Preparing High School Students for Transition to Community College

by

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A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

Approved April 2017 by the
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ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2017

ABSTRACT

Although it is generally acknowledged that a college degree is foundational to achieving success in the 21st century, only 19.5% of those entering public community colleges graduate with an associate's degree within three years (NCES, 2014). Many challenges have impeded students including being underprepared to transition from high school to college, being a first-generation college student, and having limited support networks.

The purpose of this action research project was to implement a college-going readiness program designed to increase the social and personal readiness of high school students making the transition from high school to college. The College Transition Project, the intervention, offered a series of face-to-face class sessions for students and online supplemental materials for students and parents (a) guiding and assisting students in navigating the college system, (b) improving social readiness, and (c) increasing goal setting, time management, communication, and stress management. The curriculum was designed to include key topics including potential pitfalls or challenges common to previously unsuccessful college students. Goal orientation, co-regulation, and self-regulation theories provided frameworks supporting the intervention. Over a five-week period, an instructor taught students who received information on these topics; while students and parents could review online resources at any time.

A concurrent mixed methods research design was employed and data included pre- and post-intervention surveys, field notes, and post-intervention interviews. Results indicated some modest outcomes were attained. Quantitative results indicated no changes in various study measures. By comparison, qualitative data showed students: recognized

the usefulness of co-regulation as it related to college preparedness, realized self-regulation efforts would aid their transition to college, and developed some college navigation skills that would facilitate transition to college. Most students acknowledged the need to identify goals, engage in self-regulation, and practice self-efficacy as critical components for students transitioning from high school to college. The discussion explained the outcomes in terms of the theoretical frameworks. Implications focused on additional ways to develop self-efficacy and employ co-regulated activities and relationship building to aid in developing motivation and to nurture emerging identities in students who were transitioning from high school to college.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to three people in my life who have been right by my side through this journey as my biggest supporters and motivators, my wife Stacy, my daughter Chloe, and my son Bryce. Without your love and support, I would have never been able to stay the course and complete this voyage. I love you all.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Although words cannot say enough, I want to express my deepest thanks and gratitude to my committee chair, Dr. Ray Buss. Without your guidance, support, knowledge, and motivation, I would have never been able to complete this process. Dr. Buss has inspired me to work hard, stay the course, and challenge myself in ways that I have not before, as he continuously encouraged me throughout our time working together. I thank you for all that you have done for me during this endeavor.

I would also like to extend my deepest gratitude to my committee members Dr. Steven Gonzales and Dr. Derrick Span. Both gentlemen bestowed great words of encouragement, mentorship, and knowledge to help support me during this process. I am fortunate to have both of you; your guidance, experience, knowledge, and all the things you continue to do to support me. Thank you for all that you do.

Additionally, I would like to acknowledge my parents, Margie and Louie Sanchez Jr. Without your love and support I would have not been able to complete this journey. Your love and prayers always kept me moving forward and helped guide me along the way. Also, to my brother and sisters, your continued words of encouragement, love and support, as I pushed ahead through this journey, have been amazing. Having so many supporters in my corner week-in-and-week-out kept me focused and moving forward over the last three years. To the Zimmerman's, I thank you for all your love and support and the encouragement you had for me along the way, this venture is not complete without all that you have done for our family. To all my amazing friends, colleagues, and extended family, you all have pushed me along, kept me grounded and focused, and were

always there when I needed that little extra burst of support. For those efforts, I thank you.

Finally, I say thank you to my amazing wife Stacy, my daughter Chloe, and my son Bryce. You have been incredible as we have ventured on this journey together as a family. Supporting me through the ups and downs, the long nights, working on vacations, the late evenings away from home, and all the other miscellaneous things that have come across my path on this adventure; you have been remarkable. I thank you for your continued love and support in everything I do and want you to know how much I love you.

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CHAPTER 1

LARGER AND LOCAL CONTEXT AND INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

Although it is generally acknowledged that a college degree is foundational to achieving success in the 21st century, only 19.5% of those entering public community colleges graduate with an associate's degree within three years (NCES, 2014). As an individual working in higher education for over 11 years, I have encountered many students who were able to make a successful transition from high school to college. Nevertheless, I have also encountered a wide range of students who were not prepared and struggled with making the transition from high school to post-secondary education year after year. I have seen students who were confronted with many challenges that ranged from the basic understanding of navigating the collegiate system to not having close personal support that was needed for collegiate success. As I began to examine research on this problem, I found this issue has been a long-standing matter of considerable concern. In many communities across the U.S. today, developing programs that have supported college readiness and college success have been implemented as key components to increase college attainment rates and improve long-term student success. Venezia and Jaeger (2013) examined the state of college readiness among high school students, the effectiveness of high school to college transition programs, and efforts to improve those transitions. Using statistical data from various sources including the National Center for Educational Statistics, the U.S. Department of Education, the College Board "SAT Report," and several others, Venezia and Jaeger found many post-secondary students were ill-prepared for college participation and success. The report also provided evidence that factors related to social inequity continued to hamper access to college in

underserved communities in the US. Venezia and Jaeger suggested that in addition to directly supporting academic preparation for students, capacity-building efforts were needed to ensure large comprehensive high schools had strong college-going cultures and provided the necessary professional development for educators to help all students meet college readiness standards.

Engle and Tinto's (2008) *Moving beyond access: College success for low-income, first-generation students*, focused on college attainment rates in the United States for underrepresented populations, whom they defined as students who did not receive equitable resources and in many cases were low-income, first-generation, minority college students. For this group, the authors explored perceived barriers of these students to their college success. They asked the following types of questions in their work on this issue. Why does college success matter? How do low-income, first-generation students fair in college? What are the constraints on college success for low-income, first-generation students? And how can we promote college access and success for low-income, first-generation students?

Based on their work, Engle and Tinto (2008) maintained large gaps persisted in terms of access to and success in higher education in this country. Data presented in this study revealed high-income youth were six times more likely to earn a four-year degree than were low-income students. Unfortunately, the gap between them has nearly doubled in the last 35 years. Finally, the authors offered insights and provided data to support efforts for educators and policy makers to increase college access and success by improving academic preparation for college, easing the transition to college, and encouraging engagement on the college campus.

Chait and Venezia (2009) identified improving academic skills for college readiness as a key to having students best prepared for college. These researchers highlighted the issues being faced in colleges today, with students who were under-prepared for college. They also presented data that showed approximately 83 percent of high school graduates enrolled in some form of postsecondary education, but only about 52 percent of these students completed their degrees. In their conclusions, the authors suggested attrition was influenced to a great extent by challenges students faced with respect to not being adequately prepared for college.

Local Context

In rural communities across the United States the dream of successfully graduating high school and moving on to be a successful college graduate has been on the minds of millions of young Americans. In the rural Arizona communities of Pinal County, I have had the privilege of working with students with this same dream every day. Several years ago, I was one of these students, working my way through a rural Pinal County high school pushing toward high school graduation with aspirations to move on to college. I, like so many others, believed higher education would be my ticket to better life opportunities for my future. Although my path has been successful, I cannot have said the same for many of my peers who had the potential, but for whom life challenges stepped in the way.

Working in higher education in my hometown community today, I have been afforded the opportunity to see many students with goals and aspirations to go to college, but they have failed to see their dreams come to fruition. Similar to when I was young, many of the same challenges have continued to exist today with students being

underprepared to successfully make the transition from high school to college. The region has a high contingent of first-generation, college students. Additionally, many of these students do not have strong support networks to help them understand and accomplish the various components that need to be performed to successfully enter, fully engage in, and complete college. In my action research project, I expected to tackle some of the challenges faced by prospective college students in Pinal County and help them find an effective path to their goal of a college education.

I currently serve as the director of admissions and recruitment for Central Arizona College. I have also been an adjunct faculty member for my institution, teaching an orientation to student development course for the Social and Behavioral Science Division. I have been responsible for oversight of all high school program(s) for my college district and worked closely will Pinal County educators to help develop and build programs to support college course work for local high school youth. Through my experiences as a local high school student, local community college student, and now as an educational leader in my community, I have had the opportunity to teach citizens of the region about the opportunities education can provide with respect to supporting their life goals and objectives.

My position at Central Arizona College has afforded me the opportunity to work directly with the various high schools of Pinal County. Through these interactions, I have recognized challenges that students of the region faced, which hindered students and their families from receiving the proper information needed to best prepare them for the challenging transition from high school to college. The interactions I speak of consist of my numerous experiences working with surveys, questionnaires, workshops, and various

interactions with students, faculty, staff, and administrators in my local context. Because my professional role in my institution, I hold a key responsibility of working to identify and assess the needs of local K-12 community partners and educational entities. As I considered these matters, I identified a critical need—the need to develop a network for students to help them obtain information to best support their transition from secondary to post-secondary education. Thus, the major barriers were a lack of resources: (a) preventing access to informative tools and materials on the college admissions process, (b) inhibiting guidance in navigating the financial aid world, and (c) precluding ample access to college professionals to help inform and educate students on differences between high school and college. With the budgetary constraints on Arizona high schools and the heavy work load placed on guidance counselors today, there was a substantial need for more support services to be offered to the students of Pinal County to better prepare them for college.

Issue of Concern

Educational attainment rates in Pinal County showed only 83.8% of the population with a high school diploma, 18% completed a bachelor's degree, 9.9% an associate's degree, and only 5.8% held a graduate degree or higher. From these data, it was evident that there were challenges within this region in terms of educational attainment (Economic Modeling Specialists International, 2013). In my experiences working within this community and from feedback of my peers and other local educators, there was a strong need for support in increasing the number of students who graduated from high school and moved forward by obtaining a college degree or certificate.

My experiences suggested many students in Pinal County tend to require additional support as they navigated the academic roads of high school and college. Many families of the region did not have a high level of academic attainment within their core family. Therefore, in many cases, family support has been limited with respect to knowledge of the education system. Language barriers, low socioeconomic levels, and transportation have been other challenges that hindered the academic process within the county. The vast rural space that makes up Pinal County with very limited public transportation has posed challenges for the people of this region. Moreover, the socioeconomic makeup of Pinal County indicated an estimated 17% of people lived below the poverty level according to the U.S. Census Bureau, which was below the national average.

With respect to student characteristics, my institution also admitted a high number of students who tested into developmental coursework. This fact also attested to the under-preparedness of students in this area of the state. During the academic year 2013-2014, Central Arizona College reported that 91.3% of students completing the COMPASS Algebra mathematics placement test for admissions required remedial assistance. The College also reported that 35.7% of students testing in reading needed remediation, whereas 45.2% of students testing in writing needed remedial assistance. With challenges of both academic and social unpreparedness for a vast number of students, it was evident there was considerable need to provide support to the students of Pinal County.

Based on information received from my peers, local educators, local high school and college students and their families, it appeared that offering a carefully established

support and transition program would be a key to increasing success of students transitioning to college. The focus of this project was to increase the college-going rate, and improve the overall successful transition and completion of college by more local students. Specifically, it appeared an effective program was warranted that supported students and families with college-going needs. By developing a program that supported prospective students and their families by better educating them on the skills and processes needed to be a successful college student, my action research project would provide vital tools and processes to meet community needs. My action research project focused on providing key information, a valuable support network, and a series of tools that were geared toward combating the numerous challenges that have plagued students of this region for many years.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of my action research project was to implement a college-going readiness program designed to increase the social and personal readiness of high school students making the transition from high school to college and to increase the first semester success of college freshman. The program entitled *The College Transition Project* provided an intervention designed to help minimize the pressures and fears that the college transition process can bring to students and their families. *The College Transition Project* provided a series of face-to-face class sessions that offered information on (a) guiding and assisting students in navigating the college system, (b) improving social readiness, and (c) increasing goal setting, time management, communication, and stress management. The curriculum was designed to assist with key topics identified as potential pitfalls or challenges that have been common to previously

unsuccessful college students. A theoretical framework that draws on goal orientation theory and co-regulation theory provided components for *The College Transition Project* that support social and personal readiness. This study capitalized on obtaining both qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously using a concurrent mixed methods research design.

Research Questions

The research questions that were used to guide my action research project have been presented below. These questions were formulated to help me better understand and examine how a college readiness program can increase the social and personal readiness of local high school students in rural Pinal County who are making the transition from high school to college.

RQ 1 – How and to what extent does *The College Transition Project* mediate student's behavior as they persist toward their collegiate goals?

RQ 2 - How and to what extent does participation in *The College Transition Project* help students to develop their personal and social readiness that support their transition from high school to college?

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH GUIDING THE PROJECT

The purpose of my action research was to implement a college readiness program designed to increase the social and personal readiness of high school students making the transition from high school to college to increase the first semester success of college freshman. A broad framework that incorporated goal orientation theory, co-regulation theory, and self-regulation theory was proposed to guide the project. The broad framework was viewed as providing the relevant components for a successful college transition program that supports social and personal readiness. The three theories seemed to be particularly useful for attaining the goal of developing a program designed to help guide high school students in Pinal County, Arizona to make the successful transition from high school to college and to affect retention rates of these students in their initial semester of college. Studies related to the theories identified material that establishes the importance of personal and social development as a potential component for shaping students through co-regulated activities and relationships to help build motivation, emerging identities in students, and student self-regulation. My action research capitalized on a student-to-mentor relationship, a motivational component, and goals-based curriculum.

Goal Orientation Theory

Accomplishing goals and the motivational factors that lead to successful goal achievement have been important in understanding academic attainments and students' successes. In recent decades, goal orientation theory has emerged as in important theoretical perspective that has been shown to influence students' motivation in school

(Kaplan & Maehr, 2006). Goal orientation frameworks were originally defined as situated orientations for action in an achievement task (Ames, 1992; Dweck, 1986). By comparison, the view of goal orientation today has referred more to the 'how' and 'why' people were trying to achieve objectives; thus, there has been a greater emphasis on the purpose of demonstrating competence (Ames, 1992; Dweck, 1986; Kaplan & Maehr, 2006). In addition, the goal orientation theory has highlighted environmental characteristics that fostered these motivational tendencies (Kaplan & Maehr). Early goal theorists focused on two types of goal orientation, mastery goal orientation and performance goal orientation, which were focused on the desire of mastering tasks for self-development versus demonstrating competence as compared to others, respectively. More recently, theorists have also examined approach-oriented goals in which individuals have been motivated to engage in an activity because it was viewed as being something that would provide a positive outcome as compared to avoiding other situations because they would result in negative outcomes.

The recent work of goal theorists has focused more often on mastery orientation and outcomes from mastery situations as compared to performance-oriented goals, which resulted in performance outcomes. Those who have employed mastery-oriented goals have focused on learning and mastering the task to attain self-improvement. Importantly, numerous studies have shown mastery goals were more productive than performance goals (Hurst, 2013). Recent research studies have been conducted to examine environmental factors and how they affected goal orientation and influenced students' achievement. For example, Peloso and Galliford (2003) explored the influence of students' perceptions of learning environment factors on goal orientation. Results showed

that self-efficacy was a powerful predictor of goal orientation. Based on the outcomes, Peloso and Galliford recommended that the learning environments for performance-oriented students must be revised and manipulated in ways that fostered a mastery goal orientation to afford students the greatest opportunity to learn new information and skills. Nevertheless, to attain such an outcome, it will be essential for educators to understand more of the elements involved in determining students' feelings of self-efficacy to increase the likelihood of encouraging students to be more learning oriented (Peloso & Galliford).

Overall findings from the various interventions seemed promising. Working to change educational environments to increase emphasis on mastery goal orientation has the potential to enhance students' motivation, attitudes, and achievement (Kaplan & Maehr, 2006). Goal orientation theory presents a promising avenue in research dedicated to exploring students' motivation, attitude, and behaviors in goal achievement situations.

Friedman and Mandel (2009) used expectancy and goal setting theories to predict college students' retention and performance. The authors presented historical information on previous studies and numerous variables that had been investigated in retention studies including goal orientation theory research. Specifically, students' motivation and goal setting were used in conjunction with two traditional predictors, high school GPA and SAT scores, to predict college student academic performance and retention (Friedman & Mandel, 2009). The researchers examined three hypotheses: (a) Scholastic Aptitude Test Scores (SAT) and High school GPA will predict college academic performance and retention; (b) freshmen that enter college with higher motivation to perform academically and socially in college are more likely to stay in college beyond their first year and

achieve higher GPAs; and (c) freshmen that set academic and social goals are more likely to stay in college beyond their first year and achieve higher GPAs.

Friedman and Mandel (2009) used their Student Motivation Questionnaire (SMQ) to measure goal setting behaviors, and Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory model that represented students' motivational force for performing well academically and socially. The data analysis consisted of an ANOVA to determine whether students with different retention outcomes varied with respect to their responses on the SMQ. Results of the study indicated the traditional SAT scores and high school GPA measures predicted freshmen college student academic performance and student retention, and that student academic performance expectancies provided additional prediction of end-of-first-year cumulative GPA (Friedman & Mandel).

In a follow-up study, Friedman and Mandel (2011) sought to determine whether student needs for achievement, affiliation, autonomy, and dominance measured by the Needs Assessment Questionnaire predicted academic performance and retention beyond traditional measures such as high school grade point average and Scholastic Aptitude Test scores to predict college student academic performance and retention. The researchers used goal setting and expectancy theory to predict college student performance and retention beyond the first year of college. In this study, the researchers examined two hypotheses relating to prediction of performance and retention: (a) first-year students who entered college with higher achievement, affiliation, autonomy and dominance motivation needs were more likely to achieve higher cumulative GPAs at the end of the first year in college and (b) first-year students who entered college with higher

achievement, affiliation, autonomy and dominance motivation needs were more likely to stay in college beyond their first year.

Both hypotheses tested the degree to which student motivation as measured by the NAQ predicted performance at the end of the freshman year and retention for the sophomore year of college when student demographic variables and traditional predictors such as SAT and HSGPA were controlled (Friedman & Mandel, 2011). A survey was used to capture student feedback and demographic information. All freshman students who entered a state college in northern New York during the academic year 2006-2007 were asked to participate in a voluntary survey within three weeks after the semester began. An ANOVA was used to determine whether students with different retention outcomes varied with respect to their responses on the NAQ. The findings in this study indicated that when compared to students with lesser achievement or greater autonomy needs, students who were motivated to achieve results, need for achievement, and were not motivated to work alone, low need for autonomy, were more likely to achieve higher grades.

Implications of this research for the project. After carefully considering the two studies presented in the previous section, it was evident there was potential for the use of goal orientation theory as a component of my action research project. As I focused on the development of a program designed to help high school students in Pinal County, Arizona make the successful transition from high school to college and the retention of these students during their initial semester of integration, both studies provide research that was related to my area of inquiry. In each study, results show student retention in colleges and universities are linked to goal orientation. Thus, goal orientation appears to

be a potential component for increasing retention rates with students during their first years of collegiate course work. Because I elected to integrate goal setting and goal achievement as components of my transition program, the information provided in the studies informed my research efforts.

Co-regulation Theory

Making successful transitions from one level of academic performance to another has been identified as a major factor in the retention of students and their long-term success. Many factors including social and personal preparedness were identified as potential areas of interest to help students make the successful transition from high school to college. Through various research studies, co-regulation theory has been identified as a way to help students build identity and motivation to support personal growth and development. Co-regulation has occurred whenever individuals' joint actions blend together to achieve a unique and mutually created set of social actions (Fogel, 1993).

Co-regulation has referred to the relations among cultural, social, and personal sources of influence that together challenge, shape, and guide, i.e., "co'regulate," (Hadwin, Järvelä, & Miller, 2011; McCaslin, 2009) Essentially co-regulation was derived from the fact that many individuals have needed social partners because they often could not decide, did not know how to decide, or could not easily decide on their own about matters or processes needed to function appropriately and deal with matters that were confronting them. In these cases, co-regulation was the primary way an individual could discover a link between information and the dynamics of action (Fogel, 1992). Results from research in this area have shown interactions in groups or partnerships aided in shaping an individual's identity by participation in social and cultural relationships.

Co-regulation theory has provided an encouraging occasion in academic research to explore students' identity, motivation, social, and cultural relationships, and how these areas have positively affected student retention and successful college transition. Available opportunities and social relationships have informed the activities in which students engaged and their adaptive learning. Students' adaptive learning was influenced in part by their readiness and dispositions and in part by cultural expectations and regulations (McCaslin, 2009). Moreover, a study by Volet, Summers, and Thurman (2009) focused on examining the nature and process of collaborative learning in student-led group activities at a university. The activities consisted of 18 second-year veterinary science students meetings as they worked informally on a group assignment on their own time. The framework for this research combined social regulation with content processing (Volet et al., 2009). Importantly, social shared regulation occurred when group members collectively regulated activity and activities were decided in shared ways, whereas content processing was grounded in information-processing approaches to cognition, and represented the mental activities used by students to process content knowledge. In this study, the researchers presented an approach to the study of collaborative learning. The situative approach adopted in this study was inspired by Barron's (2003) and Greeno's (2006) arguments for focusing on the group as the unit of analysis to understand the nature and emergence of productive interactions in group learning activities (Volet et al., 2009).

Consistent with the theoretical framework calling for the group as unit of analysis and the research interest in identifying episodes of group engagement in social regulation of learning, the coding units were at the episodic level, and data from two collaborative

group meetings was used to establish the reliability of the coding system. All episodes of high-level co-regulation were examined to identify and describe the point at which each episode emerged (Volet et al., 2009). Results indicated high-level co-regulation was most commonly preceded by a question or an explanatory statement and given the educational value of high-level co-regulation in collaborative learning, further documentation of regularities in how it emerged represented an important avenue for future research on group learning practices across a broad range of disciplines and task types (Volet et al.). Volet et al. concluded, "The proposed theoretical framework for socially-regulated learning combining the constructs of social regulation and content processing was found to be useful for identifying patterns of interaction in an informal, student-led group learning activity (p. 140). The implication for the current project is that students may work together to foster development of socially shared regulation, which may subsequently be used in developing individualized self-regulation by students.

Winters and Azevedo (2005) conducted a study that examined 62 high school students' regulation of learning during computer-based inquiry in a biology course. Results showed those students with low prior knowledge regulated their learning by relying on their partners for cognitive and other regulatory support. Thus, co-regulation played an important role when students felt they were less knowledgeable.

In another study, McCaslin (2009) created a co-regulation model of identity based on an emergent interaction perspective derived from Vygotsky's theory. The research was conducted to examine a model of the role of motivation in identity development and recognized a co-regulation approach as one of many modern attempts to understand how social and cultural influences might affect the development of the individual or perhaps

transcend the individual. The co-regulation model used in this piece attempted to capture the dynamics of reciprocal press of personal, cultural, and social sources of influence to understand the emergence of identity (McCaslin).

McCaslin (2009) argued that emergent identity was a continuous process of participation and validation that was co-regulated by personal, cultural, and social influences and the relationships among them. The results also identified that a co-regulation perspective could aid understanding of student motivation and emergent identity (McCaslin). Additionally, McCaslin identified that another key factor, the availability of opportunities and relationships in the social realm informed the activities in which students engaged and their adaptive learning. Students' adaptive learning was influenced in part by their readiness and dispositions and in part by cultural expectations and regulations. Finally, the research showed how emergent identity involved unique adaptations linked to personal motivation and experience as well as shared adaptations; those things that we believe and do because of the socialization and acculturation press that we have in common with others, which was a key concept in this research (McCaslin).

Implications for the project. The studies in this section provide an opportunity for the use of co-regulation theory as a component in my action research project. Because the focus of the project is on the development of a program designed to help guide high school students in Pinal County to make successful transitions from high school to college, the previous research work on co-regulation and social regulation suggests students working in groups might be a plausible technique to positively influence retention rates of these students in their initial semester of college. The studies identify

material that establishes the importance of personal and social development as a potential component in shaping students through co-regulated activities and relationships to help build motivation and emerging identities in students. Because my action research targets a student-to-mentor relationship, and a motivational component, co-regulated learning theory serves as a valuable resource in my research.

Self-Regulated Learning Theory

Although co-regulated learning was a key theoretical framework that has guided my action research, in the context of this study, it was also important to acknowledge and recognize research on self-regulated learning (SRL) as being essential to my work. Co-regulated learning actually referred to the 'transitional processes in a learner's acquisition of SRL, during which experts and learners shared a common problem-solving orientation, and SRL was gradually appropriated by the learners as part of the interactions (Hadwin & Oshige, 2011). Prior research in this area has been focused on aspects such as interaction, speech, and discourse, often centering on issues of scaffolding and interdependence (Hadwin & Oshige). Moreover, focus has also been given to the dynamic interplay among personal, social, and cultural influences, what McCaslin (2009) referred to as the press and tension among potential (personal), practicable (social such as classroom opportunities), and probable (cultural norms and challenges). As a result, data primarily consisted of traces of interaction in the form of relations among influences such as activities, engagement, regulations, and structures. Researchers examining co-regulated learning have endeavored to examine the ways in which social practices interact with individual engagement and regulatory processes. Social support in the form of scaffolding has been employed to assume some of the self-regulatory processes or

burdens rather than merely instructing or prompting students to engage in those processes (Hadwin & Oshige). I want to ensure that it was recognized that co-regulated learning merely acknowledged different aspects of self-regulation stretch beyond the individual and into the social realm (Hadwin & Oshige). Hadwin (2000) demonstrated that by studying the same complex learning context from these different theoretical and methodological perspectives, we have substantially enhanced our understanding of learners as social beings who monitor and regulate learning across a range of social levels.

Other research on self-regulation has been conducted to examine the role of monitoring and regulation processes that were used to regulate specific learning and study strategies (Pintrich, 2000; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990; Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, & McKeachie, 1991; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001). For example, Pintrich (2000) maintained self-regulated learning was, "an active, constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning and then attempt to monitor, regulate, and control their cognition, motivation, and behavior, guided and constrained by their goals and the contextual feature in the environment" (p. 453). For Zimmerman and Schunk (2001), the essence of self-regulation of learning was students taking responsibility and control over their learning. Specifically, self-regulated learning involved meta-cognitive aspects such as monitoring how well the leaning is coming along, exerting control over learning by applying strategies when learning was not going well or as planned, and engaging in self-regulation of effort in the learning process.

In an early study, Pintrich et al. (1991) explored a variety of motivational, monitoring, and self-regulation strategies in their work on developing the Motivated

Strategies Learning Questionnaire (MLSQ) with 380 college students. They developed an instrument the MLSQ to measure various constructs associated with college students' motivational orientations and their use of different learning strategies—strategies such as goal setting, monitoring of learning, and self-regulation of learning. In all, there were 81 items, which composed 15 scales on the MSLQ. Results showed the instrument demonstrated reasonable validity and reliability. Most relevant to the work to be conducted in the dissertation, were scales such as self-efficacy for learning and performance, cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies, and meta-cognitive self-regulation. The instrument was quite long and the division into 15 subscales was overly complex.

In a related study, Pintrich and De Groot (1990) employed a reduced version of the MLSQ with 44 items, which were associated with five subscales. The subscales were self-efficacy, cognitive strategy use, self-regulation, intrinsic value, and test anxiety. Given the focus of this action research project, a focused review of the first three subscales has been provided. First, self-efficacy was viewed as a motivational component because it was concerned with students' beliefs about being able to perform some task or learn some material as well as taking responsibility for that performance. In fact, self-efficacy has been considered to be confidence in carrying out the necessary requirements to ensure attainment of some outcome (Bandura, 1997). To illustrate the nature of this construct as it was related to beliefs about learning, consider the following items: "I'm certain I can understand the ideas taught in this class," and "I know I will be able to learn the material for this class." Second, cognitive strategy use was a second component of self-regulated learning strategies and referred to employing strategies to facilitate learning. Examples of items of cognitive strategy use were: "When I study, I put

important ideas into my own words," and "When reading, I try to connect the things I am reading about with what I already know." Third, self-regulation was a third component of self-regulated learning strategies and referred to monitoring and controlling learning efforts. Examples of these items were: "I ask myself questions to make sure I know the material I have been studying," and "Before I begin studying I think about the things I will need to do to learn."

Pintrich and De Groot (1990) conducted their study with 173 seventh-grade students. They examined the correlations among the constructs, the reliability of the measures, and the predictive utility of the measures for predicting academic performance using regression analyses. Results showed the measures demonstrated appropriate, significant correlations among each other and with various measures of student work such as grades, seatwork, exams/quizzes, etc. Finally, regression analyses indicated some of the motivational and self-regulated learning strategies were good predictors of student work scores and grades.

Implications of SRL for the project. There are two very important implications for the project based on the SRL literature. First, with respect to measuring outcome variables, it is clear that self-efficacy, cognitive strategy use, and self-regulation would be constructs to be assessed during the project. Based on the literature, these variables are associated with learning and control of learning, hence they would be important measures of students' ability to carry out these strategies and use them to benefit their performance in college. Second, these variables broadly suggest the kinds of instruction that would be provided as part of the intervention. For example, teaching students to use certain (a) cognitive strategies including certain study skills/techniques and (b) self-regulation skills

including monitoring and control strategies may prove to be fruitful activities to teach students during the intervention.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

For my research design, I employed a mixed methods research approach. Mixed methods research encompassed combining the techniques, processes, and languages of both quantitative and qualitative research into a single study (Creswell, 2014; Greene, 2007). Mixed methods research offered in-depth, contextualized, and natural insights of qualitative research coupled with the compelling predictive power of quantitative research. A mixed methods approach was more comprehensive than attacking a problem from only one point of view and allowed for the crossing of disciplinary boundaries (Creswell, 2014; Greene, 2007). The mixed methodology was essential in my action research project and was critical in the design and evaluation phases of my study.

Setting

My position at Central Arizona College as the director of admission and recruitment afforded me the opportunity to work directly with the various high schools of Pinal County. Through these interactions, I have recognized students of the region face challenges that prevent them and their families from receiving the proper information needed to best prepare them for the challenging transition from high school to college.

According to the Economic Modeling Specialists International (2013), educational attainment rates in Pinal County show only 27.5% of the population with a high school diploma, 11.6% carry a bachelor's degree, 9.9% an associate's degree, and only 5.8% hold a graduate degree or higher. From this data, it was evident that there were challenges within this region in terms of educational attainment. With language barriers, low socioeconomic levels, and transportation identified as challenges that hindered the

academic progress within the county, I believed this was an ideal setting for the proposed intervention. With challenges of both academic and social under-preparedness for students in the county, there was a genuine opportunity to bring support to the students of Pinal County. I developed, offered, and evaluated a carefully established support and transition program that was responsive to information provided by college colleagues, local educators, local high school and college students, and their families. I anticipated *The College Transition Project* would encourage high school graduation, increase the college-going rate, and aid the first-semester college retention rate. The program was designed to help with the overall successful transition and short-term retention of more local students at the college level.

Participants

This study took place in a local Pinal County high school in Arizona. The school for this study had a large group of traditional high-school-aged students who attended the local community college in Pinal County, Central Arizona College. The program allowed for 25 to 50 students to participate in *The College Transition Project*. Students who participated in this program were identified as students who projected to be interested in making the transition from high school to college. The individuals who participated in this program were selected through a recommendation process. Specifically, students received a recommendation from one of their high school teachers, counselors, administrators, or a member of the college's faculty or staff. The program was promoted to high school students, faculty members, and staff. The participating members of *The College Transition Project* were required to be current high school seniors who were on track to graduate in the spring of the year the research was initiated. The project was

conducted during the fall 2016 school year semester while the selected participants were concurrently enrolled in high school and in a dual-enrollment course at Central Arizona College. All participants were identified, selected, and registered for participation for the program prior to the beginning of the initial sessions.

Role of the Researcher

In this action research study, my role was that of content creator for the intervention identified as *The College Transition Project*. I created all course content, instructors' guides for the face-to-face course sessions, including developing the materials that augmented the face-to-face sessions and capitalized on using technology to provide for access outside of those sessions. I was also the data collector and an observer of the five-week program, and directly involved with all pre- and post-intervention activities. Over the last two years, I have worked on developing and determining the intervention's makeup, content, layout, and final structure. During my doctoral research program, I have honed the formation of materials, data collection tools and techniques, project content, training materials, and all tools that were necessary to support implementation of the intervention during the fall semester of 2016, as well as the evaluation of the program's effectiveness.

Intervention

The educational intervention was *The College Transition Project,* a college readiness program designed to increase the social and personal readiness of high school students making the transition from high school to college, from local high schools in Pinal County. This program consisted of series of interactive, face-to-face class sessions and also included an online system of tools that provided access to information for

students, parents, and families with the purpose of guiding them toward being better prepared for making the transition from high school to college. This suite of materials consisted of a wide variety of tools designed to help minimize the pressures and fears the college transition process can bring to families. Details on the suite of materials are provided below.

A series of face-to-face class sessions provided information on topics of navigating the college system, social readiness, goal setting, time management, stress management, and communication. The curriculum was developed to answer key questions that were identified to best educate the students on potential pitfalls or challenges that were common occurrences to unsuccessful college students. The idea was to educate these students on these topics because they were common areas of challenge for prospective college students. The in-class, face-to-face sessions consisted of two classes per week, meeting in one-hour periods, extending over a five-week period. The in-class sessions were accompanied by the use of a series of on-line modules focused on communication, goal setting, time management, social preparedness for college, and stress management. Information provided in the modules was directly aligned with information from the face-to-face sessions and supplemented and augmented that material. I compiled a variety of materials including literature and online resources designed to help minimize the pressures and fears the college transition process may otherwise induce in students. The online tools were designed to assist students and families to be better educated on the many avenues they may encounter along the path of becoming a successful collegian. The online content design also included interactive online content relevant to college preparation skills and knowledge.

The first workshop provided information on navigating the college system. In two face-to-face sessions, students learned about the various support networks within the college environment, such as academic support through the student learning center that provided free tutoring service, free workshops on student success and computer labs. They also learned about library services, the Trio Program, student engagement opportunities, and student services including academic advising, university transfer office, financial aid office, and registration services. Student also learned about terminology that was commonly used in higher education and the difference between the high school and the college environment and what the transition process often entailed. This workshop was designed to help orient the student to the college environment and help them with transition and transformation.

With respect to the online module that complemented the face-to-face sessions on navigating college, students had the opportunity to complete an online module that was designed to help them identify transitional issues of going to college, that described the expectations of college and explained the process of college, and that finally listed and defined the resources on campus to aid in their transition and success. The module and online tools supported their efforts as they tried out these skills on navigating college. For example, students were be able to complete an online form that helped them list and identify the most important resources of the college campus to support their college career.

A second workshop consisted of two face-to-face sessions held on social readiness, which included discussion on cultivating relationships, appreciating diversity, and socialization. The workshop's discussions focused on the importance of fostering

relationships with college professors, advisors, mentors, classmates, family, and friends. These forums also provided an opportunity to discuss the diverse environment and experience the collegiate milieu provided with respect to relationships with others. Other information in this workshop covered discussion of racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity, along with work on diversity in gender and sexual orientation, and generational diversity.

The online module on social readiness allowed students to review the material presented in the workshop. In addition, module materials provided students with opportunities to review videos and complete online activities of reflection from what they learned about diversity and the social aspects of college. The students also participated in a collaboration exercise online and face-to-face by selecting and reviewing a topic on diversity as it pertained to the college campus. Each student also completed a short reflection piece on relationships on campuses that they have cultivated so far and the challenges they may face developing future relationships on their campus.

A third workshop focused on goal setting, which can be used to develop academic and life goals aligned to each student's educational and life aspirations. In the face-to-face workshop component, students were provided with information about the importance and usefulness of goal setting. They also learned a goal setting procedure. Specifically, they were taught goal setting strategies that focused on educational, life, and personal goals. The session also included a goal setting activity to help students practice goal setting strategies by ranking personal values and topics they found important in life. In the session, they also learned about and discussed short-term goals, long-term goals, and establishing a routine that best supported their individual life style.

After participating in the goal setting workshop and its activities, students were able to access an online module that provided a review of information from the goal setting workshop and allowed them to access and use the information as they set goals and monitored progress toward those goals. The online, goal setting module provided students an interactive plan that helped them to develop their own educational, personal, and other life goals. Like the in-class activity, the module helped students' assess their lives and examine where they wanted to go both in the short- and long-term future. The module also allowed student to explore personal values, motivators, and allowed them to discuss overcoming potential obstacles that may cause challenges with goal attainment.

A fourth set of two face-to-face workshops was focused on time-management and stress management. In these workshops, students explored stress management and the critical role it played in student persistence and completion of college course work. Students worked on the actions they needed to practice and apply to better manage their stress. Students learned to identify their current stress levels, identify side effects of stress, analyze and recognize causes of stress, evaluate moderate stress levels and appropriate stress management strategies, and identify high stress levels. The sessions activities consisted of students working on gathering information about academic, mental, physical, and financial aid resources to help with stress, they developed a stress management plan, and focused on building awareness of their stress management abilities. The student experience provided both interactive group activities and individual activities in these sessions. The sessions also focused on helping students to identify effective time management strategies that could be used to support both academic and personal life. Because one of the biggest challenges students faced in college was

balancing academic, personal, and work time demands, students worked to establish the processes needed to capitalize on the advantages and disadvantages of various time-management tools. The course content also focused on students learning on how to apply their understanding of planning tools to academic situations, including explaining the importance of prioritizing activities, learning about prioritizing tasks to improve how to manage their time, being prepared to plan for different time periods of the academic year, and also knowing how to evaluate a time management plan and comparing it with how the students actually managed their time. Finally, the sessions recommended strategies for avoiding time-management pitfalls that persist among college students. By including a short lecture delivered by the instructor, time management activities were conducted in both group and individual experiences within the two face-to-face work sessions on the this topic.

An online module that followed up on the time management workshops was made available to students and parents. In this module, students and parents were able to participate in two time management activities that allowed the students to work on time management skills. The first interactive activity focused on reviewing a college syllabus and how it can help in establishing a time management plan for an individual course. The second interactive online activity asked students to create a daily to-do-list that helped them prioritize their day's activities based on academic goals, personal goals, and other activities. The interactive online module supported student development in establishing time management skills for the future. In the stress management module, students and parents were able focus on learning more about identifying what students' stressors can be, and how to best manage stress levels. Another interactive piece to this module

allowed students to learn about how time management influenced stress. The module also provided opportunities for students to learn more about developing a plan and intervention to be proactive when responding to stress. The online module also provided an additional resource for students and parents to better understand the critical role that stress management plays in academic success as a student.

A fifth set of two face-to-face workshops focused on self-regulated learning and helped students to learn about establishing the ability to control their learning environment while regulating their own actions toward their academic goals as college students. The sessions provided both interactive group discussions and activities, along with individual activities and reflection time. The course content focused on how self-regulated learners learn to be aware of their academic strengths and weaknesses, and how they develop individual strategies to handle the day-to-day challenges of academic success.

An online module followed up on the self-regulated session and provided another experience that allowed students to attain greater depth in developing their own strategies they applied to the onset of their collegiate career. The activity asked students to assume the role of college student and develop a short personal plan of action that will help them with a fictitious academic task given to them by a college instructor. Students focused on these self-regulation phases in their activity, task perception, goal setting and planning, enacting, and adaptation. The module work was designed to help students get a better sense of self-regulated learning and the role it played in their academic success as a college student.

Instruments

Data collected in this research study consisted of both qualitative and quantitative data. The data for this research study consisted of pre- and post-intervention assessments of participants' college-going skills, participants' self-regulation skills, and participants' motivation. Additionally, participant interviews and participant visual ethnographies were also established to provide data for the study.

Quantitative measures. The pre- and post-intervention assessments were administered to determine the effect *The College Transition Project* had on participants' college-going skills using components of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ). As noted in the literature review, the MSLQ consisted of a variety of scales including (a) self-efficacy, (b) intrinsic value (which assesses goals and interests in the tasks), (c) cognitive strategy use, and (d) self-regulation (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990). These four constructs were assessed using a six-point Likert scale with 6 = *Strongly Agree*, 5 = *Agree*, 4 = *Slightly Agree*, 3 = *Slightly Disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*, and 1 = *Strongly Disagree*. Examples of illustrative items for self-efficacy were "I know that I will be able to learn the material for this class," and "I expect to do very well in this class." Examples of items from the intrinsic value subscale were "It is important for me to learn what is being taught in this class," and "I think that what we are learning in this class is interesting." For the cognitive strategy use subscale, examples of items were "When I do homework, I try to remember what the teacher said in class so I can answer the questions correctly," and "When I am studying a topic, I try to make everything fit together." Examples of items from the self-regulation scale were "I ask myself questions to make sure I know the material I have been studying," and "When I am reading, I stop

once in a while and go over what I have read." The complete set of items may be found in Appendix A.

I also assessed a general cognitive view of motivation and learning strategies among participants by using an instrument called the Student Motivation Questionnaire (SMQ; Friedman & Mandel, 2009), which has been used to measure freshmen college students' goal setting behaviors. The SMQ consisted of a construct including goal clarity and influence that was used in my research study (Friedman & Mandel). An example of an item from the goal and clarity influence subscale was "My school goals are very clear and specific." See Appendix B for the complete set of items.

An additional researcher-created instrument was designed to be used to determine the effect of other components of *The College Transition Project*. The researcher-created instrument was administered prior to the intervention and following it. Questions focused on the constructs of (a) navigating college, (b) social readiness, and (c) time and stress management. The instrument was a 16-item questionnaire that assessed these content areas using a six-point Likert scale with 6 = *Strongly Agree*, 5 = *Agree*, 4 = *Slightly Agree*, 3 = *Slightly Disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*, and 1 = *Strongly Disagree*. An example of an item for navigating college was, "I am aware of my college's policies about academic honesty." For social readiness, an example of an item was, "I make an effort to communicate well in social interactions, especially by listening actively when others are speaking." Finally, examples of items for time and stress management were, "I use a weekly or daily calendar tool to manage my time well," and "When setbacks occur, I work to solve the problems that caused those setbacks." The complete instrument has been provided in Appendix C.

Qualitative measures. Visual ethnography data were collected to capture student participant's perception of successful college transition, as it pertained to their individual experiences and life setting. The visual ethnographies were to be pictures students used to represent their perceptions/feelings about their abilities to successfully deal with college. Thus, each student was asked to assemble five pictures that showed how they would successfully cope with college and they wrote a brief narrative that went along with the pictures to "tell their story" about successfully dealing with college.

Additionally, I conducted a semi-structured interview with a selected group of 8 students. Students were asked about knowledge and experience of goals and goal setting, co-regulation and self-regulation experiences, and the social realm or sphere of influence in relation to these targeted areas. Examples of interview items are "What anxiety or fears do you have about accomplishing these goals?" and "Can you think of ways your own self-efficacy beliefs play a role in your daily life?" The complete set of interview items has been provided in Appendix D.

Procedure and Timeline

Data collection plan. Provided in Table 1 was a visual guide that communicates the established timeline and procedure of my study including the time frame for actions and procedures, as well as data collection points. See Table 1. The proposed college transition program was projected to run over a five-week time frame, and consisted of two one-hour face-to-face sessions, taking place each week. The college success program would run during a portion of the fall semester of the senior year along with collection evaluation of data. Student participants attended sessions taught by a college staff member who had designed curriculum to meet the topics of navigating the college

system, social readiness, goal setting, time management, communication, and stress management.

The session content consisted of lecture, active learning activities, group work, individual work, videos, and online materials. The content used in each session varied based on the topic of the session and the materials that best supported the teaching and learning of the given topic. The student participants had assignments to do "homework" outside of class and were given a scheduled listing of all work and activities that were expected after the sessions. The artifacts collected were to consist of material imbedded in the program layout and the student's activities. As indicated in Table 1, pre- and post-intervention assessments were imbedded in the program activities, along with visual ethnographies, and participant interviews.

Table 1

Timeline and Procedures of the Study

Time frame	Actions	Procedures
July 2016	Assign instructor for *The College Transition Project*	• Determine who will lead program sessions • Meet with assigned instructor to discuss program goals and objectives
July 2016	Train college success instructor on workshop content	• Present at district staff meetings • Provide program content guides for instructor and staff • Develop online portal for workshop content

August 2016	Train high school staff on workshop content	Answer questions and provide assistance, as needed to high school staff
May-Aug. 2016	Recruit high school guidance staff for participant recruitment process	• Present the opportunity to participate in the study • Distribute consent forms and letters
May-Aug. 2016	Recruitment process for participants of program	Answer questions and provide assistance, as needed to high school staff in recruitment of participants
August 2016	Finalize program details and secure session times, dates, and locations	Proctor survey administration in participating faculty members' classes
August 2016	Finalize program content details and secure all materials and online components for use	Finalize development of online portal and completion of all materials needed for program facilitation
September 29, 2016	Administer pre-assessment survey for all 25 participants	Online assessment survey of participating student members
October 5, 2016	*College Transition Project* class sessions begin	Facilitation of 5 week face-to-face courses sessions begin
October 7, 2016	Visual Ethnography project assigned to all 25 participants	Review and provide direction on visual ethnography project for participants
October 19,	Visual Ethnography project	Visual ethnography's are

2016	submission date for all 25 participants	collected via online submission
November 7, 2016	*College Transition Project* class sessions end	Facilitation of 5 week face-to-face courses sessions end
November 10, 2016	Conduct interviews with 8 participants of *The College Transition Project*	Conduct 1-on1 interviews with participants
November 10, 2016	Administer post-assessment survey for participants	Online assessment survey of participating student members
November - December	Conduct research review of *The College Transition Project* data collection tools	Review and analyze all research data collected

Data Analysis Procedures

As an action researcher, I collected data for the study. I administered pre-and post-intervention assessments, conducted semi-structured student interviews, collected visual ethnographies from students and kept ongoing notes about implementation of my intervention throughout the study.

The quantitative data were developed to be analyzed in numerous ways. First, reliability of the MSLQ and SMQ constructs were examined. Subsequently, a repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted on the pre- and post-intervention data to determine whether there were changes in responses.

Qualitative data included semi-structured interviews of student participants and collection of visual ethnographies from student participants along with narratives constructed by the students. These qualitative data were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) after being entered into

HyperRESEARCH (HyperResearch 3.7.3, 2015). In this procedure, open coding was used to initially identify concepts. Then, data were gathered into theme-related components, which were aggregated into emerging themes. The themes then led to the development of assertions, which were supported with quotes from the original data.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

In the following sections, I have presented information about the data collection process and data analysis procedures for this study. The first section has been written to provide insight specifically on the data collection and analysis processes; whereas the subsequent two sections provided the results from the mixed methods study. The second section contained results from the quantitative data. The third section included results from the qualitative measures.

The quantitative data included pre- and post-intervention assessments for 18 students who completed both assessments. The quantitative measures were used to determine the effect *The College Transition Project* had on participants' college-going skills. Constructs assessed included components of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ). As previously noted, the MSLQ consisted of a variety of scales including (a) self-efficacy, (b) intrinsic value (which assessed goals and interests in the tasks), (c) cognitive strategy use, and (d) self-regulation (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990). The quantitative data also included results from the Student Motivation Questionnaire (SMQ; Friedman & Mandel, 2009), which has been used to measure freshmen college students' goal setting behaviors. An additional researcher-created instrument was also used to determine the effect of other components of *The College Transition Project*. The researcher-created instrument was administered prior to the intervention and following it. Questions focused on the constructs of (a) navigating college, (b) social readiness, and (c) time and stress management. The researcher-created instrument was administered prior to the intervention and following it. The quantitative data were analyzed in several ways—

including reliability analyses and multivariate, repeated measures analysis of variance (MANOVA).

Qualitative data were comprised of student interviews at the conclusion of the project and journal entries that were produced during the intervention. I conducted semi-structured interviews with a selected group of eight students. Students were asked about their knowledge and experiences with respect to goals and goal setting, co-regulation and self-regulation experiences, and the social realm or sphere of influence areas as they were related to transition to college. The interviews were conducted in my office in a private one-on-one setting with each student. The qualitative data were then entered into HyperRESEARCH (HyperRESEACRH 3.7.3, 2016) and were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In analyzing these data, I first utilized the procedure of open coding to initially identify concepts. Then, data were gathered into theme-related components, which were aggregated into emerging themes. The themes led to the development of assertions, which were supported with quotes from the original data.

Results

Results from Quantitative Data

Reliability. Prior to conducting the MANOVA, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients were computed for each of the constructs. Pre- and post- intervention reliabilities were generally quite strong. Many of the reliabilities exceeded .70, which has been considered to be a general acceptable level of reliability. It should be noted that some reliabilities, especially those for the researcher-constructed instrument exhibited

some reliabilities that fell below the .70 criterion. Reliabilities for all constructs at the pre- and post-intervention assessments have been presented in Table 2. See Table 2.

Table 2

Reliabilities of Pre- and Post-Intervention Instruments

	Assessment	
Construct	Pre-Intervention	Post-Intervention
Self-Efficacy	.76	.96
Intrinsic Value	.85*	.91*
Self-Regulation	.83	.83
Cognitive Strategies	.73	.80
Student Motivation	.77	.72
College Navigation	.63	.78
Social Readiness	.63	.48
Stress Management	.56	.76
Time Management	.68	.74

*--Note: Item 1 was deleted to increase the reliabilities to those presented in the table.

Multivariate, repeated measures analysis of variance. Following the reliability analyses, a multivariate, repeated measures analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted on the nine dependent measures to determine whether there were differences in the pre- and post-intervention scores on the nine measures. The overall, multivariate test was not significant, multivariate $F(9, 8) = 0.70$, $p < .71$. Although individual follow-up ANOVAs have typically not been conducted when the overall multivariate test was not significant, it was determined to conduct the follow-up tests for this dissertation. Thus, individual follow-up repeated measures ANOVAs were conducted for each of the dependent variables. The effect for self-efficacy was not significant, $F(1, 16) = 0.06$, $p < .81$. Similarly, the effect for intrinsic value was not significant, $F(1, 16) = 0.15$, $p < .71$. The effect for self-regulation was not significant, $F(1, 16) = 0.56$, $p < .47$. Moreover, the effect for cognitive strategy was not significant, $F(1, 16) = 1.81$, $p < .20$. Similarly, the

effect for school goals was not significant, $F(1, 16) = 0.31$, $p < .59$. The effect for college navigation was not significant, $F(1, 16) = 3.76$, $p < .07$. The effect for social readiness was not significant, $F(1, 16) = 1.45$, $p < .25$. Moreover, the effect for stress management was not significant, $F(1, 16) = 2.60$, $p < .13$. Finally, the effect for time management was not significant, $F(1, 16) = 2.22$, $p < .16$. As shown in Table 2, changes in the pre- to post-test scores were very small and indicated the intervention did not affect students' performance on these variables. Pre- and post-intervention means and standard deviations have been presented in Table 3 and showed scores increased or decreased by no more than 0.35 points.

Table 3

Pre- and Post-test Means and Standard Deviations for Nine Dependent Variables

	Assessment			
	Pre-Intervention		Post-Intervention	
Self-Efficacy	4.79	(0.59)*	4.87	(1.13)
Intrinsic Value	5.18	(0.50)	5.07	(0.96)
Self-Regulation	4.24	(0.75)	4.45	(0.81)
Cognitive Strategy	4.71	(0.74)	4.99	(0.74)
School Goals	4.80	(0.74)	4.94	(0.81)
College Navigation	4.73	(0.52)	5.08	(0.66)
Social Readiness	4.94	(0.50)	5.12	(0.55)
Stress Management	4.33	(0.76)	4.82	(0.91)
Time Management	3.69	(0.95)	4.16	(1.02)

*--Note: Standard deviations are in parentheses.

Results from Qualitative Data

In this section, results from qualitative data of the study have been presented. First, Table 4 included the themes and their theme-related components, along with assertions. The following section then provided each of the themes, including sample quotes from the data collected, to support the assertions.

Table 4

Themes, Theme-related Components, and Assertions

Themes and Theme-related Components	Assertions
Co-regulation of learning assisted students in social emergence in college preparedness. 1. Students identified the benefits of working in groups with peers. 2. Students recognized the benefits of learning about college preparedness from the program. 3. Students recognized the benefits to learning in a co-regulated environment. 4. The instructor employed various strategies to involve students in group think, group discussion, and active learning experiences.	1. Establishing the importance of personal and social development as a component of shaping students through co-regulated activities and relationships helped to build motivation and emerging identities in students who were transitioning from high school to college.
Self-regulated learning in life transition from high school to college occurred. 1. Students identified both academic and personal goals as key components to educational attainment and quality of life. 2. Students identified areas of self-choice in their discussions of college going experiences and college transition. 3. Students identified both strengths and weaknesses in their self-efficacy as it pertained to high school and college. 4. The course discussions and online content fostered goal setting and self-efficacy.	2. There was a high-level of consistency in identifying goals, self-regulation, and self-efficacy as critical components for students transitioning from high school to college.
College navigation was a critical component for transitioning high school students.	3. College going capital was critical to social and personal preparedness of students transitioning from high school to

1. The program provided several topics that led to discussion of college navigation and preparedness for transition. 2. Students identified information on college readiness, which was critical in help students make the move from high school to college. 3. Students and instructors felt that college transition programs/opportunities were beneficial for high school students. *4.* Students identified a need for additional time and content, over the allotted time and information provided in the program.	college.

Upon conclusion of the *College Transition Project*, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight students that provided insights about their knowledge and experience of goals and goal setting, co-regulation and self-regulation experiences, and the social realm or sphere of influence areas as they were related to transition to college. Analysis of those qualitative data have led to the following information with respect to the themes and assertions that were supported by quotes from the data.

Co-regulation of Learning assisted students in social emergence in college preparedness. *Assertion 1 – Establishing the importance of personal and social development as a potential component to shaping students through co-regulated activities and relationships can help to build motivation and emerging identities in students who are in the high school to college transition.* The theme-related components were identified as being related to Assertion 1 have been presented in the next section.

***Students identified the benefits of working in groups with peers*.** Results from the post-intervention interviews identified that students consistently felt there were benefits to working in groups with their peers. When prompted in a semi-structured

interview, one student explained about a group experience she had related to certain topics. In her response, she explained, “It was kind of something you didn't really want to talk about with other people, but it really helped to understand the topic and understand other people's points of view on different topics you wouldn't normally discuss with people.” Her response provided details on a commonality noted by respondents who also discussed the benefits of working in groups. Another student explained, “It really depends on if my peers are interested and really want to collaborate and help me out. But I would think it would be beneficial.”

In addition, another student responded, “Whenever we have a group project we'll sit there and think about other things we can do to get stuff done,” Finally, another student shared,

> I think you just get more viewpoints other than what's inside your own head and what's around you with your family and where you've come from. You just get other points of view on things from people, different backgrounds and been raised differently than you have, or from even different states or different countries.

As revealed in many of the statements, students indicated they perceived benefits to working in group settings in school. They indicated benefits included broader points of view, discussion of related topics, and exploring perspectives other than your own as being helpful.

***Students recognized the benefits of learning about college preparedness from the program*.** The post intervention interviews also identified that college going capital or college going navigation was quite beneficial for students transitioning from high school

to college. For example, when asked about their experience in this program, one student explained,

> I'm kind of confused sometimes, but I feel like when I am with a group of people, they kind of help me understand better what we are supposed to be doing or even if sometimes we don't know, we kind of all are able to figure it out together in the end, so I do feel like that's really beneficial.

In addition, another student spoke about the social aspect that was discussed in the program content. She stated,

> Having more open relationships with some of the staff helps us learn how things work a little bit better and develop, I guess better relationships with the college as a whole and understanding why we do some of the things that we do.

Another student responded about the importance of the program when she said,

> Some of the biggest challenges in my transition from high school to college would probably be, basically just figuring out how everything works here in college. Basically, just enrolling, the steps that I have to take like seeing an advisor, the placement testing, all that sort of thing.

Clearly, in her statement, she revealed the benefits of learning more about the details of 'onboarding' or enrolling in college as a benefit to her.

There was an additional response from a student that also spoke the transition challenges that were discussed. In her comments, she stated, "[*The*] biggest challenge in transitioning from high school to college ... I think that would probably be the distance between your professors and the student is a lot different in college than it is in high school." Another student spoke about the program content that focused on social

interaction and building relationships when she claimed, “I think a closer relationship with your professors can be beneficial too.” Again, this was a key indicator of the importance of personal and social development as a potential component to shaping students through co-regulated activities.

Students recognized the benefits to learning in a co-regulated environment. In another prompt in the interview component of data collection, interviewees were asked how working in a group with peers benefitted their learning. One student responded,

> I think it [group] benefits my learning because I feel like someone else in your group may know more about something that you are doing and I feel like they can kind of explain it to you so you can have a better understanding on what's going on.

Another student’s response focused on one of their in-class co-regulation experiences in a communication course. She claimed, “Yeah, maybe like in Communications class if she gives us a topic, and then we sit at the table, and we discuss it, and we come up with an answer for the whole class.” As many of the respondents did, one student discussed the benefits from her experiences when she offered,

> it benefits my learning because not only does the teacher teach me things that I need to know, but they [my peers] teach me more things that I didn't understand after the teacher taught it. I feel like it gives [me] more knowledge.

When asked about co-regulation of learning, another student stated,

> I honestly, like if I just didn't understand something I would typically ask my teachers or I would ask my friends too because most of the time I felt like when I

didn't understand something I know some of my friends would. So, I would just ask them, like hey, how do you do this?

In sum, it appeared students appreciated the benefits of co-regulation and drew upon it to aid their learning. The opportunities and social relationships that existed in the groups facilitated students to engage in adaptive learning.

The instructor employed various strategies to involve students in group think, group discussion, and active learning experiences. Another theme-related component identified from the post-intervention interviews was the instructor's strategies and interventions consistently provided group experience and active learning experiences to keep students engaged. Further, this interaction also assisted the instructor in learning more about the students and their experiences. Consistent with this theme-related component, one student stated, "I think it [group discussion] for sure does benefit me. Only because I like to discuss things. When something's difficult for me it really helps to have someone else's guidance and explanation on a certain topic." With respect to group efforts, another student maintained,

> In my chemistry class now she always has us do little group assignments. I'm doing really good in chemistry only because I could say that it does help a lot that she lets us do some of our assignments together in class. It helps because there's [*sic*] other students that know more things than you [*sic*] may know, so it just helps a lot.

As she explained some of her experiences with group activities based on the program, another student explained, "It's basically hard to not have that extra supply [*sic*] of getting to ask someone else or work with someone else. It would've been way harder

for me if I didn't have that group experience." Additionally, a final student spoke about the group experiences that were common practice in the program delivery and activity when she revealed, "I feel like if your teacher is really involved and is willing to help you, and everything like that, I feel like for the most part it [learning] should go good."

As with previous theme-related components presented in this section, the student interviews showed that students were very favorably disposed toward participating in 'group think activities' and other group activities with instructor and peers. Further, observation of the classes provided information that was consistent with this claim. Specifically, during observations on October 19th and again on October 26th, students seemed to be strongly engaged and actively participating in discussing and learning about the topics provided by the instructor when they were participating in the group exercises.

Self-regulated Learning in Life Transition from High School to College Occurred. *Assertion 2 – There was a high-level of consistency in identifying goals, self-regulation, and self-efficacy as critical components for students transitioning from high school to college.* The following theme-related components were identified for Assertion 2.

***Students identified both academic and personal goals as key components to educational attainment and quality of life*.** When talking with the students during the post-intervention interview process, it was evident that their experiences with goal setting and the goal setting discussions were important as they considered successful college transition and the pathway to other life achievements. For example, when asked about her education and career goals, one young participant explained,

> I heard of a story of a young girl she graduated high early as well as getting her associates degree, so I said, "I can do that. I want to do that." That's what really

> pushed me to achieve that goal; to even make it but it would definitely be the first to go to college on my father's side of the family.
>
> Similarly, another student suggested,
>
> I wanted to start college as soon as possible. I wanted to come in, not as a freshman but as a sophomore. Get going, don't stop, that was my goal. So, I would say that, yeah, that was my biggest goal that I wanted to accomplish, starting at a young age going to college, and once I'm in college I'll already be halfway done, in my first year.

Several other students also responded by describing key information about their personal and educational goals. One student said, "One of my goals educationally would probably just be to achieve in math probably at the level that I am supposed to be at, that would be one of them." On the other hand, another stated, "I want to get at least my bachelors, I may go further than that, in business management." Still another participant revealed, "I want to get at least my bachelors, I may go further than that, in business management." All these responses resulted from interview questions about their educational and career goals. Importantly, students felt their education and personal goals were key components to future quality of life and opportunities.

Students identified areas of self-choice in their discussions of college going experiences and college transition. Based on the student interviews, one of the most telling theme-related components was the fact that students explained they were identifying the key differences socially from high school to college. The students began to exert the new-found responsibilities of a collegiate environment, as compared to the high school setting. One student characterized the change when she explained, "As soon

as you get into college, it's up to you, everything is up to you." Consistent with the previous response, another student explained, "Her biggest challenge would be [managing] the freedom." The interviews helped me see that students were starting to understand the difference in the two academic environments, while understanding that self-choice and self-efficacy were going to play a critical role in college attainment. In addition, two other students responded with statements about self-efficacy for successfully making the transition to college. The first said, "Yeah, we might not come from a wealthy family. We may not have a lot of people to push us, but we can do it." Another student offered, "Most definitely I want to set a good example, show them, 'Hey, if I can do it you guys can do it to.'" It was telling that students were starting to understand the difference in spheres that that separated the high school and collegiate worlds of academics.

Students identified both strengths and weaknesses in their self-efficacy as it pertained to high school and college. Another very powerful component from the post-intervention interviews was the response and discussions about self-efficacy by the students. One important fact that must be recognized was that several students struggled to understand this concept. Nevertheless, those who did offered responses that provided insight on both strengths and weaknesses with respect to self-efficacy. For example, one student explained,

> I am confident now that I can communicate better with people like instructors, my classmates, and friends. I am understanding more that it's important to ask questions and talk to people because there are so many people there to help you, like with college questions.

Another student explained “Yeah. I think it kind of forces you to be more independent from your teachers to kind of learn on your own, but I think a closer relationship can be good, too, like it is in high school.” In this comment, the student was revealing her understanding of the importance of relationships in college.

In addition, this student responded by appropriately recognizing her limited demonstration of self-efficacy with respect to taking control of her learning in high school when she said,

> I guess, in high school, they didn't really get ... It was nothing like college classes. I guess, in high school, I didn't realize, but it was a lot more lenient and in college, you need to be focused and you need to have your work on time.

Another student indicated how teachers helped them to build their self-efficacy when she said, “My business teacher in high school, she always encouraged us to try new things when I was in FBLA.”

> Two additional students also spoke to this matter. For example, one student offered, she always encouraged us to try competitions that we weren't really sure about, to just do it and try it once and see what it was about—how we did. Even if we felt like we weren't going to do the greatest, just to jump in and sign up for it and try it.

Finally, another student described the encouragement to develop self-efficacy when she said,

> I think I could probably go get tutoring or just kind of force myself to get more comfortable with doing it on my own even if I don't think it's going to be the correct way, just do it to learn from it. If it's not right then I'll fix it,

Taken together, the evidence provided here suggested students understood the importance of self-efficacy. Further, they understood their strengths and limitations in terms of its development as they made the transition from high school to college.

The course discussions and online content fostered goal setting and self-efficacy. The final theme-related component for this assertion revealed that most of the students indicated in-course discussions and other content encouraged goal setting and self-efficacy. For example, a student explained her goals and self-driven motivation as she stated,

> I think it would be because I would be the first of my father's side of the family to go to college. I'd be the first to even graduate high school, so that was a big deal for me and to go to college I make him proud as well as my mother and just my whole family. They'll be like, wow she's really going for it. She's in high school but she's going to college.

The goal of college attainment was a goal driving mechanism among the student participants in other students' lives, as well. For example, students claimed various components of course content helped them clarify and establish goals. For example, one student stated, "Knowing what degree I want to pursue or what I am going to need to take to get there. That probably would have been the most challenging part." Clearly, these concerns were mitigated by the intervention.

Another student claimed a similar benefit of the *College Transition Project* when he said,

> From what we've covered throughout this course, learning about how to manage my stress, as well as understanding how to take more descriptive notes during a

> lecture have been crucial skills that will allow me to achieve my goals. By managing my stress, or creating schedule-based workarounds to avoid feeling overwhelmed by any given events that are occurring, I will be able to prepare myself for the rigorous courses that I will need to take to obtain my Bachelor's in Computer Sciences or Electrical Engineering, as well as to motivate me not to become overwhelmed by personal anxiety in life.

A similar experience was claimed by another student when he offered, "The topics covered in this class will help me out a lot during my later education and obviously later in life because they are things that I am going to encounter in my everyday life."

Finally, a fourth student also claimed, "One of the most helpful topics that I learned in this class is time management. By setting a schedule to follow, I find myself getting more work done and spending less time getting distracted by other things."

Thus, it was clear these students believed the coursework was beneficial. From understanding requirements to managing time, students appreciated course content and viewed it as being valuable.

College Navigation was a critical topic for transitioning high school students. *Assertion 3 – College going capital was critical to social and personal preparedness of students transitioning from high school to college.* Four theme-related components were connected to Assertion 3. These four components have been explained in the following section.

***The program provided several topics that led to discussion of college navigation and preparedness for transition*.** The *College Transition Project* was filled with topics and discussion that fostered many opportunities for the instructor and students to engage

in discussion about college going-culture and experiences. From each of the weekly topics to the post-intervention interviews, students and instructor engaged in numerous conversations about navigating the college realm, potential pitfalls of college, and ideas that would help them to be best prepared. During my observations, I recognized students who were very engaged in the discussion, were eager to learn about the differences in college from high school, and who provided their perceptions of what the experiences might be like.

When asked about the benefits of the program course work and its relevance to college transition, one student said, “I had a class at my actual high school teaching me about the expectations at college because it's kind of just like I jumped from high school to a different grown up world, basically.”.

Another student advised,

> I feel like it would help because whenever you're coming from high school, even if it’s just a community college, like not even a university, even when it is just community college I feel like you get kind of scared at the beginning and you kind of think like, oh, like I'm growing up now, this is serious. I have to take this seriously. I need to pass all of my classes and I think ... there should be someone there, I guess in a way, to like mentor students that are coming from high school into college and just kind of explain the process to them of what they have to do.

In another interview response, a student spoke about offering the program to others in high school when she said,

> I think if it were offered while in high school I think it would help, yeah I think it would have helped a lot because I feel ... In high school, I probably would have

> understood how to do things more. Because I feel like sometimes in high school the only things that are covered are the things that we're supposed to be doing or that are required but sometimes it is different from when you go to high school and then when you get here [college] it could be something totally different that you never even covered in high school.

In a similar response, another student said, "I do feel by doing it in high school I feel like it's more beneficial because you would've already gotten it done with, you know," as she referred to the benefits of having experienced *The College Transition Project* as a high school student. In sum, students recognized information about college navigation was useful at the high school level. This early opportunity to have useful information about going to college was viewed as providing a 'jump start' on the college-going experience.

Students identified information on college readiness that was critical in helping students make the transition from high school to college. One of the most telling pieces in the data collection and interpretation phase was the how students perceived the critical need for more college-going navigation information in their high school experiences. One student explained,

> I feel that we have a program for Pinal County students that really helped me to be prepared to transition at my own pace. I took one class and just really got the feel for college. So, once I become a full-time student, I know how the system is, I know what the professors expect of me, and I know how to get around. I do think if students are willing to make the drive and do the sacrifices to be in the program, then I think it would be beneficial.

Another student identified the benefit of learning about college-going information when she suggested,

> You expect to go to class and you expect it to be like your other classes here [at college] or you don't expect it to be like it was in high school where everyone is on the same chapter and the teacher is just up there going over the notes and what we have to do.

Another student described the differences she noticed in her transition from high school to college when she said, I think that they can assist you in kind of getting you out there more and getting you used to how a college classroom is different from a high school classroom, and how maybe differently the students may interact with each other than in high school,

As she talked about differences between high school and college courses, another student explained,

> You're not always going to be in a room with all the people that are the same age as you. You're going to get a lot of different people from different backgrounds and different age groups. I think throwing yourself into that helps a lot.

To summarize, most students claimed the benefits of having more information about college prior to leaving high school was critical to helping them to be best prepared for both transition and completion. Further, they indicated having opportunities to discuss college-going information was useful in making the transition to college.

Students felt college transition programs/opportunities were beneficial for high school students. As identified in the previous section, most students who participated in

the post-intervention interviews indicated college transition programs were beneficial to the matriculation process of college goers. One student who asked how she felt about *The College Transition Project* whether it would assist in their transition from high school to college indicated it would when she stated, "I think that it can honestly help a lot because when I was in high school I don't think I ever really had a class on college."

Additional students made similar comments. For example, one student claimed, "CPD 101 was extremely beneficial to me as a student," referring to the program by its course label. Still another suggested, "Yeah, I think I have learned a lot from the class and I think it will help me be more prepared or just a little more ready when I am in college full-time."

Another student also responded in the affirmative when she said, "I think maybe programs like the high school outreach help as well to kind of get you ready for that [college]." when offering their feedback on the benefits to *The College Transition Project*. I believe these students offered responses that identify some of the benefits that were presented through this type of programming for students. It was also noted in observations that experiences provided during implementation of the intervention was a great opportunity for those who participated, because of the benefits they were receiving. I recall in one observation session I listened to students explain that a lot of the information that was being discussed had not been provided to others, non-program participants, the same extent that the program was providing. I also identified in my notes an observation from the face-to-face session on October 26, 2016 where a student asked for permission to share course materials with friends who they thought it might benefit.

Taken together, students indicated the *College Transition Program* was quite beneficial. They perceived the content and topics to be appropriate and useful as an introduction to college navigation.

The students identified a need for additional time and content, over the allotted time and information provided in the program. Another finding from the post-intervention interviews and from the observations was that the intervention must be offered over a longer time period to be most effective for students. From my observations, there was a large amount of content and subject matter to be covered in a very short period of time. This was confirmed during a student interview when one student stated, "I wish the class was longer and we had more time, but even though it was short I still got some good info you know." The students claimed there was value in the experience and information received, however they suggested more time for more in-depth work on each subject would be more appropriate.

Another student maintained, "I think that if it was longer it would've been more beneficial. It's just I feel like there needs to be more subject matter incorporated." Two additional students also commented on the benefits if the program were to have been offered in a longer format, one noted, "I think the course could have provided more in depth info if it were longer, like the whole semester." Finally, another student said, "Maybe the class could have been even more beneficial if we had more time to cover stuff."

In sum, students indicated a clear message about the need for additional time to teach and learn *The College Transition Project* content. This need for additional time has been addressed more fully in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The *College Transition Project* is an intervention designed to provide an opportunity to a small group of Pinal County high school students to engage in a short-term experience assisting them with their transition from high school to college. The program began on October 5, 2017 and ran over a five-week period of time. The intervention delivers content on college navigation skills and college preparedness by engaging students in course work and activities on key subject matter with respect to potential challenges related to college retention and completion. Over the five-week period, 28 students received a vast amount of information on the topics of navigating the college system, social and personal preparedness for college students, goal setting, time and stress management, and information about self-regulated learning. The intervention is designed to provide data to answer the following research questions.

RQ 1 – How and to what extent does the *College Transition Project* mediate student's behavior as they persist toward their collegiate goals?

RQ 2 - How and to what extent does participation in the *College Transition Project* help students to develop their personal and social readiness that support their transition from high school to college?

The results indicate most student participants acknowledge the need to identify goals, engage in self-regulation, and practice self-efficacy as critical components for students transitioning from high school to college. The program content is focused on topics designed to best guide and prepare students for college. Importantly, students indicate both the importance of these topics and the need for development of these skills.

Discussion of Findings

Self-efficacy and goal setting. In the interviews, it is clear that self-efficacy increases among students. Recall, that self-efficacy is viewed as a motivational component because it is concerned with students' beliefs about being able to perform some task or learn some material as well as taking responsibility for that performance (Bandura, 1997). In fact, self-efficacy has been considered to be confidence in carrying out the necessary requirements to ensure attainment of some outcome (Bandura). Thus, in the current project self-efficacy increases because students have the opportunity to practice the college-going skill including goal setting and other college navigation skills that increase self-efficacy for these college skills.

The growth of self-efficacy was limited a bit by the fact that students only briefly practice these skills. Bandura (1997) suggests being able to practice the skills to attain mastery level would be preferable. Thus, successfully practicing and mastering the skills would lead to greater levels of self-efficacy. In future work on this problem of practice, the intervention must by distributed over a longer time frame to provide for attainment of mastery experiences that lead to higher levels of self-efficacy.

Social and personal readiness. A further review of findings that focuses on the components of the second research question of this study shows how the program helps students develop aspects of social and personal readiness with respect to college transitions. Results from the study show the *College Transition Project* fosters co-regulated activities and builds relationships to build motivation and nurture emerging identities in students who were transitioning from high school to college. In addition,

students express that college-going skills are critical to social and personal preparedness of students transitioning from high school to college.

We can understand these social and personal developments, in part, by prior research on interaction, speech, and discourse, often centering on issues of scaffolding and interdependence (Hadwin & Oshige, 2011). In addition, the *College Transition Project* is built on discussions, student collaboration, and levels of interaction, which are consistent with the work of Hadwin and Oshige.

Moreover, focus in the program is also on the dynamic interplay among personal, social, and cultural influences (McCaslin, 2009). McCaslin refers to these as the press and tension among potential (personal), practicable (social such as classroom opportunities), and probable (cultural norms and challenges). Additionally, McCaslin suggests that emergent identity, for example, as a newly developing college student, depends on a continuous process of participation and validation that is co-regulated by personal, cultural, and social influences and relationships among them. In sum, the results of the study are consistent with McCaslin's framework.

By extending this thinking a bit, we can better understand the qualitative results, which reveal students experience benefits from working in groups with peers. Findings also indicate students recognize the benefits of learning about college preparedness from the program. Further, students also recognize the benefits from learning in a co-regulated environment. These are telling indicators of the effect the program has with participants. Because the instructor employs various strategies to involve students in group think, group discussion, and active learning experiences, the activities are critical in establishing students' interests in college-going discussion, learning, and teaching experiences. By

including an array of topics, the instructor creates situations that lead to increases in dialogue about college navigation and preparedness for transition, which is critical in students' development of new understandings about college-going. This is critical in helping students make the transition from high school to college

Limitations

As with any action research project, there are limitations and threats to the validity of this study. Three key limitations affect the project and interpretations of the findings. Those limitations are maturation, implementation time frame, and visual ethnography data.

Maturation. Maturation is a limitation, a threat to validity, identified prior to conducting the study. Specifically, the maturation threat comes about when certain events internal to the research subjects may be responsible for the difference in the dependent variable rather than the intervention (Smith & Glass, 1987). Students enrolled in *The College Transition Program* are predominantly concurrently enrolled high school/college students, actively participating in their senior year of high school. Thus, the natural growth of students enrolled in school and contemplating college attendance can affect knowledge of college-going content; rather than the intervention, per se. In fact, it is very common for students who are in their senior year of high school to identify with having some knowledge or possibly experiences with the high school to college transition process. If students are actively engaged in college going discussions in other high school classes, with their high school guidance staff, instructors, parents, or friends; then their knowledge may not be a result of the *College Transition Program*; rather these other sources may influence college preparedness.

The time for the intervention. The time of implementation of the intervention was also identified by both the researcher and the participants to be inadequate. Because the intervention is limited to only a five-week period, with two weekly in class face-to-face meetings, there is not a sufficient amount of time to consider each of the various key topics and subject matter areas in detail. Each week of the program was designed to cover a new topic focused on college readiness and transition. Each week provided students with in-class lecture components, in-class active learning experiences, online tools, and homework assignments. As the intervention was implemented, it is clear that the amount of content that was to be delivered, in the short period of time was too much. Although students identify the topics to be very important and relevant, the request for additional discussion and information on the various subjects is not unexpected. Recall, the course is offered for one credit so the amount of time was required to consistent with college guidelines, which constrained the amount of class time. In future course offerings, increased credit load and increased class time will be considered.

Students showed they were very engaged in the subject matter, but course time did not provide a long enough window to address all the students' questions, comments and concerns, weekly. During the study, students provide a 'heavy traffic' of online interactions with online questions and comments, and students are consistently seeking additional resources and assistance. Initially, the time provided for responses was established as two hours per week on site by the facilitator. Nevertheless, student questions exceed that time frame each week. Students also identify the need for the intervention to be spread over a longer time period. The discussion of similar programming extending over an entire semester, or school year is an initial

recommendation of the participating high school guidance staff who serve as onsite monitors of the program and content.

Data collection of ethnographies. Data collection of student visual ethnographies is not successful in this study. The prompt is not well enough explained; hence student participants arrive at various interpretations of the prompt. The results show that the ethnography components are not well enough established for a group who has no previous experiences with this type of assignment. With the inability to provide adequate and timely resources for the students, the assignment provides a wide spectrum of results that vary immensely. Because both the participants and the instructor have limited experience with this type of work, and limited preparation time, it is evident the visual ethnography component does provide an appropriate, reliable, and interpretable data as originally envisioned.

Implications for Future Practice

As my research with *The College Transition Project* concludes, I believe there are some very real practice implications for my local context. Because high school students in my area are likely to attend the local community college, I believe there is great opportunity for my institution to benefit from this work. I believe there are three implications for practice.

First, the high school would like to host the project in the future. School leaders would like to continue the effort. They want to collaborate in new efforts to provide either a similar program or course offering for future students at their high school. The school leaders believe the information can assist their students to be better prepared as they transition, and help fulfill a desired outcome, for which they lack resources at this

time. The school administrators think students get more opportunities to interact with college staff to help them learn about the college environment can be a great fit for helping to provide guidance to college going students.

Second, materials must be fine-tuned and elaborated to better meet the needs of students and parents. Specifically, richer, more extended materials are needed in several areas such as self-regulated learning and goal setting. Moreover, materials more appropriate for use by parents are warranted.

Third, I will allow for more time for the intervention in preparation, implementation, and length of study. As the researcher and based on student feedback, not enough time is available to cover all of the desired topics in depth. If given another opportunity to conduct a program of this nature, I would strongly consider increasing the length of time or the frequency of the face-to-face sessions, to provide adequate time for the teaching and learning experiences for the curriculum. I believe the fast-paced environment under which this intervention is offered is not ideal for the students in helping them learn and retain the content. It would be more appropriate to extend the program to provide more time for students to truly grasp the information and to have the opportunity to ask more questions and learn more about the experiences of high school to college transition. As noted above, in future course offerings, increased credit load and class time will be considered

Again, if given the opportunity to conduct an additional iteration of this experience, I would seek to identify more opportunities to engage parents or family members with college-going navigation that is at the foundation of *The College Transition Project.* I would also consider a better way to have parents become more

engaged with the process. The intervention is designed to provide a platform for both students and parents to be engaged with content via the online resource component. Nevertheless, although students are very engaged and use the online courses resources and communication tools, parents are not very active in using the tools. It is clear that parents need more guidance and details on the resources that are available. Then, perhaps they may engage in the program more fully.

Implications for Future Research

This study provides for an initial exploration of how and to what extent the *College Transition Project* mediates students' behavior as they persist toward their collegiate goals. Further, it provides for examination of how and to what extent participation in *The College Transition Project* helps students to develop their personal and social readiness that support their transition from high school to college. In my analysis, I discuss the initial findings of one group of participants and the original program intervention. Nevertheless, there is much more room for additional research to be conducted in my local context on student's personal and social readiness, and behaviors of students in transition.

First, given the limitations identified, there is ample opportunity for future research on the best format for an intervention of this type. Additional action research may identify the benefits of a longer program that better meets the needs of students and educators. In future cycles of research in this context, an examination of how to develop a stronger program for the high school setting might be one aspect to consider. Second, exploration of direct college supports is another aspect worthy of examination. Third, development of a program with long-term sustainability to support larger numbers of

students appears to be another aspect worthy or exploration. Fourth, examination of factors such as ethnicity and gender may provide additional insights into how the program may be developed to better meet the needs of all students and support their transition to college.

In my estimation, there is ample need to develop and provide more resources within high schools in the region, as they seek programing for college and career readiness initiatives with students. In conducting more research on collaboration between high schools and colleges, with support, schools can develop research-based initiatives to provide the best resources for students who are in the transition phase between high school and college.

Personal Lessons Learned

As I reflect on this action research project, I have learned that being an educational leader brings with the title a great responsibility. I want to continue to grow and develop as a leader. I have an even stronger respect for all who have completed research in education and who have conducted research to this area and beyond. I will strive to continue to develop my own skills as an educational researcher and leader, to help others learn about the important world of education. My experience with this intervention and research project have helped me continue my upward trajectory as a leader in higher education and have helped me to understand the importance of being a lifelong learner, and the necessity to continue to build my knowledge base. I have learned it is critical to ask lots of questions and to not be afraid to stand up for what you believe in, as leaders must stay true to their values and support that about which they are passionate. As I move forward I will always remember how this research project helps

me solidify that about which I am passionate—providing increased opportunities for the people of my community to reach their educational goals and help them utilize higher education as a valuable resource to increase opportunity in their lives.

As a professional educator involved in action research and after concluding this research project, I have identified possible next steps and questions that need to continue to be asked. I believe there is an identified need in the rural communities of Pinal County, Arizona for more resources to provide experiences like *The College Transition Project* for high school students. There is a vast opportunity to develop collaborative efforts with multiple high school districts in the region, to develop intervention programs that will help with college navigation, social and personal preparedness, and simply having students better prepared for college. The intervention that I completed was so well received by the participating high school that there has been a request for additional discussion for future iterations of this program. The school district is asking to explore a long-term option for students, because of the large number of students who are attending the community college.

There are so many dedicated educators in this region that have a strong passion for supporting underserved students, and students who come from traditionally low educational attainment backgrounds. Students have many points of access to the only collegiate institution in the county, however with so many underprepared students still entering the college environment, the retention rates of returning students continue to pose a challenge to college completion rates for many local students. The questions I leave in the balance is how can we continue to provide adequate and consistent college

preparation experiences for our college going students in the rural high schools across Arizona?

Finally, the use of the mixed methods process allowed me to obtain data that supported my long-held beliefs about the importance of this work. I had recognized the moral imperative of this work prior to this study, but the data provided additional evidence about the need for programming of this nature. Moreover, the quantitative and qualitative data suggest there is a continued need for research and development for effective programming that supports students to make the transition from high school to college in the local context. Such research work will be necessary to provide strong programs that offer equity and access to high school and college students in the future.

Conclusion

I have been working in higher education for nearly nine years. During this time, I have spent much of it working with students in the community college sector in Arizona. Because of these experiences, I have a passion for providing support and guidance to local youth, as they seek to utilize college and higher education as a platform for increasing quality of life for their future.

Growing up in the region, I witness many community members who stumble as they seek a successful college experience. Because of this passion that I carry with me every day, I conduct action research to better understand the struggles students encounter as they leave high school and enter college. There is a place for more resources and interventions like *The College Transition Project* to support the students within my local context. This support is designed to help my institution increase college retention and completion rates. Because of my beliefs, I set out on a journey to try and develop an

intervention that could support local students' transition to college, assist my institution of higher education with first-year retention rates, and personally learn more about the experiences of educational research and leadership in education.

The College Transition Project provided me with a tremendous experience as I explored the world of high school students who are preparing to make their transition to college. At the beginning of this research project, I identified a need within my community for a collaborative effort that could support college navigation and ultimately have an influence on the educational attainment rates of youth in Pinal County, Arizona. To determine whether my assertions about high school to college transition are realistic, I (a) set up a research study, (b) create an intervention, (c) implement it, and (d) gather and analyze data. Although results are limited and somewhat inconclusive, the data provide sufficient information for continued discussion and further research on goal setting, self-efficacy, and social and personal readiness of college-going students in the rural communities of Pinal County.

The research that I conducted only fueled the fire inside me, which I have for supporting high school students and all college going individuals. The community college was the stepping stone that provided me with opportunities that have allow me to serve in the role I do today. Thus, I believe a college education can provide a pathway to a better life for all. With this study I see more clearly my obligation as a leader in higher education to continue my research and to use my voice to support and develop future opportunities for students young and old, who as aspire to be college graduates.

Finally, the findings provide some support for the potential of *The College Transition Project's* effect on students' college-going skills. Moreover, it appears co-

regulated activities and relationships help to build motivation and emerging identities in students who are transitioning from high school to college. The results also show identifying goals, self-regulation, and self-efficacy are critical components for students transitioning from high school to college. Further, participants identify that college going skills are critical to social and personal preparedness of students transitioning from high school to college. Going forward, it appears *The College Transition Project* can be the platform for further programing designed to support college-going students in local communities in Pinal County.

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APPENDIX A

THE COLLEGE TRANSITION PROJECT PRE- AND POST-INTERVENTION ASSESSMENTS 1 (STRATEGIES FOR LEARNING QUESTIONNAIRE (MSLQ)

A. Self-Efficacy

1 **Compared with other students in this class I expect to do well.**

Strongly Agree ○ Agree ○ Slightly Agree ○ Slightly Disagree ○ Disagree ○ Strongly Disagree ○

2 **I'm certain I can understand the ideas taught in this course.**

Strongly Agree ○ Agree ○ Slightly Agree ○ Slightly Disagree ○ Disagree ○ Strongly Disagree ○

3 **I expect to do very well in this class.**

Strongly Agree ○ Agree ○ Slightly Agree ○ Slightly Disagree ○ Disagree ○ Strongly Disagree ○

4 **I am sure I can do an excellent job on the problems and tasks assigned for this class.**

Strongly Agree ○ Agree ○ Slightly Agree ○ Slightly Disagree ○ Disagree ○ Strongly Disagree ○

5 **My study skills are excellent compared with others in this class.**

Strongly Agree ○ Agree ○ Slightly Agree ○ Slightly Disagree ○ Disagree ○ Strongly Disagree ○

B. Intrinsic Value

6 **I prefer class work that is challenging so I can learn new things.**

Strongly Agree ○ Agree ○ Slightly Agree ○ Slightly Disagree ○ Disagree ○ Strongly Disagree ○

7 **It is important for me to learn what is being taught in this class.**

Strongly Agree ○ Agree ○ Slightly Agree ○ Slightly Disagree ○ Disagree ○ Strongly Disagree ○

8 **I think that what I am learning in this class is useful for me to know.**

Strongly Agree ○ Agree ○ Slightly Agree ○ Slightly Disagree ○ Disagree ○ Strongly Disagree ○

9 **I think that what we are learning in this class is interesting.**

Strongly Agree ○ Agree ○ Slightly Agree ○ Slightly Disagree ○ Disagree ○ Strongly Disagree ○

10 **Understanding this subject is important to me**

Strongly Agree ○ Agree ○ Slightly Agree ○ Slightly Disagree ○ Disagree ○ Strongly Disagree ○

11

I ask myself questions to make sure I know the material I have been studying.

Strongly Agree ○ Agree ○ Slightly Agree ○ Slightly Disagree ○ Disagree ○ Strongly Disagree ○

12 **Even when study materials are dull and uninteresting, I keep working until I finish.**

Strongly Agree ○ Agree ○ Slightly Agree ○ Slightly Disagree ○ Disagree ○ Strongly Disagree ○

13 **Before I begin studying I think about the things I will need to do to learn.**

Strongly Agree ○ Agree ○ Slightly Agree ○ Slightly Disagree ○ Disagree ○ Strongly Disagree ○

14 **When I'm reading, I stop once in a while and go over what I have read.**

Strongly Agree ○ Agree ○ Slightly Agree ○ Slightly Disagree ○ Disagree ○ Strongly Disagree ○

15 **I work on practice exercises and answer end of chapter questions even when I don't have to.**

Strongly Agree ○ Agree ○ Slightly Agree ○ Slightly Disagree ○ Disagree ○ Strongly Disagree ○

16 **When I do homework, I try to remember what the teacher said in class so I can answer the questions correctly.**

Strongly Agree ○ Agree ○ Slightly Agree ○ Slightly Disagree ○ Disagree ○ Strongly Disagree ○

17 **When I study, I put important ideas into my own words.**

Strongly Agree ○ Agree ○ Slightly Agree ○ Slightly Disagree ○ Disagree ○ Strongly Disagree ○

18 **When I study for a test I practice saying the important facts over and over to myself.**

Strongly Agree ○ Agree ○ Slightly Agree ○ Slightly Disagree ○ Disagree ○ Strongly Disagree ○

19 **When I am studying a topic, I try to make everything fit togethe r.**

Strongly Agree ○ Agree ○ Slightly Agree ○ Slightly Disagree ○ Disagree ○ Strongly Disagree ○

20 **When reading I try to connect the things I am reading about with what I already know.**

Strongly Agree ○ Agree ○ Slightly Agree ○ Slightly Disagree ○ Disagree ○ Strongly Disagree ○

APPENDIX B

THE COLLEGE TRANSITION PROJECT PRE- AND POST-INTERVENTION ASSESSMENTS 2 STUDENT MOTIVATION QUESTIONNAIRE (SMQ)

1	**I have a high degree of influence in determining my school goals.**											
	Strongly Agree	○	Agree	○	Slightly Agree	○	Slightly Disagree	○	Disagree	○	Strongly Disagree	○
2	**My school goals are very clear and specific.**											
	Strongly Agree	○	Agree	○	Slightly Agree	○	Slightly Disagree	○	Disagree	○	Strongly Disagree	○
3	**I really have little voice in the formulation of my school goals.**											
	Strongly Agree	○	Agree	○	Slightly Agree	○	Slightly Disagree	○	Disagree	○	Strongly Disagree	○
4	**I think my school goals are ambiguous and unclear.**											
	Strongly Agree	○	Agree	○	Slightly Agree	○	Slightly Disagree	○	Disagree	○	Strongly Disagree	○
5	**The setting of my school goals is pretty much under my control.**											
	Strongly Agree	○	Agree	○	Slightly Agree	○	Slightly Disagree	○	Disagree	○	Strongly Disagree	○

APPENDIX C

THE *COLLEGE TRANSITION PROJECT* PRE- AND POST-INTERVENTION ASSESSMENT PART 2

1	**I am aware of my college's policies for academic honesty.**											
	Strongly Agree	○	Agree	○	Slightly Agree	○	Slightly Disagree	○	Disagree	○	Strongly Disagree	○
2	**I know where to find all the resources of my college that can help me succeed both academically.**											
	Strongly Agree	○	Agree	○	Slightly Agree	○	Slightly Disagree	○	Disagree	○	Strongly Disagree	○
3	**I know how to complete application paperwork for college.**											
	Strongly Agree	○	Agree	○	Slightly Agree	○	Slightly Disagree	○	Disagree	○	Strongly Disagree	○
4	**I understand the benefits of a college education for my future life.**											
	Strongly Agree	○	Agree	○	Slightly Agree	○	Slightly Disagree	○	Disagree	○	Strongly Disagree	○
5	**I am confident in in my "college navigating" skills for succeeding in college.**											
	Strongly Agree	○	Agree	○	Slightly Agree	○	Slightly Disagree	○	Disagree	○	Strongly Disagree	○
6	**My interactions with students and others on campus will contribute to my academic success.**											
	Strongly Agree	○	Agree	○	Slightly Agree	○	Slightly Disagree	○	Disagree	○	Strongly Disagree	○
7	**I feel I would like to make friends in college.**											
	Strongly Agree	○	Agree	○	Slightly Agree	○	Slightly Disagree	○	Disagree	○	Strongly Disagree	○
8	**I am comfortable interacting with people who are different from me.**											
	Strongly Agree	○	Agree	○	Slightly Agree	○	Slightly Disagree	○	Disagree	○	Strongly Disagree	○
9	**I make an effort to meet others who are different from me.**											
	Strongly Agree	○	Agree	○	Slightly Agree	○	Slightly Disagree	○	Disagree	○	Strongly Disagree	○
10	**I make an effort to communicate well in social interactions, especially to listen actively when other are speaking.**											
	Strongly Agree	○	Agree	○	Slightly Agree	○	Slightly Disagree	○	Disagree	○	Strongly Disagree	○
11	**When setbacks occur, I work to solve the problems that cause the setback.**											
	Strongly Agree	○	Agree	○	Slightly Agree	○	Slightly Disagree	○	Disagree	○	Strongly Disagree	○
12	**I have a good space for studying, to avoid distractions which lead to stress.**											
	Strongly Agree	○	Agree	○	Slightly Agree	○	Slightly Disagree	○	Disagree	○	Strongly Disagree	○
13	**I use specific strategies that I use to manage stress.**											
	Strongly Agree	○	Agree	○	Slightly Agree	○	Slightly Disagree	○	Disagree	○	Strongly Disagree	○
14	**I schedule my study periods at times when I am at my best.**											
	Strongly Agree	○	Agree	○	Slightly Agree	○	Slightly Disagree	○	Disagree	○	Strongly Disagree	○
15	**I use a weekly or daily calendar tool to manage my time well.**											
	Strongly Agree	○	Agree	○	Slightly Agree	○	Slightly Disagree	○	Disagree	○	Strongly Disagree	○
16	**I manage my time to ensure my studying comes before other things.**											
	Strongly Agree	○	Agree	○	Slightly Agree	○	Slightly Disagree	○	Disagree	○	Strongly Disagree	○

APENDIX D

NARRATIVE INTERVIEW GUIDE

Hello, my name is Luis Sanchez, I'm a doctoral student at Arizona State University and I am conducting research for educational purposes on transitioning students from rural high schools to community colleges. The information collected in this interview will strictly be used as a component for my research project to better understand how providing information on college success supports high students' transition to college. The information collected from the interview will remain anonymous at all times. You will also be provided an opportunity to review all transcriptions of this interview once available.

Thank you very much for you time. What that means is, basically, once I'm done with this, it'll be transcribed into a written form.

1. Tell me about the biggest challenges faced in making your transition from high school to college?
2. What are your educational and career goals?
3. What concerns do you have about accomplishing these goals?
4. In which areas of your life do you have strong self-efficacy (have confidence you can do a task or do something)?
5. In which areas would you like your self-efficacy to be a bit stronger? How could you increase your self-efficacy in those areas?
6. Can you think of a time when a teacher, coach, or parent did something to encourage your self-efficacy? What did he or she do and say? How did it enhance your self-efficacy?
7. Do you feel that working in a group of your peers' benefits your learning of challenging topics?
8. Tell me about a time when you have had a successful group experience?
9. How does working in a group with peers benefit your learning?
10. How do you feel that this program will assist in your transition from high school to college?
11. How would you describe your knowledge of college and what it involves?
12. How well do you think you have managed to learn what we have covered in class?

APPENDIX E
LETTER OF CONSENT

PARENTAL LETTER OF PERMISSION

Dear Parent:

I am a student in the Doctoral Program at Arizona State University. I am working on the direction of Dr. Ray Buss a faculty member in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College. I am conducting a research study to examine the effects of social and personal readiness of high school students making the transition from high school to college and to increase the first semester success of college freshman.

I am inviting your son's/daughter's participation in a survey about the effect *The College Transition Project* has on participants' college-going skills. The survey will be done on two occasions, before the beginning of *The College Success Project* and at its completion. It should take about 20 minutes each time, resulting in a total of 40 minutes. Your student's participation in this survey is voluntary. If you choose not to have your son/daughter participate, there will be no penalty. Likewise, if your son/daughter chooses not to participate in the survey, there will be no penalty. The results of the survey may be published, but your student's name will not be used.

I will also be inviting some randomly selected students to participate in an interview. The interview will take about 15 minutes. Your student's participation in this interview is voluntary. If you choose not to have your student participate, there will be no penalty. Likewise, if your student chooses not to participate in the interview, there will be no penalty. The results of the interview may be published, but your student's name will not be used.

In addition, visual ethnography data will be collected to capture student participant's perception of successful college transition, as it pertains to their individual experiences and life setting. The visual ethnographies will be of pictures students use to represent their perceptions/feelings about their abilities to successfully deal with college.

Although there may be no direct benefit to your son/daughter, the possible benefit of your student's participation is an opportunity to think about what he/she has learned. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your student's participation.

Responses will be kept confidential and will not be labeled with students' names, a unique identifier known only to your student will be used to match the pre-test and post-test responses on the survey. The results of this study may be used in a dissertation, reports, presentations, or publications but your student's name will not be known or used.

If you have any questions concerning the research study or your student's participation in it please contact Dr. Ray Buss at (602) 543-6343 or Luis Sanchez at (602) 421-7890.

Sincerely,

Luis Sanchez, Doctoral Student

Ray Buss, Associate Professor

By signing below, you are giving consent for your student _____ to participate in the above study

_____ _____ _____

Signature Printed Name Date

If you have any questions about you or your student's rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel you or your student have been placed at risk, you can contact Dr.

Ray Buss at Arizona State University at (602) 543-6343 or the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

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