these students becomes difficult when many students assume they can take the *basics* throughout their first two years to complete the core curriculum for all majors at all universities. The painful reality is that while there are state mandated classes that are similar across degree plans, there are unique differences that prevent students from completing their *basics* for all undergraduate major options. My inquiry indicated that the transfer process became much easier for students once they determined where they wanted to transfer and what major they wanted to pursue. Thus, some students entered the community college with an end goal in mind, while others stumbled into college and their choice of major.

Mario provided a narrative that reflected his experience of stumbling into a major choice. He did not enter community college with the plans to study Bilingual Education. While he knew he ultimately wanted to transfer to Texas A&M, he did not have a major in mind, thereby making it difficult for him to receive quality advising. As he indicated:

It wasn't until I realized what I wanted to do at A&M that I could figure out, okay, this is what I need to take before I can get to A&M. It wasn't until I was advised by A&M that I realized this is what I need to start focusing over here. It made more sense. Which [using community college advisors] is also kind of hard because in the beginning, I didn't really know what I wanted to do. Yeah, right. And once you do that [inform advisors of which university you wish to

transfer], you understand what class you need to take. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.pp2-3)

Mario also found the process easier once he discovered Texas A&M's transfer initiative called the Transfer Articulation Program (TAP). According to the Office of Admissions and Records, "the Transfer Articulation Program is a series of more than 50 different articulation agreements that offer conditionally guaranteed admission to select undergraduate academic programs at Texas A&M University" (DOC-TAP.3/11/11.p1). Along with guaranteed admission, TAP also provides course listings for various majors that ensure the transferability of courses. Although Mario did not meet the minimum requirement for guaranteed admission to the University, by following the prescribed courses, he was able to take specific courses that transferred to his major and ultimately made him more competitive for admission.

Similar to the TAP agreements produced by the Admissions Office, the College of Education and Human Development also publicizes copies of its degree plans on its website (<http://educate.tamu.edu/articles/degrees>). These degree plans include not only the TAMU course number, but also the equivalent number found at Texas community colleges. This was found to be a useful tool for Hope. As she indicated:

This paper [copy of degree plan] was my friend. I have like a million of these at home, where I scratched off. And that was, you know, per the advice of the first advisor, Sharon. She was just like, "Of course it looks like a lot. Just take it one class, one semester at a time. As you finish, just scratch off the list that you've finished that task." And so that's what I did. (INT-Hope.1/31/11.p4)

Rae had a similar positive experience using the degree plan, but was also fortunate to get connected with a Texas A&M advisor early who could explain the process to her. She mentioned:

Because my first semester at Blinn, I had taken some classes, and it turns out I didn't need any of those classes, so that was a semester pretty much wasted. So that was my plan – I did everything, I came and met with him [TAMU advisor], let him know what I was looking for, what I wanted to do, I wanted to transfer, and he gave me a copy [of the degree plan]. And I would plan my schedule based off of that. (INT-Rae.1/31/11.p4)

Amy mentioned the importance of working with advisors from A&M as well. She was one of the students who knew from the beginning of her undergraduate career what she wanted to study and where she hoped to transfer. She related that her transfer experience was positive because of the initiative she took early in her career. She demonstrated this by saying:

I would just say that I talked to A&M from the beginning, just to make sure that I was doing the right thing. They were really helpful. They always responded – well, they always responded like within an hour or two, which was great.

Because sometimes I would be sitting at the computer kind of waiting for that, and so I liked that I just felt welcomed and that they did want me to be a part of A&M. (INT-Amy.1/24/11.pp9-10)

Not only was getting accurate information helpful, she demonstrated that the timeliness of the response demonstrated to her that the institution was serious about wanting her to

attend and made her feel more at home after transferring to the University – a key component when attempting to recruit under-represented students.

During the interview process, I asked students what they would tell friends who may be looking to follow a similar academic path. Lulu provided advice to prospective students by sharing her own narrative:

My advice to a prospective student that has the ultimate goal of attending Texas A&M to become a certified teacher would be to keep that goal always in mind. Having a goal set in mind always helps for motivation. Things might get tough, but always think positive and that everything is possible. (JOU-Lulu.3/1/11.p1)

I interpreted many of these similar comments as an indication of the importance of providing positive experiences for students early. The study revealed that if students have positive experiences getting into the University, they will likely have a positive perception of the undergraduate experience throughout their course of study.

Some of the students I interviewed clearly had an end goal in mind, but did not appear to vocalize or internalize the process until I asked the question. For example, a couple of students reflected on their decisions to attend a PWI or to choose teaching as a career. Hope, for example, decided it was important to attend a PWI and consequently did not consider attending a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) because she felt it was important to study in a university context that was reflective of the career field in terms of racial or ethnic composition. As she mentioned:

And with Prairie View [A&M University], as bad as this may sound, I did not want to go to a majority-black campus – that was never a desire of mine. ... The

factor in that was, I knew that . . . I guess like with the hiring process, and people who I would work around, they would be majority-white, so why should I set myself up to be around majority-black people when the field that I'm going into, it is majority-white. So I may as well set myself up in that I'll already be used to that. (INT-Hope.1/31.11.pp5-6)

To summarize, starting the college career with an end goal in mind is multifaceted and complex. Hope's comments demonstrate that the *end* to which students must pursue must not only be the field of study they choose, but also the career they intend to obtain after graduation. It is important for students to conceptualize their end destination early in their academic journey to have positive experiences throughout their transition process.

I was just lost all the time: Perceptions of post-admission orientation. When describing the transition from the community college to the University, many of the students described a sense of being lost. When I drilled deeper into their comments, students were quite clear that the participants were often comfortable with the curriculum, the academic requirements, and the degree plans of the University. However, they mentioned they were often physically lost on campus and had difficulty adjusting to the logistics and navigation from one building to the next. One student commented that it helped to “walk her schedule” before classes started to become more acclimated to the campus. Most participants felt more attention should have been paid by the university to assisting with campus navigation and that a campus tour should have been a part of their new student conference. It was clear after analyzing the interviews

that the students were initially intimidated by the size of the University and expected more from the institution to ease their anxiety.

Lulu provided the most salient comments regarding the size of the university and its impact on her transition:

So like my first semester here at A&M, it was actually kinda scary because I mean I was in a classroom full of 200 students, and you never got that contact one-on-one with the teacher as you did at Blinn. ... But it was just the size of the classroom, it's just way too many students. Sometimes you have to do like work with groups, and sometimes your group members don't have time, or they just expect you to do it. ... To me, it was just the classroom size, I mean it was just a lot of people. (INT-Lulu.1/31/11.pp1-2)

One resource the University provides to assist with the transition process is the student-led Transfer Camp through the Department of Student Activities. This three-day optional program began in 1987 and is “designed to foster a meaningful experience for incoming Aggie students” (Doc-TCamp.3/14/11.p1). The T-Camp website indicates that:

Members are responsible for creating an inclusive atmosphere that introduces campers to the many opportunities and traditions that exist at Texas A&M. Through this process, campers enhance their Aggie network by creating relationships that strengthen and define the true essence of the Aggie Spirit.

(Doc-TCamp.3/14/11.p1)

In 2010, T-Camp served 347 transfer students whose demographics were roughly similar to the transfer class as a whole. (Doc-T-Camp.2/3/11.p1)

Three of the students I interviewed indicated that they attended T-Camp. The perception of this experience varied among the students, but Mario indicated having the most adverse reaction to attending. He stated:

I didn't like it [T-Camp]. I'm excited about A&M, but I'm not super-crazy – I got stuff I need to do. And it's like yeah, I'm supportive, I'm not a 2-percenter, but I don't wanna be so super-hyped up into thinking like A&M is the best place in the whole world. There was building a social network, but it was too much on like the traditions. I'm not saying traditions are bad – it's just like overkill. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p7)

Julie on the other hand, Julie actually had a very enjoyable experience with T-Camp. Julie indicated that she struggled early on with the transition to A&M because of unmet expectations. While she wanted to have the traditional college experience – which in her mind included study abroad, living on campus, and joining many organizations – she implied that her family situation prevented her from experiencing A&M in such a way. After being admitted to A&M, Julie and her mother moved from Victoria, Texas to College Station, Texas and brought along her two recently adopted siblings. She commented:

I enjoyed it. I think at that time, I was still kinda in the trying to be a traditional student, trying to go along with the traditions, and you know, experience something. ... So yeah, all I remember was the funny, you know, crazy things that the counselors did. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p22)

Even with these positive comments, she did have unmet expectations of what T-Camp should provide. She had hoped that T-Camp would have combined some of the more serious academic aspects of the University with the fun traditions that she learned. As she mentioned:

I mean now I'm thinking back, I just know that it was something that I experienced. But possibly if it was more, you know, okay, this is what, you know, how you adjust at A&M. These are some resources, maybe. Even catching them . . . because I know once I got here, it was time for a new student orientation, so we had to go through a couple transfer, you know, seminars. But maybe if that was in T Camp, you know, geared towards each major, you know, that could be helpful. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p22)

After analyzing the students' comments it was clear that they felt more should be done to lessen the anxiety they face by entering such a large university. The students proffered solutions to ease transition anxiety and I will make mention of these later in this chapter.

It really didn't matter that I was a transfer student: Individual perceptions.

Although each student perceived being a transfer student on the university campus in different ways, a sub-theme emerged that demonstrates how one particular cohort of under-represented pre-service teacher education majors experience attending a PWI. Mainly, students felt that faculty members and students on campus treated transfer students in the same way as traditional native students. This treatment also helped

alleviate some stress the students faced early in the university program. As Hope indicated:

[I was treated like] just another student. I know one professor, my first day here actually, and I told her that I was a transfer student, so I was learning the campus. And she was . . . her name was Erin . . . I can't think of her last name. But she was amazing, and she just talked to me like nothing – it didn't really matter that I was a transfer student or not. (INT-Hope.1/31/11.p12)

Students also indicated that they are seeing the number of transfer students on campus increase and many felt that the cost of attendance was the driving factor for the boom in community college enrollment. This ultimately led them to believe that they were getting the best value for their undergraduate career. Hope represented this perception best through her narrative:

I still think the transfer students had it better anyway, because we paid two years cheaper – that's my viewpoint on it. So the others that started freshman here, I'm thinking you may have started, you know, when you were supposed to have started, but my pocket is probably a little fatter than yours. (INT-Hope.1/31/11.p9)

Mario provided similar feelings when he stated, “And some people don't do community college just because they can't get into it – they do it because of financial reasons. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p10)”

Although the perceptions of being a transfer student on the University campus were positive for the most part, there were comments made by Amy and Julie that

indicated the University should still be concerned about how transfers are treated and they indicated that resources should be tailored for this unique population. Amy reflected on an instance she had that was less-than-positive when a faculty member learned she transferred to the University:

Yeah, in one of my geography classes, my first semester here actually, he just kinda made a comment downing transfer students, and I didn't feel like that was fair at all. Because honestly, some of my Blinn classes were harder than my A&M classes, and I don't think it matters. But I did feel like I needed to defend it, just because I get the impression sometimes that people think you're dumb or not as smart because you did start off at a community college. But I mean it could just be to save money, like that's what I did. (INT-Amy.1/24/11.p5)

Julie provided comments related to the difficulty in transitioning because she was not a traditionally admitted freshman native student. Julie reflected that her adjustment was difficult not only because she transitioned from a two-year community college to a major research university, but also because she had family responsibilities for which the University did not always account:

Even, you know, with being a college student and getting here at the university level, it's a little bit different, because it's sort of tailored to the students who get out of high school and go off and get in a dorm, and everything is kind of like the community here on campus, but then you have off-campus students too, or the ones who have families. And it's a little bit different dynamic for us in that

respect. So that was definitely one thing, just adjusting with my family. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p4)

Although the perception of being a transfer student was slightly nuanced between the students I interviewed, it became evident throughout my inquiry that students primarily felt they had positive experiences after being admitted to the University. However, there were comments made that indicated that the institution still has work left to do to provide a smoother transition for this unique population. These comments will be addressed in the recommendations section of Chapter V.

I Don't Know Where I Would Be without Their Help: The Role of Intimate Support Structures

Each student clearly demonstrated the different forms of support they utilized while studying in the community college environment. Often, these support mechanisms on which they relied did not change after they matriculated to the University environment. Similar to the intimate support structures mentioned by Schlossberg, et al. (1995), the students typically indicated that their support came from three sources which are discussed as sub-themes. They included *The Role of Friends*, *The Role of Family*, and *The Role of Faith*.

These people can help with venting: The role of friends. Friendships were very complex for the transfer students I interviewed. Friends were viewed as sources of information, sources of positive encouragement, and in some instances recruiters for Texas A&M. Amy's comments best demonstrated the role her friends played in providing information about the University:

Well, when I went to Blinn, I lived with three girls that were already at A&M. And so I mean I attended all the A&M functions that I could with them, went to the football games, and all that kind of stuff. And I think that prepared me too, and just made me want it even more, because I was almost there, but I still had that guest ticket or that kind of stuff. (INT-Amy.1/24/11.p.2)

This role was further demonstrated by Mario who stated, “I had one friend who was a smart guy on like transfers and all that kind of stuff, and so he helped me with that [applying for transfer]” (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p3).

Beyond the capacity of helping with guidance, friendships were also found to be a source of inspiration for the transfer students. Many indicated that a reason they were successful with making the transfer was because of the friendships they developed. Julie provided the best evidence of this when she stated:

It was definitely the friendships [that helped with the transition to A&M]. People had always told me, “you’re gonna make it, you can do it,” because when I was in high school, I made good grades, I did pretty well. That kinda added a little pressure too, but it was still kind of . . . I know people knew that I was gonna be able to make it – that was actually a help. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.pp8-9)

When providing advice for prospective transfer students, Cindy also indicated that friendships can help with the transition to campus. She wrote in her journal, “Join a teaching organization on campus because those men and women you will see in your classes. These people can help with venting for certain teachers or projects along with creating ideas for said projects” (JOU-Cindy.2/22/11.p1).

An interesting role played by friends was demonstrated by Hope. Hope indicated that she often made “friends” throughout her time in a course and often relied on them as she completed assignments in the course. However, as the course concluded, she made a point to delete the students from her cell phone and indicated that the memory space in the phone was more important to her than the possibility that she might keep in touch with that individual in the future. As she stated:

And it’s funny because like when I may have exchanged numbers for a group or project or class, but once the semester is over, I delete those numbers off my phone. And so the standing joke with the people that I’ve met in senior methods is they’re hoping to make the cut (laughs) in that I won’t delete their numbers once the semester is over. (INT-Hope.1/31/11.p10)

For many of the students I interviewed, it was friends from high school who served as the recruiters for Texas A&M. Many indicated that they decided to attend the University because either a friend was attending, or had attended and had positive experiences in the past. This was best recounted by Julie when she shared her story of applying for transfer to Texas A&M:

And she [friend who is attending A&M] would come and tell me about it, and she was also part of a Bible study here on campus, where she was really learning how to develop a relationship with the Lord. And I really enjoyed that because I was looking for that too – I was looking for a church family, to a church home where I could really start growing and developing. So she would tell me about that as well. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p5)

Mario also indicated that his decision on where to attend college was influenced by friends from his high school:

Well, I came to that conclusion because a lot of my friends were at A&M. I actually came to Blinn, not because I wanted to go to A&M, though my sister went to A&M – I went to Blinn because I had a friend who said, “Hey, I need someone to come live with me over here in College Station.” And I didn’t know where to go to college, and he’s like, “Do you wanna come with me? And you can go to church with me.” And I was like, “yeah,” and so that was really important to me then, so I decided I would come. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p1)

As previously mentioned, friendships were viewed by my participants to be useful tools, sources of support, and as guides throughout the transfer process.

It will open doors for them as well: The role of family. Similar to the role of friends, family members can also be a source of motivation and guidance. However, I found that several students mentioned that although their family was proud of them for attending A&M, this pride also generated pressure to succeed. For nontraditional students with children, the family could serve as an influence on their undergraduate experience. These students also felt the pressure of succeeding so they could serve as an example for their children and demonstrate that college was accessible and attainable – a message that was not always conveyed to them as they were growing up.

Amy’s comments demonstrated the support role that families play while studying in the university environment. She indicated that her largest support structure was “probably my family, just because I would call and complain or talk about what was

going on. And my parents would just constantly encourage me. (INT-Amy.1/24/11.p4)”

Mario echoed these sentiments when he stated:

[My family is] very supportive. My brother went to college, and then he dropped out. And my sister was at A&M, and then she dropped out and went to U of H, and she’s trying to make it through a little bit. I don’t know, hopefully she graduates. And so like right now, I’m like the only one in my immediate family who’s in college, and actually like going to graduate. And so my mom is very happy and excited, and she’s totally supportive. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p6)

With the pride that the family has in their student can be added pressure to succeed beyond the demands placed by the individual student. As Mario indicated, he is a first-generation student – as were most of my participants – and he expressed that the added burden of needing to graduate, to be the first in his family to do so. He mentioned:

Oh, yeah, absolutely – it’s crazy – they’re just like, “When are you gonna graduate? When are you gonna move back? When are you gonna start helping?” I’m like, “I don’t know – just give me time.” It’s not negative – I just kinda realize like yeah, I just gotta use it as a motivation to succeed – you just have to keep on going. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p6)

Families can serve as a source of added pressure because of the demands faced by nontraditional students with children or by students who are living with family members with needs. Julie faced this burden because her single mother, although she is helping financially, also wanted her to help with her adopted siblings and did not

understand the demands of being a college student having never gone herself. Julie demonstrated:

But yeah, it was like starting over, and definitely you really have to pay attention to what their needs are. I can't just be all about me, and okay, I have to do this – I do still have to definitely put class at a priority, but then too, I still have my family that I have to take care of. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p5)

She continued these comments by demonstrating the impact the pressure has had on her performance when she mentioned that “it’s a lot of pressure. And at times, it was hard to really focus on my schooling, because I don’t wanna be selfish. So it was a little difficult, I guess, just not having that support” (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p7). In Julie’s estimation, this lack of support was caused by mother’s inability to conceptualize the demands of being in college because her mother was never afforded that opportunity.

The students who are parents demonstrated that there is a balancing act that must take place to be both a good student and a good role model for their children. As Hope mentioned:

And so it’s like I wanna break that generational [cycle]. ... Yes, and so I don’t know, it’s like I need my children to see that going to college is attainable. It’s not something that you just see or read about on television. Like I put the kids in softball, so it’s like with the times when I was at softball games and taking them to practice, that could’ve been times that I was studying or doing work. But then it’s at the same time, gosh, my kids can’t do anything because I’m always

studying. And so it's like now they know, like they'll ask, "Mommy, can we go to Chucky Cheese after you do your homework?" (INT-Hope.1/31/11.p5)

Students with children also pointed to their families as a support mechanism for helping with the balance. Both Rae and Lulu indicated that when their children were sick, it was their parents who were able to intervene and watch the children so they would not miss class or major projects. Through their narratives it is demonstrated that family can be a burden due to added responsibility, but also a support by providing assistance. The question must be raised: What services are available for students with children who do not have immediate family to help with childcare? Although daycare is provided by the University, it is both expensive and not able to meet the demands of the campus community.

Faith is a big thing for me: The role of religious beliefs. Some students pointed to their relationship with God as a support mechanism on which they relied. The role of faith was seen as a connection to other support resources either because of church connections or student organized Bible studies. Several of the students also indicated that the power of prayer was a mechanism that was vital for their success in college.

Rae demonstrated the role that faith has played in keeping her progressing toward degree completion when she stated, "That's like the most important thing to me, is my relationship with God. And I've always believed in God and different things. But I know recently. . . I guess as I've gotten older, my faith has grown stronger" She summarized these thoughts by stating, "He has a plan, and I'm here for a reason" (INT-Rae.1/31/11.p11).

Mario also demonstrated that he attributed his success and the path he has followed toward a higher power:

I don't know, God's mercy really [is the reason for my success]. If it wasn't for God, I wouldn't be in this school, that's for sure. Because of that and just my mindset, it's just to persevere. If I didn't have faith, I don't know where I'd be right now. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p16)

Julie's comments best displayed the influence of her church and student-led Bible studies in the transition from the community college to the university:

Once I got into the Bible study here on campus and actually made it my church as well, definitely they helped out as well too with prayer. And they too were actually students here or had been students here. So they actually helped as well. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p9)

Students also indicated that faith not only influenced their decisions regarding into which university they would transfer, it was also a major influence on their decision to teach. Several demonstrated that it was their *calling* to enter the teaching profession.

Hope demonstrated:

But when it came to me transferring the second time, I spoke with an advisor who was a representative at Texas A&M, and it was actually . . . that's why it's like it has to be my God-given purpose to teach. It was the last day to transfer, and so I had to drive all the way to Brenham to get my transcript and make it back to College Station by 5:00. And I had to call people to pick my kids up from school because I knew I wasn't gonna be back in time to pick them up from

school too. And I made it, and then I got in that time, and so I was just like wow, that's God's work. (INT-Hope.1/31/11.p4)

Rae also mirrored these sentiments by stating, "I don't know – again, I think God placed me here to be a help or blessing to somebody else. And I'm thankful that I've had the opportunity that I've been given. Again, he's positioned me around good people. (INT-Rae.1/31/11.p12)"

The search for a faith community served as both a connection to support resources and as a source of inspiration for some students. Students held the perception that prayer and a higher power played an intricate role in guiding them through the University and ultimately to a career field. Faith combined with family and friends compile the support mechanisms on which these students rely throughout their undergraduate career. Some support mechanisms can serve a dual purpose of being both a source of encouragement and an anchor of added responsibilities. Although there can be added demands placed on the student by friends and family members, students typically demonstrated that these intimate support structures served as a positive influence on their progression toward undergraduate degree completion.

Providing All We Need: Institutionalized Support Structures

The theme, *Institutionally Provided Support Structures*, revealed the reasons it became necessary to inquire as to why students were reluctant to use the services that the University provides. While observing student interactions with services provided such as the Byrne Student Success Center in the College of Education and Human Development, I perceived the attendance for the evening academic support workshops this office

provides to be rather low – often fewer than 30 students. Additionally, when consulting with the office’s director, I came to understand that increasing attendance and foot-traffic has been a major goal of this office since its inception.

The Byrne Center was created by the College in 2007 through a generous gift from Dorothy and Artie McFerrin. This Office is designed to provide “individualized academic counseling, strategic referrals to campus resources, evening programs focused on a variety of topics, from study skills to career development, and resources to assist students in academics and career planning” (DOC-Byrne.2/8/11.p1). As a means to provide greater interaction and engagement with the University and increased student performance, the Center developed a series of evening workshops that focus on financial planning, resume building, math study skills, and test preparation.

As I analyzed the students’ comments, I had to remind myself that the students I interviewed were identified as academically successful by their advisors and were not necessarily the students in need of support. However, after analyzing my field notes, I realized that students did struggle academically within areas in which the Byrne Center could have provided assistance (i.e. math tutoring, time management, etc.), but students did not take advantage of the offered opportunities. Students tended to indicate that even when they needed additional help they were reluctant to use these services. Additionally, the students tended to focus more on faculty and advisor mentoring as their primary source for institutional support.

I don’t really know how to go about it: Reluctance to use services. When asked why they were reluctant to utilize the support services provided by the University,

students provided several interesting comments. Hope indicated that she did not want to alter a game plan that had worked for her to date. She felt that she had been successful getting to the University and the same skills and routines would serve her well as she progressed toward graduation. Mario felt that the only way to get students to use these services was to force them to attend through either a punitive or reward system that was connected to their performance in class. As he stated:

You have to force them [students] to go. It has to be some kind of extra credit thing that the professors decide to pull in there, or a punishment kind of thing. Because there is the intrinsic value, like I want to self-improve and do that, but sometimes you're just too busy to wanna go over there. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.pp5-6)

Mario also indicated that he had used some of the University services in the past, but could not remember it helping him that much, which influenced his future decisions on where to turn to help. According to Mario, "It's just kind of like you go, and you're kinda, "oh, good," and then you kinda forget" (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p5).

Amy indicated both through her journal entry and through her comments during her interview that seeking out academic support from the University can be an intimidating task. She wrote, "I don't think it [amount of services provided] is overwhelming. I like that there are so many resources available, but I do think it is intimidating and I feel self conscious when I need to use them, so I don't use them" (JOU-Amy.2/10/11.p1). Her comments during her interview pointed to a possible solution which the University potentially should consider:

I think as far as the Byrne Center, because it's definitely an intimidation factor where I feel dumb going in there, or that I think sometimes too, they say they can do all this stuff, but what if I go in there, and I really don't feel helped afterwards, and it was a waste of time? (INT-Amy.1/24/11.p4-5)

Further, Amy felt this anxiety could have been resolved had she been more familiar with the Center and its director much earlier – possibly with an introduction at her new student conference.

Another hurdle encountered as students attempted to utilize services points again to the need for childcare. Students with children are often unable to make the evening workshops provided by the Byrne Center or other offices on campus due to the inability to secure feasible care for their children. Rae mentioned, “It just depends on if I have that resource available for extended childcare” (INT-Rae.1/31/11.p9).

Several of the students indicated that there are too many resources being provided by the University and it makes it difficult to determine which is going to be the best use of their time. These sentiments were best portrayed through Julie's narrative when she stated, “I mean because I think too, there are so many resources, there's so many opportunities here, it's like, “Which one do you need? How do I come along and help you?” (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p8). She added that much of her early transition to the university involved the deciphering of resources that are provided and learning how to become a college student – something she felt was more difficult because she was the first in her family to attend college.

Cindy provided similar comments, but also demonstrates that the effectiveness of advertising the support resources is diminished if students are inundated with information. She stated that she often receives emails from her advisors, but “Those emails seem a little overwhelming because if I really want to go to that certain thing then it doesn't fit in my schedule or something came up that I couldn't go to it.” She offered the suggestion that “a detailed description of what that opportunity provides, if that is not already provided” would be helpful (JOU-Cindy.2/10/11.p1).

To summarize, student reluctance to utilize services can stem from a variety of sources, some students simply do not feel the services match their schedules well, while others have familial responsibilities which prevent their participation. As several students indicated, asking for help can be an overwhelming, humbling, and often intimidating task. For this study, a research question guiding my inquiry was what additional services does the University need to provide for transfer students of color to be successful? From my analysis of the students' comments and journals, it has become clear that the services are likely being provided, but are not being presented in an effective manner that facilitates their best usage.

They want to help you excel in your dream: University faculty and advisors.

When students were asked about support structures within the University that they have utilized, they often cited their advisor and faculty members as being the primary source for help. While it is positive that the students felt a rapport with these individuals, it often came at the expense of the Byrne Center's attendance. When talking with the Byrne Center director, he indicated that his goal for the Center is to make it the first stop

for help to which students turn when they have the need. He mentioned that he wants the Center to become a part of both the students' and the College's culture. According to student comments, a better approach may be to find a way for the faculty to become better partners in referring students to utilize the Center's resources.

Students attributed their success in handling difficult situations mostly to their professors' willingness to accommodate their needs. For example, Hope indicated that when her children were sick, her professors were willing to work with her to ensure she remained successful in her classes. Lulu had similar experiences and indicated:

Dr. Acosta was really easy to talk to, so I apologized that I was falling behind in all this work, and she was like, "Don't worry as long as you catch up. And by the end of the semester, you have everything turned in, you'll be good to go." So she was really easy person to talk to. If you had a question, she always used to help out. So I felt like real comfortable talking with her and telling her what's going on. It's not I'm being lazy or that I don't wanna do it, but I'm having all this at home. I didn't really feel like opening up with the professor and telling him my business or whatever. So I would just . . . since it wasn't as much work as Dr. Acosta, I would just mail it to them and send a doctor's note saying that I have a son who is sick. (INT-Lulu.1/31/11.p9)

Rae went so far as to indicate that she would not currently be enrolled at Texas A&M were it not for the compassion of her advisors along the way. This led her to believe that the institution had her best interest at heart and was consistently doing what it could to provide the support she needed. She summarized these thoughts by stating, "[Without

caring faculty and advisors] I think I would probably be pretty much . . . my life would be in disarray. I wouldn't know how to do it because I've never had to do it before”

(INT-Rae.1/31/11.p2).

Rae also demonstrated, however, that this rapport and comfort level with faculty members can cause students to take the relationship with professors too far. She recounted a time when she went beyond the professional relationship with an instructor and faced an uncomfortable reply:

But just days before that, this person [faculty member] had walked up to me and told me they loved my chocolaty skin, and pinched my cheeks as if I was a child or puppy or something. And I got a little confused because I was like I thought we're supposed to remember there's professionalism when you're writing an email, you want to address it a certain way and close a certain way, and address the topic a certain way. (Rae.1/31/11.p14)

Rae continued that this incident confused her because they had shared rather personal encounters in the past and the inability to differentiate between personal emails and more professional academic communications “gets a little nerve-racking” (INT-Rae.1/31/11.pp14-15).

Rae's story demonstrated the need for faculty members to balance their concern for student success with the professional demeanor they must portray. While it is important to be friendly and helpful, professors and advisors must also remain professional and continue to delineate the line between student and instructor.

Challenging but Rewarding: Confronting Situational Factors

A major factor in how students experience the University environment is shaped by situations they confront throughout the undergraduate years. Through my inquiry, I learned that the students of color I interviewed entered the PWI with expectations that were often unmet. Additionally, the students faced unique experiences that were shaped by being in a teacher education training program. Finally, the students faced challenges involving the completion of upper-level math courses which served as a major setback for most of those I researched. Each of these situational factors provided a description of both the educational experience as a whole and served as challenges to which students learned to adapt and overcome.

It wasn't like that at all: Perceptions of campus climate. As I mentioned previously, the students I interviewed remarked that they entered the university environment expecting to experience overt awkwardness because of the small number of Hispanic and African American students attending Texas A&M. However, almost every student indicated that their experiences on campus have been positive and did not live up to their negative expectations. When asked to summarize their experiences on campus, the participants were quick to describe the campus as friendly and in some instances the campus was described as diverse – a comment referring more to the diversity of thought and expression than race or ethnicity.

As some students became more comfortable with me as a researcher and the questions I was asking, they began to reveal instances that could be described as covertly, and in some instances, overtly racist. Some students attempted to defend the

institution. For example, Amy stated, “I would say that [Texas A&M being a racist institution] is not true, but I think if you look for it, it’s probably there. But it’s gonna be anywhere, like you can find it anywhere you go” (INT-Amy.1/24/11.pp6-7). Mario felt that the University had been described by some as a racist institution in its past because of the conservative nature of the school, a comment that was repeated by both Lulu and Cindy.

Two encounters with racism were reported by students. Hope understood that there would be times when she would be the only African American student in the class and had expectations of facing struggles due to this difference. While she felt her experiences at A&M had been mostly positive, she did encounter an uncomfortable experience at an induction ceremony for Kappa Delta Pi. She recalled her experience of being one of the few African American individuals at the event and the stares that she received as she and her guests entered the room. She shared her frustrations by stating:

And if I would’ve been given the opportunity to speak, I would not have went off – I just would’ve told them that the face of education is changing. While you’re looking at me in the party that I’m with, in such a negative way, the very people that are sitting in this room, they all aspire to be teachers. (INT-Hope.1/13/11.p6)

Although she described this encounter at the induction ceremony as negative, she was able to find a positive in the evening when one caring faculty member took the initiative to make her and her guests feel welcome. Hope continued:

But the guy, he was like, “Hey, you should come sit right here.” So we sit down, and “How are you young ladies today?” and they talked to us. And so

when they start introducing people, and they were like the president ... it was him who had offered us to sit down, and that made a big impression with me.

(INT-Hope.1/13/11.p8)

Hope relayed another experience she had endured and shared her thoughts about why she thinks Texas A&M at times has had a racist image. She demonstrated that the community surrounding the campus can often play a factor in people's perceptions of the University as a whole. She described her thought process by recalling a time that she attempted to enter an establishment off campus and was denied entry for no apparent reason. She recalled:

I've never ever gone to Northgate, and so I was like, "Hey, you guys, I go to Texas A&M. I can't wait to show them my student ID and get in." And so we went, and the guys at the door, they were like, "Um, no." – those were their exact words.

She continued to make this connection between the campus and the community by stating,

So it's like I don't think . . . it's just that A&M gets a bad rap because of stuff like that. And so it's like I still didn't take that bad experience, you know, and let it affect my opinion or my view of A&M. And my friends, they didn't either – they were just like, they know, they're like, "Oh, that's just Northgate, that's just how they do." (INT-Hope.1/31/11.p17)

She provided further evidence by recounting an episode her husband had at another off campus establishment. While her African American husband and some of his coworkers

attempted to enter a restaurant/bar off campus, they were asked to show their student ID, even though this request had not been made of other patrons. For Hope, this was one more example of a negative racial experience in the area surrounding campus that could influence individual's perceptions of the University.

While Hope's experiences were relegated to off-campus incidents, Rae demonstrated that the University was not immune from instances of racist behavior on campus. She retold this story as an expression of a negative experience she endured while studying in the Special Education program. She demonstrated that before one of her classes, an African American individual with whom she had little previous contact acknowledged her as a friend in front of other students by giving her a hug. This particular day, the class decided to meet outside without locking the door to the room. When the class returned they realized that items had been rearranged and things had been stolen. She recalled the ordeal she had to endure because of her association with this individual by stating:

Yeah. And they called campus security, and they called me, and they questioned me and everything. And they were asking me if I really belonged in that class, or I just randomly showed up, and what was my connection to him?

Had I planned to meet him there? (INT-Rae.1/31/11.p6)

Rae continued by stating that the incident "kinda bothered me that everybody quickly assumed, because he was Black and I was Black, that we automatically knew each other and had that tie" (INT-Rae.1/31/11.p6).

She continued her discussion of racial incidents by indicating that she is often left out of group projects with majority students. Rae perceived this experience by stating “I’m not bothered by it – sometimes I try not to look at it as a Black and White issue. I’m like maybe it’s because I’m older than them, and the age difference or something, so I don’t know” (INT-Rae.1/31/11.p6).

She demonstrated that she has had to learn how to react to these instances by choosing which instances she wants to address and which to let slide. As she mentioned, “I kinda choose my battles, but if it’s something that I feel that needs to be addressed, [I will]” (INT-Rae.1/31/11.p12). She recalled a recent course she took that required her class to visit the lower socio-economic area of Bryan. While many of the students in the class referred to the area as “the ghetto” or “the hood”, Rae took the opportunity to ask classmates to change their attitudes and their perceptions and enter the project with an open mind. Based on her efforts, she felt “they changed their perception after they got a chance to go into the community and meet the people” (INT-Rae.1/31/11.p12).

Race and ethnicity can play another factor in how students of color experience the PWI environment. Although Texas A&M maintains a race neutral admissions policy enacted by former President Robert Gates which chose to pursue increased diversity in its student enrollment through increased recruitment and scholarship programs (Doc-Admission.3/30/11.p1), it became evident during my interviews that several of the students indicated that the reason they felt they were successful in being admitted was due to their race or ethnicity. At least three of the students expressed similar sentiments to Mario’s when he stated that the reason he was admitted for transfer was “because I’m

Hispanic, and because I'm a male in education – I think that's like by far the reason why." He continued, "I mean we don't like to talk about it, but yes it [race/ethnicity] does play, especially in education. Because if I would have been a white girl with my same grades, I mean they probably wouldn't have gotten in" (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p7).

When probed further about this belief and its impact on his self-confidence in being able to handle the curriculum of the University, he stated:

It's [affirmative action] a fortunate thing to have right now, but the fact that that happens – like before that wouldn't happen. So it was like almost a little bit of an over-correction until you let more people come in. But I mean it makes the school more diverse, and it gets the name of A&M out to the world. I think it's good – and a little bit, but I don't know how you would tweak it to make it ... and I know A&M is not as bad as U.T. [University of Texas at Austin]" (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p8).

While he was pleased that the perceived policy worked in his favor, it leads to more questions related to students' sense of self-efficacy, if they feel they were admitted to fill a quota instead of meeting the academic requirements to be admitted.

You have to be challenged to learn something: Experiences in teacher education. Across the spectrum of the interviews, students pointed to several aspects of their teacher education program as challenging, but rewarding in its ability to prepare them for their career field. Although the students have an array of ultimate career destinations, they each felt the program was adequately preparing them for their future

and cited the field-based component of the program as the key to their strong preparation.

Cindy provided a demonstration of the steps she had taken to prepare her for a career in education and the increased comfort level she attained as she observed more classroom instruction in the field:

Yeah. Like the first time, I guess, the first time I went out in the field was when I was a senior in high school. And I only did like small groups, reading with different levels of kids. And so I was just like outside the classroom, had nothing to do with inside the classroom. And then I came to Blinn, and I had to go to a school to observe, and it was my first time observing, so I was like in the back, and I was in the back like I don't know what's going on, I don't know what to write down type thing. And then I came to A&M, and then I had to actually start teaching, and so I was like it was a really big step. (INT-Cindy.1/24/11.p10)

Mario echoed these sentiments by demonstrating his confidence in being prepared for his career, "You know, [I feel] nervous, but I feel confident that this semester and then some teaching will really prepare me for all that's gonna come. It won't prepare me for everything, but it will prepare me a lot for it" (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p18).

Several of the students, including Mario, demonstrated that their ultimate career interests may not be as a classroom instructor. For example, Mario's ultimate plan is to enter the ministry, but he felt that the preparation to be a teacher will equally serve him well in the pulpit. Rae plans to start in teaching, but ultimately pursue a Health and Human Services position where she can help families get connected with helpful

resources that will improve their quality of life. Other students such as Amy, Cindy, and Julie plan to stay in teaching while pursuing graduate degrees so they can take on leadership positions in public schools.

While discussing the teacher education training, Hope provided a very insightful description of why she feels teaching as a profession does not get the respect it deserves.

She stated:

When people ask teachers what it is they do for a living, the majority of them will say, "Oh, I'm 'just' a teacher" but I don't think a doctor, lawyer, or even a professional football player would downplay their careers in saying that they are 'just' a doctor, lawyer, etc. Also, as I started student teaching last week, I began to think how while it should not, race does play a factor in how students respond to education and I don't want to just reach the students who share the same culture or ethnicity as I do, but I wonder how I could reach those who don't. (JOU-Hope.2/7/11.p1)

Her comment regarding culture and instruction was brought up several times throughout my inquiry. Students often described the importance of holding African American or Hispanic students to a higher standard so they would be successful in the future. Hope demonstrated that she wanted to complete her program and be a teacher so she could prove to students that if she could finish her undergraduate career with a family that included two children, then the students she instructs can overcome their obstacles and be successful as well.

For the most part, students felt they were provided with quality instruction that was preparing them well for careers in the field of education. Cindy did provide one criticism in that she felt her instruction on classroom management fell short of what she needed. She demonstrated that she had difficulty with the professor's teaching style and instead relied on the real-world experience of her mother, a long-time teacher, to glean information about how to improve the management of her students. Hope provided a rival explanation when she stated, "I'm not saying A&M isn't doing their job, because they're providing us with what we need to know. It's just gonna be up to the students to apply to real-life situations" (INT-Hope.1/31/11.p7). Hope demonstrates that the University places students in environments to experience teaching, but it is up to the individual student to utilize those experiences effectively. Although Cindy felt her instruction was lacking, she did show the initiative to become a better teacher by seeking out information from an experienced teacher.

To summarize the perception of students of color of the teacher education program, the instruction was deemed informative and valuable for preparing students for the career. This was best articulated by Amy when she stated, "I've learned so much about education, and it's still something I wanna be a part of. And I mean the education professors, they're all amazing that I've had, and have just taught us how to apply the things in real life, and like had just different discussions to open our eyes" (INT-Amy.1/24/11.p7).

Are they trying to weed me out? Math as a challenge. Part of the interviews I conducted asked about the challenges the students had faced after successfully

transferring to Texas A&M. Without exception, the largest and most often repeated challenge was successfully completing the upper-level math courses in the program. The college requires students to complete their core math courses (MATH 141 and 142) as an admission requirement to their program (Doc-Educate.3/15/11.p1). However, Early Childhood, Middle Grades Math/Science, and Bilingual students must complete additional courses of upper-level math (a minimum of MATH 365 and 366). Students often viewed these courses as weed out classes that shook their confidence and caused them to question their own abilities to successfully complete the program. Amy wrote in her journal of the fears she currently has due to these courses:

For the most part, I have felt prepared to handle Texas A&M's curriculum, however, my biggest struggle has been and continues to be the math courses required of early childhood education majors. MATH 365, 366 and Stat 303 have been major obstacles for me to overcome. I did not pass Math 365 the first time I took it, and am currently enrolled in STAT 303 and am honestly afraid of this class keeping me from graduating. The class average for the first test taken in my STAT 303 was a 70; knowing that I am below average with it comes to math, this scared me. I made a 65 on the first test, which is not passing and below average. I have expressed this concern to my advisor and have received empathy as well as support, but I still am fearful of not graduating due failing this course. (JOU- Amy.2/17/11.p1)

Julie contributed her thoughts about the math courses and how she was impacted by early setbacks, "Yeah, when I was in those [MATH] classes, I was like am I really going

into the right, you know, should I change to language arts and social studies?” (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p14). Julie’s comments are particularly salient because they demonstrate how failures in math can shake the confidence of a students studying in a STEM education field. If confidence continues to be shaken and students feel they cannot grasp the concepts of upper-level math and science, they may choose to change certification areas to a program that is less in demand. Thus, addressing math confidence is critical to keep under-represented students in this high-need teaching field.

Compounding the fears that students have with these courses are their beliefs that what they are learning is not practical and will never be used in the classroom environment throughout their career. These thoughts were demonstrated by comments made by Hope when she stated:

I thought that that class, the MATH 365, would be a class that would teach me how to teach math. And some of the stuff, it will be useful in my future classroom. But some of the stuff, I don’t think I’ll ever use that. And so it’s like I don’t wanna be ... don’t waste your time teaching me something that I’m not gonna use, pretty much. And you’re testing me over something that I’m not gonna use, and then I’m failing at something that I’m not gonna use. That just makes that whole process more frustrating. And like I talked to a friend of mine, and he’s a principal – he’s like, “I’ve never used it.” (INT-Hope.1/31/11.p22)

Cindy expressed similar concerns related to the usefulness of the content of these courses by mentioning:

I also had to take a class about writing proofs. To be honest I have never heard nor written one in my life and I was expected to know how to come up with one off the top of my head. Luckily, I got out of that class when I did because otherwise I would have failed it miserably. Once again I do not understand how learning to write a proof will help you to teach elementary students math? Other than those two times I have not doubted what I wanted to do with my career.

(JOU-Cindy.2/22/11.p1)

Again, the data reveal that upper-level math courses present a challenge. This problem is compounded by the students' perception that tutoring is not available for these classes. As mentioned previously, the Byrne Student Success Center does provide free math tutoring, but due to the reluctance to use these services, it is perceived that the services are not actually available. Recommendations to mitigate this problem will be made in Chapter Five.

It Takes More Time and Commitment: Employed Strategies by Transfers

The transfer students of color I interviewed demonstrated several approaches to dealing with challenges and various situations they have faced. What Schlossberg, et al. (1995) identified as strategies to respond to transition, these students often described their response as surviving. I conclude Chapter IV with a brief discussion of how students respond to challenges, perceive the changes they have made since enrolling at Texas A&M, and list the needs the students feel university should address.

You just have to keep trying: Responding to setbacks. The most immediate response to academic challenges that was mentioned by the students I interviewed was

their response to failing the upper-level math courses in their curriculum. For most students who faced this challenge, the solution was to return to the community college to complete the equivalent courses (MATH 1350 and 1351). Hope indicated during her interview that she paid \$300 for off-campus tutoring for these classes while she was at A&M and was still unable to successfully complete the course. Her response was to return to Blinn to take the equivalent course. In some instances, the community college route was provided as advice from departmental advisors to successfully complete the course, as was recounted by Lulu. Mario felt that taking the math courses through Houston Community College was his only option for successfully completing the courses.

Beyond the response to math setbacks, Mario also indicated that to be successful at A&M, he realized early on that he was going to have to elevate his commitment to his studies by stating, “I struggled my first semester, and then later on I picked up a little bit more and more and realized it takes more time and commitment to the material” (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p2). He added to this concept later in his interview when he mentioned, “It [Texas A&M University] was harder, and so I was like I didn’t pick up my game into that. I’m trying to think what happened that semester – it was spring – I think I started working – I think I was working that semester also, which made it difficult” (INT-Mario.1/25/11.pp4-5).

Rae provided comments that were consistent with Mario’s by demonstrating the changes she had to make to become successful in the University curricula. She indicated that while studying at the four-year institution, she has become more organized and often

plans further ahead to complete projects. A similar adjustment was required by Julie after she transitioned from the two-year to the four-year campus and had her initial setbacks in courses. Julie often felt she was being “lazy” and not taking the process seriously. To adjust, she realized she “had to sit down and make the decision to say okay, I’m gonna retake these classes, even if it seems like I’ll lose face” (INT-Julie.1/25/11.pp15-16).

What all the students demonstrated was their ability to be persistent and show a dedication to succeed. Several of the students proffered that this may be what separated them from other transfer students who did not successfully transition to the new educational environment. As Lulu mentioned, “You just have to keep trying” (INT-Lulu.1/31/11.p4). Rae indicated that she has always welcomed a challenge and saw her progress at Texas A&M as a struggle she was willing to take on. She stated:

I think my time here, with me getting sick, and my personal issues, and even not doing as well as I would hope in semesters before, having to repeat semesters, that shows that I’m not a quitter. I strive to try to do my best or give 100%. And I’m not ashamed to ask for the help - if the resources are there, I’ll try to take advantage of them. (INT-Rae.1/31/11.pp3-4)

Julie indicated that students will choose whether they will succeed or fail as she presented a *fight or flight* philosophy. She stated that succeeding in the four-year environment requires a conscious decision not to fail. As she stated, “if you don’t make the choice not to fail, then you could eventually fail” (INT-Julie.1/25/11.pp18-19).

Based on these responses, it becomes clear that success is perceived as a personal

choice for many of these students. The students feel that having setbacks comes with being a student at a large research-intensive university and is unavoidable. However, the response to these setbacks is ultimately what makes students successful. For those who *quit* as Julie described, the final outcome at the university level is almost pre-determined. Without question, the most successful transfer students will be those who have the determination to succeed and refuse to stop seeking ways to be successful.

Just take it one class, and one semester at a time: Pursuing manageable goals. Another strategy employed by under-represented transfer students is breaking the process of pursuing the undergraduate degree into smaller manageable and attainable goals. Growing up in South Texas, we often used a Spanish phrase, *poco a poco, se va lejos*. This phrase translates to *little by little, one goes far*. I was reminded of this phrase when interviewing students because this describes how students in the teacher education program approached their progress towards completion. Instead of getting *bogged down* in the mire of the numerous upper-level courses of their professional phase and the requirements for certification, the successful students instead approached each course and each semester as a separate challenge that was their most immediate concern.

Some students learned this approach from trial and error, while others had utilized this strategy throughout their higher education. Cindy learned to take this approach as she adapted to life with dyslexia in high school. She stated that learning with this disorder caused her to “make out whatever they give us, the little course packet or whatever, what’s gonna happen, or what’s supposed to happen. They always change it, so I make out a little schedule of what I need to do on this day and that day. (INT-

Cindy.1/24/11.p8)” Others indicated that these strategies were given to them as they worked with faculty and advisors to better understand how to build their schedules and work on time management.

Several of the students indicated that these manageable goals were getting them one step closer to the completion of their program. For example, Mario mentioned:

Right, and I’m just so happy whenever I finish. Like last semester, I took 18 hours again, which was difficult. And I had to do like all my upper-level Spanish – that was 15 hours of upper-level Spanish and the statistics class. And I was just really happy that I got done with all that Spanish, because like I had to take these classes so that I can teach properly. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p13)

These small goals are also seen as great accomplishments in which the students take great pride. Lulu was happy that she passed her Bilingual Certification Exam and pointed to the completion of her Methods semester as her proudest accomplishment at A&M.

While talking with these students, I began to get a sense that they viewed these manageable goals from a survival standpoint. They mentioned that they are happy to still be in the program. The Irish proverb that describes their philosophy is that *any day above ground is a good day*. Hope demonstrated that although she had faced challenges outside the university such as a sick child, she was just happy to have finished her toughest semester and still be enrolled at A&M. What is clear from her narrative along with the stories of the other students is that these students are able to manage the challenges they face by keeping them in mind and not trying to look past them toward

graduation. Coaches often tell their players, “you cannot win the game in the first quarter, but you sure can lose it” meaning that it is best to pace yourself as you take on a challenge and not make so many mistakes early that your end goal is unattainable. In a related sense, breaking the process down into manageable goals is a process that has worked for these students and has kept them on the path toward degree completion.

I’m proud of myself: Personal changes. As students were asked to reflect on the changes in their lives and think about their future after graduation, it became apparent that they were beginning the *transition out* phase that Schlossberg, et al. (1995) theorized. One student in particular demonstrated that she is struggling with the concept of where she will be after graduation. Julie wrote in her journal:

I’m trying to wrap up my degree, but even acknowledging that the end is almost near is quite a unique feeling. Of course, I have the thoughts about what to do next mixed with excitement and expectancy. So, right now I would say it's really starting to set in that my experience as an undergrad is almost over, and I'm not totally sure how I'm supposed to respond to that. I don't have a model to go by, i.e. what steps to take next-- grad school or job market, what steps to take in order to wrap up my degree plan, how to transition out of college, etc. As far as coping with these thoughts, I know that what I'm expected to do right now is focus on this semester. The only way I can do that, with so much going on, is to take one day at a time, one week at a time, just to get to May. Then, the fall semester can worry about itself until I get there. (JOU-Julie.2/4/11.p1)

Parenthetically, Julie demonstrates that as she prepares to leave the program, she is employing strategies that have worked well for her in the past. These are the same strategies often mentioned by other students to survive the undergraduate program – breaking the process down into manageable goals.

The changes that students were most proud of varied. Cindy indicated that she was proud of the independent person she had become while at Texas A&M. She believed she has become a more prepared individual to take on the challenges of the professional world and is even able to become financially independent from her parents. Rae has noticed that she has become more comfortable sharing her comments with others. She stated:

Being more outspoken, volunteering to speak more [is a change I have noticed]. Because sometimes I would just sit back and be quiet and kind of be in my own world. I still get a little nervous when I'm talking in front of people, but I'm able to get up there and have the confidence to know that my point of view is important. We may not agree on the same thing, but I have a voice, and it's worth hearing. So being able to speak publicly and be comfortable with it. (INT-Rae.1/31/11.p13)

Amy demonstrated that she has noticed her maturity level increase since matriculating to A&M. In her estimation, there is more of a sense of urgency to do well since she is nearing the completion of her program. She stated:

I think probably maturity, just because a lot of things I feel like I've been there, done that. And I mean I'll still go have fun, but I don't have a problem going to

bed at 10:30 or 11:00 at night because I have classes and stuff. And I think my drive here as far as making good grades has definitely improved, even though I had ... I mean I was committed when I was at the junior college too, just because this is my final time to do well with my GPA and boost it as much as I can. (INT-Amy.1/24/11.p3)

It is clear that each student perceived specific changes in themselves from the community college to the university environment. Although the changes were uniquely different for each student, they were typically tied to the challenges they had faced and overcome. There appears to be a relationship between facing a challenge, implementing a strategy to survive, and the transformation that the student makes because of the influences of the university environment.

That would be helpful: Recommended institutional strategies. As part of my research protocol, I included questions specific to the recommendations students would have for the University to address unmet needs. Similar to the strategies and transformations the students presented, the recommendations were also often unique to the individual's situation. For example, Rae, Hope, and Lulu are all mothers with young children, and all three expressed that improved and increased childcare would be helpful. Currently, the University provides childcare through the Becky Gates Children's Center. However, the tuition rates are as high as \$700 per month for Texas A&M students and these services are limited to 65 children – a number that comprises 40% of the center's enrollment (Doc-Gates.3/15/11.p1).

An interesting need identified by two students was the creation of student organization specifically for transfer students. Both Hope and Julie indicated that a peer organization for transfers in the College of Education and Human Development would provide an outlet for discussing issues related to the transition process and help them to become more comfortable with the logistics of campus early in the undergraduate career. Hope described the organization by stating:

I'm gonna go out on a limb and say that most transfer students are older anyway, so it's like I would like to see some clubs formed where, you know, perhaps there could be a club where there's mommies. Or since I'm not the typical college student, it's like there aren't any clubs that I'm just really interested in joining, you know, due to time constraints. And so it's like that's what sets me apart – it's like when I come to campus, I'm not interested in making friends or exchanging phone numbers. And only because I'm not ... it's like I can't plug into those people. I need to know where these people are. I know that there are other people like me on campus that you know. (INT-Hope.1/31/11.pp8-9)

A major need addressed by the students was increased financial assistance. Several students indicated that they are concerned about taking out numerous loans while pursuing a degree for a career that is traditionally low paying. Mario indicated that his plan after graduation “is gonna be hindered by paying off the loans” (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p12). It also became apparent that not only is more financial assistance needed, but also the advertising and delivery of what is available should also be improved. Lulu in particular felt this process should be improved through increased

University outreach that focuses on providing information for Hispanic families before the student reaches campus.

Finally, several of the students indicated that tutoring that was specific to the previously mentioned upper-level math courses would be helpful. However, as has been discussed, these services are available through the Byrne Student Success Center and it is more likely that the advertising for these services needs to be improved. Amy indicated that these services could be advertised by having the director of the Center speak at new student conference and by having students who have utilized the services present at other meetings. This issue along with other recommendations will be discussed further in Chapter V.

Summary of Findings

In summary, this chapter was designed to demonstrate my analysis of the data collected through inquiry into how transfer students of color perceive a predominantly White, pre-service teacher education program. Additionally, through standardized open-ended interviews, informal conversational interviews, participant journals, and document analysis I sought to understand the additional services that the University must provide for this population to be successful.

From the inquiry and analysis, five themes emerged that included the perceptions of these students, *the role intimate support structures play in their lives*, *the role institutionalized support structures play in supporting their development*, *the situational factors faced by this population*, and *the strategies they utilize to be successful*. Additionally, each theme included sub-themes which included: *the perception of pre-*

university advising, the importance of starting with an end destination in mind, the perceptions of the orientation to the university after being admitted, the perception of being a transfer student, the role of friends, the role of family, the role of faith and spirituality, the reluctance to use institutional support services, the role of university faculty and advisors, the influence of campus climate, experiencing the pre-service teacher education program, challenges associated with upper-level math courses, student response to setbacks, the importance of pursuing manageable goals, the personal changes students have made, and recommendations for institutional strategies that students thought would be helpful.

CHAPTER V

INTERPRETATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter includes conclusions, study limitations, and implications for future research and practice. As I describe in Chapter I, this study focused on the following research questions: *How do under-represented transfer populations attending a predominantly White pre-service teacher training program perceive their educational environment and what are their perceptions of the services provided by the university to ensure their academic success? And what are the criteria that must be in place for students of color to succeed in a predominantly White pre-service teacher training program?*

Based on the inquiry and analysis from these guiding questions, I came to the following conclusions:

- Although most participants felt they have the resources needed to survive academically, students of color in this particular teacher education program perceive there to be a lack of institutional support that prevents them from thriving in the program. They feel the areas of math tutoring and childcare that is provided can be improved, but this is caused more by poor marketing by the College of what is available than a lack of services.
- Although family is often seen as a support mechanism, the responsibilities faced by older non-traditional students with children can impede progress in coursework, and ultimately, the degree itself.

- The transition faced by students after transfer forces them to adopt new strategies for academic success that they may develop at varying rates and in numerous ways and these strategies ultimately influence the ways in which the student changes both personally and academically throughout their undergraduate career.

This chapter will demonstrate the theoretical framework and how it was utilized to answer the research questions of the study through the emergent themes. Next, the recommendations for practice and recommendations for future research will be presented. The chapter will conclude with a demonstration of the limitations that arose during the course of inquiry and how these may have impacted my findings and conclusions.

Relation to Theoretical Framework

Schlossberg et al. (1995) theorized that adults face transition – be it anticipated, unanticipated, or a non-event transition – through a three phase model that deconstructs the change into three phases, *moving in*, *moving through*, and *moving out*. Additionally, the theory postulated that there are typically four interacting factors, or the Four S's – *Situation*, *Self*, *Support*, and *Strategy* – that adults typically rely upon to cope with the transition. I utilized this framework to design my study by framing my protocol questions longitudinally to study the transition students of color made as they were admitted into the University from the community college (moving in), went through the orientation process at the University (moving through), and as they began to complete the undergraduate pre-service teacher education program (moving out). This framework

was utilized to formulate a protocol (Appendix E) that examined the coping mechanisms at various stages of the transfer student's academic career (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1
The 4 S Variables in the Protocol

Variable	Question addressed by variable
Situation	What happened and what was its impact?
Self	To whom is it happening and how was it perceived?
Support	What help is available – both intimately and institutionally?
Strategies	How does the person cope or adapt to the academic change?

Summary and Discussion of Results

This study provides a useful contribution to our understanding of both how transfer students of color perceive the undergraduate experience in a PWI and sheds light on the academic needs these students face throughout the academic environment. Schlossberg's et al., (1995) Transition Theory (1995) provided a tool for shaping my inquiry so I could examine the perception of students before they enter the University, as they progress through their studies, and as they prepared for graduation and teacher certification. Additionally, this theory helped direct my attention to the role of *self*, the *support* mechanisms on which the students rely, the *situation* in which the students found themselves, and the *strategies* they employed to remain successful. The themes of this study actually expanded beyond the Four S Model by separating institutional support mechanisms from the intimate support structures the students utilized during their transition to the University. Woven into the discussion of each theme are the

answers to the study's research questions of (1) how community college transfer students of color perceive studying in a PWI pre-service teacher education program, and (2) the services the university must provide to improve the retention and graduation of this vulnerable population. The interaction of the five themes and their impact on the transfer student's progression through the academic career is demonstrated in the model I developed to depict transfer student transitions (Figure 5.1).

Within this model, I differentiate from Schlossberg's 4 S Model by separating the intimate support and the institutional support. My analysis demonstrated that institutional support has a very different impact in supporting students academically. Student relationships with faculty members and advisors were often cited as a major reason for student success in the program. Although intimate support mechanisms can serve as an asset to degree completion by boosting to student morale and financial stability, family can also serve as a limitation due to the added responsibilities and commitments that they demand. An example of this liability is the cost of childcare for single mothers studying in the program. While participants demonstrated they wanted to succeed to be an example for their children, they also indicated that the financial commitment of paying for daycare was a drain on limited financial resources.

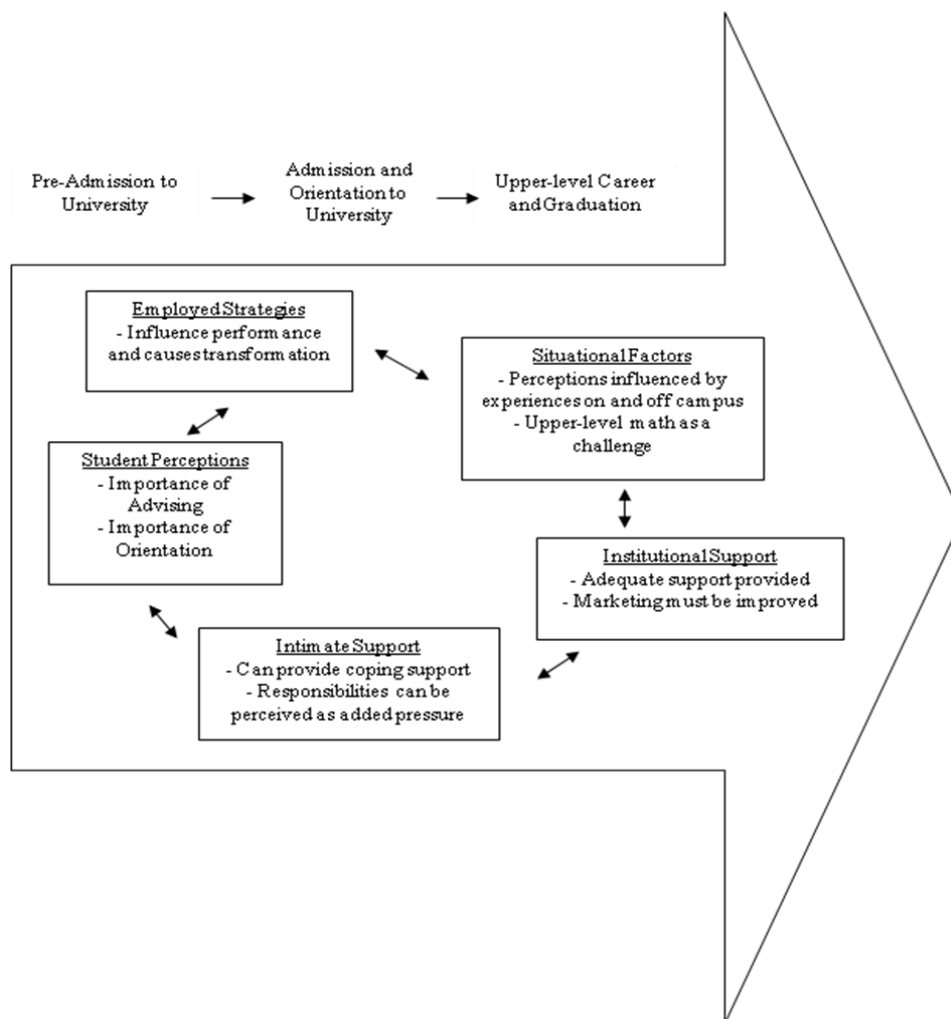


Figure 5.1. Amended Transition Model for Under-represented Transfers

Theme one: Transfer student perceptions. My inquiry through qualitative research methods produced salient data which, when analyzed, developed into five themes that were roughly consistent with Schlossberg's Four S Model (1995). However, the findings stand on their own merits for their ability to demonstrate the unique challenges faced by pre-service teachers of color who transferred from two-year community colleges. Specifically, these students demonstrated that they perceived the

transfer advising they received from the community college as inadequate, but as I discussed in the findings, this perception is likely influenced by the timeline by which they select their academic major and ultimate transfer destination. Working with academic advisors when either of these goals is unclear will lead to inconsistent advice which may not help the student to achieve their ultimate career goal.

This study also demonstrated that transfer students of color felt overwhelmed by the daunting task of learning the logistics of campus. These students mentioned the sense of intimidation both by the sheer size of the large university campus and also the enrollment size in some of their early classes. Related to these comments is the fact that the students felt their institutionally provided orientation process which the University refers to as a new student conference could be improved with the addition of campus tours to increase their comfort level with the logistical understanding of their new environment. A similar emotional response was mentioned as students attempted to utilize support services. Several mentioned that they felt a great sense of anxiety if they used support resources such as the Byrne Center evening workshops and it was this negative emotional response that kept them from attending workshops and tutoring sessions. I make recommendations to address the sense of unfamiliarity and anxiety later in this chapter.

Theme two: Intimate support structures. The findings of this study suggest that three intimate support structures are utilized by this cohort for coping mechanisms throughout their undergraduate career. These mechanisms are their family, their friends, and their faith. The support structure provided by family demonstrates that younger

students who do not have children of their own relied upon their parents for both financial and emotional support. While the non-traditional students I studied mentioned similar emotional support, they also described having children as an added obstacle because the added responsibilities served as a drain on their resources of time and energy.

Several students mentioned that they were drawn to the PWI by friends they had in high school or at the community college level. These friendships served as not only influences on the individual's perception of the campus, but also the friends were sources of information about how to navigate the admissions and orientation process. Universities must be aware that students who perceive their initial community college advising as poor will be more inclined to obtain advice from peers. The quality and accuracy of the information provided by friends may be suspect by professionals in higher education, thereby stressing the importance of both accurate advising early in the career and demonstrating the need for increased and improved collaboration between the community college and University advising offices.

To understand how the under-represented students I interviewed perceived their educational environment, I attempted to understand the coping mechanisms on which these students relied. The last intimate support structure students mentioned was the impact their faith had on their decision to attend the PWI, their reliance on faith to help understand their experiences, and the support resources they found through their faith. Students referred to teaching as their *calling* and demonstrated that they find comfort during tough times through the power of prayer. While public universities are limited in

how they can address issues of spirituality, it is important for institutions to understand the impact and influence that faith and spiritual development has on many undergraduate students.

Theme three: Institutional support structures. The students perceived that all the resources they needed to academically survive the program were being provided by the University, but they were being presented in such a way that was confusing and overwhelming for them and this prevented students from thriving. I refer to this *information overload* the students mention as *information camouflage*. If you think of how camouflage works, one color mixes in with a group of similar colors to help hide an object in the larger environmental context. In a sense, this is what institutions are doing to their undergraduate students – students are receiving multiple and sometimes mixed messages from both the College and the University through email and social media platforms. Students expressed that they are having difficulty deciphering which communications from the institution are helpful and important.

The University must be careful that it does not inundate and overwhelm students with messages that only serve to muddy the waters as they seek out institutional support. One student indicated that she does not even keep phone contacts in her cell phone from other students in her classes as the semester ends because they take up valuable memory space. One must ask the question, how likely is this student to keep and utilize emails from the College if she will not even keep in contact with her friends who served as sources of support for her throughout the semester? Recommendations to address *information camouflage* will also be presented later in this chapter.

The analysis of the data collected indicated that this particular cohort often utilized faculty and advisors as their primary source for institutional support. Although the College has invested both time and financial resources into the development of the Byrne Center, students are still hesitant to utilize the services provided. As mentioned previously, the College must continue to explore options to make the support services a part of the culture of the students in the College. Early exposure during orientation coupled with improved marketing of the services will help, but the Center must also improve partnerships with faculty and advisors so these individuals encourage students to seek out the Center's resources on their own.

Theme four: Situational factors. The findings from this study hinted at the ways in which students of color experience the campus climate at a large PWI. What was particularly interesting within this theme was that the students felt much of the University's climate and their individual perceptions of the University climate were shaped by situations which were often outside of the institution's control. Such situations were often linked to how the external community surrounding the campus treated the individuals. This caused the University to be guilty by geographical proximity or association. I perceived that the positionality of my race and role on campus played a part in students withholding additional information with regard to racism on campus. This will be further discussed both as a recommendation for further research and as a limitation.

The students I studied reflected on their situation in the PWI as a challenging, but rewarding experience. The challenge that was most discussed was the student's

perception of the upper-level math courses in the program. These students struggled with not only the content of these courses, but also with understanding how the classes fit into the bigger picture of how the courses will help them throughout their career. A concerning issue that I observed as it related to math was that the students often suggested that tutoring for these courses would be helpful and yet the tutoring services exist through the Byrne Center and the Math Department. Based on this finding, it is apparent that the services needed to survive academically are likely being provided, but they are being advertised in an ineffective way so students perceive that the services do not actually exist.

Theme five: Employed strategies. Students are being transformed by the transition process from attending a community college to studying in a PWI pre-service teacher education program. It is apparent after analyzing my findings that students are shaped not only by the educational process of attending class and the content instruction they provide, but also by the process of overcoming challenges they face throughout this particular transition. Just as Astin (1993) describes the Input-Environment-Outcome Model to demonstrate the impact the University has on the individual student, findings suggest that a fourth element could be included in the model and that is the transition's impact on each of those phases. From being admitted to the University, to being oriented to the new campus, to overcoming challenges associated with upper-level courses, the students I interviewed demonstrated newfound confidence and pride in their ability to survive the challenges and remain successful in spite of the barriers and obstacles that stood in their way.

The last point to be made regarding the findings is that many of the recommendations that the students provided regarding the improvement of their academic performance are (1) in some cases already being provided, (2) can be provided at little or no additional cost to the University, or (3) with minor tweaking, can be enhanced utilizing current structures that are in place. As an example, some students pointed to the need for childcare as a detriment to using support services in the evening. A model will be presented in my recommendations to address this need with very little effort or cost.

Recommendations for Practice

Based on my conclusions, I have developed recommendations for practice that the College of Education and Human Development could easily implement to address some of the major issues presented by the students I interviewed. These recommendations for improved practice will be presented in three stages: improving the pre-admission process for transfers, improving the orientation to campus, and increasing graduation rates. These findings are summarized in Figure 5.2.

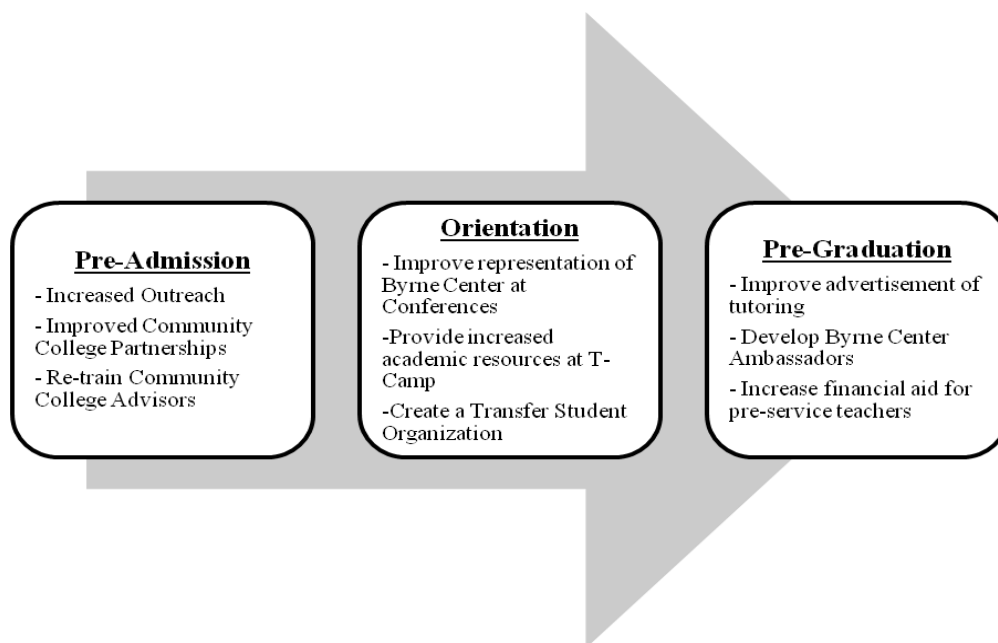


Figure 5.2. Recommendations for Improved Transfer Student Retention

Recommendation One: *Improve the pre-university advising through increased collaboration between the University admissions and departmental advisors and community college transfer centers.* Students indicated that the advising they received before applying for transfer admission was often less-than-desirable. As I mentioned in my discussion, the primary reason for this perception is that students seek advice at a time that they are unfamiliar with their end destination. To address this concern, Texas A&M University must work with community colleges and K-12 schools to assist students with career exploration and clarify the academic major that students should pursue for specific career paths. When developing publications and recruitment materials it is important to present information on majors in such a way that students can

understand and make valid decisions regarding their academic major and future career field.

Another option for improving career-oriented advising would be the increase of outreach initiatives before students reach the community college level. Specifically, TAMU should focus on providing community outreach initiatives in urban areas to promote higher education in Hispanic and African American communities. Early awareness of the demands and process for college and major choice would certainly increase college attendance rates for these under-represented populations and ultimately address both the achievement gaps in college and the shortage of pre-service teachers of color.

To address the advising issues raised by students in this study, I recommend annual training initiatives be undertaken by community college advising offices. Within these training sessions, effort should be made to include information from four-year universities on the course and GPA requirements necessary for specific degree plans and for admission into the University itself. Developing greater partnerships between community college advisors and University recruiters is vital for improving the services delivered before students apply for transfer.

Recommendation Two: *Improve the student's University orientation to campus by increasing comfort level with the services provided and transforming existing services so they better address the specific needs of transfer students.* A recommendation was provided by one of the students that seems to be a brilliant and yet simple solution to increasing attendance at Byrne Center programs. Amy felt that if the Byrne Center

director spoke briefly at the new student conference, admitted transfers would quickly understand the services the office provides and connect a name with a face to improve familiarity and comfort. While I do not think this alone will solve the problem, I do believe it would be a fast and easy solution that could be implemented. I would recommend that the College expand exposure to the Center by inviting current students who have been assisted by the Byrne Center in the past to speak as ambassadors of the Byrne Center. Having current students speak about resources that have helped them will add immediate credence to the services the college provides and increase the likelihood of future attendance.

I also recommend Transfer Camp re-evaluate the services it provides. I was disheartened to learn during my inquiry that some transfer students of color did not enjoy their T-Camp experience and felt it did not meet their needs. Additions that could improve T-Camp would be a logistical tour of campus that is led by upper-level undergraduates before leaving for T-Camp and a longer discussion of the academic services and processes that students will undergo once they begin taking classes at the University. These simple changes would add to the academic reputation of T-Camp and address one of the primary concerns of students – the fear of the size and logistical navigation of campus after being admitted.

Texas A&M takes great pride in the number of recognized student organizations (RSO) on campus, so it is likely that adding a new student-led organization that helps non-traditional and transfer students acclimate to campus would not be difficult. I recommend that the College encourage a group of transfer students who found the pre-

admission resources the College provides useful to use their experience to create a new RSO dedicated to the mentorship of new transfers and non-traditional students. Such an organization could help by representing the Byrne Center at new student conferences and other mandatory advising meetings, serve as a venting outlet for new transfers during particularly stressful times of the year, and provide an immediate peer network on which these newly admitted students can rely. Related to RSO's, attendance at the evening Byrne Center programs would also be increased if the College could identify ways to provide childcare for nontraditional students – perhaps having childcare provided as a service project by the College's student organizations.

Recommendation Three: *Improve the transfer student experience at the University by improving information dissemination and increasing financial assistance for this unique population.* As mentioned in my discussion of the findings, *information camouflage* appears to be a common problem which under-represented transfers face and is a problem that could be easily mitigated. Information camouflage refers to the inundation or bombardment of information at undergraduate students by the College and University. Social media has become so pervasive on campus that students now receive emails, Facebook messages, Twitter feeds, and text messages on a daily basis. These messages range in importance and priority. From critical information such as Code Maroon updates about potential health or safety concerns on the Texas A&M campus to less-important advertisements for video or Facebook contests that are supported by the University's Office of Marketing and Communications, students are simply overwhelmed with updates. To address this problem, I recommend that the College be

more judicious in the types and content of the messages it sends. To address these concerns, I recommend that a clearinghouse for electronic communications to undergraduate students be established so one office or individual may decide which messages are deemed important enough to disseminate to the College.

A final recommendation that would improve practice would be increasing the availability and the advertisement of financial assistance for transfer students in general, but more importantly, for our pre-service teachers in particular. As reported in my review of literature, the average student is graduating from America's universities with over \$20,000 in debt (Douglass, 2006). This burden, as my findings suggested, is impacting the career decisions of students of color and the perception of the career to which they have been dedicated. Our elected policy makers must decide how much longer they will continue to ask individuals to enter a traditionally low-paying career in the public service field of education while taking on the burden of unchecked tuition and increased debt.

Recommendations for Further Research

My findings suggest that transfer students have much to share with regard to their experiences, especially as they study in the high-need field of education where there is a critical shortage of public K-12 teachers of color. Although this study provides keen insight into student experiences and provides feasible recommendations to improve the performance of students of color, it also points to areas where further research is needed. To address the access and achievement gaps that currently exist between students of color and majority White students, transfer populations must better be understood and

fostered in higher education. To add to the extant knowledge base, I recommend further research be conducted on transfer students of color, on transfer students who suffered from attrition after transfer into a PWI environment, and that the study be replicated on a Historically Black College or University to compare the experiences with students in a different educational environment. This section will discuss these recommendations as they apply to future research.

Recommendation One: *Inquire further into the unique transitions faced by community college transfers of color.* Literature has demonstrated that students of color are much more likely to begin their college career at a two-year community college than a four-year university due to the rising tuition and increased academic standards for freshman admission (Frederickson, 1998; Eggleston & Laanan, 2001; NCES Digest, 2005; Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Based on this information, it will be even more important to understand the unique needs of this population as they transfer into large predominantly White universities in the future. I recommend this population be studied by researchers of color who would be able to build a participant/researcher relationship through a qualitative approach geared to assist in better understanding how these students experience campus climate before, during, and after transfer. I perceived that my positionality of being a White administrator in the College limited my data collection on this particular sub-theme.

Recommendation Two: *Study students of color who were unsuccessful in making the transition from the community college to the university environment to identify the services that needed to be provided to ensure their success.* For this study, I

researched students who were in good academic standing in the pre-service teacher education program and contributed new knowledge as to how successful students overcome challenges and setbacks during their undergraduate career. To better understand the services that need to be provided, it also would be helpful to understand what services could have been provided to prevent students who were unsuccessful from suffering attrition from the University environment. Such a study would provide the opportunity to compare and contrast their experiences and perceptions of the PWI environment with those of successful students to determine additional areas that must be addressed to enhance the undergraduate experience for this vulnerable population.

Recommendation Three: *Research the experiences of students of color who are studying in a pre-service teacher education program at a Historically Black College or University and/or Hispanic Serving Institution.* This study took place in a large research PWI. To address the need for increased production of teachers of color, all institutions must improve the retention and graduation rates of students of color studying in pre-service teacher education programs. Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) serve a key role in addressing this shortage and a similar study would identify the challenges and support structures that would need to be improved or added to increase the performance and graduation rates of community college transfers on these campuses.

Limitations

After analyzing the data collected for this project, I realized that there were study-specific limitations that existed. The first limitations were my race and the role it

played in building trust with my participants to discuss issues of racism on campus. Although the inquiry was conducted over a period of months with numerous encounters, it became evident that students were not always comfortable discussing issues involving racism on campus. The findings of this study are potentially impacted by my positionality of being a White male administrator in the College and may have caused the participants to withhold data related to incidents of racism in the PWI environment.

Another noteworthy limitation that I identified was that this study was highlighting ways to improve student retention; however, the participants I interviewed were in good standing with the University and may not necessarily be the students who are most in need of the academic services provided. Students who had been unsuccessful and suffered attrition were not readily available for this study. This made it difficult to understand why the students were reluctant to utilize support services. The best answer for this particular population may be that they were unwilling to use the support services because they were, for the most part, academically successful and did not feel the need to utilize these programs.

The final limitation is that none of the students I interviewed had graduated from the University. This limitation made it difficult to gather data related to the *moving out* phase of my theoretical framework. Although I asked students questions related to networking for their career and the next steps after graduation, the responses I received led me to believe that the students were not yet to this phase and had not really contemplated how they might perceive the next transition after graduation.

Summary and Conclusion

The objectives of this study were to address the critical shortage of certified K-12 teachers of color by understanding the barriers in place for pre-service teachers of color studying in a large PWI and the systems that must be added or changed to improve the retention and graduation rates of this vulnerable population. This qualitative study used data collection through participant interviews – both informal conversational and structured protocol – as well as document analysis, persistent engagement, and participant journals to gather data related to under-represented student experiences in a predominantly White pre-service teacher education program. Through constant comparative data analysis, five themes emerged related to how a cohort of this population perceived being a transfer student, the intimate support structures utilized as a coping mechanism during their career, the institutional support structures provided by the University, the situations this population experienced, and the strategies they employed to remain successful in the undergraduate program.

To improve the performance of under-represented students, the University might consider addressing the advertisement of academic resources by presenting these services in a more efficient manner and by utilizing current students in the process. Additionally, the institution should continue to provide outreach opportunities in Hispanic and African American communities to encourage students with accurate and supporting information. Finally, the University must address the advising that prospective transfer students receive by becoming more involved with transfers before

they are admitted and by enhancing the advising knowledge of academic advisors on the two-year campus.

Further research of transfer students of color and, more specifically, research of this population which includes unsuccessful students who were forced to leave the university environment would contribute further to our knowledge of what services must be provided and how the services might be presented for these populations to succeed after transfer. The findings indicate that if students are unable to navigate the marketing of support resources, then the services might as well not exist in the first place. This theory must be confirmed through further research to improve the retention efforts in higher education.

Although there is no monolithic experience for transfer students of color, emergent themes from this study suggest commonalities that contribute to our knowledge of the transfer experience. The title of this study, *Starting with an End in Mind*, was chosen because that phrase was used by several of the participants to describe the approach they took to be successful in pursuing their transfer from a community college to the University. It was not until the students had decided upon the major they wanted to study and the university they wanted to attend that their plan for transition was formulated. Both four-year universities and two-year community colleges must understand this vital requirement and provide the assistance necessary for students to develop a course of action that helps them obtain their undergraduate degree and their entry into their chosen profession.

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APPENDIX A

EMAIL TRANSCRIPT FOR RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS

Howdy Research Participant Prospect:

You have been selected as a possible participant for a qualitative research project that is researching the transition community college transfers undergo within a pre-service teacher education program at a predominantly White institution. The following information will tell you more about this study and ask for your participation.

Introduction

You have been asked to participate in a research project studying transfer student transitions in College of Education & Human Development at Texas A&M University. The purpose of this study is to identify the strengths and weaknesses associated with the transition process for under-represented students in a predominantly White pre-service teacher education program and identify experiences that can be enhanced to improve student retention and graduation success. You were selected to be a possible participant because you meet the conditions of being an under-represented (race and/or ethnicity) student who transferred to the Texas A&M University pre-service teacher education program.

What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to be interviewed by the researcher to obtain a constructed view of your transition experiences to date. This study will take approximately one hour for a conversational interview. Additional information may be gathered through follow-up communications including email, phone calls, and/or second interviews. Additionally, you will be asked to keep a running journal of your experiences as you transition out of the college environment. These journal entries will be responses to question prompts that will be emailed to you and should not be more than a paragraph each week for two months. Interviews will be recorded digitally and transcribed. Records will be scheduled for destruction five years after the initial recording.

What are the risks involved in this study?

The risks associated in this study are minimal, and are not greater than risks ordinarily encountered in daily life.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, the study will provide a clearer understanding of the transfer experience and the obstacles faced by

under-represented transfer students in predominantly White pre-service teacher education programs.

Do I have to participate?

No. Your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without your current or future relations with Texas A&M University being affected.

Who will know about my participation in this research study?

This study is confidential and the records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only David Byrd will have access to the records.

Whom do I contact with questions about the research?

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact David Byrd, (979) 862-7167, byrd99@tamu.edu or Dr. Fred Bonner, (979) 845-4274, fbonner@tamu.edu.

Whom do I contact about my rights as a research participant?

This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects' Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact these offices at (979) 458-4067 or irb@tamu.edu.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please reply to this email so we can schedule a time to meet for your interview. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions or concerns regarding this project.

Thank you,

David A. Byrd

APPENDIX B**PHONE TRANSCRIPT FOR RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS**

Howdy:

You were recently emailed an invitation to participate in a qualitative research project that is researching the transition that pre-service teacher education candidates make after transferring from a community college to a four-year university environment.

Do you have any questions or concerns regarding this study?

Would you be willing to take part in a one-hour interview of your experiences and follow-up this interview with four one-paragraph journal responses?

Thank you for your time.

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM

Starting with the End in Mind: A Case Study of Under-Represented, Teacher Education, Community College Transfers in a Predominantly White institution

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research study. If you decide to participate in this study, this form will also be used to record your consent.

You have been asked to participate in a research project studying transfer student transitions in College of Education & Human Development at Texas A&M University. The purpose of this study is to identify the strengths and weaknesses associated with the transition process for under-represented students in a predominantly White pre-service teacher education program and identify experiences that can be enhanced to improve student retention and graduation success. You were selected to be a possible participant because you meet the conditions of being an under-represented (race and/or ethnicity) student who transferred to the Texas A&M University pre-service teacher education program.

What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to be interviewed by the researcher to obtain a constructed view of your transition experiences to date. This study will take approximately one hour for a conversational interview. Additional information may be gathered through follow-up communications including email, phone calls, and/or second interviews. Additionally, you will be asked to keep a running journal of your experiences as you transition out of the college environment. These journal entries will be responses to question prompts that will be emailed to you and should not be more than a paragraph each week for two months. Interviews will be recorded digitally and transcribed. Records will be scheduled for destruction five years after the initial recording.

What are the risks involved in this study?

The risks associated in this study are minimal, and are not greater than risks ordinarily encountered in daily life.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, the study will provide a clearer understanding of the transfer experience and the obstacles faced by under-represented transfer students in predominantly White pre-service teacher education programs.

Do I have to participate?

No. Your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without your current or future relations with Texas A&M University being affected.

Who will know about my participation in this research study?

This study is confidential and the records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only David Byrd will have access to the records.

Whom do I contact with questions about the research?

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact David Byrd, (979) 862-7167, byrd99@tamu.edu or Dr. Fred Bonner, (979) 845-4274, fbonner@tamu.edu.

Whom do I contact about my rights as a research participant?

This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects' Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact these offices at (979) 458-4067 or irb@tamu.edu.

Signature

Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions and received answers to your satisfaction. You will be given a copy of the consent form for your records. By signing this document, you consent to participate in this study.

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

For more information, contact:

David Byrd
(979) 862-7167
Byrd99@tamu.edu

Dr. Fred Bonner
(979) 845-4274
fbonner@tamu.edu

APPENDIX D
PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: _____ Birthday: _____

Race/Ethnicity: _____ Gender: _____

Current GPR: _____ Major: _____ Hours Completed: _____

Highest Education Level of Father: _____

Highest Education Level of Mother: _____

Marital Status: _____ Hometown: _____

From where did you transfer? _____

GPA at Previous Institution: _____ Number of hours you transferred: _____

Did you work while at A&M? _____ If yes, how many hours per week: _____

Did you work before A&M? _____ If yes, how many hours per week: _____

What organizations were you involved with before you attended A&M? _____

What organizations have you joined while at A&M? _____

What academic support services have you utilized while at A&M? _____

What forms of financial aid did you receive before A&M? _____

What forms of financial aid did you receive at A&M? _____

APPENDIX E

RESEARCH PROTOCOL

Level 1 Questions:

How did you decide that Texas A&M was the university you wanted to attend?
What factors went into your decision to choose teaching as a career?

Level 2 Questions:

	Moving In	Moving Through	Moving Out
Situation	<p>How do you feel community college prepared you for Texas A&M?</p> <p>What were the most stressful things in your life as you left for Texas A&M?</p>	<p>Has there been anything you were expecting to experience at A&M that haven't come to be for you?</p> <p>How would you describe the difference in you as a student from the 2-year school to A&M?</p>	<p>Reflecting back, how would you describe the campus climate to friends back home and how did that perception change over time?</p>
Support	<p>Describe how your family felt about your move to Texas A&M.</p> <p>What other options did you consider when looking at four-year universities?</p>	<p>In what ways do you feel you were supported after you started taking courses at A&M?</p> <p>In what ways do you feel you were not supported?</p> <p>Can you talk about the options for academic support you felt you had when you started taking courses at A&M?</p>	<p>In what ways do you feel your support networks will change as you leave the university?</p> <p>Why do you think you succeeded at A&M while other students have not?</p>
Self	<p>What characteristics do you think you have that helped you get admitted to A&M?</p> <p>Can you talk a little about any friends you had at the community college and how they felt about you attending A&M?</p>	<p>Can you describe the biggest successes you feel you have had while at A&M?</p> <p>What are your failures?</p>	<p>In what ways do you think you have grown or changed because of the program you are completing?</p> <p>What changes are you most proud of?</p>
Strategies	<p>Did you seek out any resources at A&M to prepare for the move?</p> <p>Can you describe how you gained the information necessary to successfully transfer?</p>	<p>How did you recover from your setbacks while taking courses at A&M?</p>	<p>Do you intend to make teaching your long-term profession?</p> <p>What strategies have you used to get a job and begin the next phase of your life?</p>

APPENDIX F
JOURNAL PROMPTS

Week 1

Since we last talked, has anything changed with your situation – whether that might be academic or personal – and how have you coped with any recent changes? If not, have you thought further about our interview and have other comments you would like to contribute?

Week 2

It appears from previous responses, that some students feel Texas A&M provides too many academic support resources for students and this overwhelms students to the point that they do not know which to use when they need help. Does this describe an experience you have had while studying in our program?

Week 3

Do you feel you were adequately prepared to handle the curriculum at Texas A&M University and has there been a particular moment where you doubted your own abilities while pursuing your degree?

Week 4

What advice would you provide a prospective transfer student who has the ultimate goal of attending Texas A&M University to become a certified teacher?

APPENDIX G

CONCEPTUALLY CLUSTERED MATRIX: THEME ONE

Participant	Perceptions of Transfer Process			
	Pre-University Advising	Starting with the End in Mind	Orientation after Transfer	Perception of Being a Transfer
Amy	As far as advising went, they didn't help at all. I went and saw an advisor and told them that I wanted to ultimately end up at A&M, and I was told to take the wrong classes. So then I found an advisor at A&M, and then I talked to them ever since then. (INT-Amy.1/24/11.p1)	I think it depends. There are students at community colleges that don't really have an end in mind, and don't really know where they're gonna end up. But then I think there are other people that have their plan, and it's okay if it changes, but they know, "This is where I wanna end up." So it's just a toss-up I think. (INT-Amy.1/24/11.p.2) I do not have any other comments to add at this time other than stress the importance of emphasis [on the degree plan] within an education major being explained to transfer students [as they enter into the program]. (JOU-Amy.2/5/11.p1)	I think just finding my way around here. I was just lost all the time and just overwhelmed by class sizes of like basics and stuff like that. I mean I knew it was gonna be 200-300 people, but it wasn't until I walked in there that I was, you know, stressed out. (INT-Amy.1/24/11.p1)	Yeah, in my of my geography classes, my first semester here actually, he just kinda made a comment downing transfer students, and I didn't feel like that was fair at all. Because honestly, some of my Blinn classes were harder than my A&M classes, and I don't think it matters. But I did feel like I needed to defend it, just because I get the impression sometimes that people think you're dumb or not as smart because you did start off at a community college. But I mean it could just be to save money, like that's what I did, and so . . . (INT-Amy.1/24/11.p5)

	<p>I didn't even talk to the Blinn counselors – there's a waiver form that you can sign, and I just did that. (INT-Amy.1/24/11.p1)</p>	<p>I would just say that I talked to A&M from the beginning, just to make sure that I was doing the right thing. They were really helpful. They always responded – well, they always responded like within an hour or two, which was great. Because sometimes I would be sitting at the computer kind of waiting for that, and so I liked that I just felt welcomed and that they did want me to be a part of A&M. (INT-Amy.1/24/11.pp9-10)</p>		<p>Yeah, and I don't really think there's anything wrong with transferring. And I've heard like friends that are trying to transfer into the business school and stuff like that, it's basically impossible to do that. And I don't think that's fair – I don't think that transfer students should have to go over other hurdles, because you've already done your time at the community college and proved yourself. (INT-Amy.1/24/11.p5)</p>
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Cindy	<p>They were actually pretty good. I did not have one at Collin County, but I did have a really good one at Blinn. I can't remember her name, because I went through the disability services, and they have their own counselors. But she [Blinn advisor] was amazing. She signed me up for all the classes that I needed, she signed me up for the good teachers that would be willing to help somebody like me. (INT-Cindy.1/24/11.p1)</p>	<p>Yes. I talked with my advisor at Blinn – I was like, “Will I get these exact same services that I get now at A&M?” And she was like, “For sure, like you will definitely get these services.” And I was like, “Okay, let's do it.” Then so she like called Maria Ortega, who's my counselor, and we set up a meeting, and my mom came down to talk to her, just to make sure. (INT-Cindy.1/24/11.p4)</p>	<p>I guess I was a little scared because at Blinn it's more, you know, teachers are willing to help. Here, I didn't know, because the ADA system was so big. I went to the building, and I was like oh my gosh, they have just a building for people with disabilities, like oh, no, this is not gonna go well. And then at Blinn, it was just like they had their own little room of offices – it was just like one room, and that was it. And there were people that signed in, and there weren't as many people, and so I was worried that I wasn't gonna get the help that I needed, but I did. ... Yes, it was way smoother with somebody else being like, you know, so rather than just going at it on your own and flying solo and having to figure all that stuff out for yourself. (INT-Cindy.1/24/11.p4-5)</p>	<p>Not really, no. I mean like when I first . . . when I went to Blinn, and I hung out with some A&M students there, like, “Oh, you go to Blinn?” I was like, you know . . . but then I was like . . . I called myself an Aggie, and they didn't really like that, but I don't know, that was at Blinn. But not since I've been at A&M, I haven't. (INT-Cindy.1/24/11.p5)</p>
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	<p>Yes, it was way smoother with somebody else being like, you know, so rather than just going at it on your own and flying solo and having to figure all that stuff out for yourself. (INT-Cindy.1/24/11.pp4-5)</p>		<p>It's probably not getting involved in more activities. Because I didn't know about like open house – I didn't even know what open house was. Like my roommates would say, "Oh, we're going to open house," and I'm like, "okay." (laughs) I don't know what that is. I mean like it's gonna go meet your teacher night like type thing, because you know, in elementary school, that's what it is. And so I was like, "Okay, I don't know what that is, but have fun." (INT-Cindy.1/24/11.p7)</p>	
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Hope	<p>The only thing that I did not like at Blinn was . . . I saw the same advice, like once I get with an advisor, I tend to stick with them. And so there was one time at Blinn when I could not see the lady who I normally saw, and I had to see someone else. And she was an African American woman as well, and instead of her . . . I asked her, the question was . . . I had came down to the nitty-gritty at Blinn, I had take everything that I needed to take, and so it was like I was gonna have a semester there. (INT-Hope.1/31/11.pp2-3)</p>	<p>This paper [copy of degree plan] was my friend. I have like a million of these at home, where I scratched off. And that was, you know, per the advice of the first advisor, Sharon. She was just like, “Of course it looks like a lot. Just take it one class, one semester at a time. As you finish, just scratch off the list that you’ve finished that task.” And so that’s what I did. (INT-Hope.1/31/11.p4)</p>	<p>[Perception of New Student Conference] Yes, just cut-and-dried business, sign these papers, this is what you do, this is where you’re gonna go. And so it’s like gosh, we don’t get anything really. I think the only cool part was they did do a tour around the campus. (INT-Hope.1/31/11.p8)</p>	<p>Just another student. I know one professor, my first day here actually, and I told her that I was a transfer student, so I was learning the campus. And she was . . . her name was Erin . . . I can’t think of her last name. But she was amazing, and she just talked to me like nothing – it didn’t really matter that I was a transfer student or not. (INT-Hope.1/31/11.p12)</p>
	<p>With her, I think her name was Sharon Washington. She was an older lady. And I’ll never forget the first time I went to her, she was like don’t let my age be a factor in negatively influencing my outlook on my future. Because she said that how she herself had a baby, and she had to wait a few years before she did what she did, and so pretty much if she could do it with a baby at her age, then I can do it. (INT-Hope.1/31/11.p3)</p>	<p>And with Prairieview, as bad as this may sound, I did not want to go to a majority-black campus – that was never a desire of mine. . . . The factor in that was, I knew that . . . I guess like with the hiring process, and people who I would work around, they would be majority-white, so why should I set myself up to be around majority-black people when the field that I’m going into, it is majority-white. So I may as well set myself up in that</p>	<p>I actually had to come to campus (laughs) and walk my schedule, because I didn’t wanna be late. And I hate looking at my schedule, and then I’ll look up, and so it’s like I’m standing, you know, on campus just looking up trying to find it. (INT-Hope.1/31/11.p12) The major difference would be just the size, both in the campus and in the class. But I can’t determine which institution is</p>	<p>I still think the transfer students had it better anyway, because we paid 2 years cheaper – that’s my viewpoint on it. So the others that started freshman here, I’m thinking you may have started, you know, when you were supposed to have started, but my pocket is probably a little fatter than yours. (INT-Hope.1/31/11.p9)</p>

		I'll already be used to that. (INT-Hope.1/31.11.pp5-6)	harder, and I guess only because most of the classes that I've taken at A&M have been strictly dealing with education. (INT-Hope.1/31/11.p12)	
Julie	I think because VC [Victoria College] was a little bit more geared towards like training, so when you get our associate degree, you're right into the job that you apply for. My heart's desire was to eventually attend a 4-year university. And I didn't get a lot of advising on that – it was more like, “Let's finish the 2-year, and then let's get you in a job, and then we can talk about that later.” (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p3)	So as far as transitioning in that respect, it's a little bit more difficult than what I anticipated. I was kind of . . . I mean I did meet a lot of mentors who came alongside and helped me to adjust into A&M. But I think I did learn that you really kinda have to know what you're going for. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p2)	And so I didn't have a hard time finding resources once I got here at A&M, but I would say it may have been a little bit more difficult getting here just because the campus is so big, and it is a university system, as opposed to like a community college. So as far as transitioning in that respect, it's a little bit more difficult than what I anticipated. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p2)	Even, you know, with being a college student and getting here at the university level, it's a little bit different, because it's sort of tailored to the students who get out of high school and go off and get in a dorm, and everything is kind of like the community here on campus, but then you have off-campus students too, or the ones who have families. And it's a little bit different dynamic for us in that respect. So that was definitely one thing, just adjusting with my family. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p4)

	<p>There was a program called the Key Center. The mentor there, the director there actually helped me to . . . she actually took the Key Center members on a trip to visit A&M, which was really exciting for me, because at that time, I was kinda thinking about coming here. So she really kinda helped me – I guess she kinda encouraged me more to research, but as far as like getting applications in or like the different logistics, like the specific things that I have to do to apply for A&M, I had to pretty much do that on my own. So I didn't really get a lot of advising as far as how to get here or what I needed to do. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p3)</p>	<p>Right, you just have to know how to decipher like what is it that I need, what is it that relates to me. And I think that's difficult coming in. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p8)</p>	<p>So I did find it a little bit difficult because, of course, community college was not geared towards research, and even the curriculum here at A&M is geared towards research. So it was a little bit more difficult adjusting academically here. I think I did okay, but it was difficult. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p3) And then the other things too, you know, leaving friends, having to find a new job, because finances, I do really have to work while I'm still in school, different things like that. Trying to learn my way around campus and College Station/Bryan. And making connections too – I developed a lot of connections at VC. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p4)</p>	<p>No, I really haven't gotten that [derogatory comments regarding being a transfer student] from like students. Actually I've met a lot of transfer students, and it's good to meet people who have gone through what you've gone through. But I haven't as far as traditional students or professors, I haven't gotten that response, no I really haven't. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p11) I wanna say maybe most people think, "Okay, you've already been in college, so you kinda know what's going on." And that may not always be the case. Because I know that was one of my fears when I first got here and was getting into my major. A lot of the things kinda just came one after the other, like it was time for new student orientation, and different things like that. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p11)</p>
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		<p>Making the decision for me, I was probably like okay, I don't know if this is what I'm supposed to be doing, but once I got into it, I was like yeah, this is really what I'm supposed to be doing. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p2)</p>	<p>I did, I enjoyed it. I think at that time, I was still kinda in the trying to be a traditional student, trying to go along with the traditions, and you know, experience something. ... So yeah, all I remember was the funny, you know, crazy things that the counselors did. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p22)</p> <p>I mean now I'm thinking back, I just know that it was something that I experienced. But possibly if it was more, you know, okay, this is what, you know, how you adjust at A&M. These are some resources, maybe. Even catching them . . . because I know once I got here, it was time for a new student orientation, so we had to go through a couple transfer, you know, seminars. But maybe if that was in T Camp, you know, geared towards each major, you know, that could be helpful. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p22)</p>	
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<p style="text-align: center;">Lulu</p>	<p>Well, see, I never had one single advisor, like every semester I had a different one. So then whenever . . . there was this lady, I don't remember her name, and she was really bad at advising. At least the other advisors will tell me, "What do you think about this?" And she would just be like, "Here's what you need to take." And then when I told her that I was undecided about either Sam Houston or A&M, she just gave me all the classes for Sam Houston. So whenever I transferred here, they were like, "We cannot take these courses." (INT-Lulu.1/31/11.p2)</p>	<p>My advice to a prospective student that has the ultimate goal of attending Texas A&M to become a certified teacher would be to keep that goal always in mind. Having a goal set in mind always helps for motivation. Things might get tough, but always think positive and that everything is possible. Another advice that I would give is to communicate with the professors when things get challenging. My belief is that professors are there to help the students succeed and not to fail. Something that also helped me motivate myself was thinking of the day that I would receive that shiny beautiful A&M ring, and once you get it there is that feeling of fulfillment. (JOU-Lulu.3/1/11.p1)</p>	<p>So like my first semester here at A&M, it was actually kinda scary because I mean I was in a classroom full of 200 students, and you never got that contact one-on-one with the teacher as you did at Blinn. . . . But it was just the size of the classroom, it's just way too many students. Sometimes you have to do like work with groups, and sometimes your group members don't have time, or they just expect you to do it. . . . To me, it was just the classroom size, I mean it was just a lot of people. (INT-Lulu.1/31/11.pp1-2)</p>	<p>I think that once you're here, you're never really like, "oh, that's the transfer person." No, I think they see you equally. Like I've never had any instance where they were like. . . or a professor asking me, "Are you a transfer?" or things like that. I think once you're here, they see you like any other student. (INT-Lulu.1/31/11.p6)</p>
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	<p>And then when I was in Blinn, the advisor that I talked to, he was like, "Well, there's nothing much left for you to take here, so you need to apply somewhere." (INT-Lulu.1/31/11.p1)</p>	<p>Yeah, because I didn't know anything, like I didn't really do any research on the bilingual. So I just went to him [A&M Admissions Advisor] and said that I wanted to be a bilingual teacher, and he was really helpful at showing me like all the courses that you had to take. And he told me, "Once you're in your senior semester, you'll be taking certification exams and that stuff." He was really helpful. (INT-Lulu.1/31/11.p5)</p>		
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<p style="text-align: center;">Mario</p>	<p>It's [community college advising] awful – it was ridiculous. I just remember going in, and they're like, "Yeah, you're gonna do this, this, and that." and then I left like feeling I don't really know what I'm doing. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.pp2-3)</p>	<p>It wasn't until I realized what I wanted to do at A&M that I could figure out, okay, this is what I need to take before I can get to A&M. So it wasn't like . . . I feel like maybe there's new people, I don't know, but it's after going to be advised with A&M that I realized this is what I need to start focusing over here. It made more sense. Which [using community college advisors] is also kind of hard because in the beginning, I didn't really know what I wanted to do. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.pp2-3)</p>	<p>I noticed they [classes] were a little harder. Coming on campus, I don't know where anything is, that was like the big struggle. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p4)</p>	<p>I don't know. I had to ask people – it never really comes up, honestly. . . . Yeah, because like if you're . . . you know, high schools have a top 10% , and so that's so easy to get into college when you're in that, especially if your high school was, I don't know, kind of like slackers. And then when you go to a community college, that's when you actually have to prove yourself to be able to make it into a university. So I think it's a little more difficult to get into. But they earned it too because they worked hard in high school. I didn't work hard in high school, so therefore I went to the community college and worked hard in community college, and now I made it. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.pp9-10)</p>
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	<p>No, I never went back [completed self-advising form from then on]. ... after that, I called people at A&M – I don't know – and then online looking at stuff. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p3)</p>	<p>Yeah, right. And once you do that [inform advisors of which university you wish to transfer], you understand what class you need to take. And because when I looked at the transcript at A&M, it said – it had laid out like, “This semester, you take this many hours. Over the summer you take 6 hours.” And I'm like what? I didn't know I needed to be doing that until after I was already here. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.pp3-4)</p> <p>Yeah, the TAP program. So I used the TAP program to know what to take, but I didn't meet the requirements. ... Yeah, and so then I applied. The TAP program, yeah, very helpful. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p9)</p>	<p>I didn't like it [T-Camp]. I'm excited about A&M, but I'm not super-crazy – I got stuff I need to do. And it's like yeah, I'm supportive, I'm not a 2-percenter, but I don't wanna be so super-hyped up into thinking like A&M is the best place in the whole world. there was building a social network, but it was too much on like the traditions. I'm not saying traditions are bad – it's just like overkill. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p7)</p>	<p>And some people don't do community college just because they can't get into it – they do it because of financial reasons. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p10)</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;">Rae</p>	<p>I didn't expect it because a lot of people discouraged me like, "Oh, you're not gonna get in, you're gonna have to reapply." I think I had one advisor say that she didn't think I would be able to get in the first time, because it's normally really hard to get in. And I had several classmates at Blinn who had tried on multiple occasions to get in, and they got denied, so they were like, "No, I don't think you'll get in," or whatever. (INT-Rae.1/31/11.p1)</p>	<p>Yeah, but I spoke with a teacher, Linda Bow, she was an English Language Arts teacher or whatever there at Blinn. And I'd spoken with her, and she was telling me that I should come here and meet Dale Suel and talk to him about getting a copy of the degree plan, what's expected and what courses I should take. Because my first semester at Blinn, I had taken some classes, and it turns out I didn't need any of those classes, so that was a semester pretty much wasted. So that was my plan – I did everything, I came and met with him, let him know what I was looking for, what I wanted to do, I wanted to transfer, and he gave me a copy. And I would plan my schedule based off of that. (INT-Rae.1/31/11.p4)</p>	<p>[What I regret most about not going to T-Camp is] I think learning like all the traditions and different things, what makes it a special experience here. Because I feel kinda on the outside of those things because I missed out on a lot of those things. I've only gone to one game – I don't know all the little spirit chants and all that stuff. I think had I gone, I could've learned a little more about that, the tradition, and kind of appreciated it more. (INT-Rae.1/31/11.p3)</p>	<p>I think it's positive. I haven't had any problems with it. I've noticed there are a lot of students now who are coming in as transfer students, because they weren't at the top of their class to get in as an incoming freshman, and so they've gone to a 2-year junior college and then transfer in. (INT-Rae.1/31/11.p5)</p>
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	<p>It [Blinn College VA Advising] was pretty good. I had a lady by the name of Rebecca over there, and she's gone now, but she was really good. I was able to get close to her to where I could talk to her one-on-one. And whatever I needed, if I went to her, she called Waco and coordinated. (INT-Rae.1/31/11.pp7-8)</p>	<p>Again, I would advise them to come over here and meet with the staff here, or meet with someone on the faculty, and see what you guys are looking for. And they can prepare while they're there, so when they get here, they wouldn't have to take any of the courses that have pretty much the prerequisites out of the way, and they can focus on what they need to focus on as far as upper-level courses. (INT-Rae.1/31/11.p5)</p>		<p>I would say it was a positive one, overall positive. I have more good days than bad days, put it that way. (INT-Rae.1/31/11.p14)</p>
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APPENDIX H

CONCEPTUALLY CLUSTERED MATRIX: THEME TWO

Participant	Intimate Support Structures		
	Impact of Friends	Impact of Family	Impact of God
Amy	<p>Basically since I was in junior high . . . a family friend went here when I was that age, and I came and visited, and that was where I feel like I needed to end up. (INT-Amy.1/24/11.p1)</p>	<p>Probably my family, just because I would call and complain or talk about what was going on. And my parents would just constantly encourage me. And then classmates that have the classes with me, because we study together and like take notes and share them. And probably my roommates too, just because we go study together, even though we all have different majors. (INT-Amy.1/24/11.p4)</p>	
	<p>Well, when I went to Blinn, I lived with 3 girls that were already at A&M. And so I mean I attended all the A&M functions that I could with them, went to the football games, and all that kind of stuff. And I think that prepared me too, and just made me want it even more, because I was almost there, but I still had that guest ticket or that kind of stuff. (INT-Amy.1/24/11.p.2)</p>		

Cindy	<p>Not really. I mean I think the only way that I would've I guess survived on campus was that I lived at a dorm that housed Blinn and A&M students. So I met some A&M students that would, you know, like be friends with me. (INT-Cindy.1/24/11.p3)</p> <p>And so I knew everybody pretty much in my class. But then for Blinn, it was 2 girls – actually there was a bunch of girls – there was a girl on the track team, and then 2 girls from the equestrian team, and then a girl who was in electrical engineering, and so it was like a different spectrum of people. So then we just like hung out and became friends and stuff like that. One was my roommate, and then 2 girls lived across the hall, and one girl lived way down the hall. (INT-Cindy.1/24/11.p4)</p>	<p>My aunt who graduated in '91 went here. And so ever since then, I've always wanted to go to A&M. It's just like . . . she hasn't pushed it on me or anything, but it was like she's always talking about how it's such a good community here, and everybody is nice to everybody type thing. (INT-Cindy.1/24/11.p1)</p>	
	<p>Join a teaching organization on campus because those men and women you will see in your classes. These people can help with venting for certain teachers or projects along with creating ideas for said projects. (JOU-Cindy.2/22/11.p1)</p>	<p>Yeah, she was – she's really excited. My mom, she wants me to be a homebody. She wanted me to go to UNT, because that's where she went. She's like, "Stay close to home," and I was like, "No, I really need to get out and be on my own." And she finally understands. My dad was okay with it – I mean they were okay with it after a certain time. (INT-Cindy.1/24/11.p2)</p> <p>Yeah, she's had her share of good kids and bad kids, and so I've talked to my mom. I've talked to a couple of my mom's friends who are teachers, and they've taught me, and so I go back to them to ask questions and be like, "How did you go about this</p>	

		way of so-and-so?" And then they would be like, "Oh, this what I did," type thing, and so yeah. (INT-Cindy.1/24/11.pp10-11)	
Hope	<p>Business as usual. And it's funny because like when I may have exchanged numbers for a group or project or class, but once the semester is over, I delete those numbers off my phone. And so the standing joke with the people that I've met in senior methods is they're hoping to make the cut (laughs) in that I won't delete their numbers once the semester is over. And I was just like I'm never gonna call you again. Yes, it's holding up space and memory in my phone, and I'm weird like that. I'll go in and just periodically delete contacts. Actually one girl made the cut last semester, and she jokingly called me the first day of class, "I was just calling to see if I made the cut." Yes, she made the cut. [May change as she nears student teaching] I just might. It's like the ones that did make the cut were in the same program – we've taken some of the same classes. And so they'll call me for something, or I might have to call them for something. (INT-Hope.1/31/11.p10)</p>	<p>Actually since I am a parent, and I have 2 children, the ideal situation was for me to not have to drive to Prairieview or to Huntsville, because I don't stay far enough from my children to ride the bus, so I have to take them and pick them up. (INT-Hope.1/31/11.p1)</p> <p>It's crazy – no one in my family has a high school diploma or a GED, except for me. I have three older brothers and my mother – I don't really count my father – well, he's dead anyway – and then there's this other guy who claims to be, so I don't know. But like they're all super-proud of me. And even when I was at Blinn, my older brother, like I would tell him I'm through with school for the semester, and he would just always correlate that with, "Oh, so you're a teacher now?" "No, I'm just through with this semester – I still have a long way to go." And so they're all proud of me, and they love to brag, you know, "My sister goes to A&M." (INT-Hope.1/31/11.pp4-5)</p>	<p>Faith is a big thing for me. And I jokingly told one of my professors last semester, it was my first day in Hearne, and so you know, it's like . . . like I told my husband last night, because I start, since this is senior methods, I start this week, this Wednesday being in the classroom. And it's not to observe – I have to give these lessons, and I have to do it. It's like that scares me because it's like this is the test. Either I can be good at my craft, or I've wasted all of my time. And hopefully with what A&M has taught me, I have not wasted my time. But I told the professor – it was my first day of Hearne. And I always get to the school beforehand, and I'll just pray in my car before I walk in. And I told my professor, I said, "I know that there's supposed to be no praying in schools, but (laughs) that goes out the window with me because I always pray." And she laughed – she thought that was hilarious. (INT-Hope.1/31/11.pp18-19)</p>

	<p>I just might. It's like the ones that did make the cut were in the same program – we've taken some of the same classes. And so they'll call me for something, or I might have to call them for something. (INT-Hope.1/31/11.p10)</p>	<p>Just a support mechanism – I don't feel pressure. And I guess I don't feel pressure . . . I guess that would be bad to say because I've gotten further than what was expected of my family. And so it's like I wanna break that generational [cycle]. ... Yes, and so I don't know, it's like I need my children to see that going to college is attainable. It's not something that you just see or read about on television. Like I put the kids in softball, so it's like with the times when I was at softball games and taking them to practice, that could've been times that I was studying or doing work. But then it's at the same time, gosh, my kids can't do anything because I'm always studying. And so it's like now they know, like they'll ask, "Mommy, can we go to Chucky Cheese after you do your homework?" (INT-Hope.1/31/11.p5)</p>	<p>But when it came to me transferring the second time, I spoke with an advisor who was a representative at Texas A&M, and it was actually . . . that's why it's like it has to be my God-given purpose to teach. It was the last day to transfer, and so I had to drive all the way to Brenham to get my transcript and make it back to College Station by 5:00. And I had to call people to pick my kids up from school because I knew I wasn't gonna be back in time to pick them up from school too. And I made it, and then I got in that time, and so I was just like wow, that's God's work. (INT-Hope.1/31/11.p4)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Julie</p>	<p>When I applied to A&M, I actually was on spring break – it was spring break week, and I was with one of my really good friends actually was coming to A&M, and she actually helped me too. I really enjoyed . . . she would come back from A&M to visit Victoria – we went to high school together. And she would come and tell me about it, and she was also part of a bible study here on campus, where she was really learning how to develop a relationship with the Lord. And I really enjoyed that because I was looking for that too – I was looking for a church family, to a church home where I could really</p>	<p>But yeah, it was like starting over, and definitely you really have to pay attention to what their needs are. I can't just be all about me, and okay, I have to do this – I do still have to definitely put class at a priority, but then too, I still have my family that I have to take care of. My mother, she's a single parent, and she's kinda older, and she has diabetes and different complications with it, so it's a little bit more difficult to kinda juggle those responsibilities. But my mother has been a blessing – she's helped me to stay at home, and that kinda does help with expenses and support at times. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p5)</p>	<p>Once I got into the bible study here on campus and actually made it my church as well, definitely they helped out as well too with prayer. And they too were actually students here or had been students here. So they actually helped as well. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p9)</p>

<p>start growing and developing. So she would tell me about that as well. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p5)</p>		
<p>It was definitely the friendships [that helped with the transition to A&M]. People had always told me, “you’re gonna make it, you can do it,” because when I was in high school, I made good grades, I did pretty well. So even people from the community back home, like you know, there were people rooting for me, so I knew that there were people rooting for me. I knew there were people that were looking at me to do well, so that was definitely one thing. That kinda added a little pressure too, but it was still kind of . . . I know people knew that I was gonna be able to make it – that was actually a help. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.pp8-9)</p>	<p>Mother adopted her cousins and she has struggled with supporting her 'new' family while being enrolled at A&M. Yeah, it definitely was, because you know, you want that support, and you need that support when you’re going through all the other things you have to go through and adjusting to coming to A&M. You do really need as much support as you possibly can get. I think for her, it was like, “Okay, don’t forget about us,” you know, that was really her thing, like “Don’t forget about us, you still have responsibilities here. We still need your help. Don’t just go off and do this and that. We also want you to include us.” (INT-Julie.1/25/11.pp6-7) Caused her to experience A&M differently than the traditional student. Family is both a support mechanism and an added responsibility.</p>	<p>Well, I know you were talking about the support thing – so one thing that’s like okay, I know for me, I know that the Lord has orchestrated a certain way for me or a certain journey for me to walk through, certain experiences for me to have, so later on I am, you know, equipped with what I need to be equipped with, or even able to help someone else. So that’s helped me to cope with, okay, you know, I didn’t get to do this, or I didn’t get to do that, because now I know okay, that’s the Lord that put me on this journey to help, or to be equipped with whatever I’m gonna have to need in the future, then it’s a good thing, and I am on the right track. So that’s how I’m gonna cope. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p13)</p>

		<p>Exactly, to it's a lot of pressure. And at times, it was hard to really focus on my schooling, because I don't wanna be selfish. So it was a little difficult, I guess, just not having that support. In my position, I'm thinking I'm trying to do something good here. I'm the first one in my family to go to college, and I'm really . . . you know, this is a good thing. And I just think, too, just the lack of understanding like what it is to graduate from a university, especially one as A&M, what it is to get a degree. I think just the lack of understanding there just kind of, you know, adds on to that pressure. She didn't understand – she didn't go through it – no one else in the family went through it. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p7) - See also narrative related to her influence on others in her family - p. 20.</p>	<p>Once I got into the bible study here on campus and actually made it my church as well, definitely they helped out as well too with prayer. And they too were actually students here or had been students here. So they actually helped as well. And of course my family, you know, once we got settled in. They are happy that I'm here. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p9)</p>
Lulu	<p>At Blinn I didn't have any friends. I never really had that until I got to A&M, and I met the persons that I talked, that's when it was like we had something in common. (INT-Lulu.1/31/11.p10)</p>	<p>So whenever I started Blinn was because my sister helped me apply, so applied. Then I went to Blinn, and they were just like, "Fill out the FAFSA," so my sister helped me fill that out, and that's how I started. (INT-Lulu.1/31/11.p1)</p>	
		<p>See narrative of family helping with sick child (p 9) and family responsibilities causing less engagement with the school (p. 2).</p>	

Mario	<p>Well, I came to that conclusion because a lot of my friends were at A&M. I actually came to Blinn, not because I wanted to go to A&M, though my sister went to A&M – I went to Blinn because I had a friend who said, “Hey, I need someone to come live with me over here in College Station.” And I didn’t know where to go to college, and he’s like, “Do you wanna come with me? And you can go to church with me.” And I was like, “yeah,” and so that was really important to me then, so I decide I would come. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p1)</p>	<p>[His family is] Very supportive. My brother went to college, and then he dropped out. And my sister was at A&M, and then she dropped out and went to U of H, and she’s trying to make it through a little bit. I don’t know, hopefully she graduates. And so like right now, I’m like the only one in my immediate family who’s in college, and actually like going to graduate. And so my mom is very happy and excited, and she’s totally supportive. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p6)</p>	<p>[The reason he has been successful] I mean God, and then apart from that, maybe good friends, and that really helped encourage me to keep on going, and then family support. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p11)</p>
	<p>I had one friend who was a smart guy on like transfers and all that kind of stuff, and so he helped me with that [applying for transfer]. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p3)</p>	<p>Oh, yeah, absolutely – it’s crazy – they’re just like, “When are you gonna graduate? When are you gonna move back? When are you gonna start helping?” I’m like, “I don’t know – just give me time.” It’s not negative – I just kinda realize like yeah, I just gotta use it as a motivation to succeed – you just have to keep on going. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p6)</p>	<p>I don’t know, God’s mercy really. If it wasn’t for God, I wouldn’t be in this school, that’s for sure. Because of that and just my mindset, it’s just to persevere. If I didn’t have faith, I don’t know where I’d be right now. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p16)</p>
Rae		<p>Well, when I was transitioning in here, I was actually going through a separation from my husband, so that was really overwhelming, becoming a single parent all of a sudden, with a child who had been born prematurely. So I had to deal with health issues with him, and his father moving away, and just being</p>	<p>That’s like the most important thing to me, is my relationship with God. And I’ve always believed in God and different things. But I know recently. . . I guess as I’ve gotten older, my faith has grown stronger. And knowing the challenges that I face, and I know nobody but</p>

		<p>left here with no family. (INT-Rae.1/31/11.p2)</p>	<p>God could've brought me out of those things, that's been a real big thing with me lately. ... Because I would've called it quits if I was old me, but because of my relationship with God, I've been able to like learn how to be more open with my heart and forgive people, and just go from there. Because he has a plan, and I'm here for a reason.(INT-Rae.1/31/11.p11)</p>
		<p>My mom wanted me to continue my education – that's one thing she really stresses, is education is key and important. She actually volunteered to keep my son that second semester, which would have been the spring of '06, so she kept him that entire semester for me just to help me out so I could focus on school, and I could work, and just make sure I was okay. So they really stepped in. (INT-Rae.1/31/11.pp2-3) Yeah, I kinda feel like in a sense, I'm able to help her live her dream out, because she's always wanted to be a special education teacher. And I feel like I'm partly to blame, because she was pursuing her bachelor's, and when she became pregnant with me, her last semester she decided not to finish. And that's why she stresses to go ahead and finish and get your papers, whatever you need, because she wants me to succeed. (INT-Rae.1/31/11.p4)</p>	<p>I don't know – again, I think God placed me here to be a help or blessing to somebody else. And I'm thankful that I've had the opportunity that I've been given. Again, he's positioned me around good people. (INT-Rae.1/31/11.p12)</p>

APPENDIX I

CONCEPTUALLY CLUSTERED MATRIX: THEME THREE

Participant	Institutionalized Support	
	Reluctance to use Services	Impact of Faculty and Advisors
Amy	I don't think it [amount of services provided] is overwhelming. I like that there are so many resources available, but I do think it is intimidating and I feel self conscience when I need to use them, so I don't use them. (JOU-Amy.2/10/11.p1)	I know the Byrne Center, I always get emails from Amanda Mathers about that. The writing center, I've used that with my writing-intensive classes. And my advisor, I guess I've talked to him about falling behind in certain math classes and stuff like that, and he's offered different resources for me to use. (INT-Amy.1/24/11.p4)
	I haven't [used academic support resources on campus]. I've thought about it before, but I don't know, like I don't really know how to go about it or what to do for that. I think as far as the Byrne Center, because it's definitely an intimidation factor where I feel dumb going in there, or that I think sometimes too, they say they can do all this stuff, but what if I go in there, and I really don't feel helped afterwards, and it was a waste of time? So maybe if there . . . like when you're transferring in, or even if you're a new student, whenever you get accepted into the education department, maybe have like some kind of presentation that they do. . . . And I think also, if there was someone from the Byrne Center, just so you could put a face with them once you actually go into the office, and you can say, "Oh, I remember him from the presentation." (INT-Amy.1/24/11.p4-5)	Education-wise, like with education majors, it's been a positive thing with my professors and classmates and all that. (INT-Amy.1/24/11.p5) And I mean the education professors, they're all amazing that I've had, and have just taught us how to apply the things in real life, and like had just different discussions to open our eyes. Like my multicultural class, that was probably the most interesting, just because I didn't even think about a lot of the stuff that she brought up in class until it was actually placed in front of us, and we would have to do response or stuff like that to realize that it is a bigger issue. (INT-Amy.1/24/11.p7)

Cindy	<p>I do get emails from Amanda [advisor] all the time about tutoring for certain classes, resume stuff, and lectures on different topics. Those emails seems a little overwhelming because if I really want to go to that certain thing then it doesn't fit in my schedule or something came up that I couldn't go to it. But yes I agree there are so many opportunities for students to go to whatever they need for help that they don't know which one to choose and which will really help them or which ones will leave then on a clothes line to dry. I think that what might help is a detailed description of what that opportunity provides, if that is not already provided. (JOU-Cindy.2/10/11.p1)</p>	<p>I guess I was a little scared because at Blinn it's more, you know, teachers are willing to help. Here, I didn't know, because the ADA system was so big. I went to the building, and I was like oh my gosh, they have just a building for people with disabilities, like oh, no, this is not gonna go well. And then at Blinn, it was just like they had their own little room of offices – it was just like one room, and that was it. And there were people that signed in, and there weren't as many people, and so I was worried that I wasn't gonna get the help that I needed, but I did. (INT-Cindy.1/24/11.p4)</p> <p>I mean I've told him [Justin Smith] like . . . I pretty much go into his office, I make a meeting, and he's like, "So what do you need?" And I'm like, "Well, I need this." And then he's like, "Okay, let's get it." And so he just puts it on my thing, and you know, sort of just makes it happen the way I want it to happen type thing. (INT-Cindy.1/24/11.p6)</p>
		<p>I think it would be probably I guess the relationship that I had with the teachers. I mean being a dyslexic, they always wanted to know what I needed from not only like them, but what I needed from their lectures and stuff like that. And they wanted to really like help me succeed as being a teacher – they were like, "If you need anything, email us. If you need so-and-so, if you need help on anything." (INT-Cindy.1/24/11.p6)</p> <p>I think so, to be honest, because they know . . . they've learned about like my disability, and they know what would help it, what wouldn't, and teachers being teachers. But some professors, like electrical engineering, you know, that's unfortunate. (INT-Cindy.1/24/11.p14)</p>

Hope	<p>I have not [used academic resources after being informed of them]. I think like some of them were like how to study better, or how to manage your time, or how to manage your money. And those sound like they would've been good, but I just didn't have the time for those. (INT-Hope.1/31/11.p13)</p>	<p>[Without caring faculty members guiding her along the way] I probably would've been like my sister-in-law, who didn't even know about this piece of paper that tells you what you need to take in order to graduate. And so she ended up just taking classes here and there and everywhere, and some of them are not transferable, and some of them aren't even on her degree plan. (INT-Hope.1/31/11.p11)</p>
	<p>The one with the studying, I just felt like it probably would've been good because I am a highlighter, and I am a note card maker. But I have to stick with what's worked well for me in the past, so it's like I don't wanna change the game plan of now, when I know that these methods have been successful for me. (INT-Hope.1/31/11.p13)</p>	<p>I just like the fact that the professors that I've had thus far, they know that life happens – they have children, they have husbands, they have things. And it's like they always stress that we can come to them. And so you know, I like that, that rapport, that's built with the professors. (INT-Hope.1/31/11.p18)</p>
Julie	<p>I just had to learn how to voice what I needed and what I wanted, because there's so many students, you really have to come on campus and kinda have an idea of what you need and what you want – otherwise, you kinda miss out, because there's so many resources. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p8)</p>	<p>Whenever I look back on my educational experiences, the mentors and teachers that I had just really made an impact on me, being a first-generation college student, and just kinda helping me get to this point as well. So I got into education and just really met great mentors in the College of Education and human development. And they really took the time to kinda get me in place. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p1)</p>

I mean because I think too, there are so many resources, there's so many opportunities here, it's like, "Which one do you need? How do I come along and help you?" And at first, I kinda didn't know how to voice it. I didn't know that I really wanted to go into education. I think too that might have been too like just not being as prepared from junior college, or maybe being too used to being kinda sheltered at home because I was a first-generation only child, things like that. But I think once I figured – I guess I don't know if it's professionalism that I had to develop in, or what it was, but I just know that I did okay. There are resources, but nobody is just gonna hand it to me. But you know, it's not like people aren't like, "Okay, I'm not gonna help you" – it's just like, "I need you to tell me how to help you," and then they're able to come alongside and help. ... to the person who comes on campus and is right out of high school, or even a transfer student out of a community college, and it's kind of like you really didn't have all those resources and opportunities, it's hard to navigate through, or it's hard to decipher what do I need and what relates to me. It's hard to choose the resources that you need or to know what you need because there are so many. ... Right, you just have to know how to decipher like what is it that I need, what is it that relates to me. And I think that's difficult coming in. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p8)

to the person who comes on campus and is right out of high school, or even a transfer student out of a community college, and it's kind of like you really didn't have all those resources and opportunities, it's hard to navigate through, or it's hard to decipher what do I need and what relates to me. It's hard to choose the resources that you need or to know what you need because there are so many. I don't think there's too many – I think it's definitely needed that we have a lot because of course the campus is so huge, the system of A&M is huge, there's so many different majors and students who come. We all come from different backgrounds, there's international students, so there is definitely a need to have a lot of resources. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p8)

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Lulu	<p>I think is great that A&M offers a lot of academic support to the students, but it can become overwhelming. For example when I had to complete my e-folio for my senior methods I had to include a resume. Well it happens to be that I had never done a resume so I actually went online and paid to create one. After I had paid I learned that the career center was the place to go to receive help with resumes. (JOU-Lulu.2/14/11.p1)</p>	<p>Dr. Acosta was really easy to talk to, so I apologized that I was falling behind in all this work, and she was like, "Don't worry as long as you catch up. And by the end of the semester, you have everything turned in, you'll be good to go." So she was really easy person to talk to. If you had a question, she always used to help out. So I felt like real comfortable talking with her and telling her what's going on. It's not I'm being lazy or that I don't wanna do it, but I'm having all this at home. (INT-Lulu.1/31/11.p9)</p>
		<p>I didn't really feel like opening up with the professor and telling him my business or whatever. So I would just . . . since it wasn't as much work as Dr. Acosta, I would just mail it to them and send a doctor's note saying that I have a son who is sick. (INT-Lulu.1/31/11.p9)</p>

Mario	<p>You have to force them [students] to go. It was to be some kind of extra credit thing that the professors decide to pull in there, or a punishment kind of thing. Because there is the intrinsic value, like I want to self-improve and do that, but sometimes you're just too busy to wanna go over there. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.pp5-6)</p>	<p>I don't know, I feel like you all provide a lot, honestly. Maybe just make it easier for people to come. Like I know it's hard because . . . like I feel Christy is the only advisor for all bilingual and all special ed. It's like if there was more advisors – but I don't really know like . . . you know, like there's probably like a really . . . one season during the normal semester where there's a lot of students who are trying to get at her, and then the rest of the semester might be just like nothing really to do – I don't know if that's how it is, and that's why there's only one. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p21)</p>
	<p>It's just kind of like you go, and you're kinda, "oh, good," and then you kinda forget. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p5)</p>	<p>[Faculty influencing him to go to graduate school] Well, I see the fact like . . . one of my teachers made a good point, like our last class, a Robin Rackley, I think? She talked about she was in an elementary class, and she was influencing these students and saw something wrong, and she told her higher-up, and her higher-up said, "Don't worry about it" and told the higher-up above the higher-up and said, "Don't worry about it." And so she was like, "That's it, I'm gonna get a masters." And so she got her masters and her PhD, and so now she teaches us, and we influence so many more. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p21)</p>

Rae	<p>I think when it comes to childcare, depending on my schedule through the semester as far as school goes, and then extended childcare for my son. Because right now, he's at Power Sports, and I have to get him before 6:45. It just depends on if I have that resource available for extended childcare. (INT-Rae.1/31/11.p9)</p>	<p>[Without caring faculty and advisors] I think I would probably be pretty much . . . my life would be in disarray. I wouldn't know how to do it because I've never had to do it before. Even with the military, things were a certain way, but it's different than a civilian sector. (INT-Rae.1/31/11.p2)</p> <p>And they do [watch out for me], I think they have your best interests at hand – they're really concerned. And if they know you can do better, they're gonna stay on you until you get to where they think you should be. (INT-Rae.1/31/11.p7)</p> <p>I do, I really do [feel the institution cares about me]. Had they not, I don't think I'd still be here. Like someone had to care. (INT-Rae.1/31/11.p15)</p>
	<p>have not fond [sic] myself overwhelmed the least bit in regards to resource availability. I'm glad that I was made aware of what has been available. (JOU-Rae.2/17/11.p1)</p>	<p>I guess the instructors or faculty attitude toward students when it comes to I guess other students in class. I've had positive experiences, but I did have one incident where I emailed one of the people, and we've been on a first-name basis for a while. It was funny that this one particular email, they said I was I guess being disrespectful or I didn't acknowledge the fact that there was a teacher/student relationship, and it needs to remain professional. But just days before that, this person had walked up to me and told me they loved my chocolate skin, and pinched my cheeks as if I was a child or puppy or something. And I got a little confused because I was like I thought we're supposed to remember there's professionalism when you're writing an email, you want to address it a certain way and close a certain way, and address the topic a certain way. And I don't know if she was just having a bad day – I don't know what it was, but it was just like wow, I mean but it's okay for you to talk about my skin. I don't know, because she's never come across like that. I mean she's a believer in Christ, and we've prayed together, I mean we shared personal experiences and everything together. So that really kinda caught me off guard, and I'm like the email wasn't any different from any</p>

other one I'd written before. I don't know if she'd gotten several from other people, to where she was just fed up and had to address it right then – I don't know what the deal was. But it really got me because I'm like this same person just pinched my chin and told me about my chocolate skin, and that could've been offensive, but I didn't take it that way. I just feel, because I've been in the program forever and a day, I think they kinda watch me closely because I have like a growth plan. And they're doing a job, but sometimes I feel like that kinda adds pressure to me too. I don't think the other students are watched as hard or focused on. And I mean I know they're doing their job, but sometimes it gets a little nerve-racking. (INT-Rae.1/31/11.pp14-15)

APPENDIX J

CONCEPTUALLY CLUSTERED MATRIX: THEME FOUR

Participant	Common Situational Factors		
	Campus Climate	Perception of Teacher Education	Math as a Challenge
Amy	<p>I think everyone is really friendly. This one girl, like a stranger, I asked her where Zachary was, because I had a class there, and she walked me from in front of Harrington pretty much to Zachary, and I didn't even know her, and I thought that was really nice. And so I've of course done that to people, too, if they've helped me. I think there's a really great class spirit, and like "Go Aggies" and stuff like that, and so I tell that to people. And if I have friends come and visit me, they get here and they're like, "Wow, you weren't kidding – people are very die-hard Aggies." (INT-Amy.1/24/11.p6)</p>	<p>I've learned so much about education, and it's still something I wanna be a part of. And I mean the education professors, they're all amazing that I've had, and have just taught us how to apply the things in real life, and like had just different discussions to open our eyes. Like my multicultural class, that was probably the most interesting, just because I didn't even think about a lot of the stuff that she brought up in class until it was actually placed in front of us, and we would have to do response or stuff like that to realize that it is a bigger issue. (INT-Amy.1/24/11.p7)</p>	<p>Not really any setbacks. I mean the math courses that we are required to take are ridiculous for me, and I have had a hard time with those. I took Math 365 last spring, and I made a D in it, and so I have to retake that. And so I guess just anything that has to do with math really has been my weakness. (INT-Amy.1/24/11.p6)</p>
	<p>I would say that [Texas A&M being a racist institution] is not true, but I think if you look for it, it's probably there. But it's gonna be anywhere, like you can find it anywhere you go. (INT-Amy.1/24/11.pp6-7) It's [The College of Education and Human Development] mostly like White girls and stuff like that. (INT-Amy.1/24/11.p8)</p>	<p>I think since I've gone into the classroom for a lot of my different classes, I feel more comfortable there. And I just know how to handle myself better and the students. (INT-Amy.1/24/11.p7)</p>	<p>For the most part, I have felt prepared to handle Texas A&M's curriculum, however, my biggest struggle has been and continues to be the math courses required of early childhood education majors. Math 365, 366 and Stat 303 have been major obstacles for me to overcome. I did not pass Math 365 the first time I took it, and am currently enrolled in</p>

			<p>Stat 303 and am honestly afraid of this class keeping me from graduating. The class average for the first test taken in my Stat 303 was a 70; knowing that I am below average with it comes to math, this scared me. I made a 65 on the first test, which is not passing and below average. I have expressed this concern to my advisor and have received empathy as well as support, but I still am fearful of not graduating due failing this course. (JOU-Amy.2/17/11.p1)</p>
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Cindy	<p>I really enjoyed it. I enjoyed the climate, I enjoyed everybody, I mean it's just like you don't have to . . . because in high school, you know, how you have to dress to impress your friends. Here you can just roll out of bed and go to class. And everybody is so nice, and they always say kind of like hello. Or if you're new, if they see like transfer student, or people that are touring campus, everyone says howdy type thing, you know. (INT-Cindy.1/24/11.p8)</p> <p>I really enjoyed it. I mean I had little bumps in the road around the whole economics thing first, and that not transferring. And then I had to do . . . I had to retake my dyslexia test, which I had to find the time to do that during schoolwork. And the only time I could do it was at night, so I mean . . . but other than that, it was really good. (INT-Cindy.1/24/11.p12)</p>	<p>Struggled with classroom management: And I mean she's a really good teacher, I guess you could say – it's just that I wish her teaching style was different. (INT-Cindy.1/24/11.p13)</p>	<p>I also had to take a class about writing proofs. To be honest I have never heard nor written one in my life and I was expected to know how to come up with one off the top of my head. Luckily, I got out of that class when I did because otherwise I would have failed it miserably. Once again I do not understand how learning to write a proof will help you to teach elementary students math? Other than those two times I have not doubted what I wanted to do with my career. (JOU-Cindy.2/22/11.p1)</p>
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	<p>I mean I guess you could say that we're conservative, but it doesn't really reflect how I am. I mean I'm not rude to people unless they're rude to me, you know, type thing. (INT-Cindy.1/24/11.pp8-9)</p>	<p>Importance of field-based experience: Yeah. Like the first time, I guess, the first time I went out in the field was when I was a senior in high school. And I only did like small groups, reading with different levels of kids. And so I was just like outside the classroom, had nothing to do with inside the classroom. And then I came to Blinn, and I had to go to a school to observe, and I was . . . it was my first time observing, so I was like in the back, and I was in the back like I don't know what's going on, I don't know what to write down type thing. And then I came to A&M, and then I had to actually start teaching, and so I was like it was a really big step. (INT-Cindy.1/24/11.p10)</p>	
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<p style="text-align: center;">Hope</p>	<p>Feels A&M receives a negative image regarding racism due to the influence of the local community. In the interview it was referred to as 'guilt by association.' For evidence, see story of husband and friends at Fox and Hound off campus.</p>	<p>When people ask teachers what it is they do for a living, the majority of them will say, "Oh, I'm 'just' a teacher" but I don't think a doctor, lawyer, or even a professional football player would downplay their careers in saying that they are 'just' a doctor, lawyer, etc. Also, as I started student teaching last week, I began to think how while it should not, race does play a factor in how students respond to education and I don't want to just reach the students who share the same culture or ethnicity as I do, but I wonder how I could reach those who don't. (JOU-Hope.2/7/11.p1)</p> <p>Provides a rival explanation to Cindy's experience: I'm not saying A&M isn't doing their job, because they're providing us with what we need to know. It's just gonna be up to the students to apply to real-life situations. (INT-Hope.1/31/11.p7)</p>	<p>So I had to go it alone. And I ended up . . . like once I failed that last test . . . I didn't even go to the final – I just sent her an email and I was just like since I failed every test. . . . and I studied for it – and that was another thing that stressed me out, was I studied for those tests. I may not have done all the homework, but I thought I had done enough to where it should've been – I should not have been failing that class. So I studied for those last 2 tests – I know I pulled all-nighters and studied, where I did nothing but study, and I still failed. So that stressed me out, because it's like why am I still failing this class if I'm doing the homework and studying, I should not be failing this class. And so I forgot what I was gonna say, but ... (INT-Hope.1/31/11.p16)</p>
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	<p>Feels that A&M wants her to succeed, but did recall an instance where students judged her based on her race. For evidence see her narrative related to the Kappa Delta Pi induction. She also indicates that her race played a factor in the admissions decision. Also feels the pressure of having to represent all African Americans when she is the only Black woman in the class. In spite of these instances she mentioned that she expected to be treated poorly by students due to her race, but this was an unmet expectation.</p>	<p>Describes the importance of holding African American students to a higher standard. Understands that if she can finish a teacher education program at 30 with two kids, then those students with hurdles can learn as well. See her narrative related to instructing all children.</p>	<p>I thought that that class, the Math 365, would be a class that would teach me how to teach math. And some of the stuff, it will be useful in my future classroom. But some of the stuff, I don't think I'll ever use that. And so it's like I don't wanna be . . . don't waste your time teaching me something that I'm not gonna use, pretty much. And you're testing me over something that I'm not gonna use, and then I'm failing at something that I'm not gonna use. That just makes that whole process more frustrating. And like I talked to a friend of mine, and he's a principal – he's like, "I've never used it." (INT-Hope.1/31/11.p22) - Shakes confidence and not seen as useful.</p>
<p>Julie</p>	<p>I know that A&M is a predominantly White institution, but I've never had to experience anything, other than you're gonna get out what you put in. And I think that's expected of each student. So I really haven't had that experience [racism on campus]. And too, I guess for me, like that's really not one of the things that I was looking for in a university. Like I mean the minority program, when I looked into the medical school, it was like really appealing. But I think the reason was not only because I was from</p>		<p>I know there's some of the classes that I took, there was a class called . . . well, there was MAT 368, which was the structure of math, MAT 367, which is like geometric concepts. I would say MAT 365, 366, 367, and 368, those are tough ones, and there's not many resources for those classes. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p14)</p>

	<p>minorities, but I think for me, I saw that I was a minority. But I was gonna be able to get the support, so it was like I wasn't looking at it because they were gearing towards minorities. I was looking at it because they had a structure where they could give extra support, but it related to me because I was a minority, you know. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p17)</p>		
	<p>I would say it was definitely challenging, but it's been rewarding. I know that I'm in the place that I'm supposed to be at now, you know, at A&M in education. I'm gonna be a teacher and complete my degree, like I know that I'm definitely where I'm supposed to be. (INT-Julie.1.25.11.p21) Very diverse – I know that's probably not the first time you heard that word. But yeah, it's very diverse, just in the different goals the students have, the different students in general, international students, students from all types of backgrounds. So yeah, it's very diverse, very diverse interest groups, student organizations. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p17) Mentioned that she had heard that A&M was a racist institution before, but did not experience anything negative while attending.</p>	<p>So right now, I know we're definitely in the first phases of that with senior methods. So we'll definitely get, you know, our first, you know, experiences going into, you know, developing as a professional, developing as a teacher, finding out how to be an effective teacher, developing networks and things like that. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p20)</p>	<p>Yeah, when I was in those [MATH] classes, I was like am I really going into the right, you know, should I change to language arts and social studies? Because they are difficult, and we do have more rigorous requirements, you know, as compared to like some of the surrounding universities. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p14)</p>

	<p>Because even now, too, I am one of the for example black people in my class. So I think I did have to kind of . . . like I guess when I first came in, I thought that people might've been looking at me weird, but I really didn't have to experience that. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p18)</p>	<p>Through junior two, I developed a few networks and connections with people, the teacher, my mentor teacher, as well as the school district or the school that I was at in Hearne. I actually had gone to visit them recently, and one of the principals, or the principal there at the junior high definitely was like, "Don't forget about us," you know. So it was good to have that network. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p20)</p>	<p>I would say that there are opportunities where you do have free tutoring and things, but there's some classes that aren't offered, that don't have that resource, especially when you get into the upper-level education classes, there aren't many resources there. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p14)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Lulu</p>	<p>And then one time we had a book presentation, and I got up there, and I say Alexandra Dumbass or whatever, so everyone started like laughing. And then they look at my other friend like saying, you know, you need to check your friend, you know, tell her. So you know, it was kinda like weird. Because like I know from talking to her, we never really felt like we fit in that class. Like when working in groups, it was just like, "Okay, now who do we ask, do you all wanna work with us?" or anything. So we never really felt like comfortable. (INT-Lulu.1/31/11.p5) Only two Hispanic students in the class. I don't agree with that [TAMU being racist]. I just think that it's a very conservative type of campus. But other than that, I never felt racism or things like that. I think</p>	<p>It is challenging, but I think if you're not challenged, then you're not gonna know what your limits are. You have to be challenged in order to learn something. You cannot just get it that easy, you know, you have to be challenged. If you're not challenged, and you're being placed in an environment where it's challenging, then you're not gonna know how to handle that. (INT-Lulu.1/31/11.pp12-13)</p>	

	<p>people are really friendly. I just think that they're not really open if you go to where it's the more liberal side of the point of view. Like you said, maybe it's because it's mostly white here, and there's not that much diversity. (INT-Lulu.1/31/11.p10)</p>		
	<p>I mean the only incident that happened once was in my methods class last semester. And we all used to sit at one table, at the same table, and the social studies teacher said . . . they were asking about citizenship and all that stuff. And I mean we were just listening, and we didn't comment or anything. And then she came to our table, and she was like, "Okay, my non-American citizen table, what do you all think?" And I felt that was kind of like putting us out there, which there's no reason for her to refer to our table. Because I mean some of the girls there, they may look Hispanic, but they were born here, you know, so you cannot just think that just because you look like that, you're from that place. So I found that kind of awkward, her saying that. (INT-Lulu.1/31/11.pp5-6)</p>		
<p>Mario</p>	<p>It's been very enjoyable. It's been stressful at times because of just the workload that there is. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.pp19-20) [Characteristics he possess that helped him get admitted] Because I'm</p>	<p>Does not plan to make teaching his long-term career - ultimately wants to go into the ministry. He sees teacher education as preparing him for his second career.</p>	<p>Oh, yeah, oh, gosh, so many [challenges] – like all my math classes here at A&M, like the 365, 366, and then stat 303 or EPSY 365, whatever it's called. Yeah, it's difficult. (INT-</p>

	<p>Hispanic, and because I'm a male in education – I think that's like by far the reason why. I mean we don't like to talk about it, but yes it [race/ethnicity] does play, especially in education. Because if I would have been a white girl with my same grades, I mean they probably wouldn't have gotten in. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p7)</p> <p>[Characteristics he possess that helped him get admitted] Because I'm Hispanic, and because I'm a male in education – I think that's like by far the reason why. I mean we don't like to talk about it, but yes it [race/ethnicity] does play, especially in education. Because if I would have been a white girl with my same grades, I mean they probably wouldn't have gotten in. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p7)</p> <p>Exactly, and it's [affirmative action] a fortunate thing to have right now, but the fact that that happens – like before that wouldn't happen. So it was like almost a little bit of an over-correction until you let more people come in. But I mean it makes the school more diverse, and it gets the name of A&M out to the world. I think it's good – and a little bit, but I don't know how you would tweak it to make it . . . and I know A&M is not as bad as U.T. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p8)</p>		Mario.1/25/11.p13)
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	<p>Racism isn't like just because of some like . . . there's like the skin color, like just because this is more predominantly white, like it means they're gonna be more racist. But if you go to a more predominantly Hispanic university, they will be the same way, for sure. It's not just like this group that is racist – really everyone has a bias – I mean not say like racist, but has a bias sometimes. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p15)</p>	<p>You know, nervous, but I feel confident that this semester and then some teaching will really prepare me for all that's gonna come. It won't prepare me for everything, but it will prepare me a lot for it. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p18)</p>	
Rae	<p>Describes the difficulty of being one of the few African American students in the program. For evidence, see her narrative regarding the instance where she was accused of theft in class. Was also concerned that she would be consistently treated differently due to her race, but found that to be an unmet expectation.</p>	<p>Ultimately wants to work in Health and Human Services, but sees education as preparing her to work with young children in that second career.</p>	
	<p>I have people who believe in me, sometimes more than I believe in myself, and they see me as an asset to the class. I actually broke down crying one semester, I think it was the beginning of last semester, because one of the teachers was telling me that for students to see someone like me in class . . . I guess it goes back to the whole thing of African Americans. There's not that many African</p>	<p>Used the field-based experience to navigate her major and career choices: I really came here and began in the math science program for middle grades education. And most of the students I worked with out in Hearne, because my first placement was in Hearn at the junior high there. Those kids had learning disabilities. And I noticed the more I work with students, the more students with learning</p>	

	<p>American teachers. (INT-Rae.1/31/11.p11)</p> <p>I think so, sometimes, it's like . . . I know one of the classes, every time they say something about a black person, everybody looks at me like, "What do you think, Tanya?" I can't speak for everyone, but I can only speak on my own personal beliefs and experiences. And I do believe that sometimes it kinda . . . like "Well, you're the black person, you're supposed to know." (INT-Rae.1/31/11.p12)</p>	<p>disabilities I got a chance to work with. So I kinda like the one-on-one attention, getting to know like specific needs, and try to help them reach their goals, so I decided to switch. (INT-Rae.1/31/11.p1)</p>	
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APPENDIX K

CONCEPTUALLY CLUSTERED MATRIX: THEME FIVE

Participant	Employed Strategies			
	Response to Failure	Breaking the Process into Manageable Goals	Change from Community College to A&M	Recommended Institutional Strategies
Amy	<p>No, I'm gonna do it at Western Texas College. I mean I think with that class, I knew the work, and I could do the homework with my notes in front of me. But I just think it's silly to have to memorize all these different things, where if you're given the formulas or given like the background information, as long as you can plug stuff in, I don't really understand why you can't use that on the test. Because in real life, we'll never be using most of that math anyway, but even if I was, I would have my notes to refer to and utilize those things. (INT-Amy.1/24/11.p6)</p>		<p>I think probably maturity, just because a lot of things I feel like I've been there, done that. And I mean I'll still go have fun, but I don't have a problem going to bed at 10:30 or 11:00 at night because I have classes and stuff. And I think my drive here as far as making good grades has definitely improved, even though I had . . . I mean I was committed when I was at the junior college too, just because this is my final time to do well with my GPA and boost it as much as I can. (INT-Amy.1/24/11.p3)</p>	<p>As we discussed in our meeting, I think having students that have actually used the programs give informational presentations would take the edge off the intimidation. (JOU-Amy.2/13/11.p1)</p>

<p>Also, when applying, to not hesitate to contact the same recruiter with any questions, comments, or concerns regarding the application process. Another thing that helped me was taking Math 141 and 142 (common number Math 1324 and 1325) at Western Texas College. I was not successful with taking Math 1324 at my junior college, however, I was able to pass once I enrolled in Math 1324 at Western Texas College on line. Taking an on line math class may scare many students, especially if math is not their strong point, but it really is the best option in order to be successful. (JOU-Amy.2/23/11.p1)</p>			<p>And I think also, if there was someone from the Byrne Center, just so you could put a face with them once you actually go into the office, and you can say, "Oh, I remember him from the presentation." (INT-Amy.1/24/11.pp4-5)</p>
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Cindy		<p>I think it was probably that I'm dyslexic, and I've come so far. Like back in school, I used to make like C's and D's in all my classes. And my senior year, I worked like super-hard to get A's and B's. And then through college, like all my friends were going out and stuff, and I would just stay in my room until my homework was done type thing. I guess I'm more dedicated than some students that might have my disability type thing. (INT-Cindy.1/24/11.p3)</p>	<p>And then I guess classroom experience, because I've never had classroom experience. And I mean my mom is a teacher, but I've had middle school experience – I haven't had elementary school, so I was relying on when I was in elementary school, how things go. But for here, y'all take us out into the different places. (INT-Cindy.1/24/11.p10)</p>	<p>Probably their teaching maybe, because I've had one professor that's . . . I mean she teaches straight off of the PowerPoint, and I mean she talks about a book that's not even in our recommended list – it's not even a book that we can buy. We have to actually go – if we wanna read it, we have to actually go to Barnes and Noble and buy it. And I mean she's a really good teacher, I guess you could say – it's just that I wish her teaching style was different. Because it was my class of learning how to . . . classroom management, it was my classroom management class that I had. (INT-Cindy.1/24/11.p13)</p>
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		<p>Yeah. That's what I do every semester, is I make out whatever they give us, the little course packet or whatever, what's gonna happen, or what's supposed to happen. They always change it, so I make out a little schedule of what I need to do on this day and that day. (INT-Cindy.1/24/11.p8)</p>	<p>I guess being more independent. I mean not just only in schoolwork, but in life on it's own. Because I've learned how to manage my money wisely for the month. I've learned like, you know, bills and sorta things like that. (INT-Cindy.1/24/11.p11)</p>	
Hope	<p>And you can't even pay for it – you have to pay for it – you can't pay for it just like if I wanted 2 hours – you have a minimum, I think, with 6. I may not need 6 hours of 365. I think it was 4.0 and Go. It was \$300 minimum, I think. (INT-Hope.1/31/11.p16)</p>	<p>But I guess it would have to have been last semester – last semester was like my hardest semester ever – I was just praying, gosh, please let this semester be over, just so I can start a new one and start fresh. I ended up having to take 2 incompletes in 4 of the classes that I was taking, but I ended up turning in all of the work and getting B's in those classes, so I guess that would have had to have been my biggest</p>	<p>Well, it's like I think about everything that I do and say. Like since they always talk to us about how we should always be professional and we shouldn't discuss certain things. There was one day, a student had been kind of unruly, to say the least. And so I was talking about it, and my mom, my own mother, she was like, "Who was it?" And I was like, "Oh, I can't tell you." And she was like, "What, you can't tell me?" "Because you know, I can't tell you." And so she just thought that that was weird that I couldn't tell her, of all people. And so I was like hmm, as I reflected on that moment, I</p>	<p>I'm gonna go out on a limb and say that most transfer students are older anyway, so it's like I would like to see some clubs formed where, you know, perhaps there could be a club where there's mommies. Or since I'm not the typical college student, it's like there aren't any clubs that I'm just really interested in joining, you know, due to time constraints. And so it's like that's what sets me apart – it's like when I come to campus, I'm not interested in making friends or exchanging phone numbers.</p>

		<p>success. Because I was at the point to where I just wanted to drop all 4 of my classes and just start the semester over the next semester. But I stuck it out. (INT- Hope.1/31/11.p p13-14)</p> <p>Referring to sick son and impact on studying: It was not the coursework - it was just other factors in my life that didn't have anything to do with school, but it had everything to do with my performance in school (INT- Hope.1/31/11.p 14)</p>	<p>was just like wow, I'm proud of myself. (INT- Hope.1/31/11.p19)</p>	<p>And only because I'm not . . . it's like I can't plug into those people. I need to know where these people are. I know that there are other people like me on campus that you know. . . (INT- Hope.1/31/11.pp8-9)</p>
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	<p>And then I had another teacher – she was at Blinn, because I took 366 at Blinn – like for every section of homework we did, that would be an extra point on the test. So it’s like I don’t wanna promote incentives for doing something that’s expected of you anyway, but with these math classes, there has to be some motivation, especially if they’re like me. Because I can look at a problem and literally start crying – I have no clue as to how to solve this problem. I don’t know, it’s just with that class . . . and that was the first F I made, so I took that F very hard – I cried. (INT- Hope.1/31/11.p15)</p>	<p>And I guess only it’s because I’ve not had to struggle with grades, I’ve not had to struggle with . . . it’s like since I don’t have to struggle with outside factors that will determine my performance in the classroom, that’s what has made the transition go so smoothly. (INT- Hope.1/31/11.p 21)</p>	<p>The change that I’m most proud of is that I don’t know it’s like I’m always thinking about how people perceive me. I don’t want them . . . I don’t know, it’s like I don’t know. I wonder, like everybody in my daughter’s school, they go to Rock Prairie in College Station, they all know that I’m going to school to be a teacher. And so it’s like when I drop them off in the morning, I don’t wanna have rollers in my hair, even if I am . . . like just last night, I was up until 2am studying, you know, turning in homework assignments. But it’s like I still make the conscious effort to brush my hair and put it in a ponytail before I drop them off at school. I don’t even want their principal to see me out of my element – that’s what I term it as. I can’t let them see me out of my element, even though I am a mommy, and I don’t have a job, it’s still . . . (INT- Hope.1/31/11.p20)</p>	<p>Childcare. That’s another thing – I’m going back, I’m rambling – when you said, “What are some of the things that A&M could provide,” I think A&M should provide childcare. Even if it was just a center where we could only drop our children off during the times of our allotted classes, I think that would be amazing. (INT- Hope.1/31/11.pp2 1-22)</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;">Julie</p>	<p>I had to sit down . . . I know one of the things I realized – I was being lazy too. I actually was being lazy because I was like, okay, well, I’m dealing with this, I’m dealing with that, and then just kind of put things on the back burner, which I was just like, you know, when I sat down, I was like okay, now look, you’ve had to suffer through this semester, you have to catch up on stuff now, you know, you just kinda set yourself back. So I had to sit down and make the decision to say okay, I’m gonna retake these classes, even if it seems like I’ll lose face. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.pp15-16)</p> <p>Yeah, because I think I might have been on cruise control because I really hadn’t had to worry about grades in the past. And that semester opened my eyes. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p16)</p>	<p>So yeah, just coming back from that semester [is biggest success]. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p15)</p>	<p>But I would say that I am more interested in other people, like you know, learning to get to know people and really take their interests at heart. And even having to learn that through my family, you know, I couldn’t just look at my family and say I’m a first-generation college student and I’m still having to be here and go through all these experiences, and you’re giving me all these responsibilities. Like no, like they still need me, and so I think definitely being able to, you know, suffer myself and say okay, you know, reach out to other people and be available to them – I think that’s one thing that I’m growing in still. But one thing that I’ve learned here at A&M is like getting to know other people. And then too, just the difference focuses academically, as well as the different goals that I have in mind for my career and different things. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p19)</p>
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	<p>I would say I haven't given up, maybe. I'm I don't know , I just don't think anyone ever comes and says, "I'm gonna fail." I don't think that's the intention that we have. But I think when you do experience those different situations where you do have to choose what you're gonna do that's gonna help you succeed, if you don't make the choice to not fail, then you could eventually fail, so you know, if you give up, or you say I'm starting not to care, or I don't care anymore. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.pp18-19)</p>		<p>I would definitely say it was a different level coming into A&M. I feel like I got my feet wet at the community college level as far as learning I do have to set my own pace and like studying. And even like with the curriculum at the community college level, it was somewhat in line with what is expected here, except what I learned is that A&M is a research one university, so it's a little bit more rigor in the curriculum. (INT-Julie.1/25/11.p2)</p>	<p>I would say students in the education program at A&M could benefit from more program-specific resources. Perhaps there could be programs geared towards student achievement in 90% of education courses (the MATH 365-368 courses we discussed, sciences, upper-level education course requirements such as lesson plan writing, understanding the state & national curriculum framework, legislation, and standards for public school teachers (TEKS, TAKS, NCLB, INTASC)), content exam and PPR exam preparation, career fair readiness, career in education readiness (partnerships with districts for A&M graduates. (JOU-Julie.2/10/11.p1)</p>
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			<p>school or job market, what steps to take in order to wrap up my degree plan, how to transition out of college, etc. As far as coping with these thoughts, I know that what I'm expected to do right now is focus on this semester. The only way I can do that, with so much going on, is to take one day at a time, one week at a time, just to get to May. Then, the fall semester can worry about itself until I get there. (JOU-Julie.2/4/11.p1)</p>	
Lulu	<p>The 3rd time, I talked to my advisor, Miss Porter, and I was like, "I cannot pass this class – I don't know what to do." And she was like, "You know what, take it at Houston Community College," and I passed. (INT-Lulu.1/31/11.p4)</p>	<p>I passed my BTLPT Exam which I'm really proud of. I only have one exam left which is the PPR... (JOU-Lulu.2/4/11.p1)</p>	<p>See, at the 2-year school, it's like you are just going to college, but you don't know if you're gonna make it. And I think once you transfer to the 4-year university, it's like you're there, you're pretty much have it, you know. Because like whenever I used to go at Blinn, it was like people would ask me, "Where do you go to school?" And I would say I go to Blinn, and that was like, "oh, okay." but when I say I go to A&M, they're like, "Oh, that's great." You can see the difference in the reaction. (INT-Lulu.1/31/11.p6)</p>	<p>I think more tutoring available [is needed]. ... When I was in statistics, they had free tutoring like every single day. With this class (MATH 365), I never heard of free tutoring. (INT-Lulu.1/31/11.p4) See, I'd say financial aid, like they're really helpful. Whenever I sign up for my courses, whenever I transferred, I saw that statement, and I was like how am I gonna come up with close to \$5,000? And I mean they just offer you any, all kinds of financial aid. (INT-</p>

			Lulu.1/31/11.p7)
Yeah, you just have to keep trying. (INT-Lulu.1/31/11.p4)	<p>Biggest accomplishment in program: Passing all the methods courses because they were challenging. (INT-Lulu.1/31/11.p8)</p> <p>My proudest moment at A&M – I don't know, I'm just proud every semester when I make it through, really. Yeah, just the fact that I keep on getting closer and closer, because I keep thinking</p>	I've grown, like becoming more knowledgeable of research and things like that that have been done. I feel like I'm not an expert, but at least maybe if I'm talking to a expert in the bilingual education, I'm pretty sure I can understand what he's talking about and not be like, "What are you saying?" (INT-Lulu.1/31/11.p11)	Maybe providing more information towards Hispanic parents. Because I know my parents didn't know anything about A&M. Maybe having information out there that their sons or daughters, I mean they can come. And the process of getting accepted information. (INT-Lulu.1/31/11.p13)

		<p>this is never gonna end, and then it keeps on going. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p13)</p>		
Mario	<p>And I'm taking a math class right now online at Houston Community College, and it's like so much easier. And so the math is like the only . . . if it wasn't for these math classes, I would be done this semester, and then I could just work over the summer and save up for student teaching, because I don't have the opportunity to work. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p13) Right now that's the only option, taking it (Math) online. And it's like just get through it and not play around. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p14)</p>	<p>See, like the semester started out smooth, you know, they were like, "Okay, this project is due this day and that." But once he got toward the middle, it was like you have a project due for reading, for science, and for math, so you better get it done because you only have a week. And then you're going twice a week to the schools, and if you have a job, I mean it makes it kinda challenging. (INT-Lulu.1/31/11.p8)</p>	<p>I try to be more organized and like try to hold myself up a little higher, not because I think I'm better – it's just kind of like more is expected of me. Because when you're in community college, it's more relaxed. You are a Blinn student, but you don't represent Blinn, and they don't really care about you as much as a university would, because like you show off the whole world that you're part of the A&M system. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.Pg10)</p>	<p>Yeah, or just kind of, you know, make it easier for students to know that you can come over here and get advice. Like if Blinn students could know that they could just come over and be advised, even though they're not an A&M student, if they wanna be advised, like that would be so much better. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p21)</p>

	<p>So I struggled my first semester, and then later on I picked up a little bit more and more and realized it takes more time and commitment to the material. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p2)</p> <p>Right, and it was harder, and so I was like I didn't pick up my game into that. I'm trying to think what happened that semester – it was spring – I think I started working – I think I was working that semester also, which made it difficult. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.pp4-5)</p>	<p>Right, and I'm just so happy whenever I finish. Like last semester, I took 18 hours again, which was difficult. And I had to do like all my upper-level Spanish – that was 15 hours of upper-level Spanish and the statistics class. And I was just really happy that I got done with all that Spanish, because like I had to take these classes so that I can teach properly. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p13)</p>	<p>I seem to have more respect for just like the diversity that there is, and then also more respect for the Hispanic community, the language, more respect for educators, and like what that really all entails. And it's just kind of like man, this is some serious stuff. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.pp16-17)</p>	<p>... like a lot of stuff, all the things that I would like to do after graduating is gonna be hindered by paying off the loans. (INT-Mario.1/25/11.p12)</p>
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Rae	<p>Like I said, I've always been the one to take on a challenge. And even if I'm knocked down, I won't just stay down – I'm a fighter – I'll get back up. And I think my time here, with me getting sick, and my personal issues, and even not doing as well as I would hope in semesters before, having to repeat semesters, that shows that I'm not a quitter. I strive to try to do my best or give 100%. And I'm not ashamed to ask for the help - if the resources are there, I'll try to take advantage of them. (INT-Rae.1/31/11.pp3-4)</p>		<p>I'll have to go back to high school – during high school, I never had to study for anything. I guess I kinda slid on by without studying, and it was kind of the same way at Blinn. But when I got here, it was hard because I have no study skills, trying to organize, and that's something I've dealt with the whole time being here, is just trying to make sure I'm organized and prepping for tests and stuff like that. (INT-Rae.1/31/11.pp1-2)</p>	<p>Would find Childcare helpful.</p>
	<p>Just I guess in a sense become a little bit more organized, plan ahead. And I've gotten to the point where I know the syllabus there and what's due, to make sure I have everything. I kinda try to start a little bit earlier, even though it may not be due for weeks on out. But with me, because I never know what could come up, with me being a mom and everything, I just try to plan ahead of it. (INT_Rae.1/31/11.p10)</p>		<p>Being I guess more outspoken, volunteering to speak more. Because sometimes I would just sit back and be quiet and kind of be in my own world. I still get a little nervous when I'm talking in front of people, but I'm able to get up there and have the confidence to know that my point of view is important. We may not agree on the same thing, but I have a voice, and it's worth hearing. So being able to speak publicly and be comfortable with it. (INT-Rae.1/31/11.p13)</p>	<p>So I guess funding, like if there's additional funding or scholarships or different things out there to just help as far as the financial aspect of it. (INT-Rae.1/31/11.p14)</p>

			<p>Just being a blessing to someone else, just being a positive influence to them. I guess my son, he's like, "You're the best teacher I know, you've taught me everything I know." And just like puts a smile on my face. (INT-Rae.1/31/11.p13)</p>	
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