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## Latina/o Transfer Students and Community Cultural Wealth: Expanding the Transfer Receptive Culture Framework

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### ABSTRACT

Existing research regarding the post-transfer experiences of Students of Color who transfer from the community college to a four-year college or university is limited. However, we know less about what Latina/o community college transfer students confront during the post-transfer transition process. Therefore, this study describes the post-transfer experiences of 10 Latina/o community college transfer students who transferred to a Predominantly White Institution in Texas. Using a case study approach, the goal of this study was to highlight how Latina/o community college transfer students used their cultural and social capitals to navigate and negotiate the post-transfer conditions at their new institution. The findings show that having transfer programming does not mean the institution is serving its transfer student community equitably. A limited transfer receptive culture by the university showed how Latina/o community college transfer students practiced their aspirational, familial, navigational, and social capitals as a response to the lack of financial aid resources, academic, and social support, at their receiving institution.

Today community colleges comprise the largest post-secondary segment in the United States, enrolling almost half of the undergraduate student population (American Association of Community Colleges, 2018). Since the beginning of the 20th century, the community college – as open admission institution – offers students the opportunity to complete the first two years of their baccalaureate education (Boggs, 2010). Most recently, community colleges started offering baccalaureate degrees in specialized fields, including business management, fashion, teacher education, and nursing, to name a few (Floyd & Walker, 2008). Even with community colleges providing their student's different educational pathways, the community college continues to play a critical role in the attainment of a bachelor's degree through the transfer function (Mullin, 2012). Most Latino students enter the community college with high aspirations of transferring to a four-year university to earn a baccalaureate degree (Crisp & Nora, 2010; Rivas et al., 2007). However, despite Latino community college students having high educational aspirations, the reality is that Latino students who have the intent to transfer are not transferring and/or completing a bachelor's degree in proportion to the numbers entering the community college (Bailey et al., 2007; Gándara et al., 2012). Therefore, the objective of this study was two-fold: First, the author focuses on exploring how Transfer Student University (TSU), a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) in Texas, supports their Latina/o<sup>1</sup> community college transfer students by providing the support needed for students to successfully complete their baccalaureate degree. This includes, the receiving institution offering both a financial and academically supportive environment that is distinct for transfer students (Jain et al., 2011). Second, the author highlights how Latina/o community college transfer students applied their community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) to create the post-transfer receptive culture not established for Latino community college transfer students at TSU. Using semi-structured interviews

with 10 Latina/o community college transfer students attending a PWI in Texas, this study explored two research questions:

- (1) What is the perceived post-transfer receptive culture by Latina/o community college transfer students at Transfer Student University?
- (2) How do Latina/o community college transfer students apply their community cultural wealth to create the post-transfer receptive culture at Transfer Student University?

Despite a high number of Latino students enrolling at the community college, there is a large gap in educational attainment including transfer rates when compared to other racial/ethnic groups (Bailey et al., 2007; Gándara et al., 2012). For example, amongst first-time college students in the 2010 cohort, only 25.8% of Latino students compared to 33% of African American students, 45.1% of White students, and 43.8% Asian American students, successfully completed a certificate or degree within six-years (Shapiro et al., 2018). Unfortunately transfer rates amongst Latino community college students remain low and have been attributed to both academic challenges (Acevedo-Gil et al., 2015; Pérez Huber et al., 2015) and non-academic challenges (Alexander et al., 2007; Gard et al., 2012; Núñez & Elizondo, 2013; Wilkerson, 2017).

In Texas where this study took place, recent data provided by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) shows that more than 60% of first-time degree seeking students enroll at a public two-year college (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board [THECB], 2017). Further, only 27% of these students earned a post-secondary degree or certificate within six-years (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board [THECB], 2017). From this cohort, only 20% of first-time degree seeking Latino community college students transferred to a four-year university within six-years (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board [THECB], 2017). Therefore, this study is significant because it addresses the transfer gap within the Latino community college student population, from the perspective of students who successfully transferred to a four-year university.

### Latina/o students in community colleges

Community colleges' open admissions policy, coupled with low tuition and geographic proximity to home, make them a critical access point into higher education for many students and more specifically for first-generation, low-income, and adult learners who are going back to school seeking additional training or credentials (Ma & Baum, 2016). Four factors primarily influence Latino students in choosing the community college as a pathway into higher education: inadequate guidance from high school personnel, financial concerns, family, and seeing the community college as good place to begin their college education (Vega, 2017). Latinos who pursue a postsecondary education by enrolling in a community college have high aspirations to transfer to a four-year college or university, earn a baccalaureate degree, and/or obtain a graduate degree (Bailey et al., 2007; Núñez et al., 2011). However, once at the community college, Latino students may experience barriers such as part-time enrollment, financial challenges, academic obstacles, and limited access to information and resources that could interrupt, delay, or prevent them from transferring to a four-year college or university (Acevedo-Gil, 2018). Part-time enrollment is a major barrier for Latino students attending community college since studies show that they are less likely to transfer (Crisp & Nora, 2010).

Further, Latino students pursuing a postsecondary education, experience financial challenges. This may be in part because four out ten Latino community college students come from a low-socioeconomic background (Núñez et al., 2011). As a result, Latino students may need to work to finance their education and contribute to the family household (Núñez & Elizondo, 2013; Rendón & Valadez, 1993). For Latino males enrolled at the community college, studies show that they experience financial challenges due in part to having limited financial literacy (Salinas & Hidrowoh, 2018). Additionally, immediate financial challenges, such as an expensive car repair, structural or legal challenges, such as being undocumented under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals

(DACA),<sup>2</sup> and needing to care for immediate and extended family members (Abrica & Martinez, 2016) also prevent Latino males from pursuing higher education. A prevalent and continuous financial challenge experienced by Latino students who are undocumented across the nation has to do with having limited to no access to financial aid and or not qualifying for in-state tuition (Negrón-Gonzales, 2017; Oseguera et al., 2010).

Additionally, Latino students experience academic obstacles. For example, one of the most critical academic barriers Latino students face at the community colleges is being overrepresented in developmental English courses (Pérez Huber et al., 2015). One explanation for Latino students in developmental English delaying or not transferring may be as a result of experiencing academical invalidation, first by their placement into developmental education and then by experiencing deficit and demeaning pedagogical practices in their classrooms. These practices are characterized by a lack of approachability and negative comments by the instructor toward the students. Experiencing this type of pedagogical approach to teaching in developmental courses can make students feel unintelligent, resulting in a student having lower academic aspirations, self-confidence, and self-efficacy (Acevedo-Gil et al., 2015).

Finally, having limited access to information and resources to transfer is the fourth major obstacle for Latino community college students. This is due to the fact that the majority of Latino students enrolled at the community college are first-generation college students including, immigrant first-generation (Núñez et al., 2011). In addition, Latino community college students experience unsupportive organizational cultures which do not encourage students asking for help (Jaffe, 2007; Millward et al., 2007). This may cause Latino students to have limited access to transfer specific information and preparation (Bensimon & Dowd, 2009; Hagedorn, 2010; Rivas et al., 2007; Solórzano et al., 2013). This is critical for Latino community college students since access to information increases their likelihood to enroll (Solórzano et al., 2013) and complete college (Bensimon & Dowd, 2009; Hagedorn, 2010).

Recently, several models have emerged to address some of the institutional factors associated with the community college to four-year university experience. These models emphasize four-year institutions developing affirming transfer cultures, requiring four-year institutions to be intentional with eliminating institutional barriers that community college transfer students may face during the post-transfer process (Handel, 2011; Jain et al., 2011; Núñez & Yoshimo, 2017; Pérez & Ceja, 2010; Stremmel, 2013). To address the issues and challenges within the Latino transfer gap, the author uses the transfer receptive culture model, which calls attention to the institutional commitment by a four-year college or university to provide the support needed for students to transfer successfully. This includes supporting students to become transfer eligible, apply, enroll, and successfully earn a baccalaureate degree (Jain et al., 2011).

### **Latina/o community college transfer students in four-year universities**

Studies on Latino community college transfer students post-transfer experiences are limited and mainly document the experiences of Latino community college transfer students transitioning and integrating themselves at the four-year institution. For instance, Solis and Durán (2020) reveal that some of the challenges Latinx students experienced were due to social isolation, adapting to the quarter system from a semester system, large course sizes, having limited access to information and resources, restriction toward certain majors, and maintaining healthy lifestyles while trying to achieve at a high academic level. Further, participants also confronted feeling inferior, they experienced racism, discrimination, and sexism, inside and outside the classroom, which students realized negatively affected their academic experiences. In order to overcome these challenges, students relied on their involvement in student organizations, family, professors, and gaining access to university resources for transfer students. For Mexican American community college transfer students, Castro and Cortez (2017) revealed students experienced isolation based on their ethno/racial identity, their age, socio-economic standing, and perceived ability. Further, for Latino students who transfer to Tier 1 universities, out of their home states, Harris (2017) revealed two aspects of the transfer experience that Latino transfer students dealt with. First, the majority of Latino students experienced culture shock due to the weather. This was due to students transferring from a community college in a sunny state to four-year universities in states

where it snowed. Second, Latino students faced transfer shock, as a result of facing academic challenges, specially, science and health majors.

Looking at studies that describe how Latino transfer students adapt to their new university environments, Andrade (2018) reveals that Latino community college transfer students develop spatial awareness of spaces where students could connect with other Latinos, spaces where they could be alone, and spaces where they could benefit from others in their major. According to Andrade (2018), the most common place for students to connect with other Latinos, and where students went to be alone, was the library. Additionally, students frequently used the buildings where their majors were housed in to benefit from both students and faculty in their majors. Lastly, Cortez and Castro (2017) show that Mexican and Mexican American transfer students successfully navigate and persist at the four-year institution because they benefit from participating in the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) at the university, as well as from being supported by their academic advisors at the university.

The goals of the present research study are to address the need for additional knowledge and insights into how four-year universities support their Latino community college transfer students during the post-transfer process. Second, this research study aims to provide insights into the type of community cultural wealth developed and applied by Latino students based on the post-transfer conditions they confronted individually.

## Theoretical frameworks

This study utilized the framework of a transfer receptive culture (TRC) (Jain et al., 2011) and Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) (Yosso, 2005), both of which draw on Critical Race Theory (CRT) in education. CRT was developed out of Critical Legal Studies in the 1970's by legal scholars who were dissatisfied over the slow pace of racial reform in the United States (Delgado, 1995). Ultimately, CRT aimed to transform the relationship among race, racism, and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). In education, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) introduced CRT into education by using race as an analytical tool for understanding school inequity. Solórzano (1998) provided the premise to develop a CRT in education, arguing that CRT “challenges ahistoricism and the unidisciplinary focus of most analyses and insists on analyzing race and racism in education by placing them in both a historical and contemporary context” (p. 123). CRT goes against the dominant discourse on race and racism within the field of education, exploring how theories, policies, and practices, are continuously used to marginalize certain racial and ethnic groups (Solórzano, 1998). In this study, CRT provides the theoretical framework to view transfer as a commitment between the community college and the four-year institution (Jain et al., 2011).

## Transfer receptive culture

The TRC framework draws on CRT in education to see transfer as a racialized phenomenon. Jain et al. (2011) highlight that despite Students of Color making up the majority of students enrolled in the community colleges nationwide, and having high aspirations of transferring to four-year institutions, they transfer in low numbers. The authors also share that in colleges with predominantly Latino or African American student enrollment, the transfer rates are even lower. For these two reasons, the authors argue that race needs to be a central component when evaluating the transfer commitment made by highly selective four-year institutions to welcome transfer Students of Color. Therefore, Jain et al. (2011) provide five elements that are necessary for elite four-year institutions to institute transfer from the community college as a normalized process to their campus. The five elements of a TRC are:

- (1) Establish the transfer of students, especially nontraditional, first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented students, as a high institutional priority that ensures stable accessibility, retention, and graduation.
- (2) Provide outreach and resources that focus on the specific needs of transfer students while complimenting the community college mission of transfer.

- (3) Offer financial and academic support through distinct opportunities for nontraditional/reentry transfer students where they are stimulated to achieve at high academic levels.
- (4) Acknowledge the lived experiences that students bring and the intersectionality between community and family.
- (5) Create an appropriate and organic framework from which to assess, evaluate, and enhance transfer receptive programs and initiatives that can lead to further scholarship on transfer students (Jain et al., 2011, p. 258).

In this study, TRC provides the lens to highlight how TSU works with Latino community college students to limit or remove potential institutional barriers and support more Latino students transferring from the community college to the university.

### **Community cultural wealth**

Further, this study highlights how Latino community college transfer students apply their CCW to develop the financial, academic, and social support, not provided by university. The CCW model describes the “array of knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression” (Yosso, 2005, p. 77). Additionally, Yosso’s conceptualization of community cultural wealth, challenges Pierre Bourdieu’s (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) traditional forms of cultural capital, which have been used as the standard to explain why Students of Color do not succeed at the same rate as Whites (Yosso, 2005).

Yosso (2005) argues that Bourdieu’s interpretation of capital places “White middle-class culture as the standard, and therefore all other forms and expressions of ‘culture’ are judged in comparison to this ‘norm’” (p. 76). Therefore, the CCW model draws from CRT to highlight the forms of cultural capital that marginalized groups have that traditional cultural capital theory ignores and devalues. Yosso’s CCW model is made up of six capitals: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant capitals; they are defined below:

- (1) Aspirational capital refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, Even in the face of real and perceived barriers.
- (2) Linguistic capital includes the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style.
- (3) Familial capital refers to those cultural knowledges nurtured among familia (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition.
- (4) Social capital can be understood as networks of people and community resources.
- (5) Navigational capital refers to skills of maneuvering through social institutions.
- (6) Resistant capital refers to those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality (Yosso, 2005, pp. 77–80).

In this study, the CCW provides the lens to emphasize how Latino students apply their agency along with the sets of skills and knowledges they learn at home and in their communities to be successful once they transferred to TSU. Together TRC and the CCW allow for a critical look at how Latino community college transfer students confront the covert and overt ways that they can be institutionally discriminated against and/or marginalized because of their ethnic/racial identity, gender, sexuality, age, language, ability, and status as community college transfer students. Most importantly these frameworks emphasize how these students apply their community cultural wealth to create and maintain the transfer receptive culture they need to successfully graduate from Transfer Student University.

Methodology

The data used for this study were drawn from a larger case study conducted between 2017 and 2018. Case-study methodology allowed the researcher to explore a bounded system (a case) over a period of time through detailed, in-depth data collection that involved multiple sources of information (Creswell et al., 2007). This particular case study was bounded by one single university, TSU. Data were also generated from semi-structured interviews with students, staff, faculty, and administrators. It also includes data gathered through published and publicly available documentation on transfer policy and practices at TSU.

The data analyzed for this study is from interviews with Latina/o community college transfer students, highlighting how Latina/o community college transfer students confronted the ideological, institutional, and structural conditions they encountered after transferring to TSU. For example, Latino students tackled individual and institutional perceptions about community college transfer students not being academically prepared for the rigor at TSU. Additionally, students who participated in this study took it upon themselves to gain access to the information and resources that they needed during the post-transfer process in order to earn their baccalaureate degree from TSU. Finally, although Latino community college students make up a significant amount of the student population enrolled at the community college in the state of Texas, there are not institutionalized set of transfer policies or practices set in place by TSU to ensure that more Latino community college students are transfer eligible, apply, enroll, and earn a baccalaureate degree from TSU.

Site description and participants

This study took place at Transfer Students University (TSU a pseudonym). TSU is a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) in Texas. TSU was selected for this study because it is one of the leading destinations for transfer students nationally, and in the state of Texas. To participate, students had to meet the following criteria:1) Identify as Latina or Latino; 2) Be a community college transfer student; and 3) Be between 18 to 30 years old. A total of ten Latino students, six who self-identified as female and four who self-identified as male, participated in this study during the academic school year (See Table 1). All ten participants transferred from different community colleges in Texas to TSU and identified as either Latina or Latino. Five were born outside of the United States and five were born in Texas, and all ten were first-generation college students.

Data collection and analysis

Participants were recruited through a flyer, classroom announcements, and snowball sampling (Mertens, 2010). One 30 to 60 minute semi-structured interview was conducted by the researcher, with each participant, which took place on campus. As all the students were bilingual (Spanish/English), they were encouraged to converse in the language with which they felt most comfortable. Eight participants

Table 1. Student Demographic Information.

Name	Age	Gender Identity	Race/Ethnicity	College Generational Status	Major
Alejandra	27	Female	Latina	1 <sup>st</sup> Generation	Speech Language Pathology
Carina	20	Female	Latina	1 <sup>st</sup> Generation	Communication Sciences and Disorders
Christian	21	Male	Latino	1 <sup>st</sup> Generation	Civil Engineering
Cruz	20	Male	Latino	1 <sup>st</sup> Generation	Mechanical Engineering
Daniel	20	Male	Latino	1 <sup>st</sup> Generation	Aerospace Engineering
Ismael	20	Male	Latino	1 <sup>st</sup> Generation	Human Dimensions of Organization
Lucia	23	Female	Latina	1 <sup>st</sup> Generation	Bilingual Education
Mayte	27	Female	Latina	1 <sup>st</sup> Generation	Bilingual Education
Vanessa	22	Female	Latina	1 <sup>st</sup> Generation	Bilingual Education
Yosdi	21	Female	Latina	1 <sup>st</sup> Generation	Bilingual Education



provided their interviews in English, and two participants Cruz and Mayté, provided their interviews in Spanish. The interviews provided by participants in Spanish were translated to English by the researcher.

After conducting the semi-structured interviews, the researcher transcribed them manually and verbatim. Manually transcribing the interviews also gave the researcher the opportunity to further analyze data, by listening to the participants experiences a second time and ensuring that their voices were captured accurately into text. Additionally, to increase the reliability of the data collected, the researcher conducted a member check-in with each participant (Mertens, 2010). The researcher provided each participant with a copy of their full interview transcript, including any initial questions and comments the researcher had through a one-hour check in session. This provided participants with an opportunity to interact with their narrative, check for accuracy in the transcription of their account and provide feedback based on the questions and comments.

Data was analyzed using a thematic analysis approach (Ayres, 2008), in combination with the theoretical frameworks of a transfer receptive culture (Jain et al., 2011) and community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005). Attention was given to the third tenet of the transfer receptive culture, that promotes four-year institutions offering “financial and academic support through distinct opportunities for nontraditional/reentry transfer students where they are stimulated to achieve at high academic levels” (Jain et al., 2011, p. 258). Additionally, the researcher paid close attention to identify examples of how participants applied their community cultural wealth to navigate and negotiate the post-transfer process. In the following section the author summarizes the themes that emerged corresponding to the third tenet of the transfer receptive culture, financial resources, and academic and social support. These themes describe the current post-transfer receptive culture for Latino community college transfer students at TSU.

## Findings

The disproportion between the number of Latino students who enter the community college with aspirations to transfer to a four-year college or university and those who end up transferring requires that we examine the post-transfer receptive culture for Latino students at four-year institutions. Understanding what the specific needs may be for Latino students once they transfer to a four-year college or university provides insights into transfer policies and programming that can be developed to support more Latino community college students transferring and earning their baccalaureate degree. Using the third tenet of the transfer receptive culture, the findings highlight how Latino community college transfer students applied their aspirational, familial, navigational and social capitals, as a response of the lack of financial aid resources and academic and social support at TSU. The following section offers a summary of key findings.

### Financial resources

Element three of the transfer receptive culture requires receiving institutions to offer a financial supportive environment that meets the specific needs of transfer students (Jain et al., 2011). Transfer Student University provides limited opportunities for Latino transfer students to get financial need-based support. However, it does offer two scholarships for transfer students – the Private Transfer Scholarship (PTS) and the Public Scholarship (PS) – both of which present challenges, limiting the impact they may have on supporting the financial needs of Latino students. For example, since PTS is a private scholarship TSU has no control over who is awarded, therefore students who present the most need may be overlooked. The PS, on the other hand, presents a challenge in that it awards a limited number of scholarships each academic year. Further, securing additional financial support to make up for the need-based aid that students were not awarded was one of the major stressors among the participants in this study. This is important because several students shared that they had dependents, or their immediate family depended on some type of financial support from them. The majority of the



students who participated in this study received aid in the form of grants and loans. However, despite receiving financial aid, several students had to make up for the financial aid they were not awarded.

Lucia, a first-year bilingual education transfer student, stated that she worked multiple jobs during the summer prior to starting at TSU to make up for the financial aid she was not awarded. Additionally, she was her younger sister's legal guardian, which made the need to work multiple jobs and save money critical for their well-being. Lucia shared:

I didn't want to run the risk of falling behind because I needed to keep a job to pay my bills. So, I wanted to keep the summer free and work three jobs and not be able to sleep as much or have fun or anything like that because I wanted to do well during the first semester at TSU. [...] If I wouldn't have worked three jobs during the summer, then I really wouldn't have had another option but to work a few jobs to be able to pay the bills because what TSU provided or what was left after tuition wasn't as much.

Despite not receiving financial support, Lucia's motivation to stay on top of her academics during her first semester at TSU by sacrificing rest and social activities during the summer and working three jobs highlights her aspirational capital. Further, Lucia's familial capital exhibited through her sacrifices, also guaranteed that her younger sister was taken care of while she completed high school and pursued her own academic and professional goals.

Yosdi, a first-year bilingual education major transfer student, shared that despite getting financial support to cover her tuition and having a part-time job during the school year, her parents supported her financially by paying for her utilities. Yosdi shared, "I got TAFSA.<sup>3</sup> They gave me 5,000 USD for each semester ... Other than that, my parents sometimes support me with utilities and then I work around 25 hours a week." Yosdi's example shows her aspirational capital, by her taking the initiative to secure and work a part-time job to continue pursuing her education despite her status as a DACA student, especially within the anti-immigrant climate around the country and in Texas. Further, Yosdi's parents' financial support toward paying her utilities demonstrates familial capital practiced within their family. Moreover, the fact that her parents paid her utilities also shows their support toward her education ensuring she can be successful.

Daniel, a second-year aerospace engineering transfer student, described relying on his family's financial support to ensure he was fine financially his first year at TSU. Daniel explained:

My first-year last year, the support that I got, was mostly loans. I didn't receive many grants at all. The only grant that I received was from FAFSA, and it was a Pell-grant, and it was a lot less than I thought I would get. So, the first year was a lot more difficult, it was very difficult, like in the transition financially, and I just like, yeah it was just mostly money from me and my family, whatever they could put up, yeah. But beyond that there was no grants.

Daniel's family's financial support, like Yosdi, shows the familial capital practiced within his family. This is based on the commitment his family shares toward Daniel's well-being and educational pursuits. His family's financial support allowed Daniel to fully immerse himself in his studies, as well as take advantage of the different types of opportunities he was exposed to as an aerospace engineer major.

Student's aspirational capital highlights how, despite students not being awarded the financial aid they needed, they were motivated to do whatever it took to ensure they continued in pursuit of their educational goals. These examples of aspirational capital confirm literature on transfer students enacting their aspirational capital, demonstrating a high level of persistence and independence, as well as showing persistence through adversity (Mobley & Brawner, 2018). Additionally, students' familial capital demonstrates two types of financial support, from student toward family and from parents toward their student. At the end, familial support highlights families valuing education and the overall well-being of their students. Yosdi and Daniel's examples of familial capital confirm the type of familial support Latino transfer students receive from their families during the transfer process (Castro & Cortez, 2017).

### Academic support

The third element of the transfer receptive culture recommends that receiving institutions offer a supportive academic environment distinct for transfer students where they are supported and encouraged to achieve at a high academic level (Jain et al., 2011). According to the TSU personnel who work with transfer students, the academic support offered to Latino transfer students at TSU is limited in the type of opportunities it provided Latino students to encourage them to achieve at a high academic level. Students described getting the general academic support every college student has access to, such as office hours with their TAs and professors, tutoring, and the Writing Center. Daniel was the only student who provided details about his experience within any of the Transfer Student Learning Communities (TSLC), that only some transfer students had access to as part their major. Daniel shared:

As far as the aerospace department goes, like I said, in our TSLC seminars, my advisor was there for at least an hour a week to help us with anything. Any questions we had, any problems we were having. She told us about tutoring, if we had problems in class, we knew about the tutors and what time they were going to be there.

From Daniel's experience, the TSLC was where transfer students learned how to navigate the institution and not a place where they are motivated to achieve at a high academic level. There are no specific pedagogical practices or curriculum within this seminar that suggested the academic needs of transfer students in this department are being supported. On the other hand, by Daniel taking part in these seminars, he was using his navigational capital to gain access to institutional knowledge and resources that would help Daniel succeed at the university as a transfer student.

Cruz, a second-year mechanical engineering transfer student, also relied on his navigational capital to gain the support he needed to be academically successful. Cruz shared that he went to multiple places on campus to access the different types of academic support he needed. He described his experience as, *"he ido a tutoring labs como se llamen, para diferentes clases. Como a veces vengo aquí al Learning Center, aquí hay unas y a veces voy a las de mi departamento, también ahí hay otras clases"* [I have gone to the tutoring labs, whatever there are called, for different classes. Sometimes I come to the Learning Center, there is some here, and sometimes I go to the ones held by my department, they have other classes there]. Cruz's experiences with gaining the academic support he needed to be academically successful highlights two things: First, it shows Cruz's initiative toward gaining the academic support he needed. Second, it shows how he exercised his institutional knowledge to acquire the necessary assistance for a particular course at the time he needed it. Furthermore, Daniel and Cruz's use of navigational capital highlights that despite having access to limited resources, transfer students put their navigational into practice (Mobley & Brawner, 2018). Moreover, transfer students employ spatial awareness (Andrade, 2018) of places they can go to, to benefit from others in his major.

### Social support

One of the limitations of element three of the transfer receptive culture is that it does not address the non-academic barriers or challenges transfer students may encounter during their post-transfer experience. This point will be addressed in the discussion section. The type of non-academic support provided by TSU was limited in that it did not adequately address the specific needs of transfer students. There were two main types of support available for transfer students. First, throughout the semester they were invited to events organized by the office of New Student Services (NSS) to reconnect students to services on campus. Second, TSU had a Transfer Experience Center (TEC), staffed by someone working with the Transfer Year Experience Program, in an effort to connect transfer students with resources on campus and provide technical support regarding student's program of study. Even though these resources were available to students, none of the students who participated in this study mentioned them. Rather, the following are examples on how students used their aspirational, familial, navigational, resistant, and social capitals, to gain the non-academic support they needed to become successful.

Several students shared that they needed additional support during the academic year but were not able get in directly from university. For example, since Christian was not part of the TSLCs, he started his first semester without access to a social network of peers who were transfer students. As a result, he had to go out of his way to develop those social networks himself. He described this experience as:

Pretty much you know, just trial and error. If I saw a flyer on campus that said that a student organization was having a general meeting, I went to see if I liked it. Whenever a classmate of mine needed help in the homework or understanding something for the test, I would offer to help and that's how I started to make friends. Once I had built trust with the people I helped and I considered them good friends, I started to ask for advice on where to go to eat, which student organizations to join, what professors to avoid, fastest way to get from a certain building on campus to another, etc.

Christian's experience shows how despite not having access to a social network of transfer students, he initiated his social connections by navigating different physical and social spaces on campus. Further, he was able to make connections with others by using his experiential knowledge and offering to help his classmates understand the material. As a result, Christian developed and relied on the social network of students who were part of his classes. Here, Christian exercised his navigational capital in that he used opportunities like attending events hosted by student organizations and offering to tutor his classmates to make social connections. Additionally, Christian used his social capital to develop relationships, build trust, and eventually rely on other students for advice on navigating the university's academic and social aspects.

Another challenge that came up with a few of the participants in this study was the lack of support for students with dependents. For instance, Carina a first-year communications sciences and disorders major transfer student, described the lack of support TSU provides students who, like herself, are parents. She said, "No, that's what Chendo would do. Every year we would ask about it and there was nothing available, not even daycare. That's why he's not here". Carina was referring to Chendo, her husband who lived three hours away with their son, because they could not afford to live together and did not have reliable daycare for their son while she was pursuing her college degree. During the time that I knew Carina and Chendo, they shared that at one point, while they were both in school, their son lived with his grandparents and they would only get to see him occasionally. Carina's circumstances underscore how Carina and her partner practiced their familial capital, which represents a commitment to the well-being of one's family and community (Yosso, 2005). This was exemplified when Carina and Chendo relied on each other and on their families for the well-being of their son. Further, Carina's example also displays how, as young parents, they express their aspirational capital, a desire to succeed notwithstanding the lack of resources from the institution toward parenting students. This was evident seeing how, as young parents, Carina and Chendo were highly motivated and determined to persist toward completing their college degrees despite the inadequate amount of support they received from TSU.

Finally, Lucia, who was her sister's legal guardian, received minimal support from the university when she needed to bring her sister to live with her. Lucia shared that since she moved from her hometown to attend TSU, she had to live away from her sister. Yet, during the semester something happened and Lucia needed to bring her sister to live with her. Things did not work out and she had to withdraw from the university. Lucia described the process she went through with the university trying to find support sharing that:

I did try and look for, I guess, extra support before I moved back to Houston. I did try to go to TSU's legal services and ask them, 'okay so if I were to bring my sister, how can I make that happen? Or can you guys suggest me to anyone around American City (pseudonym), that is able to help me live with my sister here or have more support economically or something like that'. I went to a few places, but they weren't really, I guess, supportive.

Despite the unfavorable outcome, Lucia's actions demonstrate her aspirational and navigational capitals. Seeing how she faced a big challenge in the middle of the semester, she took it upon herself to access information and resources that would result in a potential solution to her situation. Furthermore, Lucia's example also shows how she practiced her familial capital, since she was not able to get the legal or financial support she needed. Lucia withdrew from TSU and moved back to her hometown to be closer to her sister,

ensuring the well-being of her younger sister. Finally, Lucia also demonstrated her resistant capital in two ways: First, by withdrawing from TSU to go back home and be with her sister. Second, by enrolling back at her former community college and transferring to the local university a semester later.

To compensate for the non-academic support students needed, students used their aspirational, navigational and social capitals to navigate different spaces/environments on campus to develop relationships with people on whom that they would later rely. Additionally, students' practice of familial capital shows the non-traditional ways students continued to pursue their academic goals while ensuring the well-being of their family members on which they depended. Christian's example supports studies that highlight transfer students using their social capital by relying on other students who were part of his classes (Mobley & Brawner, 2018). Carina and Lucia experiences, on the other hand, support studies that demonstrate the different forms in which Latinos practice familial capital (Castro & Cortez, 2017; Mobley & Brawner, 2018).

## Discussion

Based on the experiences of the participants and despite TSU having transfer programming set in place – including, scholarships, the Transfer Student Learning Communities, and the Transfer Experience Center – the post-transfer receptive culture for Latino transfer students at TSU was limited to non-existent. Rather, Latino transfer students at TSU used their aspirational, familial, navigational, resistant, and social capitals to create the resources and strategies to navigate and negotiate the post-transfer process at TSU to become successful.

The findings of this study support existing literature regarding the experiences of community college transfer students, showing how first-generation transfer students enact their community cultural wealth to succeed at the four-year university (Mobley & Brawner, 2018). Further, this study makes two important contributions to the research on transfer students and in particular to the research on Latino transfer students: First, this study is one of the initial studies to explore the post-transfer receptive culture for Latino community college transfer students who successfully transferred to a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). Previous studies focusing on the post-transfer experiences of Latino community college students transferring to four-year institutions analyzed the experiences of Latino community college students transitioning and integrating into their new institution. Most of these studies describe Latina and Latino transfer students experiencing academic and non-academic challenges due to feeling inferior, being isolated, encountering racism, discrimination, and sexism, based on their ethno/racial identity, gender, age, socio-economic standing, and abilities (Castro & Cortez, 2017; Solis & Durán, 2020). The focus on element three of a transfer receptive culture, which focuses on the type of institutional structures that are in place once a transfer student enrolls, revealed the limited amount of financial, academic, and social support TSU has in place to ensure that Latino community college transfer students not only transfer but also complete their bachelor's degree.

Further, this study is also one of the first to highlight how Latino community college transfer students apply their community cultural wealth to create the post-transfer receptive culture that is not set in place, at the university they transferred into. Other studies highlighting the Latino post-transfer experience, show how Latino students relied on their involvement in student organizations (Solis & Durán, 2020), family (Cortez & Castro, 2017; Solis & Durán, 2020), other students (Andrade, 2018), and making connections with institutional agents (Cortez & Castro, 2017; Solis & Durán, 2020). By emphasizing Latino students' use of their community cultural wealth through the post-transfer process, we can see how students actively confronted the conditions presented by TSU, reflecting the uniqueness to their own transfer experience and circumstances.

Second, this study, expands on the transfer receptive culture framework by focusing on student's agency and capitals to create their own resources and strategies to succeed when a post-transfer receptive culture is not in place. Specifically, it expands element three of a transfer receptive culture by showing how Latino students address the social challenges they confront at a PWI, as students who have multiple roles and responsibilities in addition to being students. Finally, this study expands the

research on Latino community college transfer students because it examines the role of community cultural wealth in the post-transfer process.

### ***Areas for future research***

Given that more than half of Latino undergraduate students in California, Florida, and Texas are enrolled at a community college (Excelencia in Education, 2015) and the fact that most Latino students at the community college do not transfer to a four-year institution, despite having high aspirations to do so. More research about the transfer receptive culture for Latino community college students is needed in these states. Future studies could build on this work and look at the entire transfer process for Latino community college students. Additionally, considering that the literature on the transfer receptive culture for Latino community college students continues to be limited, future studies should explore the transfer receptive culture for Latino community college students at different type of four-year institutions including like Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), and private institutions. Additional studies can provide critical findings that can support transfer policies and programing, to increase the number of Latino community college students who transfer and complete their bachelor's degree. Lastly, studies can also build on this work by highlighting other ways in which Latina/o community college students apply their aspirational, familial, linguistic, navigation, social, and resistant capitals in order to navigate and negotiate the post-transfer experience.

### ***Implications for practice***

To increase the post transfer success for Latino community college transfer students, institutions like TSU, must develop or enhance their transfer receptive culture for Latina/o community college students (Jain et al., 2011). In particular, institutions like TSU must be fully committed to equitably serving Latino community college transfer students. An important step in this direction would be to have Latino community college transfer students become an institutional priority to work with from the time they start at the community college, all the way through the completion of their baccalaureate degrees. Institutions like TSU can accomplish this by first critically analyzing their own assumptions about who Latino community college transfer students are (Castro & Cortez, 2017) and what type of challenges they may face throughout the entire transfer process. Students who participated in this study represented different ethnic groups, citizenship status, marital status, family structures, and had multiple roles and responsibilities in addition to being students. All these different statuses, roles, and responsibilities brought unique set of barriers and challenges students faced before and after they transferred to TSU.

In addition, institutions like TSU should ensure that Latino transfer students are reached out to during the pre-transfer process (Jain et al., 2011). This would ensure that students receive the information they need and are aware about resources offered by their institution, specifically for transfer students. This study showed that, although TSU has two scholarships established specifically for transfer students, only Alejandra and Daniel, 2 out of the 10 participants, knew they existed. Also, despite TSU having transfer programing set in place, including Transfer Student Learning Communities (TSLCs) and the Transfer Experience Center (TEC), not everyone was able to participate in the TSLCs, and no one who participated in this study knew about the TEC. Along with outreaching to Latina/o students, in order for institutions like TSU to increase the success of Latino students' post-transfer, transfer student programming and support needs to distinctively engage and serve Latina/o students while encouraging them to achieve at high academic levels (Jain et al., 2011). This effort needs to be a shared responsibility by the entire institution, and not a single or isolated effort by some departments. Based on conversations with university personnel who work with transfer students, these units do not work together toward improving the experiences and overall successes of Latino transfer students at TSU. Equally important is that institutions like TSU acknowledge and validate the lived experiences that Latina/o community college students bring with them to the

university and the intersection between community and family (Jain et al., 2011). This means that Latina/o students should not have to choose between family and a college education. Further, institutions like TSU must create physical and social spaces with the Latina/o community and family in mind. Finally, in order for institutions like TSU to increase the success of Latino students', post-transfer institutions must use frameworks such as community cultural wealth and the transfer receptive culture to view Latina/o transfer students in an asset-based manner versus seeing them as students who may be lacking. Furthermore, administrators, faculty, and staff can use the community cultural wealth that Latina/o students bring to their institution to assess, evaluate, and enhance transfer receptive programs and initiatives from an asset-based perspective.

## Conclusion

It is estimated that out of 60% of Latino students who begin their post-secondary education at a community college, less than 1% transfers to a four-year university (Yosso & Solórzano, 2006). Seeing the low number of Latino students who successfully transfer to a four-year university, the post-transfer receptive culture for Latino students must improve to ensure that they successfully earn their baccalaureate degree. Furthermore, a transfer receptive culture at a four-year institution must be more than granting community college students transfer admissions into a university where they rightfully belong. The emphasis on a post-transfer receptive culture provides receiving institutions the opportunity to confront their assumptions of who Latino community college students are, and to eliminate potential institutional barriers Latino students face along the transfer process. The value of community cultural wealth highlights Latino community college students' agency in navigating and negotiating their place in institutions of higher education.

Focusing on the third tenet of a transfer receptive culture gave us the opportunity to see that having transfer programming does not mean the institution is serving their transfer student community equitably. This lack of a post-transfer receptive culture places the responsibility of finding the information and resources students need on the students and not on the receiving institution. The experiences of Latino community college transfer students at TSU showed that despite the limited post-transfer receptive culture they used their aspirational, familial, navigational, and social capitals to create the resources and strategies to navigate and negotiate the different physical and social environments at TSU to become successful.

## Notes

1. In this study, I use the term Latina when referring to the female participants and Latino when referring to the male participants in the study, who racially, ethnically, and/or culturally identify as descendants of Latin America – including Central, North, or South America. Additionally, I use the terms Latinas, Latinos, Latinx, students of color, ethnic and racial group, when directly citing other research.
2. DACA was an immigration policy implemented during the Obama administration, that provided undocumented students who met specific requirements, work permits, temporary relief from deportation, short-term amnesty, and work permits. (Allen-Handy & Farinde-Wu, 2018)
3. The Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TAFSA) is used to collect information to help determine eligibility for state (or institutional) financial aid programs that are administered by institutions of higher education in the state of Texas. Students that are classified as a Texas Resident who cannot apply for federal financial aid using the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) are encouraged to complete the TASFA (Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board [THECB], 2020).

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