Activating Strengths during the Transition from Community College to University:

A Phenomenological Study of Vulnerable Transfer Students

by

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ABSTRACT

The transition experience for students who are transferring from community college to university can be an overwhelming experience for any typical student, but can be even greater for students with vulnerable backgrounds. This phenomenological action research study followed the five-month community college to the university transition experience of five students in a scholarship program. The students participated in a three-part intervention in support of their transition experience. Three theoretical perspectives framed the study: community cultural wealth, transition theory, and transfer student capital. This framework enabled me to first identify the strengths the students possessed, despite their vulnerable backgrounds, through participation in individual interviews. The students then participated in pre- and post-focus groups and completed pre- and post-questionnaires. Through these, they identified which transition coping skills were their strongest and which transfer capital they possessed from their community college experience. They also shared how they applied those prior learned skills and capital at the university. This study revealed how these students utilized their strengths at moments when they lacked certain coping skills and transfer capital during their transition experience. One particular strength was how the students accessed the resources of the scholarship program at the center of this study to help them with their sense of the ability to succeed at the university.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family who sacrificed so much to allow me the opportunity to pursue this journey.

To my daughters who sacrificed time with *mami*, including night time kisses and weekends at home. Thank you for your contribution to *mami*'s graduation gown fund.

To my husband who took on double-duty at home and with family. You were there for them when I wasn't and you were there for me when I needed you most.

Ésta dedicación también es para mi mami y mi papi quienes ofrecieron tanto en sus vidas para el bienestar de su familia. Papi, no dudo que el orgullo te alcance hasta el cielo. Mami, gracias por demostrar tu amor de tantas maneras durante este tiempo, como cuando lo hacías con oraciones, preparando comidas, o chillando cuando me iba a estudiar fuera de casa.

To all of my extended family, thank you as well for your support throughout, in all the little and big ways in which you provided your love and well wishes.

This dissertation is also dedicated to the many friends who motivated me along this journey. You paid it forward and helped me apply. You sat through my practice presentations. You asked me regularly how I was doing in school. You studied with me and helped me feel part of a new learning community. Additionally, you helped me fine tune the direction of this dissertation.

Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to the many who aspire for something better in life and find ways to achieve it against all odds. Keep up the faith, find your support system, and strive towards your dreams.

Thank you all. *Gracias a todos.*

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Finally, I want to acknowledge key people who helped me move this dissertation forward - the participants of this study, my Leader-Scholar Community (LSC), and my dissertation committee. Thank you to the participants who willingly and without hesitation volunteered to help me with this study and who shared so much of themselves. Thank you to my LSC classmates who laughed and cried with me in every class, every study group, and every hangout. And last but not least, thank you to Dr. Lauren Harris, Dr. Lisa McIntyre, and Dr. Kathleen Plinske who took a leap of faith by guiding me through this dissertation.

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Larger and Local Contexts of the Problem of Practice

Cathy[1] started her first semester at the university with great enthusiasm after transferring from a community college. She located a nearby apartment to move her and her son into after her financial aid refund arrived. She had a lot to personally prepare for in her new living arrangement and for her son's new school setting. Despite it all, Cathy was ready to take on the university; she had accomplished so much as a community college student. Unfortunately, her personal life did not organize itself neatly in the time that she hoped for. Nevertheless, Cathy understood that she had to plug along and do her best now that her semester started. Her upper division courses were more advanced than she was prepared for. Her personal responsibilities were consuming so much of her attention that she had little time left to thoroughly read her literature. Although she reached out to faculty and staff, no one could fix her personal matters or give her even more flexibility with her academics. By midterms, Cathy was drowning and soon thereafter, she allowed herself to sink.

Individuals with life experiences like Cathy are not atypical of students in the Nina Mason Pulliam Legacy Scholars program (hereafter Nina Scholars) at Arizona State University (ASU). Nina Scholars is a program that offers scholarships and mentorship to students from vulnerable backgrounds who attend ASU. Despite their circumstances, the students are individuals with great academic potential who may have experienced an innumerable amount of challenging transitions in their lives.

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[1] All names used in this study are pseudonyms.

The semester that Cathy failed out of school (before the start of this study), I struggled to accept the reality of her situation. As her scholarship director, I made sure that she received a financial aid package that would cover her academic costs and personal expenses, and that I could be available to guide her through her academic transition. But her personal circumstances were impacting her academic performance. Cathy began to doubt her abilities and was avoiding the Nina Scholars program staff and others who were part of her support system. Neither money nor guidance while at the university were enough to help this student who had so much going for her. She then concluded that it was not the right time for her to be at the university. Like Cathy, other vulnerable students in the Nina Scholars program have also struggled to balance the challenges experienced in their personal lives with their new academic expectations. The Nina Scholars program works diligently to be there for the vulnerable students it serves and prepares them with realistic academic expectations and life changes that could come when transferring to ASU. I was motivated to do this research project to do more for students like Cathy.

National Context

Vulnerable students. Studies on college student success have evolved on the perspective as to what contributes or hinders to a student's ability to persist. Early studies focus on traditional college student populations and how their own actions or backgrounds contribute to their dropout rate from college. Later studies have acknowledged the growing presence of non-traditional college student populations—like vulnerable populations—the factors that influence their success, and how the institution can champion their success. One early study was by Astin (1964) on college student

dropouts. He identified high achieving students selected for National Merit Scholarship, most of whom were male, as the participants to this study. Astin did not identify any demographic information other than gender. He found correlations related to the individual as factors that influenced the tendency to drop out of college:

> The entering college student of high aptitude who is most likely to leave college is one who had a relatively low rank in his high school class, who is not planning to take graduate or professional work, who has applied for two or fewer scholarships, and who comes from a relatively low socioeconomic background (p. 222).

The results Astin stated in this early study centered more heavily on factors for which the student was in apparent control of, more than factors within their college setting, or other outside factors that impacted the student's ability to stay in college.

Tinto and Cullen (1973) also contributed to the early research on college student success; yet, they still identified the issue as the problem of the student dropout. The *model of student departure* study examined influences that affected a student's decision to drop out of college, focusing more on the relationship of both internal and external factors related to college student dropout. They modified the definition of *dropout* to "an important interaction between the needs and desires of the individual and the concerns of the institution" (p. 78). This modification began to place a greater responsibility on the institution for the success of its students rather than placing the full burden on students for their apparent lack of success. Soon after this study, Tinto and Sherman (1974) wrote a report on college intervention programs in which they argued that institutional

interventions impact students' perceptions on their abilities to complete college, regardless of background. They argued:

> The more successful efforts appear to have resulted from a closer integration of the project into the regular school or college program. . . . [T]his is especially evident . . . at the higher educational level, when the program is functionally integrated into the academic and social mainstreams of the college (p. vii).

In identifying the success of integrated programs as interventions to support college student success, Tinto's and Sherman's research suggested that higher education institutions should increase their scale of responsibility towards its students, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds. However, they also argued that better defined factors need to be identified to validate the success of program interventions.

The growth in services for and research on students in higher education from disadvantaged backgrounds has increased both fiscally and in scope. Amendments in 1968 to the Higher Education Act of 1965 established three college readiness programs—commonly known as Federal TRIO programs—intended to serve students from disadvantaged backgrounds: Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Student Support Services (Office of Postsecondary Education, 2011). Initially funded at $70 million in 1965, these early programs grew into seven distinct student intervention programs and a staff training program that were funded at over $785 million and served 758,352 students by 2013 (Higher Education Act of 1965, 1965; Office of Postsecondary Education, 2014). The establishment of the TRIO programs gave new opportunities to "qualified youths of exceptional financial need" who had few prospects to pursue a higher education (Higher Education Act of 1965, § 407). This act presented institutions and researchers

alike with the facility to direct their focus on the needs of disadvantaged students—now more commonly referred as underserved and/or first-generation college students (Billson & Terry, 1982; Rendon, 2006).

Consequently, research grew in the decades following that demonstrated a better understanding of first-generation college students. Billson and Terry (1982) credited Fuji A. Adachi for identifying the term "first-generation" among college students who "do not have at least one parent college graduate" (p. 35). This definition is accepted and widely used today in higher education, although it can vary from having parents who did not attend college to parents who did not graduate from college (Cataldi, Bennett, & Chen, 2018; Nunez, 1998; Office of Postsecondary Education, 2011). Research on first-generation college students expanded to include other social factors and demographics of students who are underserved and underrepresented in higher education, so as to understand the relationship of those factors with college persistence and graduation rates. Billson and Terry (1982) conducted their study on first-generation status and income level factors related to college persistence rates. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) were among the first who argued that race is a significant factor to consider as a theoretical framework in research on education inequity.

Research on underserved college student populations continued to evolve over the years and included more specified populations, such as students with physical or learning disabilities (e.g. Ponticelli & Russ-Eft, 2009), with varied college academic preparation skills (e.g. Roksa & Calcagno, 2010), from different gender and sexual identities (e.g. Nguyen, Brazelton, Renn, & Woodford, 2018), who were formerly in the foster care system (e.g. Rassen, Cooper, & Mery, 2010), who are student-parents (e.g. Peterson,

2016), and who are at the intersection of multiple identities such as race and gender (e.g. Bruning, Bystydzienski, Eisenhart, 2015), among other populations. Many of these studies focused on vulnerable factors that hindered students' ability to succeed in the current college environment. Over time, the theoretical frameworks related to these specified populations also evolved to include a more critical lens. These new frameworks were developed from research by Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) on critical race theory. Critical race theory provided a different perspective on how systematic and social challenges impacted overall student success and how institutions were reacting to these realities (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2010). As is evident, research on college student success has evolved since Astin's 1964 study on college student dropouts.

The expanding research on underserved and first-generation populations demonstrates that there is an increased need for higher education institutions to provide specialized services to this ever-expanding population entering college. Among the underserved and first-generation college student populations include students from vulnerable backgrounds, like those in the Nina Scholars program. Vulnerable factors can include: income status, quality of family relationships, family's prior college education, family's legal standing and/or legal history, previously demonstrated academic performance, reaction to situations, and personal stability, and others (Koppell, Daugherty, Garcia, & Whitsett, 2014). These factors exemplify the conditions Nina Scholar recipients may experience as first-generation college students with limited financial resources and few support systems. The Nina Scholars program exists as a program that supplements the regular college experience through its added support services.

Hence, the Nina Scholars at ASU program acknowledges that it takes more than simply providing a financial scholarship in order to sustain the success of its recipients. The Nina Scholars staff provides a consistent and extended support system to each Nina Scholar recipient. They focus on the Nina Scholar recipient's personal circumstances and academic growth to champion their success, particularly for those who transfer from the Maricopa County Community College District (hereafter MCCCD) to ASU.

Role of the community college. Community colleges can serve as the gateways for opportunities in higher education for students who wish to transfer to a four-year college or university and pursue a bachelor's degree (Moser, 2013; Provasnik & Planty, 2008; Roksa & Calcagno, 2010). However, in comparison to four-year colleges or universities, community colleges enroll greater proportions of historically underrepresented populations (Ponticelli & Russ-Eft, 2009; Provasnik & Planty, 2008; Roksa & Calcagno, 2010; Wilson, 2014). The American Association of Community Colleges (2017) reported that 41% of all undergraduates attended community colleges in the United States in fall 2015. Community colleges served a diverse student population comprised of non-traditional backgrounds and academic experiences, inclusive of the following characteristics:

- 49% of community college students were 22 years old or older;
- 56% were women;
- 38% received federal grants as a form of student financial aid;
- 36% were first-generation college students;
- 12% were students with disabilities;
- 46% were students of color;

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- 62% attended part time and 38% attended full time;

- 32% of part-time students were employed part time, 41% were employed full time;

- 40% of full-time students were employed part time, 22% were employed full time.

Yet, this diverse student population also challenges community colleges to sufficiently serve its students with effective retention, graduation, and transfer practices (Phillippe & Gonzalez Sullivan, 2005). It is community colleges students—particularly underrepresented populations—who take the longest to complete their bachelor's degrees (Provasnik & Planty, 2008; Wilson, 2014). In most cases, this included academically underprepared students (Roksa & Calcagno, 2010; Wilson, 2014). However, Roksa and Calcagno attributed community college transfer students' progress to more than their demographic background and personal characteristics: "One of the explanations may be that academically prepared and unprepared students differ not only in what they bring to college but also in how they advance through college" (p. 272). This statement implies that while academically prepared students were both college ready and transfer ready, academically unprepared students were working towards being college ready and may have grappled with the acceptance of being transfer worthy for the university academic rigor. Comparatively, the Nina Scholars program supports students who have potential, but may lack other skills and assets that traditionally prepared college students may have already possessed in order to help them advance through their academic program.

The perceptions and utilization of the services received at community colleges may have had an effect on the successful completion of transfer course work and the time

to degree rate among community college transfer students, even when accounting for the demographic characteristics mentioned above (Allen, Smith, & Muehleck, 2014; Ponticelli & Russ-Eft, 2009; Wilson, 2014). Following on the heels of a study by Schlossberg (1989) on mattering and marginality, Allen et al. (2014) found that every transition leaves community college transfer students with the potential of feeling marginalized and susceptible to the bureaucracies of the multiple institutions. Although community colleges may appear to do too much hand holding and universities expect greater self-sufficiency (Allen, Smith, & Muehleck, 2014), community colleges and universities could reach a middle ground. Both institutions can view the transition of community college transfer students as a handoff and develop further collaborations between the two institutions. This would put the transfer student first, and support the student in transition from being hand-held to being self-sufficient. The transfer student could learn how to access resources such as transfer centers, transfer student orientations, transfer seminar courses, and transfer student mentor programs (Allen et al., 2014; Flaga, 2006).

Transfer partnerships. Numerous community college and university transfer partnerships exist nationwide. Many of these partnerships provide transfer students with traditional benefits, such as certain associate degree programs that follow academic pathways for transfer, guaranteed university admission, and/or reduced or locked tuition rates (Northern Virginia Community College, n.d.; The California State University, n.d.; The State University of New York, n.d.b). Other partnerships provide these traditional benefits as well as access to university resources, including connections to university transfer coordinators and the ability for students to follow their own transfer pathway

through a personalized university transfer portal (Arizona State University, n.d.a, n.d.b; University of California, n.d.; University of South Florida, n.d.). Every community college-university transfer partnership is unique in its own way, though most follow these basic models.

    SUNY. As an example, the State University of New York (SUNY) maintains a partnership with colleges and universities within its own system, comprised of 64 campuses. These campuses are categorized into four distinct institutional types: community colleges, technical colleges, university colleges, and university centers (The State University of New York, n.d.a). This partnership guarantees transfer admission to its students who graduate with an associate degree from a SUNY community college to then enroll at a SUNY four-year college (either a university college or university center). SUNY transfer students may follow any one of the 59 SUNY Transfer Paths to support their university transfer goals. The SUNY Transfer Paths incorporate the SUNY General Education Requirement (SUNY-GER) courses and a handful of lower-division major requirement courses. Yet, the SUNY Transfer Paths website does not include a comprehensive list of course requirements for a full associate degree and only lists the SUNY-GER courses. As mentioned earlier, completion of an associate degree from a SUNY community college is the core of the transfer agreement within SUNY schools (The State University of New York, n.d.b). Students following the SUNY Transfer Path have access to limited information regarding their community college to four-year college transition, making verbal communication a highly essential means to gather information and make a decision about their transfer options.

MCCCD-ASU. ASU offers the Maricopa to ASU Pathways Program (MAPP) through its partnership with MCCCD, which unlike the SUNY system, exists between two institutions that operate in distinct systems. This program allows students to complete most of their lower division courses while at MCCCD with the intent to transfer to a specific ASU bachelor's degree program. Students who sign-up for MAPP have access to a personalized transfer pathway site, offered by ASU, which specifically indicates those lower division courses the student has completed and has yet to complete before transferring. Access to this site is available through the students' own MCCCD student portal, known as MyMaricopa. In addition to providing the student with specific course transfer information, this partnership also allows the student to connect with a university transfer specialist who can answer questions on the transfer admission process or on the particular academic program of interest. All of these resources are offered to the transfer student prior to transfer (Arizona State University, n.d.a).

In comparison to the ASU-MCCCD partnership, the SUNY partnership is significantly larger and more complex. As a partnership that exists within its own system, SUNY does not appear to provide its students greater clarity on the transfer process, both in writing and through transfer coordinator positions who verbally disseminate information on the transfer process. Yet, providing guaranteed admission policies and a detailed transfer major map should not limit what any community college-university transfer partnerships can offer to their transfer students. There are some transfer students who could benefit from an extra level of service during their transition that involves consistent communication between a community college contact and a university contact who are both equally familiar with the transfer student's status.

University of Central Florida. Transfer students could benefit from a handoff from the start of their transition while at the community college and seen through their first semesters at the university. A successful handoff should be integrated into the institutional procedures that support the transfer process and should include intentional communication with the transfer student on behalf of both the college and university. One example of this type of college to university handoff exists in central Florida through DirectConnect^{TM} to UCF, where six state colleges partner with the University of Central Florida (UCF) to provide their students with a viable transfer pathway to help them earn a bachelor's degree from UCF. This partnership, which began in 2005, evolved from the competitive nature of the UCF admission process; approximately 10,000 freshmen applicants were denied admission into UCF during the 2017-2018 academic year (D. J. Bradford, personal communication, October 12, 2018; Kotala, 2015). The partnership guides students from one of the six state partner colleges to participate in DirectConnect^{TM} to UCF where they can prepare for junior level transfer. The partnership provides DirectConnect^{TM} to UCF transfer students multiple benefits:

- Guaranteed admission to UCF (consistent with university policy) when completing an associate degree from one of the six partner colleges;
- Support from a UCF success coach who is housed at one of the partner colleges and who connects with students at different touch points in order to build relationships and provide personal and academic guidance related to UCF enrollment;
- The ability to follow a college to UCF academic pathway that decreases their bachelor's degree completion time compared to other transfer students;

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- The ability to follow a college to UCF academic pathway that decreases their bachelor's degree completion time compared to other transfer students;

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- Support from UCF admission and academic advisors who continue to guide DirectConnect^{TM} to UCF students during and after their transition to UCF (D. J. Bradford, personal communication, October 12, 2018; University of Central Florida, n.d.b).

These benefits provide the DirectConnect^{TM} to UCF transfer student with individual attention and resources to support their transition to the university, a handoff that is integrated between the partner colleges and the university. While UCF does not readily make available on its website specific information related to the pathway programs via DirectConnect^{TM}, it does emphasize the support system that it offers to its transfer students through its accessibly located success coaches.

A considerable proportion of incoming students at UCF are DirectConnect^{TM} to UCF transfer students, which emphasizes the strength in the commitment to this partnership. The new class of incoming students at UCF from 2016-2017 represented about a third of incoming freshmen (35.9%), about a third of DirectConnect^{TM} to UCF transfer students (31.4%), and about a third of other transfer students (32.7%) (University of Central Florida, n.d.a). The success of DirectConnect^{TM} to UCF is not only evident in the overall enrollment rate of its incoming class, but also in the diverse population that it brings in to UCF and in the graduation rate of DirectConnect^{TM} to UCF transfer students. Fifty-two percent of DirectConnect^{TM} to UCF enrolled students were students of color during the fall 2016 semester (University of Central Florida, n.d.a). This sizable percentage indicates that students of color rely on the partnership that DirectConnect^{TM} to UCF has with its partner colleges to help them with their university enrollment and bachelor's degree attainment.

Likewise, the Nina Scholars program could serve as more of an institutional resource to Nina Scholar recipients who transfer from the community college to the university. Despite the existing partnership between both MCCCD and ASU Nina Scholars programs, handoff efforts have been limited to a couple of practices: (a) a transfer information session for Maricopa Nina Scholar recipients interested in transferring to ASU in the future, and (b) delivery of Nina Scholars program applications from the Maricopa Nina Scholars program staff to the ASU Nina Scholars program staff. Yet, the handoff has lacked a more intentional effort to provide guidance before, during, and after a student's transition. Scholars could benefit from receiving a more involved handoff during the student's pre-transfer phase from community college to the university and during their very critical first semester at the university. Like DirectConnect^{TM} to UCF, the Nina Scholars program could provide step-by-step support and guidance to Nina Scholar recipients who transfer from MCCCD to ASU.

Local Context

Arizona community colleges provide a multitude of opportunities for students coming through the educational pipeline regardless of the level of academic preparedness, even when many students are less prepared for college rigor, including at the university level, or to enter into the workforce (Hart & Eisenbarth Hager, 2012; Muro, Valdecanas & Kinnear, 2001). Among students with vulnerable backgrounds, the opportunity to pursue a college education, including a bachelor's degree, can be most accessible by starting at the community college and transferring to the university. This section will cover the educational pathways available in Arizona to support college preparation and college transfer, particularly as it relates to vulnerable populations.

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College preparedness. The consequence of a proper educational foundation on vulnerable populations should not be disregarded. A proper educational foundation can provide these communities the opportunity to move out of the cycle of vulnerability. In the last two decades, several studies have sounded the alarm to address the state of Arizona's educational gaps that largely affect vulnerable populations, such as from Garcia and Aportela (2016), Hart and Eisenbarth Hager (2012), Koppell et al. (2014), and Muro et al. (2001). In 2001, the ASU Morrison Institute for Public Policy (Muro et al., 2001) reported five critical trends that could impact the state of Arizona negatively if the state did not work towards correcting them. Two of these critical trends included a lack of keeping a talented internal and external workforce and a need to focus greater efforts on educating Arizona's underserved kindergarten through 12th grade student population. This statistic is exceedingly significant as this underserved population represents a large segment of the state's future educated and talented workforce for the next 20 years; a population that grew 85% from 1990 to 2000 (Muro et al., 2001). Yet, despite this growth, the schools who serve these underserved populations are also the ones who have the greatest societal challenges and the lowest educational funding allocation (Garcia & Aportela, 2016). With this growing trend, the educational opportunities for underserved populations in Arizona are significantly limited.

A follow-up report by the Morrison Institute a decade later repeated the same warning that the K-12 academic achievement gap among the same underserved populations did not change significantly (Hart & Eisenbarth Hager, 2012). Likewise, the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education graded Arizona poorly in preparing its eighth graders in the key subjects of math, science, reading and writing; this

poor preparation limits the state's ability to provide access to a competitive workforce and weakens the economy (Measuring Up, 2008). This inattention to improve the K-12 academic achievement gap among underserved populations has repercussions for the future academic and career preparation for a sizeable segment of Arizona residents. The consequence of such is perhaps Arizona's utmost "wicked problem" in not taking the necessary steps to provide better educational opportunities to the state's K-12 student population and in preparing more of its overall population to enroll in college (Garcia & Aportela, 2016; Measuring Up, 2008).

This historical large scale inaction affects Arizona's future talent and workforce for the young population at the bottom end of the achievement gap, leaving a growing vulnerable population for other public institutions, such as community colleges, to correct. From 1991 to 2007, efforts to improve young adult college enrollment and completion rates improved slightly in Arizona, but the disparity was evident among the different age groups who enrolled in college. The enrollment rate of young adults (ages 18 to 24 years old) grew 5% from 33% in 1991 to 38% in 2007, sitting above the national average, which also grew 5% from 29% and 34%, respectively. Additionally, the enrollment rate of working-age adults (ages 25 to 49 years old) increased nearly 4% from 11.3% in 1991 to 15.1% in 2007 in comparison to the national average which decreased 1.5% from 7.2% and 5.7%, respectively. These statistics revealed that despite the gains demonstrated during this period, young adults in Arizona did not sufficiently enroll in college until later as working-age adults. This age gap is also evident in the bachelor degree completion rates of older adults (ages 25 to 64 years old), which consistently sat

below the national average (1% under in 1990 and 3% under in 2006) (Measuring Up, 2008).

Transfer partnerships. For Arizona students who have their sights set on enrolling in a four-year college, many may choose a pathway from community college to the university. In 2017, nearly 48% of Arizona public high school graduates enrolled in Arizona public community colleges (ABOR, 2018). Students enroll in public community colleges for multiple reasons including affordability, smaller class sizes, convenient schedules and locations, and/or to refine their academic skills (Arizona Republic, 2010; Moser, 2013). Arizona community college students can then choose to transfer to Arizona's three public universities: Arizona State University (ASU), Northern Arizona University (NAU), or the University of Arizona (UA). Multiple pathway programs exist for students who attend Arizona community colleges and wish to transfer to an in-state public university. These pathways are listed below and also displayed in Figure 1.1 (AZ Transfer, n.d.a, University of Arizona, n.d.):

- MCCCD to ASU Pathways Program (for Maricopa community college students);

- Transfer Admission Guarantee to ASU (for all other Arizona community college students);

- Connect2NAU (for Maricopa community college students);

- 2NAU (for all other Arizona community college students);

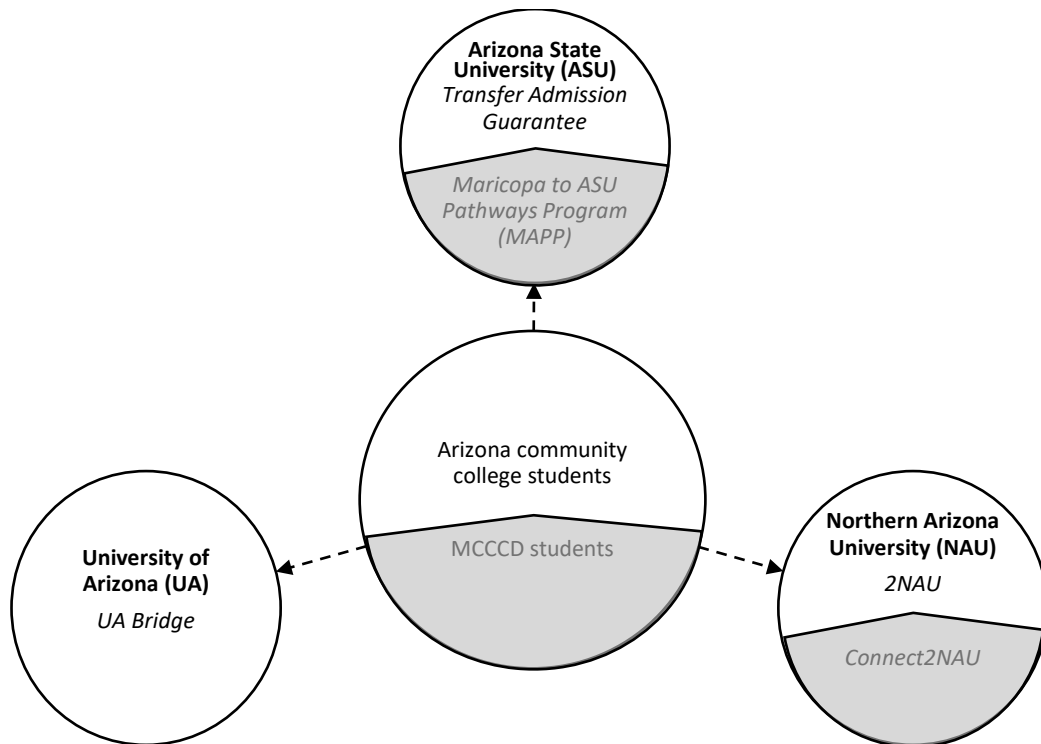- UA Bridge (for all Arizona community college students).

Arizona State University (ASU)
Transfer Admission Guarantee

Maricopa to ASU Pathways Program (MAPP)

Arizona community college students

MCCCD students

University of Arizona (UA)

UA Bridge

Northern Arizona University (NAU)

2NAU

Connect2NAU

Figure 1.1. Relationship of Arizona community college students to Arizona public university transfer pathways programs, with an emphasis of MCCCD students and MCCCD-specific transfer pathway programs. Relationships are not to scale.

As noted above, Arizona community college students can choose to follow any one of these multiple pathways, including two distinct pathways to ASU. During the fall semesters of 2015, 2016, and 2017, nearly two-thirds of ASU's new transfer students were from Arizona community colleges and most were transfer students from MCCCD (Arizona State University, 2016, 2017, 2018). The Maricopa to ASU Pathways Program (MAPP) encourages students to complete an associate degree while at the community college and guarantees admission to ASU and to the major related to the chosen pathway program (Arizona State University, n.d.a, n.d.b; MyMaricopa, n.d.). The opportunity to complete an associate degree while on a pathway program proves to be the most successful option for Arizona transfer students who move on to complete a bachelor's

degree at an Arizona public university, although pathways do not exist for all bachelor's

degree programs at ASU. Arizona transfer students have a higher rate of graduation with

a bachelor's degree when they complete an associate degree in arts, business, or science

(also known as AA, ABUS, or AS, respectively), followed by transfer students who

complete their general education courses (also known as AGEC) (AZ Transfer, 2018c).

An associate degree is comprised of 64 community college credits and an Arizona

General Educational Curriculum (AGEC) makes up of 35-37 of those credits (AZ

Transfer, n.d.b). Table 1.1 demonstrates the average graduation rates of Arizona

community college students who transfer to an Arizona public university based on their

course/degree completion.[2]

Table 1.1

Average Graduation Rates from Arizona Public Universities of Arizona Community College New Transfers by Completion Type

	1 Year	2 Years	3 Years	4 Years	5 Years
AA/AB/AS Degree	1.2%	29.0%	62.0%	72.4%	76.1%
AGEC Only	1.1%	25.1%	59.7%	70.5%	75.1%
Other Associate Degree	1.9%	23.4%	46.0%	57.0%	61.2%
No CC Degree nor AGEC	0.8%	14.5%	40.3%	55.2%	61.3%

Note. Adapted from "Arizona Statewide Graduation Rate of New Transfers from Arizona Community Colleges Academic Preparation at Entry" from academic years 2006-2007 to 2014-2015, by AZ Transfer ASSIST Statewide Reports (2018).

Arizona's three public universities graduated 13.9% more community college

transfer students in 2016-2017 than five years earlier, to total 7,833, representing 28.1%

of conferred bachelor's degrees at these three universities. The majority of this five-year

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[2] Data on graduation rates of community college transfer students were not available per university.

growth is represented among African American (44.5%) and Hispanic (44.5%) students, as well as among students who were 30 years or older (27.7%) (AZ Transfer, 2018a, 2018b). Among students who enrolled at a college with the MCCCD and were seeking a degree or seeking to transfer to a university, 60% required at least one developmental education course in reading, math, or English (Faller, 2014), demonstrating that Arizona community colleges fulfill a need in support of college educational attainment.

Post-secondary initiative. A state-wide educational initiative was launched in September 2016 by multiple grassroots and educational leaders in Arizona, under the umbrella of the Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR) and now overseen by College Success Arizona, a non-profit organization focused on post-secondary attainment. This initiative, known as Achieve60AZ, aimed to increase the statewide educational attainment from a current 42% of Arizonans who have a college degree or certificate to a goal of 60% by 2030. The initiative instituted four strategies to meet the 60% goal: (a) strengthening the K-12 pipeline with increased high school graduation rates and college readiness, (b) implementing policies for easier completion of credentials, (c) increasing college access through awareness and affordability, (d) and aligning education gaps to workforce needs (ABOR, 2017; Achieve60AZ & College Success Arizona, 2017). This effort addresses the 2001 and 2012 Morrison Institute reports on the need to build an educated and talented workforce in Arizona.

Vulnerable populations. Vulnerable individuals are those who struggle daily but in silence and are "at high risk of sliding into financial disaster" according to a report from the 104th Arizona Town Hall Research Committee (Koppell et al., 2014, p. 6). Vulnerable populations include the underemployed, the undereducated and unskilled

workforce, those with high debt and no savings, the uninsured, households with a single parent, and those with increasing health care needs. Among all Arizonans, communities of color are at greatest risk of falling into vulnerability. Vulnerable populations are an urgently growing populace in Arizona and represent 45% of all households who are at risk of going into poverty along with the other 19%—or 1.25 million—currently in poverty (Koppell et al., 2014). As defined by this report, there are multiple factors that place individuals into the status of vulnerability. Some factors are invisible, such as lack of health insurance coverage or access to health care and behavioral health, and many of which are more relatable even to those who are distant from falling into vulnerability, such as going through an unexpected illness or experiencing a physical accident.

The Nina Scholars program serves students with many of the same vulnerable factors identified by this report, with the intent to help them move out of the cycle of vulnerability through educational advancement. The Nina Scholars program understands that the vulnerability status of these students may be temporary if it can also guide their potential to thrive. The Nina Scholars program has students who may begin their educational path at either MCCCD or ASU.

The Nina Scholars Program

The Nina Scholars program supports students with immense potential and immense need. Established in 2001, its purpose is defined as "dedicated to providing educational opportunities for individuals . . . whose personal commitments and financial circumstances would preclude their attendance without substantial, long-term scholarship support" (Watts College of Public Service & Community Solutions, n.d.). The program serves a diverse population of first-generation vulnerable college students in Arizona who

demonstrate high financial need. They include students who meet any one of the following criteria: (a) students who experienced foster care or had been separated from their parents as youth, (b) students with physical disabilities, and/or (c) students with dependents in their household. The program is funded in part by the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust (hereafter Pulliam Trust), which recognizes that vulnerable individuals are personally and financially at risk, yet they need more than financial support to help them get through college; they need a dedicated long-term support system to frequently connect with them.

The Nina Scholars program is housed at four higher education institutions in Indiana and Arizona, home states to its namesake, the late Nina Mason Pulliam. Figure 1.2 describes the relationship between the Pulliam Trust and the four Nina Scholars programs along with the potential academic pathway for scholars in the program. This study is limited to scholars in the Arizona-based programs. In Arizona, the Nina Scholars program operates at both ASU and MCCCD, Arizona's largest community college system. These locations allow both ASU and Maricopa Nina Scholars programs to form a partnership in support of scholars who choose to begin their educational path at community college and continue to the university.
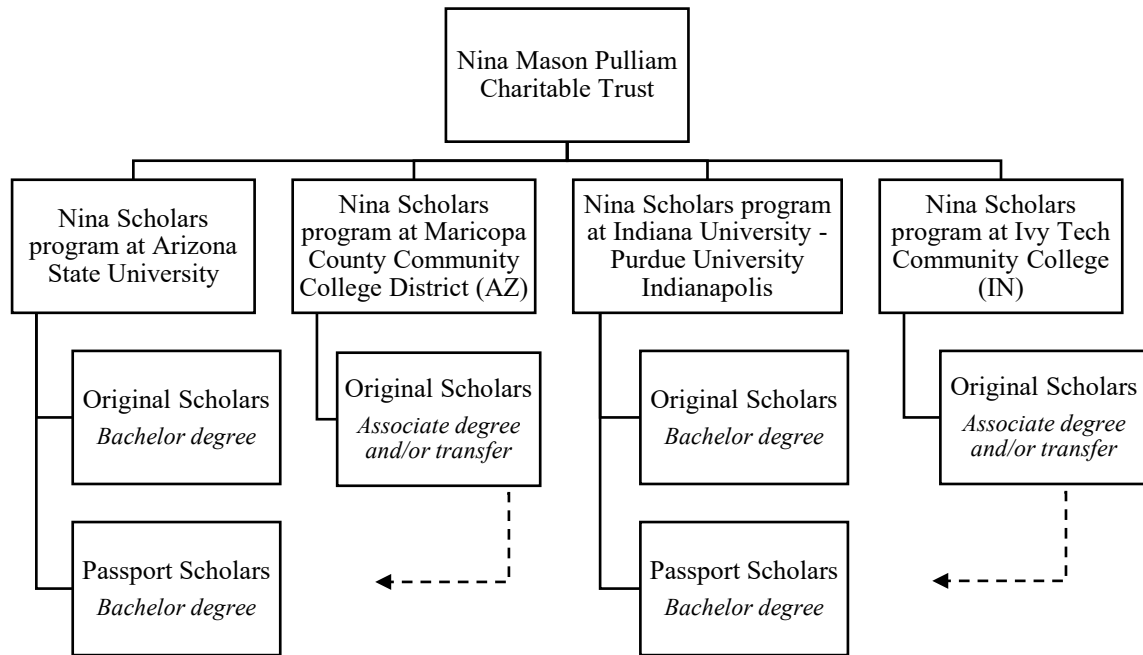
Nina Mason Pulliam
Charitable Trust

Nina Scholars
program at Arizona
State University

Nina Scholars
program at Maricopa
County Community
College District (AZ)

Nina Scholars program
at Indiana University -
Purdue University
Indianapolis

Nina Scholars
program at Ivy Tech
Community College
(IN)

Original Scholars
Bachelor degree

Original Scholars
*Associate degree
and/or transfer*

Original Scholars
Bachelor degree

Original Scholars
*Associate degree
and/or transfer*

Passport Scholars
Bachelor degree

Passport Scholars
Bachelor degree

Figure 1.2. Relationship between Pulliam Trust and Nina Scholars programs and pathway of each program's scholars who choose to transfer.

Scholars served. The Pulliam Trust grant agreement with ASU requires that ASU admit a minimum of three Passport Scholars each year (Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust, 2017). These Passport Scholars join a group of four or more other ASU Nina Scholar recipients, known as Original Scholars, who are admitted into the program as incoming or current freshmen, together forming a new cohort of seven or more scholars. Each cohort receives a multitude of support services, such as scholarship aid, mentorship, guidance to university and community resources, and participation in a student success course during their first year at ASU.

In 2006, the Nina Scholars program began offering the Passport Scholars award to Maricopa Nina Scholars interested in transferring to ASU (Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust, 2006). Since the start of the Passport Scholars award, the ASU Nina Scholars program has graduated 30 Passport Scholars, while another 11 students are

currently active in the program (not including participation and graduation rates of

Original Scholars). These Passport Scholars alumni account for a 68% adjusted

graduation rate among all transfer students who participated in the program (Nina Mason

Pulliam Charitable Trust, 2018) (see Table 1.2).

Table 1.2

Participation Numbers and Graduation Rates of Passport Scholars

Year	Total	Active	Non-active	Graduated		
				#	%	Adjusted %
2006	3		3	0	0.0%	0.0%
2007	5		3	2	40.0%	40.0%
2008	4		2	2	50.0%	50.0%
2009	4		1	3	75.0%	75.0%
2010	3		1	2	66.7%	66.7%
2011	4		1	3	75.0%	75.0%
2012	3		0	3	100.0%	100.0%
2013	3		1	2	66.7%	66.7%
2014	5		0	5	100.0%	100.0%
2015	7		2	5	71.4%	71.4%
2016	3		0	3	100.0%	100.0%
2017	6	6	0	0	0.0%	0.0%
2018	5	5	0	0	0.0%	0.0%
	55	11	14	30	54.5%	68.2%

Note. Adjusted graduation rate is reflected without active participants. Adapted from
"Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust" database by Apricot by Social Solutions (2018).

In a given academic year, the ASU Nina Scholars program serves a total of 30 to

40 students from across six academic years, inclusive of both Original Scholars and

Passport Scholars. Upon entering ASU, Nina Scholar recipients who begin as freshmen

(Original Scholars) tend to receive a variety of welcoming messages and activities from

multiple units within the university targeted towards this group. Meanwhile, Nina

Scholar recipients who transfer to ASU (Passport Scholars) tend to receive a smaller

welcome, leaving their transition into the university a bit less eventful and potentially a

bit more unnerving. Prior to transferring to ASU, Maricopa Nina Scholars receive program support from the Maricopa Nina Scholars program staff and Advisory Council members who each work from one of the ten colleges within the district. The Maricopa Nina Scholars support group connects them to many student success resources within the district and to existing university transfer resources for those who intend to transfer, including placing them on a transfer pathway like the Maricopa-ASU Pathways Program (MAPP) (MyMaricopa, n.d.). ASU Nina Scholar recipients receive support from a smaller support group that is housed at two of the four metropolitan campuses. Support to Nina Scholars is delivered by a course instructor and three program staff members who include two part-time graduate assistants and a full-time Program Director, who is also the researcher and author of this study.

Role of the Program Director. As the Program Director of the ASU Nina Scholars program and researcher of this study, I concentrate on the transfer experience of Passport Scholars who transition from MCCCD to ASU and are accepted into the ASU Nina Scholars program. It is my responsibility to ensure that the program runs efficiently, and that scholars' needs are met. During each semester of the academic year, I determine and post scholarship awards and other funds. I work with my staff to plan and execute program events for scholars that provide information on resources at the university and in the community and that allow for socialization opportunities. We offer one-on-one scholar meetings so that these meetings address each scholar's personal, emotional, and social needs and set strategies for their academic success. Throughout each semester, we provide guidance, mentorship, motivation, advocacy, and references for scholars, even after they graduate from the university. The course instructor helps

develop and executes an academic curriculum for two-semester courses specifically designed for new cohort Nina Scholar recipients.

Problem of Practice

This study focused on the specific needs of vulnerable students in the Nina Scholars program who transferred from MCCCD to ASU. The desire to do so came from my experience in working with students like Cathy, who was mentioned in the anecdote at the start of this study, and recent studies on the state of Arizona and a lack of action to address the critical issues in education and within vulnerable communities. Recent state-wide scuffles to fund K-12 and higher education have demonstrated the intense uphill battle Arizona educators face to build an educational pipeline (Beard Rau, Hansen, & Wingett Sanchez, 2016; White & Cano, 2018), particularly for a state listed as 49th in per capita higher education funding (Center for the Study of Education Policy, 2016; Stephenson & Giles, 2015). Consequently, students arriving in higher education settings were experiencing greater challenges to adapt due to a lack of educational preparation and immense personal obstacles common among vulnerable populations.

In this study I explored how Passport Scholars in the Nina Scholars program, who are vulnerable transfer students, managed their transition even with major factors impacting their everyday lives. In the years I have directed the program, I have seen many transfer students struggle with their ASU transition experience. There were students who were overwhelmed with the workload and physical distance of their classes, who decided to maintain a full-time job while attending school full-time, and those who could not secure a junior internship because they had to continue working to have an income. Unlike some students attending the university, these students did not have

effective support systems to rely on for emotional or financial support. With these issues in mind, this study measured the perceived impact a handoff support system has towards vulnerable students in the Nina Scholars program transferring from MCCCD to ASU.

Research Questions

This study investigated the following research questions to help improve the transition experience of vulnerable students transferring from MCCCD to ASU, specifically Maricopa Nina Scholar recipients who are accepted into the ASU Nina Scholars program as Passport Scholars. The questions aimed to understand the strengths the scholars brought with them during their community college to university transition and the extent an intervention had on their preparation and success at the university.

RQ1:   What cultural capital do future Passport Scholars have to assist them when transferring to the university?

RQ2:   To what extent does a transfer preparation intervention change the sense of preparedness of Passport Scholars for their university transition?

RQ3:   To what extent does a transfer preparation intervention support Passport Scholars with their sense of ability to succeed during their university transition?

Intervention

I developed the above research questions to assess an action research intervention that supported the success of transfer students in the Nina Scholars program. The intervention (described in detail in Chapter 3) followed Passport Scholars during their stages of transition from community college through their first semester at ASU. This included three one-on-one meetings before and after the scholars started with the Nina

Scholars program, guidance from a Nina Scholars peer mentor during the summer and fall semesters, and asking participants to complete five monthly self-reflection journals during their transition. I intended to guide the Passport Scholars through this process and help them prepare with as much self-awareness, knowledge of resources, and forethought as possible that would produce a successful transition into the university.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Perspectives and Research Guiding the Project

Countless transfer students experience trials when transitioning from community college to the university (Allen, Smith, & Muehleck, 2014; Roksa & Calcagno, 2010), but the challenges can be much greater for transfer students from vulnerable backgrounds (Francois, 2014; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004; Pecora et al., 2006; Peterson, 2016; Rassen, Cooper, & Mery, 2010), such as with Passport Scholars who are transfer students and recipients of the ASU Nina Scholars program. Passport Scholars are those whose vulnerable background can preclude them from their ability to complete a college education. In general terms, vulnerable populations go beyond the poor in society to include those at the edge of a personal financial disaster whose daily silent struggle nears them going into full crisis. There are five major factors that place these populations into vulnerability: access to resources, family dynamics, health care, education, and employment (Koppell et al., 2014). While traditional transfer students focus generally on the academic transition, vulnerable transfer students also worry about external dynamics that could affect them. Without a strong support system to bolster their transition, vulnerable transfer students, such as Passport Scholars, could start their university experience near full crisis mode as they adjust to their new setting.

To address the issues described here among vulnerable transfer students, I present three frameworks: *community cultural wealth, transition theory*, and *transfer student capital*. Community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) highlights positive attributes in marginalized communities over their deficiencies, which historically have received greater attention (Cox, 2016; Tinto, 2006; Tinto & Cullen, 1973). Transition theory

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(Schlossberg, 1981) addresses the physical, mental, and emotional transition that students experience. Transfer student capital (Laanan, Starobin, & Eggleston, 2011) examines how capital gained while at the community college contributes towards the success of transfer students at the university.

Community Cultural Wealth

Yosso (2005) devised community cultural wealth from critical race theory, which was conceived by legal scholars as a way to challenge conventional social approaches to communities of color. Critical race theory was later applied in the education context by Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) who argued that institutional and structural racism exists in schools: "we argue that the cause of their poverty in conjunction with the condition of their schools and schooling is institutional and structural racism" (p. 55). The approach to apply critical race theory as a larger systematic problem within education altered whose perspectives were being shared by changing the narrative on decades of data that reported poor academic performances by communities of color: "Subsequently, the approach grew in popularity and transcended its disciplinary boundaries, moving into educational studies in the mid-1990s. The approach is now established as an important part of educational studies" (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2010, p. 341). Academic scholars have applied critical race theory to various contexts. For example, Solorzano and Yosso (2001) applied critical race theory to the Latino narrative, forming what is referred to as LatCrit theory, which they depicted as one of many branches in the critical race theory tree. Yosso's (2005) later approach with community cultural wealth challenged traditional interpretations of cultural capital theory and challenged assumptions of cultural deficiencies from students of color within the educational

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context. Although Yosso's approach focused primarily on students of color, the arguments presented may be applicable towards other marginalized communities whose narratives are also hidden from conventional storytelling. For example, recipients of the Nina Scholars program represent those from marginalized communities whose vulnerabilities often categorize them as high-risk, without first giving attention to their narratives and their strengths. Hence, the framework presented in community cultural wealth can apply beyond communities of color to possibly include other marginalized communities.

With community cultural wealth theory, researchers can focus on a strength viewpoint, rather than a deficit viewpoint, when examining issues related to race and social structures. In an educational context, Yosso (2005) contended: "deficit thinking takes the position that minority students and families are at fault for poor academic performance because: (a) students enter school without the normative cultural knowledge and skills, and (b) parents neither value nor support their child's education" (p. 75). This statement breaks down the myth that marginal communities do not prioritize education but rather have a lack of exposure to educational knowledge and skills. Yosso's purpose in conceiving community cultural wealth was to "instead focus on and learn from the array of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged" (p. 69). She adapted a model that highlighted the following capital concepts:

- Aspirational capital: "the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future" despite real and perceived educational barriers experienced by marginalized groups;

- Linguistic capital: "intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style" commonly associated with communities belonging to cultures other than traditional/dominant culture;

- Familial capital: "cultural knowledges nurtured among *familia* (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition," which builds a level of commitment from its members and maintains "a healthy connection" to this group;

- Social capital: includes existing "networks of people and community resources" who can provide "instrumental and emotional support to navigate" traditional social institutions;

- Navigational capital: "skills of maneuvering through [traditional] social institutions" that are not set-up for the success of marginal communities;

- Resistant capital: "knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality" where marginal communities affirm characteristics unique to their identity as characteristics of high value despite their non-traditional form (pp. 77-81).

Although many, but not all, Passport Scholars are students of color, they tend to belong to similar marginalized communities who are overlooked for their deficiencies rather than regarded for their strengths. Belonging to a marginalized community brings with it cultural qualities that distinguish it from dominant culture. Passport Scholars possess a number of cultural capital qualities, knowingly or unknowingly. As a program, we can highlight the capital they do possess and make them aware of the wealth that their

cultural capital can provide towards their transition experience. The program could help grow their cultural capital qualities during their transition experience into the university.

Studies Related to Community Cultural Wealth

> **Cultivating achievers.** Perez and Taylor (2016) conducted a phenomenological study to identify the assets that contribute towards the success of Latino males attending a private university in the northeastern United States. Their primary guidance was a concept from Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth in that this form of capital is culturally relevant and communal. This means that capital is not intended to be kept for individual growth, but rather, to build up a community of underrepresented university students who are more often studied for their deficiencies from traditional populations rather than the capital they already possess. The study analyzed the stories of ten Latino male university students through qualitative interviews. The interviews were coded against the six forms of capital in the community cultural wealth framework. Among the many stories Perez and Taylor recorded, they discovered that the six forms of capital were interrelated to each other rather than being individually represented. They stated: "While parents used linguistic capital to nurture and sustain participants' educational aspirations, familial capital yielded other outcomes equated with success" (Perez & Taylor, 2016, p. 9). Likewise, some Nina Scholar recipients may demonstrate that their capital are interrelated. While there may be some Passport Scholars who are able to build on each of the six capital concepts, there may be others who do not have access to all the capitals concepts presented by Yosso. For instance, these students may be in contact with family members but not be able to rely on them for familial capital, which was described by Yosso as the nurture that family or kin can provide that is tied to a historical and

cultural family background. However, the program can help Passport Scholars identify strengths within the current family or guide them as they identify additional persons to grow their support system.

       Validation theory. The relationships and trust built outside of the classroom are as important and relevant to the academic success of non-traditional college students as the learning that happens inside. Rendon's (1994) validation theory addressed the need for college staff, faculty, and administrators to intervene in the collegiate experiences of non-traditional students through means of active validation, in an academic and/or interpersonal manner. Validation addressed the doubt that many non-traditional students may experience, particularly regarding academic ability. For example, Rendon stated that faculty who "demonstrate a genuine concern for teaching students" or offer "structured learning experiences that allowed students to experience themselves as capable of learning" fostered academic development for non-traditional students who may often feel as though their experiences keep them in the margins of a traditional college experience (p. 40). Likewise, interpersonal validation was best received by non-traditional students from individuals they viewed as having close and trusting relationships with. Rendon emphasized that "when validation is present, students feel capable of learning; they experience a feeling of self worth" (p. 44). Comparable to Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth theory, Rendon's validation theory highlighted the assets of non-traditional students as aspects of worth towards students' success. Through validation theory, Rendon also encouraged the use of multiple assets as identified in community cultural wealth, including, aspirational, familial, social, and navigational assets. Applying aspects of validation theory to the regular operations of the

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Nina Scholars program are already present, as it is second nature. This study aimed to more strategically implement validation theory towards its intervention, particularly in Rendon's recommendation to validate non-traditional students during the beginning of their college experience.

Self-efficacy. Students' ability to thrive at the beginning of their college experience is led in part by motivators around them and, in part, by their belief in their own ability, also known as self-efficacy. Perceived self-efficacy was defined by Bandura (1982) as when a person "is concerned with judgements of how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations" (p. 122). A person's capacity to judge their own abilities can have major implications on how they respond to successes and failures in their life and the direction their personal life and career can take, regardless of the level of success. As Bandura contended, "because people are influenced more by how they read their performance successes than by the successes per se, perceived self-efficacy was a better predictor of subsequent behavior than was performance attainment in treatment. . . . People who are skeptical of their ability to exercise adequate control over their actions tend to undermine their efforts in situations that tax capabilities" (pp. 125, 129). Despite the impact that low self-efficacy may have on an individual's ability to perform, Bandura also determined that mastery of skills (enactive attainment) and the observation of modeling by others (vicarious experiences) are the strongest influences in building self-efficacy, followed by verbal persuasion of others and one's own physiological responses (e.g. anxiety, stress, fatigue).

Within higher education, studies measuring perceived self-efficacy are often associated with students' academic performance (Han, Farruggia, & Moss, 2017; Vuong,

Brown-Welty, & Tracz, 2010). Vuong et al. (2010) found that perceived self-efficacy is often the greatest influence among the first-generation college students' current academic performance and persistence to perform well and to graduate, regardless of prior academic performance. Han et al. (2017) discovered that while self-efficacy was efficient in measuring academic performance, a sense of belonging was also critical in student retention. They observed "associations between students' sense of belonging and their academic self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and task value" (p. 1122). Moulding, Stewart, and Dunmeyer (2014) measured self-efficacy among students interning as pre-service teachers. They noticed that once students were working in the professional field, academic achievement and perceived self-efficacy together did not determine how effective they were in the profession. They realized that the perceived support pre-service teachers received while student teaching was more significant in determining their perceived self-efficacy as professionals.

What these studies demonstrated was that perceived self-efficacy is the foundation in college student success when measured by a mastery of skills and academic performance. But as later research indicated, the supportive environment surrounding college students also mattered in ensuring college student retention and increasing self-efficacy in their future professions. The Nina Scholars program staff can work towards building the Passport Scholars self-efficacy through mastery of skills during their transition experience and building community. With these aspects in mind, this study examined how self-efficacy impacted the overall transition experience of the participating recipients.

Transition Theory

Schlossberg (1981) defined a *transition* "as said to occur 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 and relationships" (p. 5). When Maricopa Nina Scholars transfer and are accepted as Passport Scholars of the ASU Nina Scholars program they take part in an *anticipated transition*, an expected major life event, as identified by Schlossberg's (2011) succinctly outlined *transition model*. However, in my experience as Program Director I have noticed that as much as these Passport Scholars planned and prepared for their anticipated transition to the university, several have faced unexpected challenges that impacted their college and university student experience. Schlossberg identified this as *unanticipated transitions*, the unexpected situations that may alter life. Some Passport Scholars have struggled in assessing the coping system called *The Four S's*—situation, self, support, and system—which Schlossberg recommended as essential to assisting individuals through a given transition.

According to the transition model (Schlossberg, 2011), individuals should follow these processes to The Four S's coping system:

Situation. Individuals should assess the *situation* and if there are other factors impacting it. This could include determining its positive or negative effect, internal or external source, permanent, temporary or uncertain duration, and its degree of stress on them (Schlossberg, 1981). Passport Scholars could assess if the decision to transfer from community college to the university is happening at the right time in their life to yield a positive outcome.

Self. Individuals should look at them *self* to understand the inner strength or level of resiliency that would allow them to cope with a situation. Inner strength and resiliency vary from person to person based on their background, current mental/emotional health and previous experiences (Schlossberg, 1981). An introspective exploration of inner strength and current mental/emotional health, could help Passport scholars understand their resiliency level for future challenging academic and personal experiences that may occur during their time at the university.

Support. Individuals should identify the level of *support* they hold to get through a transition, from beginning to end. They would need to evaluate the reliability of their informal (family, friends) or formal (professional networks) support systems (Schlossberg, 1981). Passport Scholars could have conversations with those individuals who form a part of their support systems about anticipated roles and requests during their transition into the university. If they lack informal support systems, they could look at relying further on formal support systems in their employment, school, or other organizational environments.

Strategies. Individuals should determine which coping *strategies* could help them get through a particular transition, including: strategies that change a situation (such as brainstorming), reframe the outcomes of a situation to a more positive light, or those that help reduce the stress of a situation through meditation or exercise (Schlossberg, 2011). These strategies could differ for each transition or could be useful to use again in future transitions, depending on the individual. Identifying healthy coping strategies could be an important exercise for Passport Scholars to do and to put into practice to help them develop a manageable transition to the university.

Studies Related to Transition Theory

      Transfer adjustment process. There are many studies, particularly of underrepresented students, that have focused on community college students who transfer to the university. One study by Owens (2010) sought to better understand the transfer adjustment process of Florida community college students. She wanted to learn from the perceptions and experiences of transfer students in order to determine potential implications for transfer policies and programs. Owens identified the students' transfer adjustment process in three stages: student perception, identified support, and students' recommendations. The student perception stage was tied to their pre-transfer expectations and initial transition experiences. The identified support stage included their support system available to them at the university and barriers experienced while at the university. The students' recommendations stage offered students the opportunity to reflect on pros and cons of their overall transfer experience and provide systematic recommendations. It also allowed the students to reflect on their own individual growth. Based on the outcomes of the three stages for transfer adjustment process, Owens also suggested six implications for institutional practice. Universities should:

- work closely with community college transfer counselors,

- hire transfer counselors per academic college,

- offer on-campus orientations for transfer students,

- provide user friendly online resources such as transfer guides and virtual advisors for community college students,

- offer peer mentor communities for transfer students, and

- offer transfer experience courses during the first semester to introduce the university's academic and social environment (p. 105).

Based on Owens's findings on the three stages of the transfer adjustment process, the Nina Scholars program staff can be more attentive to how Passport Scholars experience their transition from the community college to the university. The program can first connect with their Maricopa Nina Scholars college contact to learn about their prior experience at the community college. Additionally, there are existing transfer resources through ASU that the program could make a better effort connect with, including the specific Transfer Specialist who works with students from a respective college within the MCCCD or attend a Transfer Friday event at the ASU campus (Arizona State University, n.d.c).

Social-cultural facilitators and barriers. Other researchers such as Percival et al. (2016) looked at the college-to-university transfer programs' success by measuring the academic performance of its transfer students and the social-cultural facilitators and barriers experienced by transfer students. Their study revealed factors that facilitated and hindered the transfer process for students in the pathway program they studied, identified by three transition phases: enrolling in a pathway program, transitioning, and completing a pathway program. They listed the facilitators and barriers to each phase in the model they created. Their study found that students who participated in pathway programs at their community college were motivated to transfer, and performed academically better than those students who did not participate in a pathway program. Yet, they also discovered that socio-cultural barriers (e.g., anxiety over academic preparation), and systematic barriers (e.g., lack of access to information, effective pathway tracking, and

ease of course transfer options), were still prominent among all community college transfer students. Likewise, the Nina Scholars program staff can look further into how the Nina Scholars program supports Passport Scholars during their university enrollment process and assess how they experience current social-cultural barriers.

Three-Phase Transition Process. One qualitative study applied Schlossberg's (1984) transition theory as it sought to understand the transition experience of community college students transferring to the university (Lazarowicz, 2015). Lazarowicz (2015) used transition theory to provide an individualized perspective of the process community college students experienced as they prepared to enroll at the university. Based on his findings, he asserted the value of applying a three-phase transition process to move transfer students from the community college to the university. He identified the processes as *in, through,* and *out*, taking into account the time period from when students begin to think about the possibility to transfer to the university until they start their second semester at the university, such as is recommended in transition theory. Likewise, the Nina Scholars program staff could support Passport Scholars who experience this transition, to help them assess their own three-phase transition to the university, which would allow them to better prepare for what was to come and anticipate the unexpected.

Transfer Student Capital

Transfer student capital focused on the "positive influence of learning and study skills at a community college" and its impact on a student's academic transfer adjustment at the university (Laanan et al., 2011, p. 191). A study by Laanan et al. (2011) on transfer student capital looked at the community college transfer experience among students who generally include "a large percentage of ethnic minorities, women, first-generation

college students, economically disadvantaged students and other special populations" (p. 176). The study, however, included a "majority traditional-college-age student" population (p. 185) and not the underserved population typically seen among most transfer student populations as just described—a major limitation to this study. Yet, it did seek to look beyond the traditional "transfer shock" concept, defined as a drop in grade point average at the new four-year institution. The authors found that transfer shock measured student success against an academic deficiency rather than highlight strengths of the transfer experience. Although the study "was limited to the students' retrospective responses" (p. 196) on their transition experiences, it produced some key findings on those constructive factors towards academic and social transfer adjustments that built the transfer student capital model. The model included three key findings. It found that (a) "learning and study skills at the community college" positively influenced academic transfer adjustment, and (b) that "experiences with faculty" at the university along with (c) "satisfaction at the university environment" positively influenced the students' social transfer adjustment (pp. 191, 196). The Nina Scholars program staff could help Passport Scholars identify constructive factors towards their academic and social transfer adjustments of their transition experience.

Studies Related to Transfer Student Capital

  Updated construct. In response to the research on transfer student capital by Laanan et al. (2011), Moser (2013) reviewed the concepts previously developed to measure transfer adjustment at the university. She added new concepts to the original instrument that measured transfer student capital. What she created was the *Moser*

transfer student capital construct, which included new scales and constructs on

community college experiences, including:

- academic counseling experiences,

- learning and study skills at the community college,

- informal contact with faculty at the community college,

- formal collaboration with faculty at the community college,

- financial knowledge at the community college, and

- motivation and self-efficacy (p. 56).

Moser discovered how greater gains of transfer student capital at the community

college related to traditional measurements of student success at the university. These

traditional measurements include university grade point average, students' ability to cope

while at the university, and student satisfaction on their university experience.

Expressing the value of the new concepts and building on them while at the community

college are messages that the Nina Scholars program staff can share with its Passport

Scholars for their future university transfer experience.

Five dimensions of transition. Flaga (2006) conducted a qualitative study on

university transfer students to recall their community college transition through their

second semester at the university. She concluded that "transfer shock" should be

measured by student experience rather than by academic performance (p. 3). She

affirmed, rather, that academic performance occurs as a "result of complex set of

processes" throughout a student's terms (p. 4). Consequently, she developed a model on

the *five dimensions of transition*, "a comprehensive picture of the issues facing the

students in the study during their transition," which included: learning resources,

connecting, familiarity, negotiating, and integrating (p. 5). These five dimensions were

assessed against three different institutional environments—academic, physical, social—

and together provided suggestions for community colleges and universities to follow to

improve on the transfer student experience, according to Flaga. For instance, the study

found that the first dimension on learning resources were defined—according to the

institutional environments—as *formal* learning resources of the official university

structure (physical), *informal* learning resources from friends who knew about the

university (social), and as the *initiative* of gathering information on own to contribute

towards the students' overall success (academic). Flaga found that students who met

each dimension in each environment experienced the greatest level of success during

their transition.

Previous Action Research

My previous cycle of research informed this current study on the transfer

experience of students in the Nina Scholars program along with the above frameworks.

During the previous cycle of research, I interviewed four individuals familiar with the

transfer experience and the vulnerable populations served by the program. These four

individuals included a researcher familiar with issues related to vulnerable populations, a

Nina Scholar recipient who had transferred from MCCCD to ASU, and two MCCCD

employees: an academic advisor and an administrator. These individuals provided

foundational information to two research questions created during the previous cycle of

research and assisted in the development of this current study:

RQ1: Who are vulnerable populations and why is attention to their situation

important?

RQ2: What experiences do vulnerable transfer students, such as Maricopa Nina

Scholars, experience when they intend to transfer to Arizona State

University?

For this section, I will focus on one of interviews I did during this previous cycle of research: an interview with the transfer student who was a Nina Scholar recipient. During this interview, I attempted to understand the transition experience of a vulnerable student who transferred from MCCCD to ASU.

The Nina scholar recipient, who was nearing the end of her college career at the time of the interview, reflected on how difficult her college experience was without a strong family network or financial stability to help her survive while paying for college. Aligned with transition theory, the Nina scholar expanded on where she decided to attend college and what to study. She stated:

> That was a little bit tougher because I was on my own on that. You know, I was
>
> just kind of back and forth about it. "Do I want to leave my family? Should I stay,
>
> or should I go? Will I have the funds?" That's been my biggest deterrent, is funds,
>
> because [I had] no financial support. That's always been the biggest factor for me.

The personal connections she made while in college were highly important in facilitating her experience. Those connections provided her the emotional support she lacked from her semi-dependent family. They opened her opportunity to apply for a scholarship program that would remove the financial stress of paying for school on her own and being able to live independently as an 18-year-old student. The connections also set her up for the pathway program that would prepare her to transfer to the university with greater flexibility.

I used the frameworks presented by transfer student capital and community cultural wealth to examine how this student was obligated to navigate systems based on those strengths in her life. She stated:

> So I looked for people that were gonna stay there to be the stability you know. That's what I look for. So, I got a friendship out of it. So, it's been great. They've helped me with letter recommendations. They've helped me with all the applications you know. Like I said, personal advice.

The interviews I collected from the previous cycle of research informed me on the transfer experience of the Nina Scholar recipients. They validated the use of the frameworks that I applied to this current study using transition theory, transfer student capital, and community cultural wealth. Addressing the first research question in the previous research cycle allowed me to fully understand how this student experienced vulnerabilities in her life despite her persistence and hard work to overcome them, and how established networks and support systems—like those that the Nina Scholars program facilitated for her at her college—were critical to supporting her efforts in alleviating her cycle of vulnerability. The interviews from the previous cycle also allowed me to address the second research question from the previous cycle of research. I learned that financial assurance, a personal support system, and guidance to navigate the academic system were aspects that scholars in the program sought for and needed for their overall success. These lessons from the previous cycle of research informed me on how to move forward with the development of the new research questions and the intervention for this current study. The lessons first allowed me to recognize the strengths already present within these vulnerable transfer students and how identification

of those strengths can aid the students in their goals. The lessons also helped me

acknowledge that in addition to the financial support the Nina Scholars program currently

provides, personal support on matters affecting their school preparation and guidance on

how to navigate two collegiate systems were essential to offer together through an

intervention during the students' transition from the community college to the university.

Chapter 3

Method

In this chapter, I explain the methodology for this action research study and include a description of the setting and participants, intervention, research design, timeline, data analysis, and validity. The purpose of this action research study is to examine the impact of an intervention on the transition experience of recipients of the Nina Mason Pulliam Legacy Scholars program (hereafter Nina Scholars) in Arizona who are transitioning from the community college to the university. These recipients are referred to as Passport Scholars. I gathered qualitative data to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What cultural capital do future Passport Scholars have to assist them when transferring to the university?

RQ2: To what extent does a transfer preparation intervention change the sense of preparedness of Passport Scholars for their university transition?

RQ3: To what extent does a transfer preparation intervention support Passport Scholars with their sense of ability to succeed during their university transition?

Setting and Participants

Setting. Nina Scholars is a scholarship program available to college students with vulnerable backgrounds who tend to not have strong support systems in their lives. The Nina Scholars program offers students a financial award and staff support for personal mentorship and academic guidance. The Nina Scholars program is named after Nina Mason Pulliam, a former journalist who left her estate to a trust upon her death in

1997 to support "causes she loved in her home states of Arizona and Indiana" (Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust, n.d.a). Established soon after her passing, the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust (hereafter Pulliam Trust) is an organization with three key missions, one that includes "help[ing] people in need" (Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust, n.d.a). Then in 2001, the Pulliam Trust established the Nina Scholars program at four separate higher education institutions in Arizona and Indiana. Since the establishment of the four Nina Scholars programs, they have collectively provided over 630 scholarships to residents of Arizona and Indiana who face personal and financial barriers to obtaining a higher education degree. Each Nina Scholars program is run by its own separate grant agreement, funded in part by the Pulliam Trust and in part by each of the four participating higher education institutions (Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust, 2016). This study focused on the Nina Scholars programs in Arizona—housed under the Watts College of Public Service and Community Solutions (hereafter Watts College) at Arizona State University (ASU) and under the Office of Student Affairs at Maricopa County Community College District (hereafter MCCCD)—as well as a portion of the programs' respective recipients who receive the Passport Scholars award.

Arizona. In Arizona, college students may apply to the Nina Scholars program if they attend either ASU or a college within MCCCD, all located in the Phoenix-metro area. At MCCCD, the scholarship is open to students who attend any of the ten colleges within the district. The Maricopa Nina Scholars program pays their tuition and fees, inclusive of a stipend and book award. The scholarship is available for up to four years to help them earn an associate degree or transfer to a university (Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust, n.d.b). At ASU, the scholarship is open to students who attend any of

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the four metro-Phoenix campuses. The ASU scholarship pays a portion of their remaining financial need for the academic year, inclusive of a stipend and book award. Maricopa Nina Scholars interested in transferring to ASU may apply for the ASU Nina Scholars program through a distinct Passport Scholars application, made only available to current Maricopa Nina Scholars and not open to other transfer students. The Passport Scholars award allows Maricopa Nina Scholars to earn a bachelor's degree by extending the length of their award to an extra three years at ASU, but not to exceed a total of six years between both institutions. (Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust, 2017).

The grant agreement between the Pulliam Trust and ASU requires that the ASU Nina Scholars program selects three Maricopa Nina Scholar recipients each year through the Passport Scholars award, though more can be selected pending available funding. Passport Scholars receive these benefits from the ASU Nina Scholars program:

- Up to three additional years of a need-based financial award for an undergraduate program,
- Nina Scholars program staff provide guided support and individual mentorship,
- Additional university staff support for financial aid guidance,
- Office and study space for scholars at two campus locations,
- Enrollment in a two-semester Nina Scholars course for new cohorts,
- Participation in Nina Scholars program exclusive student success and social events, and
- Ability to establish a sense of community with Nina peers. (Watts College, n.d.)

Scholar recipients. In this action research study, I examined the impact of an intervention on the transfer student experiences of Passport Scholars who transferred to ASU from MCCCD in a fall semester[3]. As recipients of the Nina Scholars program, these students hold considerable vulnerabilities in their lives, which could put in jeopardy a successful college experience without the support that the Nina Scholars program offers them. They are transfer students with immense potential and immense need.

Once a year, the Nina Scholars program recruits applicants to apply for the upcoming academic year. Eligible applicants include adults with dependents in their household, adults with a physical disability, and young adults who experienced foster care or were disconnected from their parents (Watts College, n.d.). Maricopa Nina Scholar recipients interested in transferring to ASU inform their Maricopa Nina Scholars coordinator of their intent. The coordinator then guides them through the early stages of the transition process. The ASU Nina Scholars program invites them to attend an optional Passport Scholars information session at one of the ASU campuses at least one year before they start in the fall. They are informed to apply for ASU admission soon after the information session and to submit their Free Application for Federal Student Aid when the application opens in October. By December, they submit their Passport Scholars application and, if selected as a finalist, are interviewed the following spring semester by the ASU Nina Scholars program. If selected as a Passport Scholar, they are invited to an orientation just before the start of the fall semester at ASU.

Participant recruitment. In December of the previous year, six Maricopa Nina Scholar recipients who intended to enroll at ASU for the upcoming fall semester

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[3] This dissertation does not indicate the year of the study to protect the anonymity of the participants.

submitted their Passport Scholars application to the ASU Nina Scholars program. Among them, five applicants were invited to interview during the following spring semester. Near the end of the spring semester, all five finalists were selected for the Passport Scholars award. As part of their welcome to the scholarship program, I invited them to schedule a one-one-meeting with me in support of their transition to ASU. During this meeting, they were also paired up with a Nina Scholars peer mentor and were instructed to write in a reflection journal over the summer related to their transition experience. After each one-on-one meeting, I recruited each Passport Scholar to participate in this study using purposeful sampling, which is an intentional selection of participants (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010) due to the nature of this qualitative study and small sample size of the population studied. Each of the five agreed to participate. See Appendix A for a copy of the Recruitment Letter and Appendix B for a copy of the Consent Form.

I listed basic information on the Passport Scholars who participated in this study in Table 3.1. Students transferred from multiple MCCCD campuses and attended different ASU campuses. However, to protect their privacy, I have not included all their demographic information.

Table 3.1

Participant Information

Participant (pseudonyms)	Gender	Age
Ana	Female	23
Beatriz	Female	40
Chris	Male	22
Diana	Female	29
Elisa	Female	30

Role of the researcher. My role for this study was as the participant-observer (Flick, 2014), where I served in both roles as the researcher of this study and as the Program Director for the ASU Nina Scholars program. Denzin (as cited in Flick, 2014) defined participant observation as "a field strategy that simultaneously combines document analysis, interviewing of respondents and informants, direct participation and observation, and introspection" (p. 312). In this role, I worked in partnership with the staff of the Maricopa Nina Scholars program. We worked together to serve Nina Scholar recipients in our respective programs through several collaborative efforts, including serving on each other's advisory councils and supporting each other's program events. Additionally, I supported Maricopa Nina Scholar recipients who were interested in transferring to ASU and applying to the ASU Nina Scholars program by sharing information and resources on the ASU admission application process for transfer students and on the application process for the ASU Nina Scholars Passport Scholars award.

My role as participant-observer placed me as an insider of this study. As a participant, I supported the Nina Scholar recipients through their admission process at

ASU and oversaw the full process for their Passport Scholars application. I also supported Nina Scholar recipients as the Program Director of their scholarship through their first semester at ASU, per the planned timeline of this study. As an observer, I interviewed the Nina Scholar recipients during their transition to ASU to learn about their experiences through the process.

Objectivity. Maintaining objectivity was critical for this study, particularly in my role as a participant-observer, where I was not able to separate my role as the Program Director from the researcher of this study. I researched methods that support researcher objectivity and found articles from Ortlipp (2008) and Watt (2007) about how reflective journaling (on behalf of the researcher) can be a useful tool to maintain objectivity in qualitative research. Watt stated how she believed reflexivity to be essential in "understanding of both the phenomenon under the study and the research process itself" (p. 82). Using reflexivity through the development of self-reflection research memos to follow the research process allowed me see if there were any changes overtime to my own research that veered it away from the problem of practice or the research questions. Ortlipp shared that she modeled her article about the reflective process from Denzin's (1994) concern for the problem of bias in qualitative research, which he coined "interpretive crisis," and from Scheurich's (1997) approach to make "the 'baggage' we bring to the research visible" (p. 698). While I felt comfortable sharing my reflection on the research process of this study like how I went about the coding process, I felt less comfortable sharing my reflection on the baggage I brought to this study for a fear of revealing more about myself than I am comfortable with, particularly as I tend to be a more reserved person. Nevertheless, I took up the challenge and attempted to reflect on

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my present lack of vulnerability status in comparison to the Nina Scholar recipients who participated in this study despite my desire to empathize as a first-generation college student. Additionally, unlike the participants, I was not a transfer student when I started at the university. My community college transfer experience was limited to the vicarious experience of college friends who transferred to the university during my undergraduate experience and my first full-time professional job as a Program Advisor at a community college immediately after graduate school. Yet, to support my goal to maintain objectivity, I added notes from my own self-reflection research memos of this study and reflected on the changes made to this study's research design (see Appendix I).

Intervention

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of an intervention on the transition experience of Nina Scholar recipients who transferred from MCCCD to ASU. The intervention followed Nina Scholar recipients who were selected for the Passport Scholars award during their stages of transition from MCCCD through their first fall semester at ASU. Prior to my development of the intervention for this study, the communication delivered to Maricopa Nina Scholar recipients in preparation for their enrollment to ASU had been limited to three formal communication opportunities: (a) an invitation to attend an optional Passport Scholars information session at least one year before they started in the fall, (b) an invitation to interview as a finalist for the Passport Scholars award during the spring semester, and (c) an invitation to attend a Nina Scholars cohort orientation for all new recipients just before they begin their first fall semester at ASU. I considered Schlossberg's (1981, 2001) four coping systems for transition and recognized that the prior approach did not appear to set them up for success because it did

not allow them to assess their own four coping systems prior to transferring. Therefore, I

designed a new intervention model.

The intervention was applied to all five of the new Passport Scholars who started

at ASU in the fall semester. The goal of the intervention was to support Passport

Scholars during their transition from community college to the university. The

intervention included three components that were implemented before the incoming

Passport Scholars started at the university, beginning in the late spring semester and

running through the summer and fall semesters: one-on-one meetings, peer mentor

guidance, and participant self-reflection journals (see Figure 3.1):

One-On-One Meeting	Peer Mentor Guidance	Self-Reflection Journals
Meetings between the Nina Scholar Program Director and each incoming Passport Scholar	Paired with peer mentor–returning Passport Scholar who was previous transfer student–for guidance	Participant completion of self-reflection journals
Reviewed: Career and academic goals Enrollment status updates University resources Nina Scholars program expectations	Shared personal transition experiences Guided new Passport Scholar through transition	Prompts asked to reflect on their current circumstances
Three individual meetings	Four-point connections	Five journal entries
Once in end of the spring semester (April/May) and twice in fall semester (September & October)	Summer and fall semesters (May – September)	Summer and fall semesters (May – September)

Figure 3.1. Three components of intervention

Passport Scholars were asked to complete all three components. The one-on-one

meetings addressed personal topics and reviewed career and academic goals, enrollment

and financial aid status updates, general university knowledge, resources, and technology,

and Nina Scholars program expectations. I focused the first one-on-one mentor meeting on the scholars' enrollment status, which gave me the opportunity to learn more about their personal situation and their goals. I collected notes during the one-on-one meetings to support the triangulation for this study and to verify with data collected for this study. See Appendix G for a sample of the program notes template used during and previous to this study for one-on-one meetings. I asked returning Passport Scholars who previously transferred from MCCCD to ASU to volunteer as Nina Scholar peer mentors to the incoming Passport Scholars. I paired up one peer mentor to one mentee. Returning Passport Scholars, as peer mentors, were asked to share their personal transition experiences and support the incoming Passport Scholars, as peer mentees, through their transition over a four-point connection period during the summer and early fall semesters, which included the following goals:

- First meeting (summer): over phone, briefly chat and set-up in-person meeting logistics;

- Second meeting (summer): in-person at any ASU campus, returning Passport Scholar share about background, experiences at ASU, lessons learned and ask incoming Passport Scholar about expectations;

- Third meeting (summer): in-person at any convenient location, returning Passport Scholar ask incoming Passport Scholar about concerns with enrollment and provide resources/suggestions to new transfer;

- Fourth meeting (fall): in-person at any convenient location, returning Passport Scholar ask incoming Passport Scholar about highlights and challenges experienced with coursework/workload, campus setting/online

format, faculty communication, classmates, work, personal matters, etc.

and provide resources/suggestions to incoming Passport Scholar.

The third component required the incoming Passport Scholars to complete five monthly self-reflection journals from early summer through early fall, May through September. The journal prompts asked the scholars to reflect on their current circumstances during this transition period as well as their college learning and study skills. See Appendix F for a copy of the reflection journal prompts.

Phases of the Study

The intervention provided increased communication to those Maricopa Nina Scholar recipients who applied to the Passport Scholars award to help them assess their strengths and assets to their current situations and prepare for their successful transition to ASU. In support of the intervention, I ran the study in four phases over the course of the late spring, summer, and fall semesters: the *descriptive phase,* the *pre-transfer phase,* the *mid-transfer phase*, and *post-transfer phase*. During the descriptive phase, I asked Passport Scholars to identify their strengths and assets through individual interviews. This first phase was guided by a construct related to cultural capital. The second, third, and fourth phases directed Passport Scholars during their transition with focus groups and journal prompts under the guidance of two constructs, university transition preparation and university transition success (see Figure 3.2).

Descriptive phase. The descriptive phase fell under the cultural capital construct. It followed research by Yosso (2015) on community cultural wealth where she encourages researchers to reframe studies on marginalized communities away from deficit thinking and instead frame studies on the positive attributes within these

communities. In an effort to do so, I featured elements related to the culture of

marginalized communities for this construct to focus on the positive attributes from the

cultural knowledge possessed in marginalized groups that is often times ignored. To

gather information on their cultural capital, I asked Passport Scholars to participate in

individual interviews with me during the month of May.

Pre-transfer phase. The pre-transfer phase fell under the university transition

preparation construct. This phase followed research by Schlossberg (1981, 2011) on

transition theory, which defined what a transition is and developed a coping system called

The Four S's for anticipated and unanticipated transitions: situation, self, support,

strategies. During this phase, Passport Scholars participated in a pre-focus group and

completed a pre-questionnaire in the early summer before they began with ASU Nina

Scholars program in the fall, in order to understand their sense of preparedness.

Cultural Capital Construct		
Descriptive Phase Identify students' strengths in their current structures: Aspirational Linguistic Familial Social Navigational Resistant		
University Transition Preparation Construct		**University Transition Success Construct**
Pre-transfer Phase Understand the changes that may occur during this transition. Identify the Four S's coping system for anticipated and unanticipated transitions: Situation Self Support Strategies	*Mid-transfer Phase* Employ *Four S's* coping system for anticipated and unanticipated transitions: Situation Self Support Strategies Identify community college academic transfer adjustment capital: College Learning and Study Skills	*Post-transfer Phase* Employ community college academic transfer adjustment capital: College Learning and Study Skills Engage in university social transfer adjustment: Experience with Faculty Environment Satisfaction

Figure 3.2. Phases of the study

Mid-transfer phase. The mid-transfer phase fell under the university transition preparation construct as well. This phase employed the Four S's coping system (Schlossberg, 1981, 2011) from the previous phase. It also identified community college academic transfer adjustment capital by Laanan, Starobin, & Eggleston (2011), which would later be employed during the post-transfer phase. During this middle phase, I asked Passport Scholars to complete their participant self-reflection journals, guided through five scheduled prompts from May through September. Passport Scholars employed coping strategies in anticipation of the transition they experienced and

identified their own community college academic transfer adjustment through the scheduled prompts.

Post-transfer phase. The post-transfer phase fell under the university transition success construct. This final phase followed research by Laanan et al. (2011) on transfer student capital where they examined how capital related to academic transfer adjustment while at the community college contributed towards the students' successful social transfer adjustment at the university. During this final phase, Passport Scholars participated in a post-focus group and completed a post-questionnaire during the middle of the fall semester at the university. This process employed their academic transfer adjustment capital while at the university and engagement in university social transfer adjustment. This phase intended to understand their sense of ability to succeed while at the university.

I developed this study to focus on the process of the transition experience that were particular to Passport Scholars as vulnerable transfer students. I used this study to identify systematic gaps to the transition experience of Passport Scholars through the above phases. Likewise, where there were barriers to the Passport Scholars' personal success, I used the study to inform me of how the barriers impacted them through the above phases. The overall intent of the study was to identify ways to improve the level of support that Passport Scholars received so that their transfer experience from the community college to the university was one that set them up for success: graduation.

Research Design

Methodology. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) defined phenomenology as "a study of people's conscious experience of their life-world" (p. 26). The phenomenon studied

for this dissertation examined the transition experience of Passport Scholars. I applied a phenomenological research design for this study, which Creswell (2015) described as a way to "*explore* and *understand* one single phenomenon" (p. 128; emphasis in the original). This study intended to understand the phenomenon related to the impact of an intervention on the transition experience of Passport Scholars. This phenomenon methodology required an in-depth look at the transition experience while "considering all of the multiple external forces that shape this phenomenon" in order to fully comprehend the perceptions of Passport Scholars on their own transition experience (p. 128). Through this method, I sought to describe the experience that transfer students with vulnerable backgrounds encounter during their community college to university experience with the support of an intentional transition intervention. The four phases of this study measured multiple internal and external forces that impact the transition experiences of Passport Scholars. I collected, coded, and analyzed data from multiple data sources to understand the phenomenon as to why Passport Scholars in the Nina Scholars program might feel overwhelmed with their transition from MCCCD to ASU.

Data sources. For this phenomenological study, I collected qualitative data sources to measure the perceptions of Passport Scholars' transfer experiences. These data sources were ideal due to the small sample size of five Passport Scholars being studied. These data sources were: semi-structured interviews, pre- and post-focus groups, pre- and post-qualitative questionnaires, reflection journals (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), and program notes. The data collected for this study followed the framework from the three studies mentioned earlier. The first framework I applied included the six capital concepts from community cultural wealth: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social,

navigational, and resistant (Yosso, 2005). The second framework I applied included the

Four S's coping skills from transition theory: situation, self, support, strategies

(Schlossberg, 1981, 2011). The third framework I applied was from the three key

findings found in transfer student capital, including learning and study skills gained while

at the community college, experience with university faculty, and satisfaction from the

university environment (Laanan et al., 2011).

   Semi-structured individual interviews. I conducted individual interviews at the

start of the study with each participant. I prepared questions for the semi-structured

interviews and used them with flexibility, based on the flow of the conversation during

the interview (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The data I collected from the interviews

answered Research Question 1: *What cultural capital do future Passport Scholars have to*

assist them when transferring to the university? Questions for these interviews were

based on the community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) literature and were aligned with

the previously identified cultural capital construct and aspirational, linguistic, familial,

social, navigational, resistant capital sub-constructs. I conducted these interviews at the

onset of the study during the descriptive phase, during the start of summer session. See

Appendix C for the interview protocol. To illustrate, here is a sample semi-structured

interview question item, which measured social capital sub-construct: "Who are the

people in the community who helped you with your educational success?"

   Pre- and post-focus groups. I conducted focus groups after the start and at the

end of the study with all the participants. Focus groups are a method of collecting

qualitative research data with a group (in this case, the Passport Scholars) that has

knowledge on a particular topic (the transfer experience) and that could allow the group

to share thoughts, emotions, and experiences with each other about what they are going through (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The data collected from the focus groups helped me answer Research Questions 2 and 3: *To what extent does a transfer preparation intervention change the sense of preparedness of Passport Scholars for their university transition? To what extent does a transfer preparation intervention support Passport Scholars with their sense of ability to succeed during their university transition?*

I based the questions for these focus groups on the transition theory (Schlossberg, 1981, 2011) and transfer student capital (Laanan et al., 2011) literature shared earlier. The questions for the focus groups are aligned with the previously identified university transition preparation construct and its sub-constructs—situation, self, support, and strategies—as well as the university transition success construct and its sub-constructs—academic transfer adjustments and social transfer adjustments. I held the pre-focus group meeting during the beginning of the summer session, during the pre-transfer phase. I then held the post-focus group meeting after the middle of the fall semester, during the post-transfer phase. The focus group protocol is in Appendix D. The pre-focus group interview asked questions about how they planned to apply certain coping skills and learning skills for when they enroll at the university. The post-focus group interview asked questions about how they applied certain coping skills and learning skills after they enrolled and were attending classes at the university. What follows is an example of a pre-focus group question, which measured the situation sub-construct: "Now that you are an incoming ASU student, please share your academic and career goals. What does this new status mean to you?" Here is an example of a post-focus group question, which

measured the experience with faculty sub-construct: "How much of this level of engagement did you employ while at ASU with ASU faculty? Please explain."

       Pre- and post-qualitative questionnaires. I distributed the qualitative questionnaires after the start of the study to all the participants. I intended to collect responses not answered during the focus group meetings regarding more personal experiences through the questionnaires (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The data collected from the questionnaires helped me answer Research Questions 2 and 3. Questions for these questionnaires were also based on the transition theory (Schlossberg, 1981, 2011) and transfer student capital (Laanan et al., 2011) literatures. The open-ended questions on these questionnaires also aligned with the university transition preparation construct and its sub-constructs as well as the university transition success construct and its sub-constructs. I sent out the pre-qualitative questionnaire during the summer session, during the pre-transfer phase. I then sent out the post-qualitative questionnaire after the middle of the fall semester, during the post-transfer phase. The pre- and post-questionnaires are in Appendix E. The pre-questionnaire asked questions about their anticipated plans for when they enroll at the university. The post-questionnaire asked questions about their experiences after they enrolled and were attending classes at the university. This is an example of a pre-qualitative questionnaire question, which measured the self sub-construct: "Identify a specific skill you anticipate growing in from your experience at ASU." Here is an example of a post-qualitative questionnaire question, which measured college learning and study skills sub-construct: "Describe the learning and study skills you practiced the most while at the university."

Participant self-reflection journals. I asked Passport Scholars to complete self-reflection journals through the period of the intervention. Over the course of the summer and early fall semesters, I provided five prompts to the Passport Scholars to respond to during the mid-transfer phase. Through the journal prompts, I intended to stimulate responses not shared during the focus group meetings or questionnaires regarding more personal feelings and opinions about the transition experience. The data collected from the participant self-reflection journals helped me answer Research Question #2. Prompts for these reflection journals were also based on the transition theory (Schlossberg, 1981, 2011) and transfer student capital (Laanan et al., 2011) literatures. The journal prompts were also aligned with the university transition preparation construct and its sub-constructs. The five reflection journal prompts were requested from June through September, during the mid-transfer phase. See Appendix F for a copy of the reflection journal prompts. An example of a prompt that measured the support sub-construct is included here: "Which college contacts have you actively sought to help you with your transition, if any? How have these contacts helped you?"

Program notes. During each of the one-on-one meetings held with the Passport Scholars over the course of this study, I wrote program notes that documented our conversations. The data collected from program notes helped me answer Research Questions 2 and 3. The program notes I wrote were well-aligned concepts pulled from transition theory (Schlossberg, 1981, 2011) and transfer student capital (Laanan et al., 2011) literatures. I collected program notes from the end of the spring semester through middle of the fall semester during the pre-transfer and post-transfer phases. A sample of the program notes template is listed in Appendix G.

Timeline

   I connected with Passport Scholars during their transition from the community college to the university. Once the study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) during the end of the spring semester, I first interviewed each Passport Scholar during the descriptive phase to identify their strengths. Soon after, I implemented the pre-transfer phase to allow the Passport Scholars to identify how they apply the Four S's coping system through a pre-focus group interview and pre-questionnaire form. I implemented the mid-transfer phase during the beginning of the summer semester through the beginning of the fall semester. This phase asked Passport Scholars to document in reflection journals about how they employed the Four S's coping system and to identify the strengths in their community college academic transfer adjustment capital. I then implemented the post-transfer phase during the fall semester. This phase asked Passport Scholars how they employed their community college academic transfer adjustment capital and social transfer adjustment capital at the university, which intended to strengthen their transfer success. See Table 3.2 for more information.

Table 3.2

Timeline and Procedures of the Study and Semester Milestones

Month	Week	Intervention Activities & Semester Milestones		
April	4	First one-on-one meetings	Recruitment of participants	
May	1	Individual interviews begin		
	2	*ASU & MCCCD spring semesters end*	First journal prompt responses due by May 15th	First peer mentor meetings due by May 15th
	3	*ASU summer session begins*		
	4			
June	1	Individual interviews end	Pre-questionnaire sent	
	2	Pre-focus group interview held	Second journal prompt responses due by June 15th	Second peer mentor meetings due by June 15th
	3			
	4			
July	1			
	2		Third journal prompt responses due by July 15th	
	3			
	4			
August	1			
	2	*ASU fall semester begins*	Fourth journal prompt responses due by August 15th	Third peer mentor meetings due by August 15th
	3			
	4			
September	1	Second one-on-one meeting	Fifth journal prompt responses due by September 15th	Fourth peer mentor meetings due by September 15th
	2			
	3			
	4			
October	1	Third one-on-one meeting		
	2			
	3			
	4			
November	1	Post-focus group interview held	Post-questionnaire sent	

Data Analysis

To best answer the research questions in this phenomenological study, I conducted a qualitative analysis on the collected data. This section includes a description of the data analysis procedures utilized for this study, which were built from the three constructs—cultural capital, university transition preparation, and university transition success. Under these constructs, I placed sub-constructs from concepts pulled from the three frameworks mentioned earlier:

- Community cultural wealth: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant (Yosso, 2005);

- Transition theory: self, situation, support, and strategies (Schlossberg, 1981 & 2011);

- Transfer student capital: academic transfer adjustment and social transfer adjustment (Laanan et al., 2011).

Individual and focus group interviews. I analyzed data collected from the open-ended questions asked during the interviews, including the semi-structured interviews and pre- and post-focus groups. I transcribed the audio recorded interviews using an online transcription service and then coded the transcriptions using *initial coding* so as identify the Passport Scholars' strengths. I coded data from the focus group interviews using a combination of *emotions coding* and *values coding* so as to understand the Passport Scholars' experiences and attitudes during the pre-transfer and post-transfer phases. Emotions coding highlighted "emotions recalled and/or experienced by the participant" and were applied to explore interpersonal and intrapersonal experiences, while values coding was applicable when exploring "cultural values, identity,

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intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions in case studies"
(Saldaña, 2013, pp. 105, 111). After conducting a couple of rounds of coding, I grouped
similar codes to find themes, or "major idea[s] about the central phenomenon," in the
data (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010, p. 362). Some examples of preliminary codes from
the individual interviews related to the aspiration sub-construct included: *College
aspiration - took different path* and *College aspiration - sudden & unexpected*. I then
analyzed the codes to determine how they may relate to each other until some larger
themes were identified. An example of a larger theme that came out of these two
preliminary codes was *Aspiration - college unexpected*.

  Questionnaires and journals. I analyzed data collected from the open-ended
questions asked on the pre- and post-questionnaires and self-reflection journals. I coded
data from the questionnaires and the self-reflection journals using *initial coding* so as to
allow the data to lead itself and to see if the themes found from these data sources were
similar to the themes derived from the pre- and post-focus groups (Saldaña, 2013). Some
examples of preliminary codes from the journals related to different questions under the
strategy sub-construct included: *Plan courses - self-discipline & organization* and
Personal situation affect school - time management with coursework. I then analyzed
these codes as well to determine how they may relate to each other until some larger
themes can be identified and found a larger theme: *Strategy - time management*.

  Program Notes. I analyzed data from the program notes collected. These
documents shared additional insight into the Passport Scholar's experiences, past
academic performance, and future plans. I created narratives of the program notes; the
narrative approach was effective in pulling out larger stories happening in the lives of the

scholars rather than coding for detail. It provided the flexibility necessary for the type of document collected.

Validity

Providing reliable data and analysis in a qualitative study requires a thorough plan for validity to ensure that readers trust the process and outcomes of this study. I conducted a number of different strategies for this study in an effort to provide credible, reliable, transferable, and action-oriented outcomes among the collected data sources and analysis conducted (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These strategies strengthened the findings and outcomes of this qualitative study.

Credibility and reliability. To provide credibility to this study, "the extent to which research findings are credible," I applied *member checks* and *adequate engagement in data collection* (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 265). To provide reliability to this study, "the extent to which there is consistency in the findings," I focused on the consistency of the results with the data collected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 265). To provide both credibility and reliability to this study, I applied strategies to increase consistency in qualitative studies, including *triangulation* techniques, *reflexivity* and *peer examination*. I solicited feedback from the participants of the study as a way to apply member checks. I solicited participant feedback on the preliminary data from their respective interviews to rule out any misinterpretations of their messages. To ensure adequate engagement in data collection, I searched for other studies that provided various interpretations in understanding this phenomenon of the transition experience (Flaga 2006; Lazarowicz, 2015; Owens, 2010; Percival et al., 2016), which is discussed in the theoretical perspectives section of this study. I applied multiple methods of data

collection—such as interviews, surveys, and documents—and used multiple sources of data to cross-check data from different time frames as a triangulation strategy—such as pre-and post-focus groups. I shared notes in the findings section of this study on the self-reflection research memos I wrote throughout this dissertation process to allow readers to understand my own biases to apply reflexivity as a strategy for credibility and reliability. For the peer examination, I received feedback from my committee members as well as the segment of my cohort that is a part my Leader-Scholar Community (LSC). Together, they provided their professional, research, and experiential advice as to how I could improve or critically assess various aspects of this study. Many of these techniques transcend the traditional data collection already outlined for this study.

Transferability. To facilitate transferability of this study, "the extent to which the findings of a qualitative study can be generalized or transferred to other situations," I described techniques that allow readers of this study to clearly understand and to apply in their local contexts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 265). While not all aspects of this study can be transferred, I offered a *rich, thick description* within the findings of this study to allow the reader to then create a *working hypothesis*, which is a "hypothesis that reflect[s] situation-specific conditions in a particular context…that take[s] account of local conditions" (Cronbach as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 254). I also produced an *innovation configuration map* (IC Map) to provide a clear list of ideal and acceptable expectations of the intervention presented for this study. Hord, Steigelbauer, Hall, and George (2013) wrote about the purpose of the IC Map within the educational context as a way to "emphasize the concrete and more tangible operational forms of the innovation [or, in this case, the intervention], thereby increasing the possibility of having reliable and

valid information about the use of the innovation" (p. 4). The IC Map I created prior to the start of the intervention for this study is presented in Appendix H. An explanation of how the IC Map was applied is described in the findings of this study.

    Action-oriented outcomes. To provide action-oriented outcomes for this study, I applied an additional validation criteria important for action research studies as described by Herr and Anderson (2015). Since this is a phenomenological study, I applied a criteria that measured the experience of transfer students over a period of time called *process validity*. Process validity "asks to what extent problems are framed and solved in a manner that permits ongoing learning of the individual system" (p. 68). Since this study intended to understand the transfer experience of the transfer students in the study, process validity measured the experience of transfer students over a period of time with the both pre- and post-focus group data sources and the pre- and post-questionnaire data sources. As an action research study, providing this extra validation criteria to readers was an important addition.

Chapter 4

Findings

I conducted this action research study to examine the impact a three-part intervention had on the transition experience of recipients of the Nina Mason Pulliam Legacy Scholars (Nina Scholars) program who are vulnerable transfer students transitioning from the community college to the university in Arizona. These recipients are referred to as Passport Scholars and are the participants of this study. I asked five Passport Scholars to participate in an intervention that included one-on-one meetings with me, guidance through peer mentorship, and an opportunity to reflect on their transition experience. Through this phenomenological study, I collected qualitative data measured under three constructs: cultural capital construct, university transition preparation construct, and university transition construct. I collected data that documented the experiences of five Passport Scholars over a seven month period of their transition experience to the university. I examined the data sources that highlighted the Passport Scholars' personal strengths (semi-structured individual interviews), their experience before and after transition (pre- and post-focus group interviews and pre- and post-qualitative surveys), and their experience during transition (monthly self-reflection journals), along with program notes collected as part of the intervention. I used the findings from the analysis to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What cultural capital do future Passport Scholars have to assist them when transferring to the university?

RQ2: To what extent does a transfer preparation intervention change the sense of preparedness of Passport Scholars for their university transition?

RQ3:   To what extent does a transfer preparation intervention support Passport Scholars with their sense of ability to succeed during their university transition?

In this chapter, I present the findings to these qualitative data sources on the analysis of each phase of this study, the *descriptive phase, the pre-transfer phase, the mid-transfer phase*, and *post-transfer phase*. The findings I present are according to the phases of the study to demonstrate the phenomenon related to the transition experience of Passport Scholars and the impact an action research intervention had on the Passport Scholars' transition experiences.

Descriptive Phase

In the descriptive phase, I identified the Passport Scholars' personal strengths, following research from Yosso (2005) on capital she identified as community cultural wealth: *aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational*, and *resistant*. I conducted a semi-structured individual interview with each Passport Scholar at the start of the study to better understand each of their personal strengths from the lenses of the construct related to cultural capital. In these interviews, each Passport Scholar demonstrated immense fortitude in their lives and in their goals towards earning their bachelor's degree. They demonstrated how, like for many students with vulnerable backgrounds, the start of their academic journey was unconventional as they were not planning to go to college until they suddenly decided to enroll. They shared how they were pursuing their college degrees for more than themselves, but also for those in their immediate circles of support. Since starting their academic journey at the community college, they also demonstrated new-found learning skills and a new understanding of social matters related

to their immediate community. I listed examples below, under the descriptive phase, of sub-constructs to the cultural capital construct measured.

Aspirational. An aspiration for something better in life was present in all of the Passport Scholars' interviews. Most of the scholars shared that they were not prepared to go to college from a young age and saw that college was not easily accessible to them. Yet, many of them still aspired to earn a college education. Passport Scholars had to have an experience happen in life in order for them to envision themselves attending college, rather than being prepared since childhood about going to college. For example, Ana's path led her to envision herself as a "franchisee" of where she had been working until an international volunteer experience made her realize that she had more opportunities for a college education than she was aware of:

> So I was enrolled at [another university and] still focused on work. Enrolled in . . . Community College and then didn't do well either and so I thought I wasn't going to go to college. I was working at [a coffee shop] at the time so I thought 'I'm going to be a [coffee shop] employee for the rest of my life and franchise.' And I think that changed when I went to my first mission trip [abroad] and all these kids, all their dreams were go to college. And I think I kind of was humbled and realize, like I had the opportunity to go to college. And like I need to take advantage of that because these kids don't have that opportunity. So that's kind of what got me back. And so I reenrolled the next semester and did really well, you can even see on my transcripts.

Ana admitted that a strong focus on her college education was secondary to her work commitments and that she struggled prioritizing time for her academic

responsibilities. For Chris, his focus was simply to graduate high school since he was the first in his family to do so. In recalling his earliest college aspirations, Chris shared:

> The earliest time I probably had to say is like late senior year. Like, right after high school I've been reading about college and to get towards graduation. 'Cause at the time I know graduation was like the big goal for me. Like, I didn't think past that. That was just like the goal of the family because I know not a lot of my family members actually finished college, I mean high school. . . . And then I realized that there's more after that and that's when I kind of like started with aspirations of—got involved with a couple group things like that to help me find scholarships, colleges, and things like that.

However, for the other scholars, their college aspiration took longer to develop. For some, their children were the motivation they needed to envision a better life, a strength that also stood out within the familial sub-construct. That was when they took the necessary steps towards college enrollment. Beatriz, however, shared that her aspiration for a college education did begin at a young age after a second grade teacher did not see the potential in her to teach her well enough. The teacher flunked her and identified her as a student with a learning disability. "I didn't have an instructor or a teacher who took the time to guide me through the process of learning." Yet, Beatriz did not allow this experience to define her for the rest of her childhood. She showed her first signs of resiliency after this experience. She stated:

> It was just like, it was just a very traumatized grade for me. So I, during that age I pictured myself that I was going to be somewhere in college and it was going to

have a different teacher than what I had that time and I was going to have a well-rounded instructed learning something that I was missing at [that] time.

Yet, Beatriz did not receive the guidance to achieve her college aspirations earlier in life. Like the other Passport Scholars, it was not until after Beatriz started raising six children with her spouse that she persisted in her goal to receive a college education. Beatriz wanted to be able to provide for her family and wanted to make her children and mother proud as the first in her family to receive a college education.

Linguistic. I asked Passport Scholars to relate principal experiences in their lives to an artist or artistic piece they admired, such as a book, movie, song, or artist. I sought to get their reflection on why they related to this artist or artistic piece as a way to assess the linguistic strength they possessed, particularly in how they communicate their own narratives as a vulnerable population. Through this cultural expression medium, they communicated their experiences in a language or style that was relevant to them. Some shared experiences they related to when they identified more traditional artistic pieces well-known in popular American culture and others shared their experiences they related to that belonged to less dominant American cultures. However, what tied them all together was that all Passport Scholars described experiences of attrition and triumph with the artists or artistic pieces they admired. Ana identified the movie "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" in how it mirrored her life:

It's about this guy who, he's kind of living an average life but aspires for so much more and has these daydreams of going on adventures and just kind of taking on the world. And he finally goes and does it and he gets out of his comfort zone and he starts to realize that he's good at things that he never thought he'd be good at . .

. I feel very connected to it because I'm, like I said, I didn't think I was going to go to college.

Ana realized that, like this movie, she previously kept to her comfort zone and withheld aspiring to more opportunities in her life, such as envisioning herself as a college student. She only began to learn about her passion in helping people when she allowed herself to step out of her comfort zone.

Chris and Elisa shared how they look up to artists who had similar stories as themselves. Elisa shared how she was inspired by artist Jenni Rivera who broke through a male-dominated music field. Jenni accomplished this when the odds were against her, after becoming a mother at a young age, experiencing domestic violence and sexual abuse against her children. Despite her struggles, she persisted through college and became a stand-out in the music field. Elisa shared, "I learned so many things about her and she's just so inspiring so. I can relate to her. . . . And her just fighting through it . . . and she got to where she wanted her to be." Similar to Jenni, Elisa was trying to finish college while raising a family. Likewise, Chris shared how he related to artist J. Cole, who through music, expresses his life struggle and social challenges:

He talks about was like his upbringing as a child. You know, dealing with his family. His mom was addicted to drugs. His dad was, kind of like, absent in the sense. So basically, how he grew up, like, in his, probably his environment where there was like a lot of bad influences there. So I can relate to that considering like, my family doesn't really have the best history and a lot of things, a lot of violence. So I like how he, like, breaks the cycle to continue and do something different and that might inspire others make a way out, you know.

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Chris added that, like J. Cole who was raised without his father present and used education and art to break a cycle, he too sees himself breaking a cycle of violence by applying himself to his education in art and technology.

Beatriz shared how she identified with the third book in the Harry Potter series, "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban." She revealed how, as a child, she saw herself as a prisoner of the situation she was placed in with no chance to react to what was happening to her:

> The reason why is, because you know, I just feel that many times we find ourselves most of us prisoners of our own . . . like in this situation. Ever since that happened to me everybody would just call me crazy, and you know—sorry. . . . So you know, overcoming that. And I saw myself as a prisoner. Like having this person who was me and was in prison you know for something that you know it wasn't my fault. And yet, I was paying for it.

Beatriz's emotional recollection demonstrated that she, like other scholars in the program, found herself in a challenging circumstance out of her control and had to weather the experience from being in this circumstance. During this moment, she was able to share her story of trauma by communicating her lived experience through an artistic medium that she related to most.

Overall, Passport Scholars shared deep reflections on why they related to a particular artist or artistic piece that were pulled from both traditional and less dominant American culture. Through this reflection, they communicated their lived experiences in a way that was meaningful and relevant to them. It is from these cultural expression

mediums that Passport Scholars learned from other relatable stories with more positive outcomes that they also build aspiration and further resilience.

Familial and social. Passport Scholars demonstrated strength in both familial and social capital, which acted as two principal levels of support, an inner circle and an outer circle of support. These two levels of support were essential towards helping them with their educational pursuits. Their inner circle of support began with a healthy connection to at least one person closest to them—a spouse or a parent—and followed with other family members, such as children or in-laws, and/or close friends. These inner circles of support were the principal motivators who encouraged the Passport Scholars to pursue a college education.

Familial. For Beatriz, the motivation began first with herself and her faith, and then with the people closest to her. Beatriz shared, "Well, my faith. So God is the first one and then his Son. So those are my first two biggest strength in my life. Then it is my husband and my kids." Her spouse played the biggest influence in her life in motivating her to pursue the education she always wanted. Beatriz shared:

> Well my husband always believe, has believed in, you know, that I can do a lot of things. And he encouraged me to go and do it. He like, "Go ahead do it. You can do it. Don't sit there and feel bad about yourself. You think you can do it, like going and do it, then do it. Prove it."

This motivation moved Beatriz to finally enroll in college and pursue her college education. Likewise, for Ana her principal motivator and supporter is one person, her future spouse. She lamented that she did not receive the same level of support from the foster family who raised her during her adolescent years:

My fiancé definitely. We have been together for over three years and I've known

him since I was 17. I'm 23 now . . . we met through the church and he's just, we

have similar stories that we relate to so we can support each other through all of

that.

Yet, for other Passport Scholars their principal levels of support expanded beyond

just one person. For Elisa, this included her immediate and extended families. She

shared:

My mom, my sisters, one of my brothers, my husband, and my kids. They

have always been there. Anytime I need anything, I know them, that group

that I can count on. My husband especially, he basically picks up the

slack.

Similarly, for Diana, her principal level of support included her immediate family (spouse

and children), her extended family (parents and siblings), as well as her two best friends

(a former co-worker and her sister-in-law). Meanwhile, Chris's level of support came

from his mother and his best friend from high school who shared similar academic and

career aspirational goals with Chris. He shared:

So two people that are close to me are my mom, I'm proud to say, my best friend.

. . . So my mom, she basically raised me by herself. So everything I want to be is

basically inspired by her in, like, the ideals actually passed on to me. She wanted,

like, the best for [her] children and, like, she would sacrifice a lot of things so we

have, like, a decent life. And, like, just being that seeing her struggle and growing

up, I know just how bad it got on her, like, the toll it took. Seeing that all things

that she went through are kind of, like, they kind of motivated me more. . . . Start

to take care of my mother like she once did for me and, like, since then every step of the way she's been there. Like my biggest supporter, rootin' my name. Things like that and everything I do I have to make sure that it is accepted by her so that at the end of the day I can still be able to provide her what she provided for me. She just like big support and my inspiration so . . . [My best friend has] been my friend since high school. So with him, like, he's pretty motivated person, so we kind of have a competitive energy. So, like, if he does something I gotta somehow do better, in, like, we took that same mentality into, like, college and school. So I whenever we was in the same class we do the homework together. Like, we would motivate each other to do better.

Chris recognized the sacrifices his mother did for his family and wished to reciprocate that level of support. The ability to provide that support was likely only possible with his friend who helped him focus on academic pursuits rather than funnel his energy towards violence, the way his other family members fell victims to. Similar to what Beatriz shared earlier, Chris's motivation to pursue his college education was driven by making his mother proud.

Passport Scholars also shared that they not only wanted to make their families proud, but that they wanted to be examples to their children, so that their children could also learn the value of an education, and in particular a college education. Elisa wants her children to see her as an example for themselves, "My daughters. They were the, I want to give them a better life . . . I can honestly say that it has always been my daughters that have reminded me and kept me pushing forward." Beatriz affirmed how her decision

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to return to school had an impact on one daughter who previously shouted about how she hated going to school. She spoke to her daughter the following lesson:

> And so then I said to my, to my daughters, you know, "Why would you waste your time? You have so much, you know, opportunities that you can take from and make something out of yourself, and you now have an education that you don't have to work at McDonald's, you know. I don't tend to demean anybody working at McDonald's, I mean. I think it's hard, it's a really hard job. . . . I mean that's a good start-up you know a job that you want to start off in high school or whatever. But you don't want to be you know 30 years old and you still working at McDonald's." So that's what, you know, trying to tell my kids, "What you want? If you really like flipping burgers, I'm going, you know, I'm going to support you, but I'm still going to encourage you to pursue something that you're going to wake up every morning and you're going to love going to work."

The Passport Scholars demonstrated a strength in familial capital. They required as much support from the inner circle as the impact they give back to their inner circle. Their pursuit of a college education impacted them as much as it impacted those in their inner circle of support.

Social. Each of these Passport Scholars, as first generation college students, also relied immensely on their outer circle of support, consisting of both community and institutional support, to help them through their educational pursuit. For some, this included individuals who briefly interacted with other Passport Scholars, such as college staff and advisors, as well as individuals who consistently guided them to get into and

through college. Ana shared how she learned to value her education more and more when she saw that her bosses valued it as well:

> I think the bosses that I've had over the past two years I mean they've all been very much like "school first, school first" which is surprising to me because that doesn't happen. Yeah. And you know the one job that did, I ended up leaving because I was like, my education comes first.

In addition to her work environment, Ana shared how her faith community was also part of her outer circle of support. Similarly, Diana felt her faith community was a strong source of support, "Well, mostly just like my church. . . . Just like, [they] helped support me and gave me good advice about, like, following my dreams of getting a good education." These external networks of people from within their outer circle of support helped Passport Scholars affirm the value in pursuing a college education at this point in their lives.

Receiving support from within the college system was also a significant social capital Passport Scholars possessed. The greatest support they indicated that they received came from the Maricopa Nina Scholars program or from the college representatives tied to the program. Beatriz shared that her greatest level of institutional support came from the Maricopa Nina Scholars program:

> Nina has been my biggest support. Without Nina I don't think I would have been [here]. . . . The scholarship has been amazing. You know, if they haven't helped me with my tuition, my books. And I mean books are expensive and you know college tuition is expensive. Without that without that support I wouldn't be able to because I have six children. And along with those six children [we] face a lot of

expenses, you know, food, clothing, doctors, insurance, [and] medication. …
[Nina] provide[d] me with tools and resources. Something that was really familiar
in the community college. There was so much guidance through the program.

Chris shared that his college advisors were his greatest level of institutional
support. His college advisors served as the college representatives to the Maricopa Nina
Scholars program, which serves scholars district-wide, across ten colleges. Chris's
college advisors explained processes and shared student opportunities with him. They
also guided him towards the next steps in his life, inclusively writing letters of
recommendation for him. Elisa shared her support came from her counselor, a Maricopa
Nina Scholars college representative:

She's the reason why I received the Nina Scholar in Maricopa. She told me about
it. She helped me with it. Also [the Maricopa Nina Scholars coordinator] has
helped me a lot. . . . But mainly it's been [my counselor] who has helped me ever
since I met her my first semester there. She's always been there for me so I'm very
grateful for her.

Each of these individuals at the institutional level, whether they held small or
large roles in the lives of these Passport Scholars, added to their social capital because
they were a part of their outer circle of support. Each of these individuals played an
integral part in teaching the scholars how to navigate an unfamiliar institution and how to
make the most of their experience there.

Navigational. Passport Scholars gained navigational skills that they learned to
value from their experience of attending the community college. These were skills that
many of them did not previously have the opportunity to practice in their lives. They

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acknowledged that these newfound navigational skills contributed towards their college academic success. With their improved skills in communication, time management and organization, and leadership, the Passport Scholars learned how to navigate an institutional system previously unfamiliar to them.

Chris gained new navigational skills when he took on college student leadership roles. This experience changed him from being a quiet student in high school to a more active student in his college classes: "I used to be that guy that sits in the back that doesn't say anything, but now I'm, like, more willing to raise my hand, answer the question, more willing to step up and go first." However, before Chris stepped into his leadership roles, he started out as a member of a student group that promotes male student persistence in college. When the opportunity came to lead the group, he said:

> I wasn't really sure I wanted to do it, but no one else stand up so I kind of like volunteered, cause like, I figured what could go wrong, because I knew I wasn't alone. And I knew my advisors would help me along the way. So it kind of helped me out in just doing that. I learned a lot. It's kind of helped me develop with a lot of skills. Letter writing, and things like that. So just doing that I say that's kinda make a big impact on me. And I'd say that's probably one of the things I don't regret. Because it'd be helping out a lot in the long run.

The trust Chris had in his outer circle of support—the strength in his social capital— provided him with the confidence to take on a leadership role that taught him essential college navigational skills and changed the course of his college experience. As a result, Chris grew in his interpersonal communication skills and time management skills. He learned the value of completing assignments early and communicating with his

instructors when he was falling behind. He said, "Just having communication with your professor, anything like that, 'Hey I'm not going to be in class,' or 'I needed more time on this particular assignment.' I feel like they're pretty understandable about that." He learned to work towards deadlines but also knew that communication was a key tool if he found himself struggling to meet a deadline.

Similar to Chris, Ana also learned more about applying her communication skills and improving on her time management skills as tools to navigate her way through community college, primarily when she enrolled in online classes and had to make time to learn the material on her own and complete the assignments.

I'm definitely still learning time management because it's very easy for me one week to make time for school and the next week wait until 10:00 p.m. at night on Sunday when it's due at midnight. And then I think too online classes, those have been really, I think those have been the most helpful in teaching me time management. Like I don't, I think if I never would've took an online class I would have never learned that skill of "I need this amount of time to finish this assignment." And even communication because your communication skills you have to talk to your online teacher.

Having open communication with her community college instructors proved immensely helpful to Ana. When she did open up to them about her struggle to meet course requirements due to work-related challenges, she shared that they provided her with the flexibility she needed to still stay on top of her assignments.

Other Passport Scholars also shared how they learned—and continue to learn— the essential skill of time management, from the most basic level to the more strategic

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level. Beatriz learned the most basic level of time management. She shared that she learned "how to literally schedule time for classes. Writing in an agenda writing in calendar. That's something I never, I never used to do." She added that this practice did not start right away for her, but rather into the third semester of her professional program when she had to balance varied class dates, assorted clinical requirements, and a random course assignments schedule.

Meanwhile, Elisa was already familiar with some time management skills but struggled implementing them regularly. She applied this essential skill to keep herself organized by writing everything down on a planner. Inclusively, this skill was instrumental in her current work environment and a challenge when she did not apply it outside of her school semester timeframe: "Right now I'm kind of getting used to not having class and then I'm at work and I'm all over the place. . . . So since I'm not taking classes right now, I don't bring the planner anymore." She strived to be organized more regularly. Doing so reminds her that she has goals and aspirations to keep and children she does not want to let down. Whereas Diana learned how to strategically spend her time as a result of her community college experience: "I'm doing homework ahead of time or just doing like every day. Some of it helps me have everything on time and not stressing like to have to do it in one day, all of it." In addition to working on homework every day, she also learned the value of attending class every day:

> Every day there's something new to learn. And if you're not there then you're not gonna learn it. Even if you like trying to learn on your own it's different and you cannot do it. It's always important to be there. I learned what the instructor has to teach you for that day.

Each of these Passport Scholar demonstrated how they all learned a variety of new navigational skills from their community college experience that contributed towards their academic success.

Resistant. Passport Scholars expressed how their community college experience also gave them insight into existing issues within their respective communities that they were not previously aware of. These issues—which varied from micro to macro level issues—strongly concerned them, but yet they struggled to find solutions for them. This newfound knowledge demonstrated the Passport Scholars' understanding of the inequities that exist in their respective communities and their desire for change.

At the micro level, Chris shared how his family's problems "made it difficult" in his ability to be successful while at the community college. Although his family acted as his first level of support, their circumstances also acted as major barriers to his ability to focus on school, particularly since he lived at home and commuted to college. He shared:

> So when there are problems at home is kind of like it takes my attention away from my classes and things like that. Where I would have to sacrifice my classes, go help out where the situation with family is happening. . . . Oh yeah they are persistent. You know there's a lot of things with money, transportation, babysitting and things like that. So we try to look out for each other because that's really all we have is each other.

This challenge forced Chris to practice better time management and communication by working ahead and communicating early with his instructors about potential set-backs.

Meanwhile, Diana and Ana's awareness of issues within their community were a bit more encompassing. The issues were larger in scope although the issues still affected

them directly. Diana shared how she never previously noticed how crime was a prevalent issue in her neighborhood and how there was a lack of policing in her neighborhood to check or prevent the crime from happening. She shared:

> Before, like, we wouldn't, like, we thought it was normal, you know. Because I have never lived, like, in a good neighborhood. So before I could have thought, "Oh that's normal. That's probably happened everywhere." But once you go to school, you know that there's, like, justice. Police are supposed to, like, take care of, like, people that take, that lives in the communities, or like watch or. . . . I don't know how to explain it, but like. So I know more now about what's right and what's right to, for our community.

Likewise, Ana shared how her community college experience made her aware of an issue she never before considered was a systematic issue. Prior to her community college experience, Ana believed that her decision to attend college was an independent choice as to whether she even wanted to pursue college. However, after she attended community college and was awarded the Nina Scholars scholarship, she began to learn about opportunities for foster youth that she could have taken advantage of earlier in her life, if she only knew they existed. She shared:

> I feel like a lot of like foster youth—and like myself, and I was 18—didn't hear about these scholarships. Like, I just got emailed [the opportunity to apply to another] scholarship by [the Maricopa Nina Scholars coordinator] where [the requirement] was like, 18 and 21, and it was like, you know, you get like a monthly salary for your rent and for gas and for food and all these things that I was like, "If I would have saw it when I was 18, I probably wouldn't be in debt,"

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and like. And that's why I was so thankful when somebody told me about this [scholarship]. . . . So, like, I feel like for myself, if I had to, like, look back, or just like foster youth in general, and hearing about these scholarships that they can go to college too. 'Cause all the kids I work with right now, they don't, they don't think about college, like it's just not realistic for them. Like a lot of them feel like, "Yeah I'm just going to, like, get my GED and that's it," that's their mindset. And like, a lot of them are in online school and aren't doing well because they just don't care about school. Whereas, I feel, like, they were [aware of the opportunities], you know, like, "Oh I have the ability to go to college."

Ana recognized that the current lack of college information provided by the child welfare system impacts many other foster youth as much as it once impacted her:

I aged out of the system and, like, they never came and did like a home visit and were like, "Hey you have this opportunity to go to college. . . ." Like, I just found out that, like, you can be in [the child welfare system] 'til your 21 and they give you, like, a monthly salary to help pay for the rent as long as you meet with them once a month. Then I think like, like I said, if I were never found [Nina Scholars] like I wouldn't be in college. . . . So, I mean, I got so lucky with [Nina Scholars], that it was awesome, but I just want to think of, like, other kids too.

Ana described how the child welfare system failed to prepare and motivate her to go to college. Without knowledge of all of the financial resources available to foster youth like herself, she did not previously consider the possibility of affording a college education.

On the other hand, Elisa's awareness of issues in her community encompassed a micro to macro-level problem, the issue of child abuse. She shared how she had not

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previously experienced or been exposed to child abuse, but shared how both her college experience and her job exposed her to an issue that spreads across boundaries:

Ever since I started working here, I see so much of the cases that go on with the child abuse. I don't, I don't understand it because it's a child. It's someone who can't defend themselves and they're being abused in this way. . . . It just it just makes me so mad. So I feel like that's something that I have been gravitating towards a little more because I don't understand why people can commit horrific things like that to a child.

When asked how she sees this issue within her local community, Elisa clarified that she does not see child abuse as an issue that is more prevalent here than in other communities, "I feel like maybe everyone deals with it." Regardless, she added, that the issue is gravely important here in her local community.

In sum, each Passport Scholar exhibited high levels of personal strengths during the descriptive phase of this study. While not all Passport Scholars exhibited all of the six identified strengths that were assessed under the cultural capital construct, every Passport Scholars did exhibit a majority of the strengths. This was most evident with the final question related to the sub-construct on resistance, even after I had to make some adjustments to what ended up being a difficult question for the Passport Scholars to understand. In my self-reflection research memos, I recalled how I directed every Passport Scholar to Yosso's description of resistance capital so that they could interpret the question on their own. I felt that they after they read the description, they understood it well and were not led to answer it in any way other than through their own interpretation.

In what follows, I detail how the aforementioned strengths supported each scholar during their transition from the community college and into the university, as assessed during the three transfer phases (pre-transfer, mid-transfer, and post-transfer phases) of this study and how the intervention impacted their transition and their ability to be the successful student they anticipated in being. At the conclusion of each section, I include triangulation data from notes I took during the one-on-one mentor meetings held during the summer and fall semesters.

Pre-transfer Phase

In the pre-transfer phase, I identified the Passport Scholars' preparation for their transition, following research from Schlossberg (1981, 2011) on transition theory where she developed a coping system called The Four S's for anticipated and unanticipated transitions: *self*, *situation*, *support*, and *strategies*. After I held the individual interviews with all the scholars and before they officially began with the ASU Nina Scholars program in the fall, I conducted a pre-focus group interview with them and asked each scholar to complete a pre-questionnaire. These two data sources gave a basic understanding of the Passport Scholars' sense of preparedness for their university transition. In the pre-focus group interview and pre-questionnaire, Passport Scholars shared what this transition from community college to the university meant to them, the status of their current situation (housing, commute, and support system), their major and career goals, and their coping strategies when confronting a challenge. I list examples below, under the pre-transfer phase, of sub-constructs measured to the university transition preparation construct.

Situation. During this phase of the study, Passport Scholars were asked questions that painted a picture of their current circumstances and their respective conditions. Learning about their current circumstances revealed the factors impacting their current circumstances and the coping skills that the Passport Scholars apply.

Status as incoming ASU student. Passport Scholars were first asked during the pre-focus group interview about what this new status as an incoming ASU student meant to them. Many of their responses demonstrated themes of self pride and pride for family. For Diana, it was about completing the process, a next step in life. For Beatriz, it was a "huge blessing" to be a part of the scholarship program and at ASU. Meanwhile, Anna's pride stemmed from being physically present on the campus:

> I think I was even just walking into the building, I just kind of was looking around like, "this is, like, this is my school." I don't know. It's just it's different from walking through a community college to walking through ASU. And I'm just, I didn't see myself getting here. So it's, like, a sense of just being proud.

For Chris and Elisa, the pride they experienced as incoming ASU students was directed towards their families. For Elisa, her pride and accomplishment was reflected in her role as a parent. She shared:

> To me, it means everything because I, again, I get to show my kids how important school is and it's a huge opportunity for me to get my education and to show everyone in my family . . . what is important.

Similarly, Chris shared how his status as an incoming ASU meant to his family:

> For me it means a lot, like breaking the cycle for my family. Rewriting the history, starting over. And kind of paving a new path. A role model, if you go

down. We are all inspired by negative events in my family. So I would like to give them the positive, a bit of light to kind of shine and kind of inspire others [to] do the same to my younger family members. So hopefully to inspire.

It was apparent that the first level of support from family that these Passport Scholars receive impacted how they value seeing themselves as university students.

Academic goals. Passport Scholars were then asked about their academic and career goals and about their graduation timeframe. Four of the five students indicated plans on graduating within two years of starting at ASU and were focused on one possible career path. Meanwhile, one student, Chris, indicated plans on graduating in a little over two years with the intent to double major in digital culture and computer science. Most of the Passport Scholars had clear career goals and, therefore, shared a strong desire to continue in their fields and were well aware of what courses they needed to complete in order to graduate with their desired degrees. They learned about their program requirements from their second levels of support, many of which included academic advisors at both the community college and the university, who guided them through the institutional process.

One student, however, appeared to be the most indecisive student of the group. Ana had completed a "community college to university pathway agreement map" for a social work major. Earlier, during her first ASU Nina Scholars one-on-one mentor meeting at the start of the summer, she shared how she wanted to pair her two passions of fitness and helping youth in the child welfare system. Later, during the pre-focus group, her plans changed slightly:

I definitely want to major with my social work degree. I'm trying to figure out, potentially minoring in Spanish. I've been trying to sort some stuff out as my degree has changed specifically with social work now. And then—I don't know I know that I want to work with adolescents, maybe in group home, or, whether it's [with the child welfare agency] or just some sort of way working with adolescents, helping them with their future.

At this time, Ana's minor uncertainty did not have a major impact on her overall career and academic plans, as her goals still focused on working with youth in need. Her switch from a double-major with kinesiology to a minor in Spanish did not seem to be detrimental to her overall goals.

Housing and commute. I asked Passport Scholars about the status of their housing and commuting situations, including where they were going to live (relative to campus), who they were going to live with, and how long their commute was going to be from home to campus, if they lived off-campus. All Passport Scholars had plans to live off-campus with their respective families—those who they identified as their first levels of support. One scholar, Chris, did submit a housing application that was still pending at this phase of the study. All but one scholar shared that they were going to live within the metro area and estimated a fifteen to thirty minute daily commute to campus, which they appeared to all be fine with and did not show any dismay for during the focus group interview. One scholar who was going to live and commute from outside the metro area recognized that she was going to have to fight a lot of highway and freeway traffic to get to campus. Yet, she shared: "But I am ready for that challenge. With traffic is going to be, probably I'm looking about an hour and ten minutes approximately, maybe a little bit

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longer. So, I'm gonna make sure to leave extra early." Additionally, most Passport Scholars planned on using the university parking lots and structures for their parking needs—although only one scholar confirmed that he purchased a parking permit—and one scholar, Elisa, planned on using the university intercampus shuttles. She discussed her plan:

> My advantage is that I already work downtown. So I think it'll be easier for me to commute to Tempe by using the shuttle that takes you from here, the downtown campus, to Tempe campus. So, it'll be a lot easier for me.

None of the Passport Scholars indicated a plan to use city public transportation or being dropped-off and picked-up from campus. All Passport Scholars said they felt prepared for their commuting plans and did not see this matter as a major issue.

Self. Passport Scholars were asked questions that sought to know about their interests, passions, self-awareness, and how they take on academic challenges. Understanding these aspects about who they are provided a distinct image about how they apply coping skills on themselves.

Career interests. When asked about their career interests, Passport Scholars' responses shared a common theme: they chose majors that would lead them into careers that they were passionate about. While some Passport Scholars shared that the passion in their career choice was driven by a desire to help others in need, other Passport Scholars said that their passion was driven by a strategic choice that would lead them to be successful in that particular career. Beatriz explained how her passion to serve others was formed:

Nursing has always been a passion of mine. And I find great joy in helping

people. So, my mother was one of my biggest inspirations to, to follow this

career. And then after I had children, my children were also my inspiration.

Likewise, Chris shared his passion to help others with disabilities through his

passion for art and technology. He explained:

For me, I always had like a strong connection with art and technology. So to do

something like that, I always wanted to use my hobbies and things like that to do

something great that can also help people and do something that I wanted to do.

And like having a disability, I understand all the games and kind of influence like

a lot of society. You know, kind of help shape it in a sense. . . . So I thought

maybe I could help others in a sense, doing that, like creating games that kind of

influence others. . . . Like I know there are some companies that create certain

controllers to help people with like messed up fingers or kind of . . . I don't know

exactly how they do it, but it's with something the brain. . . . So I think it's kind of

like pressing the button for them. Some type of technology that kind of gives of

them the ability that they was taken from in a sense.

Both Beatriz and Chris demonstrated how their passion to help and serve others led them

to choose careers that could employ their technical skills in the service of others with

greater needs.

Ana talked about how her career discovery drove her to first choose fields that

were strategically successful options, but lacked passion, and eventually always drove her

back to a field that would help youth in need. She shared:

I chose my major just because it's personal. It's kind of like my story so I want to

help other kids that have been through similar experiences. Especially because,

personally, I don't think I had that support when going through the system, so

wanting to be able to kind of be a voice for kids who don't have a voice. And it's

funny because the amount of times I tried to change my major it always goes back

to social work. It always falls back into that heart and drive for those kids. . . . I

just realize that my heart is with people and that's just where I want to be.

Meanwhile, Diana shared her desire to choose a major that would ensure career

success for her and her husband who wanted to open a construction company together,

given that he was already skilled in the field:

Well, I wanted to do something that had to do with, like, business. And when me

and my husband talked about opening a business [together], I thought accounting

was . . . a good major for us to be successful, because, like, money, you know,

and that's an important part of the business. Plus I had like, like, cashiering and

all that stuff before.

Growth. Passport Scholars demonstrated self-awareness of their current skill-sets

and in how they handle challenges. Most Passport Scholars, indicated that they

anticipated growing their time management skills and organization, particularly as an

incoming ASU student; a couple of Passport Scholars also wanted to improve their

technical skills in writing and coding. When it came to addressing academic-related

challenges, Passport Scholars disclosed how these challenges affected them. Some

Passport Scholars had previously struggled immensely with the high stress of getting

through school. Beatriz recounted, "School has always been challenging and it has

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affected me in many ways. For example, school causes me stress and anxiety. However, I have learned several techniques to help me with my stress and anxiety during a test." Elisa revealed how she struggled with parental separation anxiety, "It's hard being away or not having time for [my children] at times." Other Passport Scholars struggled to simply learn how to navigate the institutional expectations and processes. Chris expressed, "I have not had many challenges. The biggest thing I could think of is navigating and the only thing it did is take time." The Passport Scholars demonstrated self-awareness and various approaches to how they view and approach academic-related challenges.

Support. Passport Scholars were asked who their support systems were during this period of transition, which included critical supporters who were part of their inner circle of support and navigators who guided them along their academic path who were a part of their outer circle of support. Their responses demonstrated who impacted their desire to succeed.

Inner circle of support. Four of the Passport Scholars with partners all attested that their spouses provided immense levels of support during critical moments in school, especially in how they ran the home and in tending to their children's needs so that they can focus on their schoolwork. Diana shared how her spouse supported her through school: "He always takes care of the kids. Just doing whatever I need for him to do, so I could get things done for school." Likewise, Elisa affirmed how her spouse supported her:

If I have a lot of homework or I'm frustrated or I'm mad, he just kind of takes the

girls and he's like, "Ok girls come here. Leave your mom alone do homework," or

just making dinner cleaning around the house.

Two Passport Scholars indicated how their spouses were their principle

motivators to pursue a college education. Anna talked about how her fiancé at the time

(now her spouse) motivated her to pursue her college education. After she took a trip

abroad, she finally acknowledged that she had more educational opportunities than she

originally thought. She recalled:

[My fiancé] is the reason why I went back to school. It was very much like, "You

need an education." And I was like "I don't need an education." And he just kept

helping me see the bigger picture. . . . That you can't just work in the coffee shop

for the rest of your life. So I'd definitely say he, he's the one that kind of kept me

open minded. And then, I went on a mission trip; I think I told you this. And,

just hearing that all those kids that don't have the ability to go to school talk about

how they wish so they could go to school, kind of, opened my eyes to realize that

I have the opportunity to and I should take advantage of it while I can.

Ana's eye-opening experience allowed her to appreciate and accept her fiancé's

motivation to pursue a college education, which inspired her to follow-through.

Likewise, Beatriz also noted how her spouse was the one critical person who encouraged

her to take their first steps towards a college education. She shared: "Pretty much only

my husband. He encouraged me, you know, to keep going, thankfully, you know,

because some of the hardest classes sometimes have been very difficult. And he just

encouraged me and is positive about my education." For these two Passport Scholars,

their partners supported them at two critical points, as their principle motivators before the Passport Scholars decided to pursue their education and as their long-term and active supporters while the Passport Scholars are in college.

Outer circle of support. Diana added that another person who provided immense support during critical moments in school included her community college advisor. Her advisor also encouraged her to aim higher in her career path, particularly when Diana was looking for the shortest route possible towards a potential career. She remembered the moment her career path changed:

> She encouraged me to, like, do accounting, like, the classes or whatever because I was just going to do, like, CNA [Certified Nursing Assistant] and like, you know, a short period. So she's, like, encouraged me, 'cause she like, "Do you really want to do this?" Like, "What do you really want to do?" And that's when I actually wanted to do accounting.

Although Diana's inner circle of support was critical in helping her manage her academic and personal responsibilities, it did not provide her the guidance she needed to navigate her own career path. Therefore, her outer circle of support also played a critical role in allowing her to explore greater interests and skills, and exploring more of her own potential.

Strategies. I asked Passport Scholars about coping strategies they used to get them through transitions, either when managing stress or when confronting school-related challenges. They were asked if they apply strategies that change a situation, reframe the outcome of a situation, or reduce the stress of the situation. Their responses gave an understanding as to how they traditionally address challenges in their lives.

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The Passport Scholars varied on their coping strategies and sometimes revealed how they use a combination of strategies. Some Passport Scholars chose to change the situation by managing the issue on their own; they attempted to reassess the problem to try to get to the solution on their own. Elisa approached problems primarily on her own:

I always try to just . . . fix it. You know, try my best and if I can't do it, I always try to look at it in another way or look at it, you know, in another perspective and try to figure it out then.

Yet, when it came to managing stress in general, she did not have a defined go-to strategy to help manage her own stress, stating that she is "still working on it." Likewise, Chris shared how he first attempted to problem solve on his own (changing a situation) before he requested help:

I probably look at it, try to understand the problem a little bit. Like, ask "Why is this a problem? What are the obstacles stopping me from completing the task?" So I look at those factors, like, "Ok, in what ways can I make it easier or who can I communicate with to help me get there?" Or, "Is there a professor I can talk to? Can I divide it up by time fragments and things like that?"

Chris recognized that after his attempt to problem solve did not reach his expected outcome, he turned to reducing the stressor by giving himself a break, before trying again to problem solve, "I manage to grab food or take long walks to campus while listening to music," and then asking for help if he did not solve the problem.

Both Beatriz and Diana said that they attempt to manage their stress by preventing it in the first place. They worked to stay ahead of their homework and reading assignments so as to not procrastinate. Similar to Chris, both Beatriz and Diana also

approached school related problems by first problem solving and then reducing the stress before they return back to the problem. Beatriz described how reducing the stress of a situation is important, common, and necessary in her experience, along with a little reframing to motivate herself:

> Goodness. I try to, when I get frustrated I just try to, like, walk away for a few minutes. You know homework on the computer, I just walk away for a few minutes, just to take a couple of breaths and relax and you know refocus my mind back to, you know, whatever I'm doing, class assignment, or a project. And I have found that instead of just sitting there in front of the computer, you know, rather than pulling my hair because I'm so frustrated, I just. I actually find it more helpful to just walk away from everything for a few minutes and take a couple of deep breaths and just saying to myself you know "You can do this. Calm down. You're ok. You can do this." I actually have found that very helpful when I'm frustrated with school or, you know, kids.

Ana also shared that she attempts to change the situation to her problem, but in a slightly different way. Rather than problem solving first, she expressed that her approach is to directly ask for help or clarification, followed by reducing the stress with exercise:

> I would say that I'm a pretty confrontational person. So, like, if I struggle with something at school . . . through community college, like, I've learned to, like, communication with your teachers is very important. So, if I don't understand something, I'm very quick to, like, email or try to catch them after class and just kind of ask "Ok I don't get this," or "I should've received this grade," or whatever. And if, like, that stuff doesn't work . . . , I would say de-stressing is the next one.

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And that's how fitness and working out or whatever else helps me get my mind

off of it.

Ana was the one scholar who primarily reached out for help as her first coping strategy

rather than seeking for ways to resolve the matter on her own.

Most Passport Scholars appeared to apply more than one coping strategy to

address challenges. Among Beatriz, Chris and Diana, there approach first included

changing the situation by considering different problem solving approaches, followed by

reducing the stress of the situation, then returning to a second attempt to problem solve,

and finally trying a different approach to change the situation by asking for help or

clarification.

Triangulation. Prior to the data collection phase of this study, I created an

innovation configuration map, also known as an IC Map. The IC Map served as an

operational tool for the intervention I created for this study. My self-reflection research

memos indicated that I originally created an IC Map that was focused on the phases of

the study rather than on the intervention: "I already had an IC Map created that was

framed around the phases of the study, but then realized that I probably should redo the

IC Map to be framed around the intervention instead." Once I finally updated the IC

Map to reflect the operational process for the intervention, I realized I had a much better

image in my mind as to how the intervention would function, once I started facilitating it.

It painted a clearer picture as to how the intervention, including the one-on-one mentor

meetings, should ideally function during its course of implementation.

During the one-on-one mentor meeting held in the early summer, each Passport

Scholar shared their academic and career goals as well as their family statuses. I

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reviewed the scholarship expectations with them and answered any questions they had about being a Passport Scholar. This included their participation in an intervention to support their transition from the community college to the university, regardless of their participation in this study. The intervention was inclusive of three one-on-one meetings, a peer mentor guidance, and submission of self-reflection journals. We also examined their enrollment statuses and discussed necessary processes to complete so that they understood how to navigate the university system.

Diana and Elisa still needed to complete most of their enrollment process meeting with an academic advisor, and registering for classes. Ana, Beatriz, and Chris had already completed these processes and were already enrolled in their courses for the fall semester. Beatriz and Chris shared that they reviewed their program of study with their academic advisors and were well aware of the courses they needed to complete their major requirements. Ana was getting married in the middle of the fall semester and was originally enrolled in 18 credits. I recommended her to consider reducing her course load to the minimum full-time requirement and to significantly reduce her full-time work hours since she was going through a major life event that would require a very high level of her time and attention, in addition to the time her honeymoon trip would take her away from classes. She shared that she had the support of her fiancé to reduce her work hours and that he would take on the financial responsibility for the two of them so that she could focus more on school. Beatriz recently earned her nursing license and confirmed that she wanted to increase her work hours since she was only working one day per week, but was struggling to find a position in a hospital setting. She wanted to work a job that provided more hours and balanced well with the eight credits she would be enrolled in

during the fall semester. Chris planned on reducing his new full-time job at the airport to part-time hours once the semester started. Elisa, on the other hand, chose to maintain a full-time job with the county court system while also attending school full-time. She decided she wanted to keep this position as a strategic career move and to set herself up for a future job prospect. Additionally, she served as the income earner in her family. Since all Passport Scholars are students with financial need, I recommended all Passport Scholars to apply for additional scholarships, whether for this or the next academic year, to help them alleviate any financial responsibilities that they may have.

Summary of pre-transfer phase. During the pre-transfer phase of this study, the Passport Scholars mostly demonstrated strength in the four coping skills during this anticipated transition from the community college to the university. They were well aware of the significance of becoming an ASU student and felt their circumstances were stable enough, that they had the support they needed, and that they had the inner strength and strategies to succeed at the university. However, both Ana and Elisa showed signs of having fewer coping strategies compared to their peers in this study. Ana's additional transition with her upcoming marriage in the middle of the semester was more concerning for me as her scholarship director than it appeared to be for her during this phase of the study.

Mid-transfer Phase

In the mid-transfer phase, I identified the Passport Scholars' preparation for their transition, employing concepts from transition theory (Schlossberg, 1981, 2011) and identifying strengths from community college academic transfer adjustment capital (Laanan, Starobin, & Eggleston, 2011): two theoretical frameworks previously mentioned

in this study. After I held the pre-focus group and asked the Passport Scholars to complete a pre-questionnaire in the early summer, I asked the students to then begin reflecting on their transition experience through monthly journal prompts that were made available to them online from June through September. I collected from this data source more personal responses than what was shared in the previous data sources about the transition experience. In the self-reflection journals, Passport Scholars shared about their reasons to transfer, their experiences on the university enrollment processes, their university support systems, their school-life balance, and about their learning experiences. Listed below are the strongest examples, under the mid-transfer phase, of sub-constructs measured to the university transition preparation construct.

Situation. During this mid-transfer phase, Passport Scholars were asked to reflect on their reasons to transfer from the community college to the university. Passport Scholars expressed how the community college supported their initial needs to go to college and what they believed the university now had to offer them. The Passport Scholars shared that they chose their respective community college for accessibility and flexibility and the university for its transfer accessibility and reputation.

College accessibility and flexibility. The community college was accessible for its open admission requirements and the affordability. For Chris, college became accessible to him through his and his friend's participation in Upward Bound, a federally funded college recruitment program for low-income families offered at his high school. Beatriz believed that the community college made her dream of going to college possible after having a life-long desire, but no clear pathway to get there:

I believed that education was crucial, especially if I wanted to have a comfortable life and provide for my family. I also wanted to be the first person in my family to obtain a college degree. I have always dreamed of being educated and well spoken, which led me to go to college.

For Beatriz, community college was the first open door that allowed her to become the educated person she aspired to become.

Affordability also made the community college accessible for both Ana and Diana. Ana declared, "The classes I was taking would be less expensive at [community college] than taking it at ASU," a common concern for students who do begin at the community college before transferring to the university. Diana shared how college was both financially affordable and more suitable to her as a returning adult student, "I thought that a community college was better to start in after like [ten] years of not attending school. I wanted to get an education to give my boys a better financial life."

Also important to Ana and Diana was the flexibility in exploring career options that community colleges provided, particularly for undecided majors. Ana shared, "I also did not know what I officially wanted to do, so I figured [the community college] was a great place to find my major." Diana added how attending the community college allowed her to unexpectedly change career paths into one that she is now happy to be in. She shared, "I first enrolled was because I wanted to get in the [nursing assistant] program, but then I realized that it wasn't what I really wanted to do. My dream was to become an accountant, to one day open a business with my husband and both be involved in it."

University accessibility and reputation. The Passport Scholars shared that they chose the university for its transfer accessibility and its reputation. What made the university accessible was the financial support and Nina Scholars connection. What gave the university its reputation was the strength in its diverse programs.

Chris chose ASU because of his prior connections with multiple contacts and resources at ASU, including Nina Scholars, and because of the campus environment. "What I would say has influenced or affected my enrollment plans at ASU is the environment. The atmosphere is truly opening. . . . Considering ASU had many accommodations that would be beneficial to my education." For the Passport Scholars, the opportunity to transfer to the university became much more accessible when they received the financial award from the Nina Scholars Passport program.

Most students identified the university's reputation as a compelling reason to transfer. Attending the university was a point of pride for Diana, "My reasons for choosing to attend ASU in the fall semester is because I have always dream of attending ASU one day and graduate to make my family proud." For Elisa, attending ASU was due to the reputation brought by close social influences, "I have heard good things about ASU. I used to visit the campus sometimes, my friend attended, and I was always impressed. I always said to myself that if I would attend a university, then ASU would be it." Beatriz dreamed to further her education:

> ASU has been around for many years and has built a great reputation that I want to be a part of. In addition, ASU has great nursing programs that would guide me in the right path to success. People who have graduated from ASU highly recommend it because of their great programs available to students.

The university's reputation appeared to be the Passport Scholars' primary reason to choose the university and the university's accessibility is what made that desire possible for these Passport Scholars.

Self. Passport Scholars were asked to reflect on the experience of their university enrollment process. Passport Scholars stated how simple some aspects of their experience to the enrollment process was due to familiarity, contacts made, and ease of technology. They also expressed how challenging and different other aspects of their experience were compared to what they were used to at the community college.

Process missteps. Some Passport Scholars reported challenging aspects of their university enrollment process. At first, the overall enrollment process was overwhelming for Diana:

> It has been a little stressing for me, the enrollment process at ASU. There are a lot of steps in enrolling and there are some things that I am not familiar with, which that makes it harder for me. . . . It was hard to figure out how to make an appointment and when I figure it out, I missed the email and didn't attend. I'm still having some trouble because I will barely have my appointment and I will have to go to a campus that I am not familiar with. It has also been difficult to set up my direct deposit because I was having a hard time finding where I was going to click, but I finally found it and set it up.

The multitude of small steps and missteps added up for Diana and were too confounding before she was able to finally manage the process. Beatriz managed to prevent getting overwhelmed through "careful planning" yet struggled when hurdles occurred. She added:

The enrollment process at ASU was pretty lengthy, especially because I had to

wait several weeks for the ASU admission office to get my college transcripts. I

constantly called the admission office at ASU to verify the status of my

application. Once they received my transcripts, the process [was] a lot easier.

Elisa also affirmed Beatriz's sentiments when it came to submitting supporting

documentation necessary to complete the enrollment process:

Gathering information and sending it to different places [was difficult]. It has

been hard when certain information is being asked [from] you [and you] do not

have it. For example, in the ASU app, they were asking about high school. Then

they wanted transcripts but I received a GED, not high school diploma. It was

hard trying to find someone to ask what I should do but I did and it all worked

out.

Physical navigation. In addition to managing the enrollment process, Passport

Scholars also learned how to navigate an unfamiliar physical setting, as Diana mentioned

earlier. For Chris, this was his biggest challenge with the enrollment process. He shared:

The most difficult experiences of enrollment would have to be finding my way

around campus. Considering everything is spread out it is hard to find certain

buildings. Also, [there] are a lot of students contributing to the difficulty of

navigating. Another difficult is parking. It is not specific on parking areas.

Chris submitted this journal reflection during the late summer, at a time when a larger

student population was present and parking challenges were beginning to increase.

Yet, some Passport Scholars experienced manageable aspects of their university

enrollment process. Ana reported the least challenges within her enrollment experience

and expressed that she felt "pretty confident about the enrollment process so far." Diana confirmed that familiarity with her prior federal financial aid application process at the community college helped her understand how to complete a new application for the university. She and Chris also shared that once he received guidance, he realized how much easier it was to manage the enrollment process, such as submitting vaccination documents or setting-up their online portal. Other Passport Scholars shared that connecting with persons who could answer their concerns also made the experience manageable for them. Ana shared how she "had an easy process getting a hold of people at ASU for questions about classes." Chris added that "the easiest experiences of enrollment I would have to say is setting up appointment with advisors and picking out my classes." For him, much of this was due to the ease of technology through his online portal: "Everything is located on MyASU account and easy to access. Navigating my account became easy and convenient." Elisa affirmed that the online portal made completing the steps of the process much easier: "Giving you a to-do list of what needs to be done, it has helped because I know what is done and what is still pending." Although it took her a while to learn how to manage the portal, she shared that once she learned, the enrollment process became easier to manage. She stated: "It is a lot different from Maricopa Colleges so it was a bit hard to adapt. I am still learning but I always try my best to ask a lot of questions." For some Passport Scholars, it took time to learn how to navigate distinct processes, unfamiliar technology, and new environments. Those who asked questions early appeared to have managed these three areas best and quickest.

Support. Passport Scholars were asked to reflect about on the support they received during their transition to ASU. Passport Scholars shared the extent of support

each of their college contacts had on their transition experiences as well as few challenges they experienced from their respective support groups.

Personal support. Most Passport Scholars indicated that their greatest support group did not demonstrate any challenges or distractions to their university transition experience. Ana stated that her fiancé at the time kept her "level headed" and reminded her of "the goals that [she has]." Elisa responded that her spouse was her "biggest supporter." She added: "He cooks dinner when I cannot, he cares for our daughters, and he supports anything I have to do regarding school or any aspect. He goes above and beyond to help me accomplish everything that needs to get done." Yet, she also disclosed that while he supports her, she recognized that he struggled understanding her transition experience. She revealed: "It seems he wants to understand but cannot fully do so. He doesn't understand the process and why I may feel anxious or nervous, so that has been a challenge for me. Although I try to explain, he doesn't feel what I feel." Therefore, to help herself get through this transition experience, Elisa admitted that she relied on other people who previously transferred.

Over the summer, however, one scholar lost her greatest support. Beatriz's spouse died suddenly, leaving her widowed with six children to raise and relying on faith to guide her. Immediately, her transition support circle, as identified below, maintained communication with her to support her goals, whatever they may be, in her new reality.

Nina peer mentors. Some of the Passport Scholars identified their Nina peer mentors as important members of their transition support circle. As mentioned earlier, all Passport Scholars were paired with a Nina Scholar peer mentor (a prior cohort Passport Scholar) at the start of the summer and were guided to connect multiple times over the

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summer and through the start of the fall semester to support the incoming Passport Scholar with their transition experience. The peer mentor pairing was an aspect of the intervention in this study that many of the Passport Scholars found helpful during their transition. Beatriz's peer mentor helped her gain a new perspective: "[He] has helped me to understand ASU more in a student's point of view and to know what is expected of me as a student." Both Diana and Elisa mentioned that their peer mentors calmed their nerves about what to expect. Diana shared: "[She] has shared her transition experience and how to make it easier for me, she has show[ed] me the campus and what I need to know about it." Elisa shared: "[She] has helped with quick questions I have and also lifted me up when I feel nervous or anxious about certain things." Learning from the peer mentors allowed the Passport Scholars to feel understood and related to about their transition experiences, including feelings of nervousness and anxiety, expectations as a university student, and knowledge of campus resources.

Nina staff. The Nina Scholars program staff also represented an integral role in the Passport Scholars' transition support circle. Ana shared: "[The Program Director] has made me feel supported and ready for my classes. I am ready to walk into ASU knowing I have a whole community behind me." Likewise, Diana acknowledged how the program staff guided her with processes necessary for the transition: "[The Program Director] has guide[d] me on the things that I have to get done before starting my first semester." Beatriz elaborated on how she felt more prepared:

> [The Program Director] has helped me through the 1:1 meetings, where she reviews all of my questions and concerns and provides me with resources and guidance. She also helps me with any ASU holds and registration issues. In

addition to getting me acquainted with the campus by providing me with a

mentor, she also currently provides me with important information and many

resources available to students.

Chris added how he felt well-directed:

The greatest support to help me with my transition into ASU has been the Nina

group. They have been able to point me to each direction I needed. If I was

curious about something they always had an answer or a resource for me.

The one-on-one mentor meeting held at the start of the summer as part of the intervention

done for this study likely played an important part in the way the Passport Scholars' view

their relationship with the program staff, particularly in how they felt guided through the

transition process.

Institutional support. Additional institutional support outside of the Nina

Scholars program also played an important role in the Passport Scholars' transition

support circle. The persons who supported Passport Scholars during their transition

included individuals from both the community college and the university.

Diana acknowledged that her support during the transition began with her

community college advisor. This advisor was the same person who guided her when she

decided to pursue business career. Her advisor's ability to connect about her own

transition experience with Diana was relevant to her: "She has shared her transition story

with me. She gives me some advice on how to choose my classes and answers all my

questions the best she can." After her transfer was initiated, Diana then identified her

university academic advisor from the business college as a key person who helped her

identify the correct classes to register for and how to enroll as an accountancy major.

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Similarly, Beatriz recognized that a nursing coordinator at the university guided her through the nursing application process through consistent email communication. Furthermore, Chris registered with the university's Disability Resource Center and believed that this office also supported his transition to the university by establishing accommodations he needed during the semester. He reported: "They allow me more time to finish my assignments. They also provide a pickup to take me to and from class in large distances." Each of these individuals along the transition experience played critical roles in an unofficial handoff the Passport Scholars needed to complete the university transfer enrollment process.

Strategies. Passport Scholars were asked to reflect on how they planned to manage a school-life balance. Passport Scholars shared how they decided to register for their university semester courses and how they believed they could rely on their time management skills to meet the requirements of their university courses.

Tight balance. Passport Scholars expressed a resolute capability in maintaining self-discipline with their academic work-load, including those who also balanced a job and family responsibilities. To receive the Nina Scholars award, Passport Scholars needed to be enrolled in a minimum of twelve credits in order to qualify as a full-time student at the university. During the one-on-one meeting held at the start of the summer with each scholar, they were guided by the Nina Scholars program staff to register for a minimum of twelve credits for the semester, based on the recommendation of their respective academic advisor, in order to meet the scholarship program's full-time enrollment eligibility requirement. The only exception to this rule included Beatriz whose nursing program had a different set of academic requirements than most

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undergraduate programs, which only required her to enroll in seven credits per semester, because it was an RN- to-BSN program. This is a program for registered nurses with an Associate Degree who were now earning a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree. Passport Scholars were also guided to make adequate decisions to balance school with other responsibilities.

As the primary income earner in her family, Elisa affirmed her desire to keep her full-time position with the county court system in order to build her skills along keeping her full-time academic responsibilities and parental responsibilities. To balance her work and school schedule, she decided to maintain an early work schedule and attend classes in the evening. She stated: "Since I work downtown, it makes it easy for me to get to class on time. I always try to have about 2 hours after work to do school work." She planned on relying on her time management skills to keep her on track and selected her courses on her own based on their available evening schedules. However, she is also a parent. Even though her spouse supported her in school, she expressed how she carries parental guilt in trying to also raise them: "I think having [three] daughters is very challenging. Having to work every day, then go to school, then go home makes it difficult to spend time with them. Having to study and do homework makes it challenging with having to tell my daughters I can't spend time with them at the moment."

Ana experienced a work transition over the summer as a result of the one-on-one held at the start of the summer. She switched from working an emotionally demanding full-time behavioral health job with adolescents to working a physically demanding full-time job with a coffee shop. However, just before the start of the fall semester, she reduced her schedule with the coffee shop from 35-40 hours per week to 25-30 hours per

week. To keep herself balanced, she started a calendar with all her semester coursework and exams listed. She maintained, "This will help me to keep everything in check as the semester gets busy and with the wedding! . . . I think that if I wait to the last minute to do my assignments, I know that my personal life will get in the way. I am making it a goal of mine to complete my assignments or start them before the due date so that I can enjoy my personal life and not do my assignments the night of." Noted here in Ana's reflection, however, is her focus on simply completing assignments that do not appear to consider a wider set of critical thinking studying habits that could include reading, reviewing, writing, studying for quizzes or exams, and attending tutoring sessions or study groups, among other essential studying requirements.

  Disparate balances. Chris worked with his academic advisor to choose a class schedule that kept him on campus four days a week and gave him the flexibility to work off-campus on the weekend. He believed this semester schedule "will be well balanced" and will allow him the opportunity to be involved in student clubs.

  Beatriz and Diana both did not account for jobs that would require a significant amount of their time at the time that they enrolled in their fall courses. Beatriz worked an eight-hour health care job and was looking for a position in a hospital setting, but was not having any luck getting hired. Diana did not plan on working at all and relied on her husband financially while she was in school. Both of these Passport Scholars had children to raise. Diana relied on her spouse to help at home. Beatriz was widowed over the summer and found herself in need of a full-time job to raise her family. Both Diana and Beatriz followed the recommendation of their respective advisors to register for the right classes they needed for their programs. Diana's focus was on taking the right

amount of courses that would not overwhelm her so she could get admitted into the accountancy program as soon as possible. Meanwhile, Beatriz's courses were going to be held exclusively online, so she decided that in order to be successful, she needed to "have a tremendous amount of self-discipline and jot down important due dates, reading assignments, and projects on my electronic devices, as well as on my calendar." She added:

> Balancing out my personal, financial, and work schedule, as well as my educational commitments is going to be difficult, but my determination to succeed is greater than the challenges I am currently facing. I know there is much to be learned, but I also know that these challenges are going to help me be stronger and I also need to be willing to ask for help when I need it. . . . Personally, I believe that a person's personal circumstances can definitely have an effect on their semester, whether it be positive or negative. In a situation like mine, I must be aware of the options and resources available to me. We also must be willing to ask people or family members for help. One should also be open to new learning opportunities or chances in one's own life to improve their current situation. However, we also have to take into consideration our own personal circumstances and remain focused so that we can reach success in every semester regardless of our personal circumstances. Also, knowing where we can turn for help when we need it is also essential.

The strategies these Passport Scholars planned to implement to maintain a healthy school-life balance involved tremendous challenges, for the most part. Even with guidance received from their respective academic advisors and Nina Scholars program

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staff, the scholars were in positions where a slight imbalance in their lives could have rippling effects on their academic performance and ability to persist with their education.

College learning and study skills. After the start of the fall semester at the university, Passport Scholars were asked to reflect back on their community college learning experience. Passport Scholars shared that they enjoyed aspects about their learning experiences that supported and promoted their opportunity to learn and how they used those lessons to prepare themselves for their university courses.

Community college learning. Passport Scholars shared their favorite aspects about their learning experience at the community college. They identified aspects that may have been simple but made their learning environment enjoyable while they were there. Ana focused on the technical aspect of her learning experience while others reflected on the support provided to enhance their learning experience. Ana expressed how the learning management system her college used made keeping track of her coursework simple to follow and reduced her stress level to complete her coursework on time. In comparison, Elisa believed that the instructors were actively involved in understanding the lives of their students and that they sincerely cared for their students: "If you needed something you can always count on them to be there." Beatriz and Diana shared how their course instruction was enjoyable and easy to learn. Beatriz said, "I enjoyed the lectures given by the instructors. The instructors made the lectures fun and interesting." Complementing their experiences in the classroom, Beatriz and Diana added that support from others with their coursework encouraged them to persist. Beatriz shared how her relationships with relatable classmates motivated her persistence because each brought different skills and helped each other using their respective strengths.

Diana shared how support from tutoring helped her stay on track. Diana said, "Sometimes there were subjects were it was challenging but, there was tutors at the tutoring center always willing to help students. Yes, it was enjoyable and being challenging at times was also enjoyable because it helps me learn." Moreover, Chris believed that his best learning experience happened outside of the classroom as a student leader where he developed his networking and leadership skills. "I feel [community college] gave me opportunities to step up. In doing so, I gained many things I can use in the future. I am grateful for the experience. This is enjoyable because I can now take those skills and use them here at ASU." Most of the Passport Scholars showed that their learning experiences were enjoyable because of the support they received and opportunities they were provided.

University course preparation. All Passport Scholars demonstrated that they took time to prepare for their university courses during this transition phase. Many students took the time to review their courses' syllabi to learn their courses' expectations. Others also created a calendar to write down class dates and assignment due dates. This basic time management skill was reflective of the learning experience they gained at the community college, but some did not implement it effectively or immediately at the start of their first university semester. Elisa relied on the habit of daily reviewing her courses' syllabi and learning management system to help her stay on track. Yet, she realized how often she worried about making a mistake. She admitted that a course requirement, assigned after the start of the semester, to create a semester calendar helped her stay more on track of her coursework. She color-coordinated her classes and believed that this layout kept her organized. Similarly, Ana shared how she previously relied on her

community college's learning management system to stay on track of her coursework. Yet, when implementing that skill at the university, she admitted that she fell behind in her coursework despite using a calendar to track course due dates. She explained:

> I thought I was prepared, but after looking at my grades, I didn't realize how behind I was. I believed that my calendar would help me, which it has, but I need to be okay with staying on campus longer to go to tutoring instead of wanting to go home and do homework.

Ana acknowledged that she needed to make more time to study by being a more engaged on-campus learner. She felt that practicing a new on-campus routine would help her stay more on track rather than simply being a commuter student who stayed on-campus just to attend classes and then left home to study where her concentration to completing school work declined.

In comparison, there were Passport Scholars who took steps beyond their calendars with class schedules and assignment due dates. Both Chris and Beatriz set-up their own routines and connected with resources that they felt benefited their needs. Chris shared how he established "a routine that works and benefits my development" and learned about all the resources that were available to him. He even relied on both academic advisors and peers as resources to help him plan his future semester courses for enrollment. Beatriz's routine included an attempt to set healthy habits for herself and setting aside time to study, separate from simply completing her assignments. She shared: "I made sure to set time aside to study and do my homework assignments. Furthermore, I learned about other resources available to me to help me be successful." The steps that some Passport Scholars took to prepare for their university courses were

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notably different in this detail of establishing routines and learning about the available resources.

Triangulation. At the start of the fall semester, I held the second of three one-on-one meetings held during the timeframe of this study with each Passport Scholar. This second meeting reviewed the Passport Scholars' experiences at the mid-point of their transition into the university. It focused less on how they were performing in their courses and more about how they were coping in their new environment. Most Passport Scholars experienced major transitions that added to their experience of starting to attend classes in the fall semester.

Just before the start of the fall semester, Ana decided to change her major from social work to business. She said she wanted to avoid working in a field that would cause burnout, the way her previous job did when she worked as a social worker with adolescent youth. Ana felt that with a business degree, she could still work with adolescent youth in need but through a different means, such as running a group home that also operated a coffee shop that could serve two purposes: (a) to finance the group home, and (b) to train the youth with employment skills. It was evident that her heart was still in working with youth. I encouraged Ana to research additional sources, including adding a non-profit management discipline or an interdisciplinary bachelor's degree that would allow her to map her own varied discipline interests and to volunteer or intern at a local non-profit that has a similar business model but serves a different population in need. In addition to this transition, Ana was also preparing herself academically for her upcoming wedding. She connected with all her faculty about the

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time that she would be away from school for her honeymoon trip. She was trying to push one exam that was scheduled during the time that she would be away.

Soon after the start of the fall semester, Beatriz was hired as a full-time nurse in a local hospital. She needed to first participate in a 12 week new grad training program that ended in October in addition to working the 36 hours per week that were expected of her. She decided to dedicate time on the weekends to complete her homework, which according to her, included a lot of readings, discussion board posts, and homework assignments. With a higher expectation of reading and writing about research than she was previously used to, I encouraged her to visit with a university librarian who specifically supports nursing students. Additionally, Beatriz shared that she was relying more on her children to help around the house with cooking and cleaning, now that her spouse was no longer with them.

Days before the start of the fall semester, the Nina Scholars program staff secured on-campus housing for Chris. The staff followed-up with the university housing department on Chris's pending housing application and were informed that a space was made available for him. Chris immediately took advantage of the opportunity and settled himself into his new environment. This last minute addition of his housing and meal expenses impacted his student account balance. I encouraged Chris to connect with the financial aid office to make sure his financial aid package was reflective of his new housing status. I also encouraged Chris to consider applying for additional scholarships now that his housing costs increased by living on campus, even if the scholarships were for future academic years.

At the start of the fall semester, Elisa experienced an unexpected transition due to family situation that pulled her out of town for a number of days. She and her siblings would now be responsible for the care of an aging parent with an addiction. Her time away impacted her ability to keep up with some assignments. She did, however, connect with her instructors who worked with her to allow her to get back on track. This set-back also made Elisa realize that she no longer wanted to take additional online courses, since three of her five courses were online.

Summary of mid-transfer phase. During the mid-transfer phase of this study, the Passport Scholars demonstrated through their self-reflection journals how they prepared for their transition over a period during the summer and early fall, while employing concepts from transition theory's *Four S's* coping skills and identifying strengths from community college academic transfer adjustment capital. Through the responses they provided, Passport Scholars shared how they were able to apply coping skills and learning skills during this phase of the transition throughout their enrollment process into the university. Passport Scholars first reflected on their reason to transfer. They believed that both institutions provided them with the accessibility they needed to first enroll. Additionally, their reasons as to why they chose their respective institutions changed from the community college providing the flexibility to explore career options to the university having a strong academic reputation due to the diverse career opportunities to choose from. Their *situation coping skills* reflected that Passport Scholars felt confident about the direction of their career opportunities and were ready to transfer.

When Passport Scholars reflected on how they managed their university enrollment process, they shared how they struggled through some aspects of the process.

They also shared how they were able to adapt to the needs of the enrollment process after learning from own experiences, which showed strength in their *self coping skills*. Much of their ability to manage the overwhelming experiences of the enrollment process was aided by the guidance Passport Scholars received from key college and university supporters. Passport Scholars were open to receiving guidance from these key supporters, which showed strength in their *support coping skills*.

When Passport Scholars shared the strategies and college learning skills they implemented towards their academic success, the Passport Scholars demonstrated a tight balance in managing time between school, work, and family. Out of the three areas that required their time and attention, three Passport Scholars—Ana, Beatriz, and Elisa— attempted to give their full attention to all three areas once school started and all three believed that managing a strict calendar was the necessary strategy to keep them afloat. The other two Passport Scholars—Chris and Diana—gave their full attention to two of the three areas (school plus work or family), which was still quite demanding of their time and attention. This demonstrated a lack of strength in their *strategy coping skills* and *college learning and study skills*.

Post-transfer Phase

During the post-transfer phase, I examined the Passport Scholars' ability to employ prior skills learned at the community college for their university transition, by once again applying concepts from a theoretical framework on transfer student capital, specifically looking at community college academic transfer adjustment capital and university social transfer adjustment (Laanan et al., 2011). After the Passport Scholars officially started with the program in August, at the start of the fall semester, I regrouped

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the Passport Scholars for a post-focus group, which was pushed from October to November due to scheduling challenges, and asked the students to complete a post-questionnaire soon afterwards. These data sources painted a picture as to how their transition expectations were met. In the post-focus group interview and post-questionnaire, Passport Scholars expressed their sense of ability to succeed while at the university based on skills they previously learned from the community college and now employed at the university. I list examples below, under the post-transfer phase, of sub-constructs measured to the university transition success construct.

College learning and study skills. During this phase of the study, Passport Scholars shared a lot about their university transition, including how prepared they felt from what they learned at the community college and how their expectations were met when employing their college learning and study skills capital in a university setting. They identified their ability to meet these skills in how they applied both learning skills and navigational skills while at the university.

Students identified navigational skills as challenging to enact when it came to selecting future courses for enrollment. Chris, who wanted to add a minor to his program of study, struggled to get approval from another college unit where the minor was housed. "I made a lot of appointments with advising, to set classes for next semester and things like that." Despite the struggle to get the approval he needed, he acknowledged that he increased his communication with his academic advisor and learned more about his academic requirements, although he was still bounced around quite a bit: "They might send you to another department, then that department might send you to another department. So it's kind of like hopscotched." This experience with university academic

advising was different than at the community college where academic advising was housed in one central area and not under each academic unit. Ana concurred to this experience and acknowledged how different it previously was:

> [At] community college, you can set-up all your own classes and like make your own like, everything like, schedule. But here, you have to like, it, it's very like, no you should talk to an adviser. And if you choose not to, it's kind of like, at your own risk.

Beatriz shared a similar navigational struggle well into the semester, "I am still trying to figure out a way of learning [on my own] and studying for my online classes . . . [and learning] how to submit assignments with precaution to avoid misunderstanding and under desirable grades." Yet, Chris's challenges in navigating one area of the university did not keep him from accessing other resources like he did at the community college, especially the media labs that provided tutoring for students in his major and keeping up his communication with his professors. Diana also continued accessing tutoring at the university like she did at the community college.

Passport Scholars differed on how they applied their learning skills at the university. While some Passport Scholars found challenges in how they managed their communication with their instructors and in how they managed larger, faster-paced workloads, other Passport Scholars found that they were able to maintain good communication with their instructors (like the situation Chris shared above) and managed their workload equal to the community college experience. Ana expressed, "It all seems to move faster and more [is] expected of you. It can be stressful and overwhelming." Diana struggled staying afloat, "There is a bigger load of homework and instructors are

more strict." Both Ana and Diana were business majors and, therefore, likely experienced a similar workload and pace in their courses that made it challenging to apply their community college learning skills in a university setting.

Although Beatriz shared her struggles as an online student, she found that the pattern of knowing when homework was due was helpful towards applying her time management skills:

> I think that even that aspect for me is easier now than it was before, because in nursing school we have everything all over the place. We don't have like, schedules set, dates for turning in things. We always have like, what we literally work all over the place. So having actually structure with, like, "Oh, every Wednesday I have an assignment. Oh, every Sunday I had to respond to two students." It really has been a lot easier for me, you know, versus college where everything was all over the place.

Other Passport Scholars also shared that implementing the time management skills they learned at the community college was essential at the university. Elisa agreed and confided:

> For me, I was writing the assignment down—even though last week I did miss one assignment; that's why I didn't do it—But yeah, I think writing everything down and then, all the classes usually have an assignment due the same day every week, so you automatically know, "I know I have an assignment coming up." So then you just check your planner.

For some students, this pattern of noting homework due dates and automatic recollection also encouraged them to work ahead. Ana explained:

I think it's crucial to especially be taking a lot of classes and staying ahead, like you were talking, about there all due, like, on Wednesday or Sunday. If you get two of them done, then you only have one due on Wednesday instead of having three or four.

Most Passport Scholars focused on applying their time management skills while at the university, likely due to the fact that they had other major responsibilities they were accountable for. However, Chris shared, "The one thing that remains the same about college is the effort it requires." He believed that this was the college learning skill that transferred equally from community college to the university.

Experience with faculty. Passport Scholars shared an extensive amount on their level of engagement with university faculty during the post-transfer phase of their university transition. Most Passport Scholars shared their challenges in attempting to connect with faculty while a couple discussed more positive experiences. They identified how this experience has led them to adapt to new resources and new skills.

Lack of faculty connection. Passport Scholars from the business and online nursing programs shared the most on the challenges they experienced when attempting to connect with university faculty, especially in comparison to what they were used to at the community college. They felt that community college faculty were more flexible and approachable than the university faculty whose classes they were now enrolled in. For Beatriz, the nature of her online nursing program separated her from the ability to engage with her instructors and from collecting instant feedback from them, even though they generally respond by email in less than 24 hours. This lack of engagement and instant feedback became a problem when she needed clarification on the technical details of an

assignment that she thought she followed. Yet for Diana and Ana, the lack of faculty

connection persisted even as they made multiple attempts to engage with them. Diana

believed that university instructors are stricter and do not give second opportunities to

complete assignments. In a similar experience, Ana shared her frustration when

requesting flexibility on her academic responsibilities while she was away for her

wedding and honeymoon:

> Maybe it's the classes that I'm taking, like macro or micro, but I just think, like. I
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> feel, like, that's one thing at community college, you can explain to them, like,
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> "Hey, like, life is a little crazy here," or "Something came up here," and they'd be
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> like, "OK, I'll just give you, like, 24 hours." Versus here, it's like, "It's in the
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> syllabus." And it's like, "No I get it, but like, life happens." . . . Like, teachers
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> here are kind of like, "Look, I have all these students to worry about, like, I can't
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> just, like, give you that amount of time and don't expect to give everyone else that
>
> amount of time."

The experiences shared by Ana and Diana drove them to avoid engaging with their

university faculty in comparison to what they were used to at the community college.

   More positive faculty connections. Meanwhile, Chris and Elisa shared contrary

experiences. Their engagement with university faculty was positive and supportive.

Chris felt comfortable to approach the faculty on his own when he needed clarification.

He talked about his persistence with faculty engagement:

> I think in my situation it kind of helped me to like really reach out to people when
>
> I was in need of help, especially if I saw myself, you know, like, "This test was

not as what I had expected." So you know reaching out to people for help before

it's too late.

Chris's prior faculty engagement experience at the community college and student

leadership skills likely gave him the skills and confidence to speak and be heard by his

faculty. Yet, for Elisa, her engagement experience with university faculty was more

passive, where the faculty approached her (and her classmates) out of general concern.

She expressed:

I have felt that I've been connecting a lot more with my instructors here and

they've given me so many chances, like right now I have to do like three

assignments. Yeah, I know. And I have one instructor who was actually a

prosecutor, but he's always like, "I'm here after class if you guys want to connect.

I can talk to you guys over the phone. Or we can go meet at Starbucks."

In both situations, the Passport Scholars felt a more positive faculty engagement

experience that was not tied to the Passport Scholars' approaches to their faculty, but

rather the faculty's response towards engagement.

New learning skills. The Passport Scholars who experienced less faculty

engagement also shared that they gained new skills when they had to rely on other means

to support their success at the university. They learned better self-reliance on their own

academic performance and simultaneously learned to rely more on other resources that

supported them. Ana shared how she learned to pay better attention to the assignment

details, requirements, and due dates. She also improved on her time management skills,

even when she thought she had a good handle on them before, but then realized she could

do better.

I think, with that, it's taught me to get the assignments done beforehand, because like, life happens the night of or the day before whatever else. I think that's how I learned that skill, by talking to professors and hearing them be like, "I can't give you an extension" and recognizing just do everything you can ahead of time. Because life is crazy. Like we all have a lot of stuff going on and I have a lot of stuff going on for the past two months.

When Ana relied more on herself to stay on top of her assignments, she also expanded on her resources for emotional guidance. She extended her outer circle of support and became more comfortable with the university Nina staff and her Nina peers in her cohort. She directed her response to me during the focus group and her peers in the room with her:

I feel like more comfortable, I talk to you a lot and to all the Passport Scholars if we have like a group meeting where people will send out text messages every now and then or whatever else. And I haven't been here as often for the class because of this crazy semester, but I just I feel, like I'm more reliant on Nina here than I was at the community college.

Beatriz also shared her sentiment and added how the course she took as part of the scholarship requirement provided her that human connection that her online classes did not provide.

Environment satisfaction. Passport Scholars were asked about their environment satisfaction during the post-transfer phase of their university transition, specifically in how they engaged with faculty outside of the classroom setting or involved themselves in non-academic experiences at the university. Passport Scholars shared

varied levels of connection with instructors outside of the classroom setting. Most also shared a desire to involve themselves outside of the classroom with other students but found it challenging for multiple reasons.

Chris, Diana, and Elisa shared that they connected with instructors often in relation to their coursework. Elisa had instructors who reached out to her and were "very kind and willing to help." For most of them, their level of connection with their instructors was very high but limited to conversations in the classroom or via email. For Beatriz, all communication was via email. Ana shared she emailed her teachers a lot when she found herself in a time of need, which was the time she was getting married. None of the Passport Scholars identified connecting with the instructors during office hours or other means outside of the classroom.

When it came to being actively involved on campus, most Passport Scholars shared a desire to be actively involved with other students outside of the classroom. Only Chris expressed that he took the time to get involved and was already anxious to step into leadership roles, the way he was at the community college. He felt that he needed to start from the beginning in developing himself as a leader once more:

> At community college, I was more involved like with certain clubs. . . . I had like
> to send a lot of e-mail, do a lot of planning, do a lot speaking things like that.
> And here, I'm more like a member.

Despite this step back, Chris felt that the university would once again provide him the opportunity to lead once he is able to show what he is capable of and he would have the support of others.

Most of the other Passport Scholars, however, shared that they did not have the time to be involved. Diana was not interested in having her involvement interfere with her academics. Beatriz saw that she was not in a position to get involved, and rather wanted to focus on work and school so that she could provide for her children. While Ana was not yet involved in a formal way, she found that physically being on campus for her classes and to study as well as her participation with Nina Scholars was more than she experienced as a commuter community college student. She added:

> And even with Nina too and feel like I'm definitely more involved in Nina now and more communicative, if that's the right term, than I was before as well. And also more vulnerable. I've noticed that too, like I've been more ok with being open about things that are going on in life versus like, community colleges kind of like I went home and just did my thing.

She then went on to clarify how her involvement with university Nina Scholars helped her communicate more about her vulnerabilities:

> It just feels like a stress release. It's kind of like, you're explaining to somebody that is already supporting you, why you might not have been successful on a certain like, assignment or class or even just like in life, you feel like, a little down or whatever else, to talk to people that you know support you, kind of makes you feel like, "OK like, they still support me like, I still have these people behind me to like, get me to the finish line and not," because I think like, when you, when difficult times are happening and, like you're kind of by yourself, it's really easy to think like, "Oh they don't care anymore. They're not going to want to be there, yada yada yada." You start like think things out in your head that are

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very just not accurate. So being able to be more vulnerable to the program has kind of like, shut out a lot of those like, thoughts of like, "you know here like, they're going to continue to be here." And so I think like, being here makes it more enjoyable versus like, walking around feeling like you're, you have a, I don't know, a chip on your shoulder because you're not being honest and open with you guys. Or like, yeah I enjoy being here because it feels like home versus just wanting to go home.

The Passport Scholars demonstrated less traditional levels of engagement, on the most part. Although they did not engage as much with faculty outside the classroom or through campus activities, they demonstrated high levels of satisfaction with their current level of engagement, some of which included involvement with the university Nina Scholars program.

Triangulation. During the middle of the fall semester, I held the third of three one-on-one meetings held during the timeframe of this study with each Passport Scholar. This third meeting reviewed the Passport Scholars' experiences at the mid-point of their transition into the university. It focused more on how they were performing in their courses than the second meeting did and how they were utilizing their strategies to succeed in their courses and to address personal issues. Most Passport Scholars who experienced adverse transitions at the start of their fall semester were still overwhelmed with balancing school and life responsibilities well into the semester.

Halfway into the semester, Ana withdrew from two key business math and writing courses and then added a marriage and family relationships online course for the second half of the semester, which kept her enrolled just above the full-time credit

requirement. She also took on another part-time position as a nanny while still working her current part-time position at a coffee shop. Although she made plans with each of her instructors on how to stay afloat while she was out for her honeymoon, she struggled to stay ahead in her assignments. Ana shared how she wanted to receive trauma induced therapy after her wedding so that she could address traumatic experiences from her life. I encouraged her to apply for state healthcare coverage in order to pay for the therapy she was interested in.

Beatriz took on the full-load of responsibilities in caring for her family, working full-time, and going to school. She was taking one online nursing class at a time, each during the first or second half of the semester, in addition to the scholarship required course during the full-length of the semester. She found the first nursing course challenging and time-consuming due to the high volume of reading and research she reviewed, and all the writing and digital projects she produced.

Chris was doing fairly well in all his courses. Only one course on coding language was truly challenging for him. Based on his instructor's recommendation, he was encouraged to improve participation in class discussions. He was also encouraged to visit his media editing instructor during office hours to review coursework requirements. He lived on-campus and worked part-time out of the airport. Family matters did not come up during this conversation.

Diana struggled to stay afloat on all her business courses even after dedicating time to prepare and study for her exams. She was encouraged to engage in dialogue on course topics with other persons, such as classmates or with her instructor in order to better learn the material. She also worked on her application for the accountancy

professional program. Diana and her family took the time to participate in a university family event during a Saturday morning.

Elisa found herself struggling in most of her courses. We reviewed her course performance and feedback from instructors on how she was doing in each course and what she could do to improve her status. However, Elisa felt the journal reflection assignment required for the scholarship program course helped improve her mindset towards her personal and academic goals. She worked with her siblings to intermittently care for her ailing father. She continued to stress about parental anxiety separation while simultaneously found herself taking out a lot of frustration on her children. Elisa and her family also took the time to participate in a university family event during a Saturday morning.

Summary of post-transfer phase. During the post-transfer phase of this study, the Passport Scholars demonstrated some strengths and some challenges in their ability to employ prior skills learned at the community college for their university transition. I closely reviewed community college academic transfer adjustment capital and university social transfer adjustment. I explored the Passport Scholars' ability to apply their college learning and study skills at the university. Additionally, I asked Passport Scholars about their engagement with faculty inside and outside the classroom setting as well as their involvement in activities at the university.

In employing their community college academic transfer adjustment capital, Ana, Beatriz, and Elisa struggled the most in their ability to keep up with an essential college learning and study skill that stood out the most: time management. Their expectations on how they would be able to manage their time did not pair well with the realistic situation

to their available time. These Passport Scholars experienced major transitions in their lives that carried with them through the middle of the semester, which was through the end of the timeframe of this study. As a result of the added responsibilities they carried, they struggled with missteps in their courses, such as missing assignments, submitting late assignments, or not dedicating more time to particular assignments that required it. Chris demonstrated the strongest applicability of college learning and study skills, primarily with his navigational skills, as well as experiencing more positive faculty connections.

Changes Over Time

Passport Scholars began this study with a description of a high number of personal strengths. The strengths identified the capital that these Passport Scholars possessed going into a phenomenon that is set-up to originally support traditional college student populations more than community college transfer students or vulnerable student populations. However, the Nina Scholars program was established to support vulnerable student populations and to guide them through their university transition experience. This study focused on the university transition experience of transfer students from the community college to the university. It assessed the changes over time that happened during the Passport Scholars' transition experience, over a period of three phases: pre-transfer phase, mid-transfer phase, and post-transfer phase. This study assessed whether a transfer preparation intervention changed the sense of preparedness and supported Passport Scholars with their sense of ability to succeed during their university transition.

Changes from pre-transfer phase to post-transfer phase. Passport Scholars started in the pre-transfer phase of this study with demonstrated strength in four coping

skills—*situation, self, support, and strategies*—that encouraged their sense of preparedness for a university transfer. Their overall strength in these four coping skills suggested that the Passport Scholars did demonstrate a sense of preparedness prior to the start of their transition, even as Ana and Elisa showed less strength in *strategies* coping skills due to the load of responsibilities they chose to take on.

Over the mid-transfer phase, Passport Scholars employed their four coping skills during their university enrollment process. Their *situation* coping skill reflected that the Passport Scholars felt confident about their decision to transfer. Their *self* coping skill was strengthened more after they received guidance from key institutional supporters, including Nina Scholars program staff and Nina Scholar peers who took part in the intervention. These key institutional supporters showed them how to manage the enrollment process, which simultaneously showed strength in their *support* coping skills. During this phase of the study, Passport Scholars struggled most in showing strength in their *strategies* coping skills and *college learning and study skills*, as some Passport Scholars attempted to balance time between school, work, and family.

The post-transfer phase revealed a lot about the Passport Scholars' sense of ability to succeed during their university transition. During this phase, participants demonstrated both strengths and challenges in their ability to employ *college learning and study skills*, their ability to *engage with faculty*, and their *satisfaction with their university environment*. Passport Scholars struggled to employ college learning and study skills when they attempted to balance their time too much between school, work, and family. Their engagement with faculty and environment satisfaction impacted their ability to keep up with their academic responsibilities.

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Chapter 5

Discussion

The purpose of this action research study was to understand the transition experience of five recipients in the Nina Mason Pulliam Legacy Scholars program (hereafter Nina Scholars) who transferred from the community college to the university, through the participation in a three-part intervention. Transfer students who were recipients of this scholarship are referred to as Passport Students and are participants of this study. This study was driven by the desire to better support the success of these Passport Scholars during their transition from the Maricopa Community Colleges (hereafter MCCCD) to Arizona State University (hereafter ASU). These Passport Scholars are a part of a growing vulnerable population in the state of Arizona who could benefit from a strong support system to bolster their transition. In this chapter, I provide a culminating discussion of how the findings answer the three research questions that this study investigates, and discuss implications for practice and research, limitations of this study, and concluding thoughts.

Summary

Through this study, I sought to answer three research questions that examined the impact of an intervention on the transition experiences of five Passport Scholars who belonged to a cohort in the Nina Scholars program. The intervention included three components that were implemented before the Passport Scholars started and through their first semester at the university: one-on-one meetings, peer mentor guidance, and participant self-reflection journals. I found that the intervention strengthened the Passport Scholars' transition experience in multiple ways. By applying the intervention,

the Passport Scholars established a supportive relationship with contacts at the university, which included Nina Scholars program staff and Nina Scholars peer mentors, who guided them through the enrollment process with both professional knowledge and personal relatability. The Passport Scholars also had the opportunity to purposefully reflect on their own transition experiences and feel like their concerns were being heard and addressed. Through the research questions, I learned which strengths the Passport Scholars brought with them during their community college to university transition and understood the extent an intervention had on their preparation and success at the university.

RQ1: What cultural capital do future Passport Scholars have to assist them when transferring to the university?

RQ2: To what extent does a transfer preparation intervention change the sense of preparedness of Passport Scholars for their university transition?

RQ3: To what extent does a transfer preparation intervention support Passport Scholars with their sense of ability to succeed during their university transition?

First research question. Using Yosso's (2005) research on community cultural wealth, I individually interviewed the Passport Scholars and assessed six sub-constructs as strengths that they possessed prior to their transfer to the university. These strengths were important to recognize as a way to challenge assumptions of deficiencies that individuals from marginalized communities are often interpreted to primarily possess. Through this study, the Passport Scholars demonstrated that they did possess a compelling amount of these strengths.

Aspirational. Passport Scholars demonstrated strength in their aspiration for something better in life, including aspiring for a college education. However, Passport Scholars were not prepared to pursue a college education from a young age. The Passport Scholars revealed that they had to experience a particular set of circumstances in their lives in order for them to build their aspiration for a college education. For the most part, their career paths were headed in different directions until they suddenly realized that they needed to take on the challenge to complete a college education. For example, one scholar first envisioned herself as a coffee shop franchisee after a lack of college guidance during her time in the foster care system and prior failed attempts to get through college on her own before finally succeeding in college with the assistance of the Nina Scholars program.

Linguistic. Passport Scholars demonstrated strength in their ability to communicate challenging experiences in life through artistic interpretations. These artistic interpretations were most relatable to their own life when they encompassed stories of attrition and triumph. The Passport Scholars reflected on movies and books, such as the "Secret Life of Walter Mitty" and "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban," that conveyed messages of entrapment followed by liberation. Meanwhile, other Passport Scholars reflected on musical artists, including J. Cole and Jenni Rivera, who shared similar life stories as themselves who, through their music, expressed the triumphs over the struggles they experienced. Each of these examples revealed the Passport Scholars' recognition of where they saw themselves in life, where they wanted be in life, and how they were able convey their desire to improve their lives.

Familial and social. Passport Scholars demonstrated strength in their familial and social connections, identified as two levels of support who encouraged their educational pursuits: an inner circle and an outer circle of support. Their inner circle of support motivated the Passport Scholars to pursue college before they started and during their time in college, while their outer circle of support guided the Passport Scholars through the college-going process. The inner circle of support included people who the Passport Scholars had healthy connections with and typically included a spouse or parent, followed by a family member or friend. The Passport Scholars cared enough for the persons who belonged to this inner circle of support that they wanted to make them proud of the educational accomplishments they were attempting to reach. Meanwhile, the outer circle of support included people who were familiar with the college-going process and understood the value of a college education. Those who made a significant impact included the staff from Maricopa Nina Scholars program and others at the college who were affiliated with program who provided continual guidance in an unfamiliar setting.

Navigational. Passport Scholars demonstrated strength in their navigational skills, particularly from experiences gained while at the community college that were uncommon in their lives beforehand. The new navigational skills they acquired included improved communication, time management and organization, and leadership skills. They believed that these newfound skills allowed them to maneuver a system previously unfamiliar to them. One strong example included a scholar who shared that the community college allowed him to step out of his shell. He learned how to regularly communicate with his instructors and speak in public. It also provided him the opportunity to take on leadership roles, something he never did before while in high

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school. He admitted that these opportunities only came to him because he had an outer-circle of support who guided him as a new student leader.

Resistant. Passport Scholars also demonstrated strength in their resistant skill, which is an awareness of inequalities found among marginal communities. Passport Scholars were asked to reflect on insight gained, since they started college, about issues that exist within their respective communities that they were not previously aware of. The Passport Scholars identified large and small issues that had complex solutions. They included issues related to poverty and the burden that this places on their family's transportation and childcare needs, the existence of high crime and low policing in their neighborhood, a systematic lack of college preparation opportunities for foster youth, and the prolific issue of child abuse. This new awareness, revealed the Passport Scholars' concern for larger social issues that impact others beyond themselves. It also revealed that they believed that their college education could directly or indirectly make an impact on these issues.

Summary of first research question. Passport Scholars demonstrated high levels of strength among the six sub-constructs listed, although no one scholar demonstrated high levels of strength among all six sub-constructs assessed. Passport Scholars benefited immensely in possessing these strengths and applying them during their community college to university transition, despite the vulnerable factors that affected their circumstances. These strengths were relevant to the Passport Scholars' sense of preparedness and sense of ability to succeed, as is assessed in the following two research questions.

Second research question. I formed the second research question to this study as: To what extent does a transfer preparation intervention change the sense of preparedness of Passport Scholars for their university transition? Using Schlossberg's (1981, 2011) research on transition experiences and from Laanan, Starobin, and Eggleston's (2011) research on transfer student capital, I assessed five sub-constructs to understand the Passport Scholars' sense of preparedness for this anticipated transition. I asked Passport Scholars to participate in focus groups and to submit questionnaires and self-reflection journals that inquired about their ability to identify and employ four transition coping skills and college learning and study skills relevant to their transition experience.

Situation. Passport Scholars were asked to reflect on their current situation. They demonstrated pride in their status as an incoming ASU student, clarity in their academic and career pathway and goals, and confidence in their housing stability and commuting needs to school. As students who did not originally have plans to attend college, the Passport Scholars saw their status as an incoming ASU student an unbelievable feat. One scholar reflected how her presence on a university campus felt "different" from walking through a community college campus. They expressed that their ability to attend a reputable school such as ASU was a "huge blessing" and a big source of pride, especially as the role models they represented in their families and particularly as the persons who would help their families move out of their current status of vulnerability. They shared that both the community college's and university's accessibility allowed them the opportunity to pursue a higher education, particularly with the continuation of the Nina Scholars award through the Passport Scholars award. Most

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Passport Scholars also felt they had clear career goals and were well aware of the program requirements to complete their degree, thanks to the guidance they received from their social support systems who guided them through the institutional process. Additionally, most Passport Scholars felt that their housing and transportation situations were in good standing, with a stable housing plan and a manageable commute. In sum, most Passport Scholars demonstrated preparedness of situations that were under their control, which they had already accounted for in their transition plans.

Self. Passport Scholars expressed clarity in the purpose for their career choices, self-awareness of their current skill-sets, and how they managed different aspects of the enrollment process. They shared that their career choice was either driven by a passion in the field they chose or by a strategic choice for a field that would lead them to be successful. Some Passport Scholars anticipated that becoming an ASU student would help them grow in their navigational, time management and organization skills, which were skills they had not yet fully developed. Passport Scholars also shared how different aspects of the university enrollment process were either simple or challenging to manage. They acknowledged that many of the missteps they experienced during their transition experience were due to the complicated and unfamiliar aspects of the multi-step university enrollment process, such as unknowingly missing advising appointments or repeatedly submitting documentation that was not received. Percival et al. (2016) also addressed how socio-cultural facilitators and barriers impacted students' abilities to complete a community college to university pathway program. In this situation, Passport Scholars recognized that the challenges they experienced were due to the differences in the enrollment experiences from the community college and the university. Allen, Smith,

and Muehleck (2014) highlighted this as a feeling of marginalization in which transitions leave students susceptible to bureaucracies. Passport Scholars also acknowledged that a lack of familiarity with a multitude of university resources and contacts who could help them navigate the enrollment process also had an impact on the challenges they experienced. However, they also credited the simpler experiences of the enrollment process to an ease of technology, guidance received on how to navigate the enrollment process, and having some familiarity with other aspects of the enrollment process, such as previously submitting a federal financial aid application. Most Passport Scholars learned to ask for support when they realized that they could not navigate the enrollment process on their own. In sum, most Passport Scholars demonstrated some levels of preparedness of when it came to understanding how they viewed and managed their transition experience.

Support. Passport Scholars were asked to reflect on who their support systems included. They identified two levels of support that existed in their lives, which were critical in motivating them to get into college and in guiding them to get through college. Passport Scholars identified their immediate family members—spouses or parents—as their inner circle of support. They also included close friends and extended family members as part of this inner circle of support. These key individuals motivated the Passport Scholars to persist towards their college goals and took over personal responsibilities in order to allow the Passport Scholars to focus on their school responsibilities. Additionally, Passport Scholars identified multiple college representatives as part of their outer circle of support who facilitated the Passport Scholars' transition experience. They included college and university advisors, MCCCD

and ASU Nina Scholars program staff, and Nina Scholars peer mentors who participated in the intervention for this study. Similar to how Perez and Taylor (2016) described in their study how community cultural wealth to was meant to be communal, to build up a community of underrepresented students, Passport Scholars shared that the peer mentors helped them know "what is expected of me as a student." Peer mentors also answered their questions, calmed their nerves, and showed them around campus. They provided the Passport Scholars an opportunity to feel understood about their transition experience. In sum, all Passport Scholars demonstrated preparedness with a support system who could motivate them and guide them through their university transition experience.

     Strategies. Passport Scholars were asked to reflect on what strategies they used to cope with academic stressors and how they planned to keep a healthy balance in their lives. They identified a combination of coping strategies to help them address an issue. Some Passport Scholars preferred to first change the situation by problem-solving on their own, then reducing the stress by taking a break, and then asking for help if not able to problem-solve for a second time. Other Passport Scholars shared how they worked to stay ahead of the problem by preventing it, in other words, completing any homework ahead of time. Learning about these strategies that the Passport Scholars' implemented was essential to better understanding how they planned to keep a healthy balance in their lives. All Passport Scholars felt that they would be able to maintain a balance as a full-time student and any other responsibilities they carried with them, such as work and/or family. They all identified great amounts of self-discipline and following a calendar as ways to keep themselves on top of their academic and personal or work responsibilities. One scholar new she was taking on quite a bit in her life, and responded: "Balancing out

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my personal, financial, and work schedule, as well as my educational commitments is going to be difficult, but my determination to succeed is greater than the challenges I am currently facing." The Passport Scholars all appeared to have an understanding that they were taking on a huge endeavor by enrolling at the university, but were determined to sacrifice time in order to make it happen. Yet, many of the Passport Scholars did not account for extenuating circumstances that could be detrimental to the tight balance they were attempting to maintain. In sum, many Passport Scholars revealed less than realistic goals towards their level of preparedness in developing an effective strategy that could help them cope with academic and personal stressors.

College learning and study skills. Passport Scholars were asked to reflect on what learning and study skills they gained from their time at the community college, what was most enjoyable about their community college learning experience, and what skills they would apply while at the university. They shared many positive examples about their community college learning experiences, such as the ability to rely on classmates with diverse skills, instructors who cared, and tutoring support for challenging subjects. One scholar also shared that he gained a lot from his student leadership role. He was especially excited on the opportunity to take those leadership skills and apply them to his new environment at the university. Meanwhile, other Passport Scholars shared that they planned on applying their time management and organization skills at the university, although not all Passport Scholars effectively implemented this skill or underestimated the time they needed to dedicate to their schoolwork once the semester started. However, those who shared that they implemented a routine in their schedules demonstrated that they were able to keep up with their university courses at the start of the fall semester. In

sum, many Passport Scholars demonstrated that they left the community college with a set of learning and studying skills that would leave them better prepared for the university, only to find that they underestimated the amount of time they needed to implement from those learning and study skills now that they were at the university.

Summary of second research question. Passport Scholars demonstrated moderate levels of their sense of preparedness among the five sub-constructs listed: *situation*, *self*, *support*, *strategy*, and *community college learning and study skills*. Passport Scholars demonstrated the strongest levels of preparedness among situations they felt they had control over, such as their career goals, housing arrangement, and commuting plans. However, when it came to reflecting on their self coping skills, Passport Scholars demonstrated only some levels of preparedness in how they managed stress in order to address academic and personal challenges. This self coping skill informed how Passport Scholars would later deal with stress once they transitioned into the university. The Passport Scholars demonstrated the least sense of preparedness in their strategic coping skills due to the less than realistic goals they had in the amount of time they would need to dedicate towards studying. These aspects in the Passport Scholars' sense of preparedness were essential to the Passport Scholars' sense of ability to succeed, as is assessed in the following final research question.

Third research question. I formed the third research question to this study to ask: To what extent does a transfer preparation intervention support Passport Scholars with their sense of ability to succeed during their university transition? Using research by Laanan et al. (2011) on transfer student capital, I assessed three sub-constructs to understand the Passport Scholars' sense of ability to succeed for this transition. These

sub-constructs were significant factors that added to a student's transfer capital and "could positively influence students' social transfer adjustment," which aimed to result in a positive transfer experience (Laanan et al., 2011, p. 191). I requested that Passport Scholars participate in focus groups and submit responses to questionnaires that asked about their ability to employ at the university those college learning and study skills they gained while at the community college. I also asked Passport Scholars to share on their experiences with university faculty and on their environment satisfaction at the university.

College learning and study skills. Passport Scholars were asked to reflect on the learning and study skills they practiced most while at the university. This reflection garnered many frustrations from the Passport Scholars who struggled with the vast differences that exist between the community college and the university. Some Passport Scholars struggled with navigating a large system, including one Scholar who felt he was directed in circles in order to request academic approval to add a minor outside of his college unit and to enroll in courses related to that minor. Another scholar was attempting to learn on her own in her exclusively online program after completing two years of an in-person program at the community college. However, these challenges with navigating the system pushed them to learn how to seek resources on campus. They also shared how they were able to learn the pattern of when assignments were due and applied their own time management skills in order to stay ahead. In sum, most Passport Scholars demonstrated some level of ability to succeed during their university transition when it came to applying their community college learning and study skills at the university. There were some scholars who learned how to navigate the system by seeking additional

resources and others who used their time management skills to problem solve when they were struggling.

   Experience with faculty. Passport Scholars were asked to reflect on the extent of their engagement with community college faculty and how they practiced that skill at the university. When it came to approaching the instructors for academic support, a portion of the students struggled while others thrived. Two Passport Scholars succeeded in this endeavor, including one whose community college student leadership skills prepared him on how to communicate with his university instructors, and another whose university instructors shared compassion and gave her flexibility in her assignment due dates during a period of personal struggle. Those who struggled felt that community college faculty were more flexible and approachable than the university faculty whose classes they were now enrolled in. One scholar shared that her instructors were nice but did not show the same compassion or flexibility when they requested it for their personal needs. For another scholar who got married during her first semester at the university, this experience was evident when she was not given the opportunity to change the date to an exam that landed on her time away for her wedding. She stated, "It all seems to move faster and more [is] expected of you." Another scholar struggled with simply communicating effectively with her online instructors and explaining how she was struggling to adapt as an effective online learner.

   Passport Scholars who had the less than positive experiences were forced to rely on other resources for the emotional support they sought from their faculty, in particular with the Nina Scholars program staff and their cohort Nina Scholar peers. Passport Scholars sought for a sense of belonging, which Han, Farruggia and Moss (2017)

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contended was just as critical for student retention as self-efficacy was in measuring academic performance.

The Nina Scholars program staff also made concerted efforts to help Passport Scholars in the program build their self-efficacy through mastery of skills. Passport Scholars were presented with study skills strategies and university or online resources at the beginning of their university transition. In addition to helping Passport Scholars build their self-efficacy, they were brought into a community where their identification as a Nina Scholar was promoted to build their sense of belonging and to encourage a sense of community where they can be there for each other. Passport Scholars were also mentored by staff members to support them through their college experience by providing personal guidance and access to university and community resources.

In sum, some Passport Scholars demonstrated some level of ability to succeed during their university transition when it came to positive learning outcomes from engaging with university faculty, especially among those who were resourceful when their faculty engagement experience was less than what they desired. The Nina Scholars program also supported their success by helping them build their self-efficacy.

Environment satisfaction. Passport Scholars were asked to reflect on their level of connection at the university, in particular with their involvement in non-academic activities on campus and with the extent of their connection with faculty outside of the classroom setting. Like the experiences shared above, some Passport Scholars demonstrated a greater connection with faculty who were "very kind and willing to help" outside of class, while others limited their connection with faculty to an email interaction. Yet, neither of these Passport Scholars actually took the opportunity to have a

conversation with their faculty outside of the classroom setting, physically or virtually. Likewise, most Passport Scholars also revealed that they could not make the time to be more involved in non-academic activities due to family and work commitments, although they shared a desire to be more involved. One scholar felt, however, that the act of spending more time on campus and participating with Nina Scholars counted for more on-campus activity than she was previously used to at the community college and valued that aspect a lot. Only one scholar was actively involved in on-campus activities and was looking forward to further developing his leadership skills in the organizations he joined. In sum, some Passport Scholars demonstrated some level of ability to succeed during their university transition when it came to their environment satisfaction. Although most Passport Scholars did not engage with faculty outside of class or participate in traditional on-campus activities, they demonstrated satisfaction with the extent of their existing engagement with the Nina Scholars program and basic on-campus presence in their new university environment.

Summary of third research question. Passport Scholars demonstrated moderate levels of their sense of ability to succeed during their university transition among the three sub-constructs listed: *community college learning and study skills*, *experience with faculty*, and *environment satisfaction*. Passport Scholars struggled to apply their community college learning and study skills at the university, but in the end succeeded when they learned how to navigate the university system by seeking additional resources and applying other strategies, like time management. While some Passport Scholars sought support from faculty, others engaged with alternative support systems like the Nina Scholars program and with their Nina Scholar peers. Only one scholar engaged in a

traditional on-campus organization. Other Passport Scholars desired to do the same but could not commit to the same level of engagement. Yet, they were satisfied with their current engagement level knowing that they could not take on more experiences at this point in their lives.

Themes across questions. Through this study, I intended to understand the transition experience of Passport Scholars in the Nina Scholars program through their participation in a three-part intervention. The three research questions allowed me to assess the strengths the Passport Scholars possessed in support of their educational experience and how they experienced their own college to university transition. I found that the larger themes from this study demonstrated (a) that Passport Scholars possessed and recognized how their strengths supported their educational goals, (b) that Passport Scholars felt prepared for their transition to the university even as some of them lacked certain coping skills, (c) that Passport Scholars felt the skills they gained at the community college did not fully match their transition experiences and impacted their sense of ability to succeed, and (d) that Passport Scholars were able to utilize their strengths at moments when they lacked certain skills.

Passport Scholars demonstrated high levels in a multitude of strengths. Although, none demonstrated high levels in all six strengths assessed—aspiration, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, resistance—they did exhibit high levels of strength in most of the six areas assessed. This was relevant to the study because it illustrated how Passport Scholars were able to apply the strengths they possessed during their community college to university transition. Originally, I chose to identify their strengths over their deficits as a way to avoid victimizing the Passport Scholars for what they lack in

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comparison to more traditional college student populations. As I reflected on this approach in my self-reflection research memos, I realized that focusing on their strengths also led me to identify the ways the Passport Scholars were able to succeed rather than how they were not able to succeed. Yosso (2005) explained this perspective in her research on community cultural wealth where she encouraged researchers to focus on the strengths that marginalized groups possessed and often go unrecognized. For example, one Passport Scholar who did not have family or kin to rely on among either of her biological or foster families could have been discounted for her lack of familial capital. Yet, when prompted for this question, she identified other people who made up her new family and now contributed to a strong familial capital. Consequently, she shared how the strength of this capital provided her with a sense of ability to succeed at the university.

Most Passport Scholars felt prepared for their transition to the university, even though some of them lacked certain coping skills. Schlossberg (2011) identified the Four S's coping system as essential for individuals experiencing transition, which other studies have also adapted within a higher education context (Lazarowicz, 2015, Owens 2010). The Passport Scholars' strongest coping skills included stability in their *situation* and a strong *support* system in place. Yet, despite the current stability these Passport Scholars now experienced, their vulnerable backgrounds still impacted the *self* and *strategy* coping skills and the *community college learning and study skills* that some of the Passport Scholars had not yet strengthened for their university enrollment. This was evident among some Passport Scholars' who were unsure as to how they managed stressed and enacted resiliency, in how they limited their problem solving approach to a couple of

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processes before they cried for help, and in how they employed study skills and communication skills effectively at the university.

When Passport Scholars felt that the skills they gained at the community college did not match well with the skills they needed for a successful transition experience at the university, their sense of ability to succeed was impacted. Laanan et al. (2011) found that the learning and study skills students gain while at the community college could have a positive impact on a student's academic transfer adjustment at the university, also identified as transfer student capital. However, once at the university, Passport Scholars realized that their transfer student capital fell short of what they needed to succeed in their courses. They learned that they needed to expand on their study habits and time management skills. They realized that they were simply finishing assignments rather than learning the content. They also realized that they were in the practice of scheduling time to finish assignments rather than scheduling time to routinely study and review, regardless of how quickly they complete an assignment or set of assignments for a class.

When Passport Scholars felt that their sense of ability to succeed was being impacted, most did apply other strengths and skills at moments when they lacked certain coping skills. In particular, Passport Scholars learned to rely on their social support system and social coping skills for validation. Rendon (1994) identified this practice as an attempt to seek active validation from staff, faculty, and administrators in higher education. In her research, many non-traditional students applied this practice to address their own self-doubt, especially in regards to their own academic ability. Hence, many Passport Scholars reached out to their faculty and some found the guidance and flexibility they needed to succeed while other Passport Scholars did not find what they sought from

their university faculty. According to Rendon, faculty who "demonstrate a genuine concern for teaching students" or offer "structured learning experiences that allowed students to experience themselves as capable of learning" fostered academic development for students who felt as though their experiences kept them in the margins of a traditional college experience (p. 40). When faculty did not validate Passport Scholars' needs, they sought guidance from other support systems, like with the Nina Scholars program staff. The ability for Passport Scholars to utilize this social strength, to receive the validation and guidance needed, impacted their perceived self-efficacy and their sense of belonging, as identified by Vuong, Brown-Welty, and Tracz (2010) and Han, Farruggia, and Moss (2017), respectively. Passport Scholars shared that their ability to connect with the Nina Scholars program staff and peers gave them with the community and support they needed during their university transition.

Implications

I opened this dissertation with an anecdote that depicted the story of Cathy, a Passport Scholar who I had the pleasure of knowing before this study, and the sad reality of losing her as a scholarship recipient. For this scholar, the university transition experience was more than she was able to handle despite her prior community college success. While the scholar possessed many strengths in her life, there were many external challenges that affected her outlook and overall success at the university. She seemed unprepared for the transition to the university despite the efforts taken by the ASU Nina Scholars program to support her transition. The experience of working with Cathy made me wonder how I could, as a researcher and practitioner, use research to

better support transferring Passport Scholars in practice. My experiences with Cathy, in part, inspired my work on this study.

The research I collected from this qualitative study gave me the information I needed to know about the transition experience for Passport Scholars in the Nina Scholars program. I first researched the backgrounds of Passport Scholars using a strengths-based approach, despite the deficiencies they may have possessed as vulnerable students. Beginning with this approach led me to the concluding theme in this study. The concluding theme recognized how Passport Scholars used their strengths in areas where they lacked strength. I learned how this approach can better prepare Passport Scholars in the future and can impact their sense of ability to succeed during their university transition. The success that I discuss in this study is measured by perceived self-efficacy rather than traditional academic measurements. If time permits, I would like to continue the research for the participants in this study in one to two years to assess if an overall increase in transfer student capital gained from the community college, as described by Moser (2013), translates to an increase in traditional measurements of academic performance at the university.

This study gave me the information I needed to move forward in practice and to continue to make an impact on the lives of this cohort of Passport Scholars and all future Passport Scholars in the ASU Nina Scholars program. I focused this study on the transition experience of Passport Scholars and learned in particular about the capital they brought from their community college transfer experience. Moving forward, I am interested in understanding the transition experience of incoming freshman Passport Scholars who are in the Nina Scholars program, also known as Original Scholars. I

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would like to learn further about the capital they possess from their prior environments and how those impact their identified vulnerabilities or deficiencies. This would enable me to learn about the parallels between both Passport and Original Scholars. I would also like to direct all future scholars to identify their strengths and recognize where they lack strength. This can perhaps be achieved through similar means that the intervention and this dissertation study applied during the early summer and fall semesters. With this intervention, I want the scholars to expect that their transition with the ASU Nina Scholars program starts before they officially begin at ASU. They will get the opportunity to learn about their strengths and to participate in the intervention. The intervention will first require the scholars to meet with the Nina Scholars program staff in the early summer to review their transition plans, then they will participate in a more established peer mentor program, and finally, they will be invited to reflect on their transition experience through self-reflection journals. With the transition strengths finder exercise and participation in an intervention, I would like to guide all incoming scholars to be proactive about their transition experience.

Outside of the scope of the Nina Scholars program, a significant effort is also needed among multiple Arizona institutions to positively affect the state's growing vulnerable populations. Additional effort is also needed to ensure vulnerable populations receive a fair educational foundation to set them up to be college ready and support their full transition through college, towards graduation and onward as future professionals and strong community leaders. Interventions such as those through the Nina Scholars program could champion vulnerable students during their academic and personal transitions from community college through the university.

Limitations

There were several limitations to this action research study, many of which are due to the nature of a qualitative study. As an exclusively qualitative study, I listed a number of approaches to ensure validity to this study, including credibility, reliability, transferability, and action-oriented outcomes. Among these approaches to ensure validity, there were limitations in my attempt to ensure credibility and action-oriented outcomes. To ensure credibility, I shared that I solicited feedback from the participants in the study, known as member checks. Although all Passport Scholars confirmed that they did receive their respective transcribed responses, none of the Passport Scholars provided any feedback due to a lack of time to dedicate to this task, after they had already started the following semester. To ensure credibility, I shared a limited selection from my self-reflection research memos in the findings and discussion sections of this study; I also shared some excerpts of my self-reflection research memos on multiple topics, including reflexivity, in Appendix I. This practice of reflexivity (Ortlipp, 2008; Watt, 2007) allowed me to understand my own biases with the goal of maintaining objectivity, particularly since I served in the role of a participant-observer for this study. Based on Watt's recommendation for reflexivity, I attempted to understand both the phenomenon of the transition experience and the research process itself. In my own self-reflection research memos, I share how I discover that I could use the reflective process—as described by Ortlipp and Watt—as options for my own reflection writing. However, I also kept in mind that the selection of the notes I used from my self-reflection research memos for this study were also based on my own bias as to what I considered relevant. Additionally, I also reflected on my decision to use the term "vulnerable" as a major

limitation to this study. I recognize that I chose to identify the population of students that I work with as vulnerable based on how the previously cited research defined vulnerable. I struggled to allow myself to use this term as an identity term on them, particularly since I cannot currently and equally identify myself as vulnerable. Even in my most marginalized moments in life, I recognize that the life experiences I had do not compare to the experiences they had. The best I could possibly do is empathize with them and allow this study to demonstrate how I, as the researcher, attempted to let their experiences speak and how I, as the participant-observer, attempted to respond to their needs.

To ensure action-oriented outcomes, I shared that this study applied process validity as a way to measure the experience over a period of time, as would be expected for a phenomenological study. Although the study did measure the transition experience of Passport Scholars over a period of five months, this length of time was not sufficient to measure student success at later periods in the participant's university experience. As the implications section states above, I would like to continue the research for this study in one to two years to assess if greater transfer student capital translates to longer term success, as measured by grade point average or graduation.

Another limitation to this study was the small sample size of the participants. The sample size limits the study from generalizability, which is typically determined from larger samples using quantitative data. Even as I provided a rich, thick, description in the findings of this study, the small sample size may affect the transferability of the study. The context of the study is within the Nina Scholars program and therefore, the ability to transfer the working hypothesis from this study's context into a different context is limited.

Another limitation has to do with the larger approach of this study, particularly in how the study measures success and in how my role as participant-researcher lends to bias. The second and third research questions to this study attempted to understand the participants' sense of preparedness and sense of ability to succeed during their university transition. I attempted to answer these two aspects of the study through rich, thick descriptions collected from exclusively qualitative data. However, even though the description provided is extensive, ultimately, the Passport Scholars' sense of success still does not equal traditional measures of success as defined by grade point average and graduation.

Conclusion

This action research study affirmed my sentiment that the work my colleagues and I do in the Nina Scholars program is extremely valuable to the Passport Scholars in the program. The process of producing this study also taught me how to properly assess if our work was valuable, impactful, and successful in supporting the success of our Passport Scholars. I learned that, while one's vulnerability background can limit a person's access to higher education, it does not define how a person can succeed. This study taught me that a person's strength had a greater influence in their success and their ability to overcome challenges. This study also taught me that institutional support is just as necessary to help students recognize their own strengths and how to apply them when they experience challenges during their college or university career.

The growing number of vulnerable populations in Arizona will continue to impact future populations attending the state's colleges and universities. In an effort to reach the state's college attainment goals, colleges and universities must be ready to understand

how providing greater access to higher education can impact their ability to also serve

these students' academic and non-academic needs and their own sense of ability to reach

success.

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APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT LETTER

APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear Nina Scholar:

In addition to working as your Program Director for the ASU Nina Scholars program, I am a doctoral student in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College (MLFTC) at Arizona State University (ASU). I am working under the direction of Dr. Lauren Harris, an ASU faculty member in MLFTC and the School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies. I am conducting a research study to understand the transition experiences for Nina Scholars transferring from Maricopa Community Colleges to Arizona State University. The purpose of this study is to assess how the ASU Nina Mason Pulliam Legacy Scholars program supports the needs of its vulnerable student population who seek their educational path to the university via the community college.

I am asking for your help, which will involve your participation in a qualitative study over the course of your transition to ASU (through fall 2018). Your participation will include the following procedures:
- An individual interview, held in April or May, intends to learn about your strengths coming in as a transfer student into the university. I anticipate that the interview will take 30 minutes.
- There will be two focus group meetings, one in May and one in October, with other Nina Scholars participating in the study. These focus group meetings will ask the group about transition experiences to ASU. I anticipate that each focus group will take 30-45 minutes.
- Complete two questionnaires, one in May and one in October. The questionnaires will ask about your transition expectations and outcomes and any strengths and skills you applied towards your transition to ASU. I anticipate that each questionnaire will take 20-30 minutes to complete.
- The self-reflection journal will be collected monthly throughout the summer and early fall as you transition to ASU. Five journal prompts will ask about your transition preparation and enrollment experiences. I anticipate that each journal response will take 10-20 minutes to complete.

I would like to audio record the interview and focus group meetings. I will not record them without your permission. Please let me know if you do not want them to be recorded. You may also change your mind after the interview and focus groups start; just let me know.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty whatsoever. Interviewees must be 18 years of age or older to participate.

Your benefit to participating in this study is to allow you the opportunity to reflect on and think more about your experience as a Nina Scholar recipient who transferred from

Maricopa to ASU. Responses will also inform future iterations of the study. Thus, there is potential to enhance the experiences of future Nina Scholars recipients who transfer from Maricopa Community Colleges to Arizona State University. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

Your responses from the interviews, questionnaires, and journals will be confidential. Although complete confidentiality cannot be assured due to the nature of focus groups, no identifying information will be mentioned in any reports, presentations, and publications regarding this study. Results from this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Arizona State University Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788. If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team – Jo Ann Martinez at (joann.martinez@asu.edu) or (480-228-7547) or Dr. Lauren Harris at lauren.harris.1@asu.edu or (480) 965-6692.

Thank you,

Jo Ann Martinez, Doctoral Candidate
Dr. Lauren Harris, Associate Professor

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

Thank you for your participation in this study. I will read to you the nature of this study with instructions on your participation.

As mentioned in the recruitment letter, I am a doctoral student in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College (MLFTC) at Arizona State University (ASU), in addition to working as your Program Director for the ASU Nina Scholars program. I am working under the direction of Dr. Lauren Harris, an ASU faculty member in MLFTC and the School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies. I am conducting a research study to understand the transition experiences for Nina Scholars transferring from Maricopa Community Colleges to Arizona State University. The purpose of this study is to assess how the ASU Nina Scholars program supports the needs of its vulnerable student population who seek their educational path to the university via the community college.

I am asking for your help, which will involve your participation in a qualitative study over the course of your transition to ASU (through fall 2018). Your participation will include the following procedures:
- An individual interview, held in April or May, intends to learn about your strengths coming in as a transfer student into the university. I anticipate that the interview will take 30 minutes.
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I would like to audio record the interview and focus group meetings. I will not record them without your permission. Please let me know if you do not want them to be recorded. You may also change your mind after the interview and focus groups start; just let me know.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty whatsoever. Your choice to participate or not participate will not impact your standing with the ASU Nina Scholars program. Interviewees must be 18 years of age or older to participate.

Your benefit to participating in this study is to allow you the opportunity to reflect on and think more about your experience as a Nina Scholar recipient who transferred from Maricopa to ASU. Responses may also inform future iterations of the study. Thus, there is potential to enhance the experiences of future Nina Scholars recipients who transfer from Maricopa Community Colleges to ASU. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

Your responses from the interviews, questionnaires, and journals will be confidential. Although complete confidentiality cannot be assured due to the nature of focus groups, no identifying information will be mentioned in any reports, presentations, and publications regarding this study. Additionally, this study requests the release of your academic records for purposes of this study. These include records regularly collected for the ASU Nina Scholars program, such as your Maricopa and ASU academic transcripts, instructor feedback requests, and program notes collected during mentor meetings, among other items. Results from this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Arizona State University Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788. If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team – Jo Ann Martinez (joann.martinez@asu.edu or 480-228-7547) or Dr. Lauren Harris (lauren.harris.1@asu.edu or 480-965-6692).

Let me know if you would like to continue with the study. Please sign below to confirm your participation in this study.

Printed Name	Signed
Name	Date

APPENDIX C

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

APPENDIX C

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Sub-construct	Item
Aspirational	1. Tell me about the earliest time you remember having college aspirations.
Linguistic	2. Tell me about a book you read, song you heard, or artist you admire that/who speaks to who you are and relate to the most.
Familial	3. Who are the persons who are closest to you? What makes these persons close?
Social	4. Who are the persons in the community who helped you with your educational success?
Navigational	5. Since being in college, what skills have you learned about how to best stay on top of your academic requirements?
Resistant	6. Since being in college, what have been the most pressing issues to you that exist in your community and why?

APPENDIX D

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

APPENDIX D

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Pre-focus group

Sub-construct	Item
Self	1. Please introduce yourself and tell us who you are.
Situation	2. Now that you are an incoming ASU student, please share your academic and career goals. What does this new status mean to you?
Situation	3. From what part of the Valley will you be traveling from when you start at ASU in the fall semester?
Self	4. What inspired you to choose your major? Alternatively, what drives you to your career of choice?
Support	5. Who is (are) the person(s) in your life who help you during critical moments in school? How do they support you?
Strategy	6. When confronting a school-related challenge, how do you cope with it? (Do you attempt to change the issue, reframe the issue, and find ways to reduce stress, or use other methods to cope?)
College learning & study skills	7. Please share what learning and study skills you learned while at the community college.
Experience with faculty	8. To what extent did you engage with faculty while at the community college?
Environment satisfaction	9. To what extent were you involved with non-academic related activities while at the community college?

Post-focus group

Sub-construct	Item
Situation	1. Now that you are an incoming ASU student, what does this status mean to you?
Self	2. What motivates you or excites you about your coursework?
Support	3. Who is (are) the person(s) who helped you during first critical moments while at ASU? How did they support you?
Strategy	4. Did you experience any school-related challenges since enrolling at ASU? If so, how did you cope with it?
College learning & study skills	5. Earlier during the pre-focus group, I asked you about the learning and study skills you that you learned while at the community college. How much of these learning and study skills did you employ while at ASU? Please explain.

Experience with faculty	6. Earlier during the pre-focus group, I asked you about the extent of your engagement with faculty while at the community college. To what extent did these skills help your academic transition while at ASU? Please explain.
Experience with faculty	7. How much of this level of engagement did you employ while at ASU with ASU faculty? Please explain.
Environment satisfaction	8. Earlier during the pre-focus group, I asked you about the level of your involvement with non-academic related activities while at the community college. How much of this level of engagement did you employ at ASU with non-academic related ASU activities? Please explain.

APPENDIX E

QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNAIRE

Pre-qualitative questionnaire
Please answer the following questions in 2 to 5 sentences.

Sub-construct	Item
Situation	1. When do you anticipate graduating from ASU? What factors helped you determine this timeframe?
Situation	2. Where will you live when you start at ASU?
Situation	3. What are your parking/commuter plans when you start at ASU in the fall?
Self	4. Identify a specific skill you anticipate growing in from your experience at ASU.
Self	5. If you have had a school-related challenge, how has it affected you personally?
Support	6. Whom will you live with when you start at ASU?
Support	7. Describe the level of support you may receive from individuals who support you the greatest.
Strategy	8. Since starting college, how do you manage stress?
Experience with faculty	9. Which class format (in-person, hybrid, or online) will you enroll in at ASU and why?
College learning & study skills or Experience with faulty or Environment satisfaction	10. Compared to your community college experience, what do you anticipate will remain the same about your academic experience at ASU?
	11. Compared to your community college experience, what do you anticipate will be different about your academic experience at ASU?

Post-qualitative questionnaire
Please answer the following questions in 2 to 5 sentences.

Sub-construct	Item
Situation	1. When do you anticipate graduating from ASU? What factors helped you determine this timeframe?
Situation	2. How has the location of your home affected your ability to be the student you want to be?
Situation	3. How has your parking/commuter plans affected your access to campus?
Self	4. Identify a specific skill you grew in the most in while at ASU.

Self	5. If you have had a school-related challenge, how has it affected you personally?
Support	6. How has/have the person/people you live with affected your goals as an ASU student?
Support	7. Describe the level of support you receive from individuals who support you the greatest.
Strategy	8. Since starting college, how do you manage stress?
Experience with faculty	9. Which ASU class format (in-person, hybrid, or online) do you feel most successful in?
College learning & study skills or Experience with faulty or Environment satisfaction	10. Compared to your community college experience, what remains the same about your academic experience at ASU?
	11. Compared to your community college experience, what is different about your academic experience at ASU?
College learning & study skills	12. Describe the learning and study skills you practiced the most while at the university.
Experience with faulty	13. Which ASU faculty did you connect with the most during your first semester?
Environment satisfaction	14. Describe the level of connection (office hours, during/before/after class, email, etc.) and the level of frequency you maintained with your professors at ASU.

APPENDIX F

REFLECTION JOURNAL PROMPTS

APPENDIX F

REFLECTION JOURNAL PROMPTS

Reflection Journal Prompt #1
Please answer the following questions in paragraph format of five sentences or more.

Sub-construct	Item
Situation	1. Explain your reason for attending the community college when you first enrolled.
Situation	2. Describe your reason(s) for choosing to attend ASU in the fall as a transfer student.
Situation	3. Has anything recently influenced or affected your enrollment plans at ASU? If any, please elaborate.

Reflection Journal Prompt #2
Please answer the following questions in paragraph format of five sentences or more.

Sub-construct	Item
Self	1. How have you been able to manage the enrollment process ASU?
Self	2. What have been the surprisingly easiest experiences of enrollment?
Self	3. What have been the surprisingly most difficult experiences of enrollment?

Reflection Journal Prompt #3
Please answer the following questions in paragraph format of five sentences or more.

Sub-construct	Item
Support	1. Who are your greatest support to help you with your transition into ASU, if any? Explain in detail how they have supported you.
Support	2. Which college contacts have you actively sought to help you with your transition, if any? How have these contacts helped you?
Support	3. What, if any, has been challenging your support group to understand about your transition to the university? Please elaborate.

Reflection Journal Prompt #4
Please answer the following questions in paragraph format of five sentences or more.

Strategy	1. After enrolling in your fall courses, explain how you planned your semester courses according to your academic program to help you be the most successful student possible at ASU.
Strategy	2. How do believe your semester courses will balance out with your personal situation (e.g., your living situation, personal/work schedule, personal commitments, financial standing, etc.)?

Strategy	3. How do you believe your personal situation can affect your chosen semester courses?

Reflection Journal Prompt #5

Please answer the following questions in paragraph format of five sentences or more.

College learning & study skills	1. What did you enjoy most about your learning experience while at the community college? Why was this enjoyable?
College learning & study skills	2. What steps have you taken so far to prepare for your semester courses, if any? Please elaborate.

APPENDIX G

PROGRAM NOTES TEMPLATE

PROGRAM NOTES TEMPLATE

ASU NMP Legacy Scholars Program
1:1 Mentor Meetings

Student Name:	
Major:	(major map)
Year:	
Campus:	
Cohort:	

Course name	Location	Schedule	Cr

Date:		Follow-up:
Semester:	Fall: # credits, CGPA: #	Request Instructor Feedbacks
Career Goal:	Jr/Sr: internship fair/placement, job opportunities, resume reviews	
Live:		
Work:		
Plans for semester:	Review major map and understand how it fits in semester by semester plan	
Finances:	Student Account Balance: $	Refund: $ Awards: $ includes (Pell, etc.) Stipend: Supplemental Scholarships: FAFSA:	
Technology:		
Upcoming Nina Events:		
Other:		
Next meeting:		

Date:		Follow-up:
Semester:		
Career Goal:		
Live:		
Work:		
Plans for semester:		
Finances:	Student Account Balance:	
Upcoming Nina Events:		
Other:		

APPENDIX H

INNOVATION CONFIGURATION MAP (IC MAP)[4]

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[4] IC Map on Nina Scholars Transfer Student Intervention. Bold line = Ideal behaviors. Dotted line = Acceptable behaviors

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APPENDIX H

INNOVATION CONFIGURATION MAP (IC MAP)

Component 1: Request participation (recruitment)

1	2	3	4	5
All 5 Maricopa Nina Scholars who applied & interviewed to the ASU Nina Scholars Passport program for fall 2018 (participants) fully participate in study through individual interviews, pre-/post-focus groups, monthly journal reflection, and pre-/post-surveys during the late spring to fall/community college to university transition experience in addition to regular Nina Scholars program participation activities/events.	All 5 participants agree to participate in study but do not fully participation in study's requested individual interviews, pre-/post-focus groups, monthly journal reflection, and pre-/post-surveys during the late spring to fall/ community college to university transition.	Most (3-4) participants participate in study through individual interviews, pre-/post-focus groups, monthly journal reflection, and pre-/post-surveys during the late spring to fall/community college to university transition experience in addition to regular Nina Scholars program participation activities/events.	Not many (1-2) of the participants participate in the study; and/or they only participate in a small selection of the following: individual interviews, pre-/post-focus groups, monthly journal reflection, and pre-/post-surveys during the late spring to fall/community college to university transition experience, regular Nina Scholars program participation activities/events.	None (0) of the participants participate in the study.

Component 2: One-on-one mentor meeting

1	2	3	4	5
Participant attends 1 one-on-one mentor meeting during late spring/early summer session and 2 during fall semester with Nina Scholars Program Director. Meeting reviews participant's career and academic plan, current enrollment standing, and financial aid package status, as well as their general university knowledge, resources, and technology and Nina Scholars program expectations. A plan of action to address needs is provided with tools/resources, contacts, goals, deadlines, and follow-up.	Participant attends 1 one-on-one mentor meeting during early to mid-summer session and 1 or 2 during fall semester with the Nina Scholars Program Director. Goals and needs are somewhat assessed by reviewing their various statuses from first variation. A plan of action to address needs is provided but may lack depth, goals, and follow-up.	Participant attends 1 one-on-one mentor meeting during mid-summer session and 1 during fall semester with the Nina Scholars Program Director. Goals and needs are assessed without depth. Some review of their various statuses from first variation is completed. A plan of action to address needs is provided but may lack depth, goals, follow-up, or no plan of action is provided.	Participant attends no one-on-one mentor meeting during late summer session and only 1 during fall semester with the Nina Scholars Program Director. Participants' needs are not assessed. A review of their various statuses from first variation is NOT completed. A plan of action to address needs fails to be provided.	Participant does not attend a one-on-one mentor meeting at all during the summer and fall semesters with the Nina Scholars Program Director.

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Component 3: Peer mentor guidance

1	2	3	4
Participant is paired with a Nina Scholar peer mentor (aka: returning Passport Scholar). Participant and peer mentor connect 4 times during summer and fall semesters. Mentor shares personal transition experiences and guides participant through transition.	Participant is paired with Nina Scholar peer mentor. Participant and peer mentor connect 2 to 3 times during summer and fall semesters. Mentor shares but does not fulfill participant's needs when sharing about personal transition experience and guidance through transition.	Participant is paired with Nina Scholar peer mentor. Participant and peer mentor connect 1 time during summer or fall semesters. Mentor shares almost nothing to fulfill participant's needs about personal transition experience and guidance through transition.	Participant is paired with Nina Scholar peer mentor. Participant and peer mentor do not connect at all. As a result, mentor does not share anything about personal transition experience and guidance through transition with participant.

Component 4: Self-reflection journals

1	2	3	4	5
Participant is sent 5 separate monthly self-reflection journal prompts from early summer to early fall. Participant is asked to complete the self-reflection journals online within a two-week window. Participant is asked to reflect on their current circumstances during this transition period as well as their college learning and study skills.	Participant completes the 5 self-reflection journals online within one-month of the requested timeline. Participant somewhat reflects on their current circumstances and somewhat on their college learning and study skills during this transition period.	Participant completes the 3 to 4 of the self-reflection journals online within one-month of the requested timeline. Participant reflects very little on their current circumstances and very little on their college learning and study skills during this transition period.	Participant completes the 1 or 2 of the self-reflection journals online within the timeline of the study. Participant reflects very little on their current circumstances and very little on their college learning and study skills during this transition period.	Participant does not complete any of the self-reflection journals within the timeline of the study. Participant does not reflect at all on their current circumstances nor on their college learning and study skills during this transition period.

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APPENDIX I

SELF-REFLECTION RESEARCH MEMOS

SELF-REFLECTION RESEARCH MEMOS

An excerpt related to reflexivity

Suggestion #1 - Avoid Bias:

What I found were articles that encouraged reflective journaling. This is interesting, as I had originally included reflection as my fourth research question but was recommended by my chair to remove it early on as it was going to add to too many research questions for this study. One article from Ortlipp (2008) followed the framework to reflection writing from Denzin (1994) who coined the term "the interpretive crisis" (p. 501), which questions the level of researcher influence that exists in qualitative research, including how much is acceptable, if it needs to be "controlled" (Denizen, 1994, p. 501) and "how it might be accounted for" (Ortlipp, 2008, p. 698). Another article from Watt (2007) believed reflexivity to be essential in "understanding of both the phenomenon under the study and the research process itself" (p. 82). I was hoping to find articles that would give me clear guidance on good strategies and topics to write about in the journal reflections, but this was not their aim. Instead, the purpose of both of the articles were to share about their own reflection processes and what they learned about them. Funny, it was frustrating to me as to how subjective these articles were. However, as I wrote notes on the margins of both articles, I found that I could use their respective processes as strategies or options for my own reflection writing. To summarize, here is what I found useful among their articles:

- Over the long term of journaling, talk about the thought process of your study as you move along with it; provide a "research 'trail'" of how your study changes/may change
- Make the baggage we bring visible
- One author added excerpts from pre-research journal to her introduction chapter
- Reflect on changes made to research design
- Address how trustworthiness is considered
- Address how data sources may be used for validation
- Integrate theoretical material into journaling
- Assess if journaling helps identify theoretical lens for study & implications
- Consider asking participants to review analyzed data (not sure if this is appropriate during analyzing phase or better to conduct earlier in data collection phase)
- Praxis: allow research to help participants understand change situations, such as when they review their own data source (or data analysis)
- Allow critical self-reflection to unearth the power-knowledge relationship with participants
- Allow CSR to be a map to own growing and changing understanding of own role in this research (researcher, interviewer, and data interpreter)

- Reflect on management of each phase of the study

An excerpt related to challenges with interview question on resistance sub-construct

First Interview:

I conducted my first individual interview on this day with a Maricopa Nina Scholars transfer student who I will call student #1 [before assigning a pseudonym].

I met with student #1 a week before for our summer 1:1 meeting. Originally, I thought that I was going to be able to conduct the individual interview at the end of the 1:1 meeting, but that was not the case. I also thought that the 1:1 meeting was going to be only a half-hour long, but that was definitely not the case. There was so much to review during our 1:1 meeting to help her be well prepared/on-track to start the fall semester on the right track that the meeting ran sometimes 60 minutes long. At the end of the 1:1 meetings, was when I decided to invite her to participate in my study. I gave her a hard copy of the recruitment letter and when she agreed to participate, I scheduled the individual interview (for this day). This student was really motivated and willing to help me with my research. It appears that she was impressed that I too was in school. I also shared the individual interview questions in advance so as to let her know what to expect, which she appreciated and shook off a bit of her nerves about participating in a study.

The interview went well. Before starting the interview, I briefly reviewed Yosso's community cultural wealth theory using a handout I found online, which listed the author's citation. I shared with the student that this theory helped lay the framework for the questions I would be asking, so that she had an understanding how the questions were formed. She appreciated the context and was interested in learning more about the theory. Since this student had a chance to review the questions in advance, she was able to quickly formulate responses and even asked for clarification where she did not understand the question. I realize that the last question #6 (Since being in college, what have been the most pressing issues to you that exist in your community and why?) was not very well written and was confusing to this student. I tested my all questions beforehand with my committee chair but now I realize that I could have tested with my LSC members. So now, I'll have to prepare a follow-up explanation of this question and tie it back to Yosso's theory and sixth capital, resistance capital, when giving the follow-up explanation to the other students.

An excerpt related to using the term "vulnerable" as a major aspect of this study

Problem of Practice:

My meeting with Dr. Harris allowed me to verify that my problem of practice is a worthy problem for consideration: Vulnerable transfer students in the Nina Scholars program feel overwhelmed with the transition experience from community college to the university. She clarified for me that my problem of practice was a worthwhile problem to study because the issue/the perception that my students feel is still a relevant one even if they have demonstrated in the past relatively strong academic performance → the issue is also part of a larger matter that is just as relevant. After hearing her validation, I reassured myself that she had a point. I reflected on one recent research study I highlighted first chapter that talks about the growing vulnerable population in the state and how a lack of attention to this population could have negative consequences in the long run and how this population extended to more than just those in poverty, but rather to many more people who we may commonly know in our own communities. But, is it right for me to use the term vulnerable on these students? Do these students fit the definition of vulnerable as defined by this study? I think they do. But how do I know what it is to be vulnerable if I currently and fortunately do not identify with any of the factors that define a vulnerable person? But, maybe I should just be ok with that and rather focus on understanding their needs better, not just for the sake of this study, but for the impact that this program can have on these students → therefore, create an intervention that focuses on the impact.

An excerpt related to the development of an IC Map

Post-data collection:

I finished all the suggested edits for chapters 1-3 from my committee members that I could possibly complete at this point in my research. I also included the validation section at the end of chapter 3 that I hadn't previously laid out, including interrater reliability and the innovation configuration map (IC Map). I already had an IC Map created that was framed around the phases of the study, but then realized that I probably should redo the IC Map to be framed around the intervention instead. I looked up readings on validation strategies for qualitative research and was happy to find some pretty strong leads, including a text from Merriam and Tisdell (2015), which guided the framework for this section, particularly on how they addressed three key areas for validation: credibility, reliability, and transferability. I also added a fourth validation area, action-oriented outcomes, since this study is an action research study and the literature suggested that this validation technique was a good one to implement for this type of study. I was pretty happy with the thoroughness of the validity techniques I laid out, but questioned if this large list was more than is necessary. This made me think of the many, many coding methods I laid out in my proposal and whether I may or may not use them all by the time I finish my coding and analysis.

An excerpt related to using a strengths-based approach

I finished chapter 5 on discussion not too long ago and I had to reorganize my original outline, based on how my chapter 4 came out. Originally, I was planning on including a discussion of the three frameworks in the Implications section of chapter 5, but that changed in the end since I already pull in the frameworks when I talk about the phases in chapter 4 on findings. However, I am a bit nervous as to how much shorter chapter 5 in comparison to what I expected, especially after considering the length of chapter 4. Did I explain myself enough? I made sure to answer each of the research questions individually, per sub-construct, and then address the larger themes found, particularly as it relates to the transition from the pre-transfer to the post-transfer phases, which included: (a) that Passport Scholars possessed and recognized how their strengths supported their educational goals, (b) that Passport Scholars felt prepared for their transition to the university even as some of them lacked certain coping skills, (c) that Passport Scholars felt the skills they gained at the community college did not fully match their transition experiences and impacted their sense of ability to succeed, and (d) that Passport Scholars were able to utilize their strengths at moments when they lacked certain skills. I was surprised to see that the findings emphasized how the scholars utilized strengths. Going into this study, I wanted to utilize the framework from community cultural wealth as a way to avoid focusing on the students' deficiencies, the way I found that many studies did. I didn't want to go in to this study by defining them as victims. Once I finished writing and had the chance to step back to look at the overall picture, I did not expect the study to tell me how the students' strengths actually helped them during the transition.