ADULT LEARNERS' EXPERIENCES OF STIGMA IN DEVELOPMENTAL READING COURSES

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by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work first to my children, Eric and Sydni, who have sacrificed their mom time for the past few years and come to embrace that sometimes hard work looks like "Mom's just sitting there at her computer."

Family is a big deal. One of the main reasons I pursued this degree is to set a precedent for my siblings, nieces, nephews, and cousins who will follow the trail I am blazing. I am the fourth of 10 siblings in a huge, blended family, one among dozens of cousins: This is for you. To my parents (all of them, but especially my mother, Wyvonne): you have supported me through everything and always made me believe I was the smartest, hardest working, and most qualified person you know. Papa and Nana, you accepted me as your own, and most importantly, you opened your home and your hearts to accommodate my children when I needed a tad more focus. Three of my parents passed away in 2018 – Aunt Saundra, Daddy Jimmie, and Dollye (aka Nana), I wish I could have shared this with them.

I am so grateful to you, dear reader and good friend of mine – you know who you are! (☺ Your name goes here.)

Lastly, I dedicate this work to my husband Mica who embarked upon this journey with me. You have been a willing proofreader, listener, and guy who says, "I'm not sure what you're going for, but that doesn't make sense." You have cooked and cleaned and made coffee. You have taxied children and single-parented at times. You tolerated my odd sleep and work patterns and my (extremely rare) mood swings and panic attacks. You have been my rock! I love you, and I appreciate your sacrifice.

ABSTRACT

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In this study, I explore college students' perception of their experiences in developmental reading courses, whether they feel stigma, and if said stigma discourages them from engaging in behaviors that promote retention and lead to completion. I hope the research reveals how feelings of stigma relate to help-seeking behavior among college student who are enrolled in developmental reading classes. Furthermore, conclusions in this study should suggest actions institutions, faculty, and practitioners can take to further retention among struggling college readers who experience stigma.

KEY WORDS: Stigma, Reading, Developmental education, Community colleges, Post-secondary reading instruction, Oklahoma, Sam Houston State University, Graduate School, Texas.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Reading instruction in college is a subset of Developmental Education. Developmental Education is a component of undergraduate, post-secondary education prescribed to students who need courses that compensate for deficits in their college preparedness. Anecdotally, practitioners share the belief that an element of stigma is involved in developmental education course-taking. While developmental educators discuss the stigma among themselves, the phenomenon that developmental education students may feel stigmatized is rarely acknowledged in the scholarly literature around developmental education. This study will contribute to the existing sets of research regarding stigma among developmental education students in general and developmental reading students in particular.

Developmental reading courses have been part of a traditional model of deficit-driven course which focus on supporting students' areas of struggle rather than building on their strengths (Rose, 1985; Lesley, 2001). This deficit focus may encourage stigma associated with taking developmental reading classes. A few students self-select the developmental reading courses on the pretense that they struggled with reading previously and want to gain more reading strategies before entering reading-intensive college courses. Likewise, some non-traditional students recognize that their last school experiences are so far removed that they wish to improve their reading skills while becoming reacquainted with the act of being in the academy. Students for whom English is not a native language also regard reading as an opportunity to build literacy fluency. In contrast to those who find value in being placed into reading courses, some students are

more hesitant. The reasons for this reluctance range from perceived "underplacement" to financial regret. I have heard students lament, "I already know how to read. I don't need to take a reading class." Such students have the misconception that reading courses are designed to teach the phonics or word-decoding skills that students associate with learning to read in the early grades. Other students resist enrolling in the course because in many programs, the courses are not credit-bearing and have no impact on a student's cumulative grade-point-average nor their university transfer hours (a concern for many two-year college students). On top of the lack of transferability, there are also barriers in the form of additional fees. The fee structure at the college I teach includes a developmental course fee and a developmental lab fee that are not added to the costs of any other courses in the catalogue. Students are essentially paying more to enroll in courses for which they earn no credit and that will nor transfer to another institution.

Statement of the Problem

In research and in conversations among community college colleagues, practitioners discuss the stigma students feel about taking developmental courses (Deacon, et al., 2017; Ntiri, 2009). Developmental studies courses and programs are seldom highlighted in prestigious marketing and recruitment campaigns. This lack of acknowledgement creates a scenario where students who enroll in developmental courses experience stigma because they perceive that their classes are less scholarly and outside the normal experience of college course-taking. The late 1990s and early 2000s saw a doubling of colleges and universities along with a six-fold increase of new college students (Attewell, et al., 2007). Many institutions, especially open-access institutions like community colleges, are now filled with more students who struggle academically

(Attewell et al., 2007). Until recent reform and redesign efforts garnered more press, developmental education was often not discussed. When students enroll and their developmental college courses do not align with the expected narrative of college experiences, they feel the shame and stigma of inadequacy (Grubb & Gabriner, 2013). With the majority of community college students, and almost 40 percent of university students, being placed into at least one remedial course (Chen, 2016), the challenges of developmental education can no longer be ignored.

Reading students seem to face a more stigmatized academic scenario than other students in developmental education. In addition to the alleged stigma of being placed in so called “zero-level” courses for which they earn no college credit, they are crowned with the potential stigma of adult illiteracy concerns (Ntiri, 2009). Reading proficiency is often affiliated with cognitive ability – potentially lacking the academic capacity to achieve their goal. This could be a source of shame because ability, unlike effort, is uncontrollable (Nicholls, 1984; Palmer & Willson, 1982; Weiner, 1994). The stigma can also be driven by the often-isolated physical or organizational position of the courses. Some colleges have a stand-alone reading department (Mesa, n.d.). At other colleges, the reading courses, though tucked securely into an English department, are not prioritized courses within the academic programs (Kersteins, 1998); the courses are not directly tied to a gatekeeper course such as English Composition or College Algebra. In some instances, the courses represent reading proficiency required of all general education courses. In other instances, the reading courses are in a general college success discipline, separated entirely from the English course structure. This isolation gives the impression

that these courses are shameful or otherwise misaligned with the other college-level courses; it may contribute to students' feelings of shame or stigma.

Faculty who teach developmental courses seemingly apologize to students for having to take these courses (personal communication, V. Robison, 2017). Other practitioners assume stigma when they warn students that engaging in certain practices may lead to their further stigmatization. For example, in an outreach effort to screen and support students who had a reported or documented history of reading difficulty, practitioners told developmental reading students explicitly "that advising is useful for all students" (p. 447) in in an effort to alleviate the barrier that students avoid disclosing learning disabilities, especially in face-to-face circumstances (Deacon, et al.,2017, Denhart, 2008;). Their presumption was that emphasizing to the struggling readers that the advising services were "available and recommended to all university students" (p. 477), and separate from special accommodations for students who are struggling would encourage students to accept the help they needed without imposing the stigma associated with needing to receive additional support.

Some students entering developmental education are recent high school graduates, while others may have graduated decades ago and returning as adult students. Some earned a GED without completing traditional high school courses, and others may have attended high school in other countries speaking languages besides English. All of these students, like their peers, arrived here expecting to enroll in courses that will lead to earning their anticipated post-secondary degrees. A few of them anticipated taking reading courses and look forward to the prospect of becoming stronger readers. Others, however, feel sidetracked from their original plan. Is this feeling of stigma innate? Do

students bring it with them? Do faculty, advisors, and institutions stigmatize developmental studies programs? What can institutions, faculty or practitioners do to destigmatize this experience for students? Exploring students' thoughts about their placement in reading courses should reveal how they feel.

In general, stigma is harmful because it stifles academic progress and professional achievement (Goffman, 1963). The diagnosis or public acknowledgement of "differentness" can exacerbate stigma (Corrigan, 2007). Related to the stigma of mental illness, Corrigan (2007) posits that diagnostic classification can intensify stigma by confirming stereotypes of homogeneity and the public's sense of groupness when one's diagnosis falls outside of the group. When individuals who are stigmatized internalize their condition, they feel devalued, and the stigma undermines their self-esteem and mental wellness (Corrigan, 2007; Corrigan & Watson, 2002). Trauma and damaged mental health can have negative effects on academic performance, so when students feel stigma, their class attendance, participation, and assignment completion may suffer. Struggle in these areas can translate to failure to pass courses and accumulate to poor completion and retention. Stigmatization, devaluing of a person's difference, has social and psychological functions, which intersect with Bean and Eaton's (2000) theory of student retention and connect to students' experiences in developmental education.

The semantics of developmental education are also troubling. When Paulson and Armstrong (2010) discussed the challenges of inconsistent language within the area, they discussed terminology that had pejorative and stigmatizing connotations. Along with literature on literacy, this discussion plays a significant role in shaping the need for the study (Allatt, 2017; Frankel, et al.,2016; Wells 2014). The vocabulary that describes

developmental education is infused with deficit-informed thinking. The deficit mindset, which is often positioned in Critical Race Theory, takes the position that struggling students are at fault for their poor academic performance because they enter school without the appropriate knowledge and skills and neither value nor support their own education (Yosso, 2005).

Authors who write about higher education report that the end of the twentieth century and the new millennium saw a doubling of colleges and universities along with a large scale increase of new students enrolling in college (Attewell, et al., 2007). That growth enriched top-ranked, academically-selective institutions with stronger students while it filled open-access institutions like community colleges with more students who struggle academically (Attewell et al., 2007). This struggling student population includes students who are underprepared in mathematics, writing, and reading. Students seem to be less comfortable confessing that they struggle to read effectively than they are to admit that they struggle with calculating mathematics problems or composing writing assignments because of the social stigma and shame associated with illiteracy (Beder, 1991; Ntiri, 2009). This concept that a low level of college reading ability carries the stigma of illiteracy would seem more valid if college reading courses targeted illiteracy or taught skills such as basic phonics or decoding. Instead, college reading professors teach reading and study strategies. College reading students are competent readers with various levels of literacy expertise.

Conceptual Framework

This study is built upon overlapping assumptions within the theories of stigma, andragogy, and retention (specifically Bean & Eaton's psychological model of retention) among developmental reading students in a college setting. Stigma theory holds that that when individuals are ostracized because of differences that are linked to undesirable characteristics, they experience discrimination and a loss of status. Literacy includes a social context, of which some students find stigma, shame, and embarrassment. Andragogy, which theorizes the education of adults, assumes that college students use critical self-reflection with their abundant lived experience to mitigate the premises that fuel their habits of mind and points of view. Bean and Eaton (2000) posit that students' interactions and experiences within the academy influence their persistence and retention. When these theories intersect, adult learners who experience the adversity of being identified as struggling readers at the onset of the college experience are subject to stigmatization. The psychological implications of feeling stigma have the potential to deter students from retention.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study is to examine the self-perception of urban community college students who have been placed in developmental reading courses. Phenomenology studies *phenomena* or experience from the first-person point of view. This study will explore students' experiences in developmental reading courses and their perceptions of those experiences. Upon establishing if and to what extent these students experience stigma, a further purpose of this study is to better understand how stigma may inform or inhibit help-seeking behavior.

In addition to examining how students describe their self-perception regarding placement into developmental reading courses, the researcher strives to understand how students perceive the benefit or detriment of their experiences in the courses. Sometimes students' body language or nonverbal communication seems to suggest that they are not pleased with their class experiences. The displeasure could be boredom, frustration, or a wandering mind. Without asking students directly, practitioners cannot ascertain to what degree, if any, that students experience stigma related to their placement in developmental reading. After receiving reading placement prescriptions, some students may be empowered to fulfill the expectations of a first-year college course while another group may feel deflated and embody the role of struggling reader. Others may use the opportunity as motivation to dispel the presumption of inadequacy based on a lower test score. Yet other students feel compelled to leave the class altogether, in search of what they deem a more appropriate course.

This study will help provide empirical evidence to support what some authors have claimed about students' perception of stigma in developmental education. Some authors hold that students feel stigmatized about being placed in developmental studies courses in general (Doran, 2017; Grubb & Gabriner, 2013), but there is an absence of research that addresses the perceptions of stigma related to developmental reading courses specifically. Despite the occasional acknowledgement of stigmatization within the context of developmental education, a deeper exploration of stigma is missing from the body of research. Stigma interrupts a sense of belonging and may prevent students from seeking the resources that can contribute to their success in college.

Research Question

The phenomenological study explores the lived experiences of community college students placed into developmental reading to better understand the extent to which they may or may not experience stigma. The research questions guiding this study have been designed to examine how students report feeling stigma associated with having been placed in developmental reading classes and how their self-perception interacts with their willingness to engage in the help-seeking behavior of accessing instructional support resources at the college. Students will have an opportunity to elaborate on their feelings about reading placement, stigma, and help-seeking habits in a series of open-ended interview questions.

The primary research question that guides this qualitative study is:

1. How do community college students experience stigma when they have been enrolled in developmental reading courses?

Definition of Terms

The terms collected here are organized according the context in which they appear in the manuscript. Some terms are common within the practice of Developmental Education and may have other connotations in another area of education or society. While the terminology related to stigma appears commonly as well, it is positioned here as it relates to students who have been placed in developmental reading courses.

Terms Related to Developmental Education

Developmental education (Dev Ed) is the area of college curriculum designated for students who are not prepared for college-level courses.

Adult basic education (ABE) programs offer instruction to adults who want to improve their basic skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic to secure a GED, a job, or access to school or work. In some states (not Oklahoma), ABE is part of the college structure and overlaps or operates concurrently with Dev Ed.

Underprepared students are entering college students whose college entrance test scores, high school GPA, or placement tests indicate that they are not "college-ready" and must enroll in compensatory coursework. The term "underprepared" blames students' previous instruction, and instructors by extension, for their lack of success. Synonyms are *misprepared, at-risk, transitional, remedial, or developmental.*

Misprepared students are entering college students whose college entrance test scores, high school GPA, or placement tests indicate that they are not "college-ready" and must enroll in compensatory coursework. "Misprepared" eliminates the judgmental tone of "underprepared" and acknowledges that high school and college success includes diverse goals and therefore a successful high school experience may not adequately prepare a student for college. Synonyms are *underprepared, at-risk, transitional, remedial, or developmental.*

At-risk is a broad term used in other aspects of education, academic, and society to labels students and individuals and having a greater potential for failure. In this context, it is used to describe entering college students whose college entrance test scores, high school GPA, or placement tests indicate that they are not "college-ready"

and must enroll in compensatory coursework. Synonyms include *underprepared, misprepared, transitional, remedial, and developmental.*

Transitional is a less pejorative term than *at risk*, *remedial* or *misprepared*. It embraces the natural and necessary changes entering college students encounter. Like its synonyms, this term describes students whose college entrance test scores, high school GPA, or placement tests indicate that they are not "college-ready" and must enroll in compensatory coursework. Synonyms include *underprepared, misprepared, at-risk, remedial, and developmental.*

Remedial is a commonly used term to describe entering college students who are assigned to compensatory, zero-level coursework based on their performance on college entrance test scores, high school GPA, or placement tests. This term is deficit-oriented and suggests that students are flawed, broken, or otherwise inadequate. Synonyms include *underprepared, misprepared, at-risk, and developmental.*

Developmental is term *de jour* for this manuscript to reference students who are underprepared for college-level coursework based on key readiness indicators such as college entrance test scores, high school GPA, or placement tests. This term acknowledges that the entering college student is forming habits and developing skills to become a stronger and more successful student. Synonyms include *underprepared, misprepared, at-risk, transitional, and remedial.*

In the context of this manuscript, **college-level** coursework refers to freshman and sophomore level classes that earn university transfer credit. These courses are marked by 1000 and 2000 series of course numbers in the course catalog of the research site. Synonyms are *credit bearing, on-level, or college-ready.* In contrast, **zero-level**

coursework refers to the compensatory, prerequisite courses that some students must complete before attempting college-level courses. These developmental courses are designated by 0000 series of course numbers. Related terms include *non-credit-bearing, developmental, underprepared, misprepared, at-risk, transitional, and remedial.*

Placement refers to the process of assessing students' previous learning experience determine their levels of college readiness. For students who need development, placement also refers to the process of assigning student to prescribed coursework. Placement typically relies on college entrance exam scores, high school GPA, standardized placement tests, or GED scores.

Non-cognitive, also called non-academic, refers to a group of measurement tools that target social and emotional study traits as opposed to the intellectual skills-based and information-based tests which are typically captured as a single testing incident (e.g., ACT, SAT) for entrance or placement in college.

In the context of course delivery and design, **traditional** developmental courses are offered as one course of study over a full semester. **Accelerated** courses cover the same content in shorter terms of time (Jaggars, et al.,2015; Jenkins, et al.,, 2010). **Compressed** courses combine levels of a traditional sequence into fewer levels (Bailey & Smith Jaggars, 2016; Gajewski & Mather, 2015; Sheldon & Durdella, 2009). The **corequisite** design allows students to enroll in a college-level course concurrently with its developmental prerequisite (Belfield, et al.,, 2016; Hagedorn & Kuznetsova, 2016; Vandal, 2014; CCA, 2016).

Terms Related to Stigma

Stigma, a social concept, is an internal or enacted social perception that a person is flawed, inferior, unworthy, or less acceptable than others are (Vogel, et al., 2006). Related terms include public stigma, self-stigma, stigma by association, structural stigma, perceived stigma, and experienced stigma.

Privilege, the opposite of stigma, as an unearned, special advantage that is "related to a preferred status or rank" and is often oblivious to its possessor (Black & Stone, 2005; Link & Phelan, 2001).

A **target** is the individual upon whom the stigma is directed or the person who perceives that that they are flawed or inferior.

Public stigma is defined as the general public's evaluations and reactions against persons with stigmatized conditions (Corrigan & Watson, 2002). **Perceived stigma** is the awareness of public stigma (Glass et al., 2013). **Experienced stigma** involves actual occurrences of situations that deliver discrimination, neglect, antagonization, or offensive behavior attributed to a stigmatized condition (Glass et al., 2013).

Self-stigma is the perceived inadequacy associated with the anxiety of being exposed to humiliation and the potential internalization of the destructive attitudes or mindsets. Related terms are enacted stigma, felt stigma, and internalized stigma. **Enacted stigma** happens when a target is mistreated because of a stigmatized condition. **Felt stigma** occurs when a target experiences or anticipates mistreatment connected to their condition. **Internalized stigma** happens when a target's experience of stigma leads to psychological distress and a diminished self-concept (Herek, 2007, 2009).

Stigma by association is the feeling of stigma based on the stigmatizing condition of an individual in the perceiver's in-group.

Structural stigma is the "legitimatization and perpetuation of a stigmatized status by society's institutions and ideological systems" (Pryor & Reeder, 2011, p. 792) when schools, companies, or governments perpetuate stigma in their policies, expectations, and practices.

Educational Significance of the Study

There is an anecdotally shared belief among practitioners that an element of stigma is involved in developmental education course-taking. Developmental educators discuss the stigma in anecdotes, however, the phenomenon that developmental education students may feel stigmatized is rarely acknowledged in the scholarly literature around developmental education. This study will contribute to the existing sets of research regarding stigma among developmental education students.

In many institutions we have may have systemically created stigmatization for of developmental reading students, and thusly created a marginalized group of learners. Gaining a greater understanding about shame or embarrassment students may experience in developmental reading courses allows institutions to create programs, courses, and support services that are beneficial to student growth without cultivating a culture of stigma. If more institutions, faculty members, and other practitioners recognize an unconscious disservice delivered to our most vulnerable students, we can implement practices or policies to better support them to success.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Each year a projected 18 million undergraduate students attend American colleges and universities (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). Research in higher education suggests that 60 – 80% of incoming students fail to meet college readiness standards (Belfield & Crosta, 2012; Fields & Parsad, 2012; Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2011). This means that as many as 14.4 million students present proficiency deficits in English and/or mathematics each year. Such students are often referred to developmental education programs and courses to support their academic deficiencies or assets. Some have suggested that students who enter developmental education face higher risks of dropping out of college before they have opportunities for retention, completion, or graduation (Bailey & Cho, 2010; CCA, 2012). Others have acknowledged the positive growth of the students placed into developmental education and whose success sometimes becomes overlooked in the context of flawed research that demerits their outcomes (Goudas & Boylan, 2012).

Grubb and Gabriner (2013) imply that academic deficiencies lead to stigma. Students who are not prepared for college-level course work often internalize the feelings of their underpreparedness and experience it as shame. The feel ashamed that either they have not done what was expected or their background was inadequate to equip them with preparedness. Underprepared students might feel stigma because students' challenges with reading are interpreted as illiteracy or ignorance, and illiteracy has historically been laden with images of inferiority and cause for shame (Beder, 1991; Ntiri, 2009). If this type of shame affects their sense of belonging at the academy, it could potentially invoke a feeling of imposter syndrome. As with other types of shame, students attempt to hide

the embarrassing behavior or attribute to encourage acceptance into a community or in-group and to avoid alienation or discrimination. In general, fear of non-acceptance, alienation, or discrimination can cause feelings of stigma, and it should be explored here. In HIV patients, for example, shame keeps individuals away from life-saving treatment (Ma, et al.,et al., 2017).

The initial literature search was conducted to examine existing research regarding the effects of stigma among developmental students in college. The search for relevant articles encompassed a wide variety of databases, such as Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost, Education Source, and JSTOR. Articles from scholarly, peer-reviewed journals were strongly preferred over less critically-evaluated sources, as were sources where the full text was available online or through interlibrary loan. Websites such as Google Search were used to locate websites that could contain relevant background information and current publications on various aspects of developmental education, adult literacy, and stigma.

Some of the search terms used, both in isolation and in combination were (in alphabetical order): *adult learning, adult literacy, college success, community college, developmental education, help-seeking, reading, remediation/remedial education, retention, post-secondary, literacy,* and *stigma.* With the exception of foundational theories and definitions, the literature search was limited to 2000 – 2019 to contribute currency and relevance to the study.

Developmental Reading

A major focus of this study is developmental reading, a subdivision of developmental education. Developmental reading, which will be described in greater detail within this manuscript, exists in the intersection of developmental education and adult basic education. Developmental education is the area of college curriculum designated for students who are not prepared for college-level courses. Adult basic education (ABE) programs offer instruction to adults who want to improve their basic skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic to secure a GED, a job, or access to school or work. If one imagines a Venn diagram where one circle represents developmental education and the other circle represents adult basic education, developmental reading occupies the space within the overlap. Most developmental reading students are degree-seeking, however some students in developmental reading classes wish to improve their reading skills in order to satisfy personal goals as lifelong readers or occupational requirements related to reading proficiency.

Students who present with the need to remediate their English skills are placed into a developmental course based on assessments in two areas – either their written expression or their reading comprehension. Students who are inadequately prepared for college-level English may need academic support for reading, for writing, or for both areas. The bulk of developmental English students are referred for writing support, leaving a smaller delegation of students requiring developmental reading. Students who are referred to or enroll in developmental reading courses have completed secondary education or its equivalent (i.e. GED) but still lack the literacy tools sufficient for studying in college (Perin, 2019).

Developmental reading courses are perceived as part of a deficit model of learning which focuses on supporting students' areas of struggle rather than building on their strengths (Lesley, 2001). This deficit focus may encourage stigma associated with taking developmental reading classes. Developmental reading curricula focus on a variety of reading strategies and study skills. Outcomes of reading courses may include basic concepts of identifying topics and main ideas, recognizing the rhetorical context of reading materials, and critical thinking along with skills like annotating texts and academic notetaking with goals to improve students' literacy skills and metacognitive awareness (Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2011). The courses are designed to prepare students to read at the college level, which requires students to engage with diverse texts written for a variety of purposes, at various levels, and invoking various expectations of prior knowledge or learner background. The complexity of engagement for navigating college text requires both cognitive and metacognitive processing (Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2011; Magliano & Trabasso, 1999; Wade & Reynolds, 1989).

Struggling college readers often present with reading-specific challenges such as prioritizing between major and minor details, interpreting across multiple texts, matching appropriate reading strategies to specific learning tasks, and general metacognitive processing (Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2011; Kiewra, 2002). These learners also face non-cognitive challenges. Students who enter developmental reading courses typically have a long history of having been placed in remedial-type reading courses in K-12 schools experiences (Falk-Ross, 2002; Good, 1998; Lesley, 2004). After a pattern of harrowing experiences with reading instruction, those students have negative expectations and resent having to take reading courses in college (Brothen & Wambach, 2002; Lesley,

2004). Several studies have addressed the stigma, low self-esteem, and poor motivation of college students referred to developmental courses (Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2011; Lesley, 2004; Maitland, 2000; Morrison, 1999; Perin, 2002). Stigma, another focus of this study, will be discussed in greater detail in this manuscript.

Adult Literacy

The International Literacy Association, formerly the International Reading Association, whose stated mission is to "to empower educators, inspire students, and encourage leaders with the resources they need to make literacy accessible for all" (Literacy Worldwide, 2019, para. 2) describes literacy as a complicated and ever-evolving term that encompasses the ability to read, write and make meaning of language. Though the term is broader in scope than college reading coursework, *adult literacy* is an appropriate lens through which to examine developmental reading because (a) college students are adult learners, (b) literacy instruction includes reading, and (c) in data collection, developmental reading students are often aggregated with developmental writing students.

Though the existing data is outdated, and accurate collection of literacy statistics is complicated, an estimated 37 million adults are illiterate in the United States (Weber, 2015). The most recent comprehensive studies of adult illiteracy were conducted in 1992 and 2003. The U.S. Department of Education and National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) interviewed households and prisons to assess levels of literacy in three areas – prose, document and quantitative. In the two reports, the NCES defined *prose literacy* as an ability to comprehend and contextualize printed or written information, *document literacy* as the capacity to understand graphic or visual information, and

quantitative literacy as the ability to understand and compute numbers and money (U.S. Dept of Ed, 2002; 2009). Within these three definitions, researchers sorted readers into five levels of literacy proficiency and found that nearly a quarter of U. S. adults functioned in Level I, the lowest level literacy.

Low literate adults, who account for more than nine million Americans, find it difficult to retrieve information from text or to calculate simple sums. These behaviors hinder people from performing mundane tasks related to personal finance, completing essential paperwork, and communicating with others in writing or via text (Weber, 2015). Data suggest that many low literate adults have not received high school diplomas (Perin, 2002; Weber 2015). Some adults never seek additional learning, and those who wish to address reading needs do so in adult literacy programs. Adult literacy programs are complex and diverse (Wells, 2014). Programs differ because of the heterogeneity of the students and their levels of literacy as well as the delivery and setting of instruction (Greenberg, 2008), however most adult literacy programs conform with similar areas of student interest. There are two primary types of programs: Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs or college developmental reading course programs. ABE programs tend to prepare students to complete General Educational Development (GED) tests to earn a General Equivalency Diploma (GED). College reading courses prepare students to earn a college degree. In addition to GED preparation, ABE students are commonly interested workforce preparation or improvement, health issues, social concerns, and English as a foreign language (Blunch & Portner, 2011; Wells, 2014). Degree-seeking students are typically interested in preparing to engage in advanced academic reading and writing and in taking courses related to their major areas of study.

While adult literacy programs, both ABE and academic literacy, teach skills and strategies related to the mechanics of reading and writing, students and teachers frequently mention the social context of literacy instruction (Allatt, 2017; Frankel, et al.,2016; Wells 2014). In the social context, literacy is a constructive process that draws on social and cultural practices (Allat, 2017; Frankel, et al., 2016) wherein students seek to read for personal enjoyment, functioning in everyday life, social interaction, and employability. Adult students' discussion of literacy reveals their concern for "self-esteem, self-fulfillment, and personal responsibility" (Allatt, 2017, p. 51) within the social context of literacy students find stigma, shame, and embarrassment. When students align themselves against peer and social expectations, they may perceive their literacy fluency as less acceptable that their peers'. Despite students' optimistic aspirations for becoming more literate, adult learners express embarrassment over their literacy limitations and take steps to conceal their illiteracy (Martini & Page, 1996). Some learners, for example, may avoid reading aloud or in public situations by claiming excuses like having lost their reading glasses. Other learners imitate behaviors that they associate with successful reading such as talking about books or speaking in multisyllabic words. Additionally, adult reading students feel personally responsible for addressing their literacy deficits in order to become contributing members of society (Allatt, 2017).

Developmental Education Background

The student participants in this study are enrolled in reading courses within a developmental education program at a community college. Since its inception, the goal of developmental education has been to support the needs of college students in the academy. It has not always been the systemic approach we recognize today. College lore

holds that the first developmental courses began some 400 years ago in the early era of American higher education when cohorts were smaller and students who struggled received individualized tutoring and services to support their learning needs (Parker, et al., 2014). The foundation of courses like freshman composition were born of the need to have stronger writers at colleges and universities during a time when colonial college curricula consisted of theology, logic, ethics, physics, geometry, astronomy, rhetoric, and languages (i.e., Latin, Hebrew, and Greek). As student populations in higher education grew, the need for more courses providing prerequisite skills also grew, making way for general education curricula to bridge the divide between students' previous learning experiences and the prepared college curricula. After colonial times, such prerequisite courses gradually became more common.

Course Structure, Sequence, and Placement

Comprehensive developmental education today includes services for student assessment and placement, academic and career advisement, groups and individual tutoring, non-course-based instruction (e.g., computer learning modules), learning assistance centers or laboratories, and non-academic support (Boylan, 2002). While most campuses offer these basic student services, developmental education integrates these services into the co-curriculum for its learners through practices such as mandatory advisement, embedded tutoring, or required use of support labs for students with developmental studies placements. The supports are centered around the developmental course offerings. The courses are designed as prerequisites for college-level coursework and are commonly non-credit-bearing courses themselves. Developmental education courses are less likely to contribute to a student's course credit needs for graduation, and

the courses rarely transfer to other institutions (Melguizo, et al., 2008) when students chose to transfer between institutions. Despite the limited transferability and lack of credit weight, the courses have the same financial implications as credit-bearing classes. Along with the additional cost of being required to take courses that do not count toward the degree, students who enroll in these courses often incur addition enrollment fees (e.g., lab fees, remediation fees) to fund the embedded or required course support services.

Students enter a developmental course sequence through course placement. Course placement protocols for these pathways vary among schools, multi-college systems, and states. In some states, a board of regents or a similar coordinating body regulates policies and practices regarding higher education. The implementation of recommended or mandated practices is done at the individual institution level, except in regions within states where several colleges form a multi-college system that follows a common set of education protocols. A typical practice among most institutions is to establish a point of proficiency or "college readiness" and use metrics ranging from a single measure (e.g., entrance exam) to multiple measures (e.g., entrance exam with exceptions or other criteria). Within the various protocols, most institutions rely on cognitive measures such as commercially distributed standardized tests (i.e., ACT, SAT), system-created placement exams, or previous course experience. Some schools or systems use *non-cognitive* placement measures alongside or instead of the placement exams (Bean & Eaton, 2001; Lotkowski, et al., 2004; Pritchard & Wilson, 2003). Non-cognitive, also called non-academic, measurement tools target social and emotional student traits as opposed to the intellectual skills-based and information-based tests which are typically captured as a single testing incident (e.g., ACT, SAT). Some of the non-

cognitive measures include affective domain instruments, "grit" tests, or high school grade-point-average, which can also be used as a cognitive measure (Bean & Eaton, 2001; Lotkowski, et al., 2004; Pritchard & Wilson, 2003).

Under the umbrella of developmental education, students place into two primary areas of need for remediation – Mathematics or English, based on ACT scores or other placement criteria (Scott-Clayton, et al., 2014). Developmental mathematics courses prepare students to take College Algebra or Precalculus, and developmental English courses prepare students to take Composition. In a traditional developmental math sequence, students may enroll in up to four levels of courses, depending on their initial placement and the number of developmental course levels the institution offers.

The traditional English sequence of courses usually includes up to two levels of courses for placement because reading and writing courses, if not integrated, can be taken concurrently. Typically, each level of a course is completed in a semester. In addition to traditional developmental courses offered over a full semester, many institutions now offer accelerated, compressed, or corequisite courses to reduce the overall time students spend in developmental coursework (Bailey, 2009). Accelerated courses cover the same content in shorter terms of time (e.g., a 16-week course presented in 8 weeks; Jaggars, et al.,2015; Jenkins, et al.,, 2010). Compressed courses combine levels of a traditional sequence into fewer levels (e.g., teaching Pre-algebra A with Pre-algebra 2 in a new Pre-algebra A+B course; Bailey & Smith Jaggars, 2016; Gajewski & Mather, 2015; Sheldon & Durdella, 2009). The corequisite design allows students to enroll in a college-level course concurrently with its developmental prerequisite (e.g., Dev Writing with Composition I; Belfield, et al.,, 2016; Hagedorn & Kuznetsova, 2016; Vandal, 2014;

CCA, 2016). These augmented course designs have become popular additions and alternatives to developmental course structures regardless of English or Math course placement (Attewell, et al.,et al., 2006; Bailey, 2009; Bahr, 2010; Boatman & Long, 2018; Martorell & McFarlin, 2011; Scott-Clayton, et al., 2014; Scott-Clayton & Rodriguez, 2015).

Enrollment Trends, Criticism, and State Policy Changes

In the past decade, developmental education research and practices have focused on interventions that should improve outcomes for students recommended for and enrolled in developmental coursework and services. In a recent report, federal researchers identified that nearly 70% of two-year college students and 40% of four-year college students enrolled in at least one developmental course upon entering college (Chen, 2016).

Students who complete their developmental course sequences are more successful in terms of measurable outcomes like completion, persistence, and graduation or transfer, but there are exceptions when considering the length of the projected developmental sequence (Attewell, et al.,et al., 2006; Bailey, 2009; Bahr, 2010; Boatman & Long, 2018; Martorell & McFarlin, 2011; Scott-Clayton, et al., 2014; Scott-Clayton & Rodriguez, 2015). Completion refers to remaining enrolled through the duration of a course to earn a grade or credits. Successful completion leads to persistence. Persistence is consistently enrolling in courses from term to term, which leads to graduation or transfer. Graduation is defined by attaining a degree; usually a bachelor’s degree. Two-year college students may earn an associate degree from the two-year institution or attain enough credits to transfer to a four-year institution to pursue a baccalaureate degree.

The challenge for developmental education is that many students do not complete their developmental course sequences are less likely to complete, persist, transfer, or graduate (Martorell & McFarlin, 2011; Scott-Clayton, et al., 2014; Scott-Clayton & Rodriguez, 2015). Many students stop attending before they meet success markers for a variety of reasons. Critics have blamed the traditional delivery of developmental education for the high rates of attrition (Belfield, et al.,, 2016; Hagedorn & Kuznetsova, 2016; Vandal, 2014; CCA, 2012; CCA, 2016). In 2012, a post-secondary research think tank labeled remedial education (developmental education), "higher education's bridge to nowhere" (CCA, p. 1). CCA (2012) also claimed that too many students were entering developmental education, and of those entering too few were completing their primary college courses and graduating. The article arrived in the midst of a series of action research initiatives funded by well-known philanthropists which helped to encourage the discussion of developmental education among legislators and academics. Interest spurred by the article and surrounding studies inspired further research into the *remedial education problem* and spurred reform. As state legislators learned the highlights of the challenges of remediation for college students, some of them championed interventions and mandates to modify the delivery of developmental education in their states. CCA praised thirty-three "Governors Who Get It" (p. 4) to inspire further legislative buy-in to reform developmental education.

Reform and redesign were manifested in several ways after CCA's assessment of developmental education. Among the reform efforts were acceleration, co-requisite, compression, and non-course-based support. Acceleration models speed the delivery of a course (Jaggars, et al., 2015; Jenkins, et al., 2010). For example, a series of traditional,

semester-long, 16-week courses could be accelerated to be presented in eight-week sessions. A student beginning two levels below the target in mathematics could remediate in one 16-week semester and enter the college-level course in the second semester. In the co-requisite model, students are concurrently enrolled in the college-level course and the developmental prerequisite course (Belfield, et al., 2016; Hagedorn & Kuznetsova, 2016; Vandal, 2014; CCA, 2016).

The compression model addresses the criticism that there are often too many courses in a developmental sequence by compressing two or more courses into a redesigned course (Bailey & Smith-Jaggars, 2016; Gajewski & Mather, 2015; Sheldon & Durdella, 2009). Colleges that may have offered three or four levels of developmental mathematics before the college-level course (e.g., college algebra), compressed the two levels closest to the target course into one level to create an intermediate algebra course that covered material that had been previously offered over two semesters. One of the most prominent recommendations of the 2012 CCA article was to enroll students directly into the college-level courses for which the developmental courses were designed to prepare them. Most of the redesign formats guided students to the target college-level courses sooner than the traditionally designed sequences did (Bailey, 2009).

The model of redesign that seems to be the least similar to the traditional prerequisite design allows students to bypass developmental courses and enroll directly into the college-level courses without any remediation, essentially eliminating the developmental sequences altogether. Some of these models offer non-course-based support in the form of tutoring, online modules, or multi-purpose support centers. Years of assessment and modification of developmental redesign have created models that

resemble hybrids of acceleration, compression, and co-requisite models. The redesigned models have seen varying levels of student success but have generally succeeded in the institutional goals of enrolling more students in college-level courses sooner (Attewell, et al.,et al., 2006; Bailey, 2009; Bahr, 2010; Boatman & Long, 2018; Martorell & McFarlin, 2011; Scott-Clayton, et al., 2014; Scott-Clayton & Rodriguez, 2015).

Implications of Developmental Education Terminology

Despite the curricular need for developmental courses, regardless of the delivery method, framing the discussion and definition of developmental education is important if it to empower students, teachers, and others to embrace the beneficial outcomes and avoid the deficit mindset sometimes associated with prerequisite learning. The vocabulary used to describe developmental education is sometimes ambiguous and often pejorative. In an article included in a collection of readings for teaching developmental reading, Paulson and Armstrong (2010) discussed the challenges of inconsistent language in surrounding this area of postsecondary education; they recommend that practitioners within and outside of the field of developmental education adapt terminology and usage to accommodate the students and the relevant pedagogy. The authors discussed the following terminology in the article: *underprepared, misprepared, at-risk, transitional, remedial, and developmental.*

The term “underprepared” insinuates blame. It blames students’ previous instruction, and instructors by extension, for their lack of success. A reappropriation of underprepared is “misprepared.” Misprepared eliminates the judgmental tone of underprepared and acknowledges that high school and college success includes diverse goals and therefore a successful high school experience may not adequately prepare a

student for college. “At-risk” is not a new term in education, as it has historically and continuously been used to label certain students as having a greater potential to fail. “Transitional” has emerged as a term that embraces the natural changes that college students necessarily encounter as they matriculate into college.

“Remedial” is the among most commonly used term in the national research and also the least palatable to developmental educators and practitioners. It is arguably the most recognizable of the terms. Remedial is derived from the Latin *remedialis* or *remedium* meaning “that heals, salutary, curative” (Oxford University Press, 2019), infers the need for repairing or correcting a deficit and may shame students for their lack of success. Paulson and Armstrong (2010) reiterated that educators find the term offensive, destructive, and insulting, as connotations of *remedial* suggest that the student must flawed, broken, or inadequate in some manner. Such implications may reinforce students’ doubts that they “are not college material” or are otherwise foreign to the academy. The term remedial is deficit-oriented, but this orientation may also cause some students to feel stigma or shame.

To contrast the negative connotations associated with the term remedial, many colleges and practitioners prefer the term “developmental,” which reflects the development of the whole student. Developmental implies that the student is developing skills, concepts, and content or emerging as a learner in the targeted courses. It is the term embraced by colleges, practitioners, and leaders in this area of practice. Readers and researchers of this field of study subscribe to the *Journal of Developmental Education*, which is published by the National Center for Developmental Education (Boylan & Bonham, 2007). The National Organization for Student Success, the largest professional

body for developmental education instructors, tutors, researchers, and other practitioners was known as the National Association for Developmental Education until March 2019. Many state and local chapters continue to carry the terminology in their titles.

The collection of terms describing this group of non-college level courses, methodology, and practices is used interchangeably, and sometimes terms are dubbed synonyms, despite the differences of their implications for diverse audiences (students, faculty, institutions, researchers, policymakers). The inconsistency and lack of coherence adds to the conflicting and occasionally stigmatizing nature of developmental education.

For the purpose of this manuscript, *developmental education* is defined as the programs, courses, and support services used in colleges and universities to scaffold academic preparedness and advancement for students who need additional support (Boylan, 2002). Developmental education acknowledges that neither the courses nor the students are merely an extension of the secondary experience, and thus, relies on the tenets of Knowles' (1980) adult learning theory, which emphasized the social and cognitive development of adult learners. *Andragogy*, which contrasts pedagogy, describes the ways in which adults learn differently than children. Adult learners tend to be more self-directed and have richer past experiences. They also seek relevance in the content and concepts they learn (Knowles, 1970; Knowles, et al.,et al., 2005). Considering these traits makes developmental education more student-centered.

Developmental, Not Remedial

National studies, the department of education and many state policy makers use the term remediation (Belfield et al, 2016; CCA, 2012; Chen, 2016). However, it is important to distinguish developmental education from *remedial education*, which refers

to the deficit-based courses that are designed to remedy (e.g., to fix) gaps in students' knowledge or skills (Bailey, et al., 2010; Boylan &Bonham, 2007). While developmental education historically included, and in some instances still includes, remedial-type courses, developmental education extends beyond the course to also include support services. It is holistic and focuses on the academic competencies as well as student attitudes and learning environment. Developmental education is inclusive of learners who span the spectrum of preparedness. The intellectual diversity of learners is expressed in the motto of the National Organization for Student Success (NOSS): "helping underprepared students prepare, prepared students advance, and advanced students excel" (need citation). In contrast, remedial education is limited to underprepared students. When Robin Ozz, former president of NOSS/NADE, differentiated between the two approaches to education during the organization's 2016 national meeting, she described remedial practices as having a redundant, "if you didn't get it the first time, we will repeat it until you do" order of practice, while developmental education creates environments of support where learners can *thrive* (Schreiner, 2010).

As described by Schreiner (2010), *thriving* is a holistic ideology that casts student success as a function of institution, instructor, and individual investment and cultivates a *sense of belonging* for students. Sense of belonging, a desire to connect with and be accepted by peers, classmates, or others on campus, is so powerful that it can affect a student's decision to remain enrolled in college (Strayhorn, 2019). Some developmental education students are plagued by *imposter syndrome*, the feeling that belonging is not deserved (Austin, et al.,2009; Bahn, 2014; Parkman, 2016), Developing sense of

belonging and escaping imposter syndrome contribute to student thriving and ultimately to student success outcomes such as retention, persistence, and graduation or transfer.

In contrast to the term developmental education, remedial education, which focuses on individual deficit, also assumes that learners underperform because of perceived motivational, social, economic, or cognitive shortfalls (e.g., lazy, dumb, poor), while developmental education examines students' needs and applies cognitive psychology and adult learning theory. Although limited and inaccurate in its description of developmental education, the term remediation is more recognizable and more commonly used in higher education references. The focus of this study is on the perspective of students and their perceived stigma from assignment to a remedial reading course. Although researchers and practitioners may be more inclined to use the term "developmental," the perception among students, parents, and external stakeholders may still be one of remediation. Remediation may carry with it a perceived stigma among students, despite intentional efforts to reframe these perceptions among practitioners.

Theoretical Overview

The theoretical framework of this study occupies the space where the concept of a stigmatized condition intersects with adult literacy and student retention for college reading students. Students who enroll in developmental reading courses are less likely to persist through graduation than other community college students. Models of college student retention suggests that social and psychological influences impact students' retention (Bean & Eaton, 2000), and stigma has social and psychological components. Adult learning theory (Knowles, 1974, 1984) and the transformative theory of adult learning (Mezirow, 1995) explain the academic, social, psychological experiences and

conditions in which adult literacy students approach their learning endeavors. To explain the theoretical connection, it is necessary to discuss stigma, psychological models of retention, and how these intersect and influence the experiences of adult learners who struggle to with low literacy.

Stigma Theory

The idea of stigma dates back to the late 1500s when the word was used as a concrete noun to identify a brand made by a hot iron which was a mark of infamy (OED, 1916, 2019). Over the years, the usage has shifted to include the more commonly recognized abstract noun used in this manuscript. According to Goffman (1963) in his seminal publication, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, Greeks cut or burned stigmata (plural) into the skin of criminals, slaves, or traitors to shun them as tainted, immoral people, unworthy of interaction with others. While the physical attributes of stigma have subsided, current usage of the term reckons the same scarring levels of disgrace, dishonor, or humiliation. Because stigma is a social concept, both the perceivers and targets of stigma are interrelated. The targets are the stigmatized individuals, and the perceivers are they whose thoughts and actions stigmatize the targets (Pryor & Reeder, 2011).

Stigma is an internal or enacted social perception that a person is flawed, inferior, unworthy, or less acceptable than others are (Vogel, et al., 2006). Corrigan and Watson (2002) differentiate between *public stigma* and *self-stigma*. Both foster the development of stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination. Public stigma is defined as the general public’s evaluations and reactions against persons with stigmatized conditions (Corrigan & Watson, 2002). These perceptions are sometimes internalized by the targeted

individuals, resulting in *perceived stigma*, the awareness of public stigma (Glass et al., 2013). Other times the prejudices of public stigma create situations that deliver discrimination, neglect, antagonization, or offensive behavior. *Experienced stigma* involves actual occurrences of these types of acts attributed to a stigmatized condition (Glass et al., 2013). Regardless of the classification, a diminished image of self or others has a deleterious impact on one's being in various situations.

Pryor and Reeder (2011) expand Corrigan and Watson's differentiation to clarify four interrelated types of stigma – public stigma, self-stigma, stigma by association, and structural stigma – in a conceptual model that expounds on societal, interpersonal, and individual manifestations of stigma (2011). *Public stigma* represents perceivers' social and psychological response to someone they perceive to have a stigmatized condition (e.g., low literacy, illiteracy, not college-ready). The origin of stigmatization is derived from perceivers' preconceived notions, prejudices, or stereotypes (e.g., uneducated, ignorant, lazy) about those with the stigmatized conditions.

Self-stigma reflects the targets' social and psychological stress of carrying shame. A target must contend with the anxiety of being exposed to humiliation and the potential internalization of the destructive attitudes or mindsets (e.g., I am stupid; I am lazy; I read too slowly; I am not college material) associated with the stigmatized condition. Self-stigma often stems from an awareness of public stigma through *enacted stigma*, *felt stigma*, or *internalized stigma*. Enacted stigma happens when a target is mistreated because of a stigmatized condition. Felt stigma occurs when a target experiences or anticipates mistreatment connected to their condition. Internalized stigma happens when a target's experience of stigma leads to psychological distress and a diminished self-

concept (Herek, 2007, 2009). Conceivably, adult literacy students have had previous stigmatizing encounters on their journey to the developmental reading classroom. Adult students who have unremediated or undiagnosed dyslexia have likely overheard or been told directly that they cannot learn, that they cannot read, or that they are not "normal" readers. English language learners who speak and read other languages have likely been ridiculed for their seemingly clumsy use of English. Other learners may have been "pulled out" for reading intervention during primary or secondary education. Learner who perceived themselves as strong readers may have faced recent stigma upon testing into developmental college courses and deemed "not college ready." Regardless of the recency of the encounter, students who have experienced public stigma are prone to feeling self-stigma (Pryor & Reeder, 2011).

Third, *stigma by association* (Pryor & Reeder, 2011), or courtesy stigma (Goffman, 1963), describes perceivers' social and psychological reactions to individuals associated with targets of stigma (e.g., developmental reading faculty, support staff, friends) and also the reactions of the associated individuals themselves. In certain types of stigma, the associated distance themselves from the targets or persuade targets to deny their own stigmatizing condition. A friend may urge his friend to test out of the reading class or avoid studying with his friend an area designated for student support (e.g., writing center, reading lab).

Pryor and Reeder (2011) defined the fourth type, *structural stigma*, as the "legitimatization and perpetuation of a stigmatized status by society's institutions and ideological systems." (p. 792). This happens when schools, companies, or governments perpetuate stigma in their policies, expectations, and practices. The structural stigma

surrounding developmental coursework may come in its zero-level course status, the non-transferability of credit from developmental classes, or the isolated positioning of the courses with the implied not-quite-college connotation.

Various models of stigma share two defining components – (a) a recognition of difference and (b) a devaluation of persons based on that difference (Dovidio, et al., 2000; Goffman, 1963; Pryor & Reeder, 2011). Stigmatization, devaluing of a person's difference, has social and psychological functions (Bos, et al., 2013; Phelan, et al., 2008), which intersect with Bean and Eaton's (2000) theory of student retention. Phelan and colleagues identify three functions of stigma – to exploit and dominate, to enforce social norms, and to avoid disease. These functions serve to "keep[…] people down" (p. 2), "keep[…] people in" (p. 2), and "keep[…] people away" (p. 2), respectively (Bos, et al., 2013). In society, illiteracy keeps people down. Historically, literacy was used to promote oppression and social control and to suppress individuals who had less power and privilege (e.g., literacy poll taxes that kept poor, uneducated, and black people from voting until the 1960s). Low literate adults carry that oppression and stigma into classrooms as adult learners. From a psychological perspective, oppression and stigma may impact a students' retention in college. Illiteracy also keeps people in; it keeps people isolated in their homes and communities as they avoid interactions that may expose their illiteracy. The fear of stigmatization encourages low literate adults, potential targets of stigma, to fit into ingroup norms and to develop coping behaviors to mask their reading struggles. For example, students may memorize and rehearse readings prior to attending class in order to participate in class discussions. Others may claim to have forgotten books or reading glasses to avoid responding to in-class readings. And, in some

cases, illiteracy keeps people away. In evolutionary practice, stigmatized persons were kept away for herd protection against infectious disease (Kurzban & Leary, 2001; Phelan et al., 2008, Bos et al., 2013). While low literacy is not an infectious disease, it is often concurrent with poverty, joblessness, homelessness, chronic illness, crime, and other socially ostracized conditions.

Individuals may feel stigma as a result of a variety of conditions or behaviors such as mental health challenges (Eisenberg & Downs 2006; Fox, et al., 2018; Fripp & Carlson, 2017; Klik, 2019; and Tucker, et al., 2013), drug use (Glass, et al.,2013; Gunn, et al., 2018; and Lloyd, 2013), HIV status (Deacon, 2006; Frye, et al., 2017; Ma, et al., 2017 and Pretorius, et al., 2016), eating disorders (Evans, et al., 2011; Griffiths, et al., 2015 and Hackler, et al., 2011), or sexual interaction (Andresen & Blais, 2018; Gorry, et al., 2010; Kubiak, et al., 2018; Ma, et al., 2017; Machado, et al., 2017, McCleary-Sills, et al., 2016; and Patterson, et al., 2009). Stigma is often connected with labels – *addict, victim, alcoholic, disordered* – that evoke shame or guilt (Glass et al., 2013). The shame or guilt that individuals feel may trigger fears that they are unworthy of seeking help, receiving empathy, or engaging in rehabilitation (Corrigan & Watson, 2002).

Applying the concept of polarity management, which analyses and simplifies the complexities of two seemingly polarized ideas (Johnson, 1992), one may imagine *privilege* as a polar opposite of stigma. Polarities are chronic, interrelated issues that cannot be solved and require ongoing, correlated maintenance and management (Johnson, 1992; 1993). Black and Stone (2005) define privilege as an unearned, special advantage that is “related to a preferred status or rank” (p. 244), “exercised for the benefit of the recipient and to the exclusion or detriment of others” (p. 244), and often oblivious to the

its possessor. At the other end of the spectrum, Link and Phelan (2001) define stigma as the simultaneous occurrence of the five components of stigma – labeling, stereotyping, separation, status loss, and discrimination – “in a power situation that allows the components of stigma to unfold” (p. 367). Link and Phelan explain that when (a) individuals are labeled as different, (b) their differences are linked to undesirable characteristics, and (c) they are separated as outsiders, then they often experience status loss and discrimination. Students in college developmental reading programs are (a) labeled as non-proficient readers, (b) their reading challenges are linked to poor academic performance, and (c) they are placed in prerequisite, compensatory courses with the exclusion from some or all credit-bearing courses. They fulfill the definition of stigma and, by extension, lack college-ready privilege – the granted access to courses in the typical degree plan for college students.

Ferber and Herrera (2013) posit in their Matrix Framework for teaching about privilege that privilege and oppression are integrated in such a way that one cannot exist without the other (Kimmel & Ferber, 2010). Within the framework the researchers apply an intersectional approach to privilege. Intersectionality addresses that individuals and groups of people are multidimensional, that their composition is limitless, and that people’s experiences and concerns are not mutually exclusive (Ferber & Herrera, 2013). Members who belong to the same group – Muslims, for example – may share similar or common experiences regarding social acceptance and stereotyping, but particular members, such as Middle-eastern Muslims are likely to have encounters that differ from those that White or fairer-skinned Muslims experience. Likewise, lesbians in general may share similar or common experiences regarding certain rights or legal benefits, but

particular members, such as lesbians of color are likely to have encounters that differ from those that White lesbians have (Moore, 2011). College reading students and low literate adults may feel stigma as well. They encounter their college experience differently than their classmates who do not experience low literacy. The goal of intersectionality is to eliminate the stigma and marginalization introduced by the "negative, interactive effects of categories" (Ferber & Herrera, 2013, p. 84) that are often used to describe and classify individuals and groups of people.

Adult learners become more susceptible to stigma because they carry all of their academic baggage into the classroom. They are lugging the trauma of past learning experiences, mindsets about authority, and distractions of current life happenings into every lesson. Within their classroom interactions, they risk ego and self-esteem when risking new behaviors or experiences in front of their class peers (Zemke & Zemke, 1984).

Adult Learning Theory

Adult learning theory defines part of the framework of developmental education (Boylan & Bonham, 2000). In his work surrounding characteristics that define adult learners, Knowles (1974, 1984) theorized four principles: Adult learners are self-directed, experienced, ready-to-learn, and task-motivated. They bring a wealth of lived experiences into their college environments and, thus, are more likely to have established their self-identify, including feelings of self-doubt and self-stigma.

Adult literacy education includes traits of adult learning theory, a key idea in the definition of developmental education. Knowles' (1980, 1984) theory establishes *andragogy* as distinct from the term *pedagogy,* which comes from the Greek root *paidos*

(meaning children) and is therefore less appropriate for the theory that governs the education of adults. The andragogy theory is appropriate not only because college students are adult learners, but also because community college students are more likely than their university peers to be non-traditionally aged, parenting, and work at least part-time (CCRC, 2019). Knowles (1984) identified five characteristics that distinguish adult learners from their more youthful counterparts – self-concept, learner experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation. The assumptions are influenced by the understanding that, unlike children, adult learners arrive with more abundant lived experiences from which they can draw context to build associations for new learning. Adult students are more self-directed and autonomous because they are less dependent on others for their day-to-day experiences. Children are often motivated to learn based on expectations from their parents and other external factors while adults' motivation to learn is intrinsic.

Expanding on Knowles' theory is Mezirow's transformative learning (1997). Transformative learning is a guiding theory in adult literacy education. Mezirow posits that adults experience change in a frame of reference, a coherent body of lived experiences that frames their worldview including associations, concepts, values, feelings, and conditioned responses. When ideas fall outside of their frame of reference, adults typically dismiss them as weird, foolish, irrelevant, or mistaken, however, transformative circumstances move adult learners to expand their frame of reference through self-reflection and interpretation of new experiences.

Adults transform their frames of reference through critical reflection on the assumptions that fuel their habits of mind and points of view. Transformation

encompasses two of the four processes of learning that inform this model. Two processes intensify the learner's point of view when the learning (a) elaborates on the learner's existing ideas or (b) establishes new, differing points of view that confirm the initial beliefs. A third process of learning transforms one's point of view by igniting critical reflection of misconceptions. Consistent and repeated critical reflection of new ideas can lead to an accumulation of ideas that transform the adult learner's primary habit of mind. A fourth, albeit rarer, process of learning also results in transformation; the learner examines their own biases and habits of mind to be problematic and worthy of a shift in frame of reference. Regarding literacy instruction, adult learners reflect on their experiences as readers and have a shift in their habits of minds that encourages them to pursue more education. The U.S. National Institute for Literacy (Stein, 1995) found that learners enroll in adult literacy programs to "(1) gain access to information so they can orient themselves in the world; (2) give voice to their ideas, with the confidence they will be heard; (3) make decisions and act independently; and (4) build a bridge to the future by learning how to learn" (Mezirow, 1997). Transformative learning happens in concert with other learning theories. The goal of adult education is to help create educated citizens who act autonomously, read critically, and think reflectively in interest of advancing their place in the world.

Despite their wealth of lived experience, adult learners experience high attrition rates because they meet challenges with successful integration into college culture (Kenner & Weinerman, 2011). Their attrition tendencies can be explained by Bean and Eaton's (2000) psychological model of student retention which posits that students' experience with the institution lead to their attitudes, which lead to their intention to

persist. Prior to their entrée to the institution, students who have had stigmatizing experiences related to literacy are likely more susceptible to attrition than their peers are.

To connect with adult learners, developmental reading instructors must craft curricula to embrace principles of andragogy that stress that adult learners (a) prefer to be involved in self-directed or self-designed learning, (b) are driven by experience, (c) seek relevance in their learning, and (d) prefer problem-centered content (Knowles, 1984; Zemke & Zemke, 1984). Within adult literacy programs, curricula are built with students in mind. Though reading strategies may overlap with content presented to adolescent learners, delivery of instruction and text selection are appropriate to adult readers.

Psychological Model of Retention

When a student enters college, their long-term goal is graduation or earning a degree. The process to pursue the goal is gradual and relies on the intermediate goal of retention. Retention is remaining enrolled in courses and is measured when students re-enroll from semester-to-semester (e.g., fall-to-spring retention) or year-to-year (e.g., fall-to-fall retention). One student success challenge for developmental education students is retention.

According to the psychological model of retention, actions lead to outcomes (Bandura, 1998; Bean & Eaton, 2000). When actions make students feel kept down, kept in, or kept away, they are at risk for leaving the institution. In Bean and Eaton's psychological model (2000), a student's psychological attributes accompany them into the institution. Then the student engages in experiences with the institution that engage psychological responses. Those experiences confirm or challenge the student's self-assessments and expectations and result in institutional fit, academic and social

integration, the intent to persist, and ultimately retention. (Tinto's 1975 social model of retention is foundational and influenced Bean and Eaton's model. This manuscript focuses on retention's psychological connection to stigma and literacy.)

The who-what-when-where-why-and-how of the psychological model of retention are described in the theories that support the model – attitude-behavior theory, coping theory, self-efficacy theory, and attribution theory. College students are *who* the model describes. In this context, the students are adult learners at community colleges who have been described as struggling readers. Some students embrace that description while others deny it. *What* is essential in this model is self-efficacy theory. Bandura (1986, 1998) posits that one's self-perception is developed built on past experience and observation. Self-efficacy is one's belief in their ability to accomplish a certain task (outcomes) by carrying out the necessary steps (actions). Self-efficacy theory suggests that students are better able to assess their efficacy when tasks are more specific. When students who struggle academically, and have had past experiences with poor performance, observe other students' success and begin to expect their own success, they are more likely to take the necessary steps to succeed because of strong self-efficacy. Assuming that the opposite must also be true, struggling readers who lack self-efficacy are more likely to feel defeated, overwhelmed, or stigmatized by their past failures. As students gain self-efficacy, they will exhibit a greater propensity to complete academic tasks and to persist to graduation.

Coping behavior theory is the conditional, or *when* and *where,* component of the model that addresses the institutional environment. Coping refers to the behaviors students exhibit in response to stressful situations; stressful situations are responses to

perceived threats from the environment (Appley & Trumbull, 1986). Coping can either improve a threatening situation or diffuse a dangerous one. To cope with stressors in the college environment, students respond in two primary ways: approach or avoidance. Students are practicing approach behaviors when they respond aggressively to a stressor to reduce stress. Some examples of approach behaviors in college are asking questions in class, seeking help from instructors or tutors, setting actionable goals, and planning learning activities. Students are practicing avoidance behaviors when passively avert a stressor. Examples of avoidance behaviors are procrastination, missing classes or assignments, and skirting responsibility. Students who cope using approach behaviors are more like to persist, while avoidance behaviors are negatively related to retention and persistence (Bean & Eaton, 2000).

Why students persist to is explained in attribution theory (Weiner, 1986). For student retention, the most relevant causal model of attribution theory is locus of control (Rotter, 1966). Locus of control is the extent to which a student identifies an internal or external cause for past experiences and consequences. A student who identifies an internal locus of control recognizes personal traits such as aptitude, skill, or talent as keys to their success. The student with internal attribution earns good grades because he works hard and makes smart, intentional choices. A student with an external locus of control credits external attributes such as luck, fate, or conditions beyond their control with their success. The external attribution student believes she earns good grades if the teacher likes her or if the class is easy. Based on Weiner's (1986) theory, students who believe they are in control of their outcomes feel more empowered to perform. Students who

believe their outcomes are beyond their control, feel less invested in accomplishing their goals.

Lastly, attitude-behavior theory (Fishbein & Ajzenm 1975) explains *how* students persist to retention. This is perhaps the prevailing theory of the model. According to the model, behavior is caused by the student's intention to perform the behavior. Behavior and attitude, or beliefs, are linked in a cycle where feedback from the behavior reforms or confirms beliefs about the behavior. Bean and Eaton explain that "intention is linked to an attitude toward the behavior, where attitude is based on beliefs about the consequences of the behavior. Second, intention is based on subjective norms that come from normative beliefs about the behavior" (2000, p. 50). As these elements converge, beliefs influence attitudes, which in turn influence intentions, which then influence behavior, which circles back to influence attitudes. This loop explains how past behaviors influence future behaviors, and how all of the elements influence student retention. Assuming that literacy experiences are part of students' behavioral influence, one can predict that stigmatizing attitudes about reading can deter a student's intention toward retention.

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher explored an overview of practices, policies, and trends in developmental education, both in general and as related to college reading courses. Literature related to theories surrounding stigma, adult literacy, and college student retention were also examined. The review of existing literature surrounding developmental reading and stigma inform the study, its findings, its conclusions, and recommendations for the trajectory of research and practice in developmental reading among college students.

CHAPTER III

Method

Many students see the courses as part of their academic path, but some have mixed concerns about them. How students feel about having been placed in developmental reading courses is unclear. They may feel inadequately prepared as readers or as college students when asked to enroll in pre-college reading courses. Exploring their thoughts should reveal how they feel.

Research Question

The phenomenological study explores the experiences of community college students placed into developmental reading to better understand the extent to which they may or may not experience stigma. The research questions guiding this study have been designed to examine how students report feeling stigma associated with placement into developmental reading classes and how this is related to help-seeking behaviors of accessing instructional support resources at the college. Students will have an opportunity to elaborate on their feelings about reading placement, stigma, and help-seeking habits in a series of open-ended interview questions.

The primary research question that guides this qualitative study is: How do community college students experience stigma when they have been placed in developmental reading courses?

Research Design

Using a social constructivism worldview, which assumes that reality is socially constructed and that there is no single, observable reality (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009), invites the researcher to “drill down” into students’ thoughts and feelings. In social constructivism, the individual interprets the world by

building subjective meanings of his or her experiences. Because meanings vary, researchers may explore several, complex views rather than reducing meanings to singular or simple categories or ideas. Social constructivism acknowledges that the influences of experiences are negotiated socially and interpreted through the students' historical and cultural norms (Creswell, 2013). Within this worldview, the goal of research is to "rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation" (Creswell, 2013, p. 24).

In this qualitative study, a phenomenological case-study approach was used to explore the interpretations of experiences of community college students placed into developmental reading courses. The purpose of a phenomenological approach is to use the everyday knowledge and perceptions of individuals in a specific subgroup to explain an issue or topic pertinent to that group (Creswell, 2013). In this approach, researchers with general knowledge about the topic are interested in developing a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon which may include clarification of insufficient or unclear ideas or reinforcement and elaboration of information from previous understanding. The primary concern of phenomenology is not with explaining the causes of events and circumstances, but instead with describing how events and circumstances are experienced first-hand in the everyday world by those involved (Denscombe, 2004). Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) posited that qualitative methodology, including case study, promotes deep understanding because it allows the complexity and nuance of multiple perspectives to be voiced. Stake (1995) affirmed that the uniqueness of each case as well as the stakeholder's subjective experience in qualitative case study which lends itself to a more focused and profound study of a phenomenon.

Phenomenological case study is appropriate for the research questions in this study because the primary purpose of this study was to understand the phenomenon of adult learners being referred to and enrolled in developmental reading courses and how the course experience may or may not influence the stigma associated with adult illiteracy or the perceived reluctance of remediation. Furthermore, the use of interviews is appropriate because interviews helped the researcher to gather meaningful perspectives on the phenomenon.

The phenomenological approach is appropriate for this study because students are being asked to describe their lived experiences connected to the phenomena of being adult learners in developmental reading classes at a community college. Their experience will provide a lens through which researchers can examine students' choices to seek academic support or to avoid it and make student-centric decisions that encourage behaviors that lead to retention and completion.

Context

The researcher selected Multi-campus Community College (MCC) as the research site because it is an open-access institution with a diverse enrollment of adult learners who are likely to represent a variety of previous experiences related to their literacy history. Some students may have been identified as struggling readers in elementary or secondary learning experiences while others may have rarely encountered a reading or literacy challenge. MCC is the third largest college in the state and the only two-year institution that serves a metropolitan area with a population near one million residents. MCC is organized into four main campuses along with two suburban satellite campuses, and outreach centers in other parts of the city. The annual enrollment at this multi-

campus community college is 26,112. Student demographic trends tend to vary slightly among the four main campuses, however, institutional data have shown consistencies among enrollment by campus.

According to the preliminary enrollment report, the unduplicated headcount population of MCC students in the Fall of 2020 was 15,206. Within this population, 33% of students were enrolled full-time and 67% were enrolled part-time. By gender, 64% were female, 36% were male, and fewer than 1% had no response to the gender question. By race, 7% were American Indian or Alaskan Native, 4% were Asian, 7% were Black or African American, 13% were Hispanic or Latinx, less than 1% were Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and 50% were White while 12% identified themselves as belonging to two or more races, 2% were non-resident aliens, and 4% did not report race. By age, 14% were under 18 years old, 28% were 18 – 19 years old, 27% were 20 – 24 years old, and more than 31% were older than 24 years old (TCC-IRA, 2019b).

Developmental Education in Oklahoma

The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) is the coordinating board for colleges and universities in Oklahoma's state system of higher education. In Oklahoma, the coordinating board recommends academic standards, regulates functions and course offerings, and grants degrees. The board of regents also allocates budgets to the public institutions and approves their tuition and fee schedules. The Regents, however, do not govern the management, administration, and operations of the state's colleges and universities. Each school has its own board of regents or a board of trustees to govern its operations.

In 2013, Oklahoma joined other states in planning initiatives to increase completion rates among college students. According to the OSRHE website, “Complete College America (CCA) is the most comprehensive and ambitious higher education initiative ever undertaken by the state of Oklahoma.” The OSRHE, lawmakers, and other stakeholders were confident that an increase of degrees and certificates from the state institution of higher education helps Oklahoma create a more educated workforce, attracting more jobs and industry to the state, and enhances Oklahoma’s competition in a global economy.

Following the guidance of CCA, a state-created leadership team, and representatives from the state’s 25 member institutions, Oklahoma proposed a series of five initiatives to increase degree completion by 67% from 2013 to 2023. The second initiative, “Transform Remediation,” which focuses on developmental education, recommended action steps that include improving assessment and placement practices, creating summer bridge and gateway programs, and redesigning developmental education programs. The redesign suggestions included co-requisite remediation, elimination of developmental courses, and course acceleration.

Multi-campus Community College has a Developmental Education Committee, which addresses issues specific to curriculum design and course administration for developmental education courses and students. In response to the OSRHE recommendation to “transform remediation,” MCC created a corequisite course to accelerate students with developmental writing needs to enrollment in college-level Composition courses. Despite the changes of course delivery for the English writing courses, MCC kept the existing structure of the reading course sequence intact.

Placement at Multi-campus Community College

When entering MCC, students who lack qualifying ACT or SAT scores must take the ACCUPLACER Next Generation Reading Test to determine their level of reading proficiency. Based on cut-off scores, students are deemed proficient at college-level or placed into one of two developmental reading courses. College-level reading proficiency gains students access to most general education courses at the college. The developmental reading program at Multi-campus Community College includes two courses – Introduction to Academic Reading and Critical Academic Reading (previously Reading Foundations I and Reading Foundations II). The first is a prerequisite for the second, but students may place directly into the second without needing the first. The program is designed to meet the reading needs of students who place into the non-credit-bearing developmental courses. The goals of the developmental course program are to prepare students for college-level reading in general education courses. Reading proficiency is a prerequisite for the college's general education courses, meaning that students must demonstrate reading proficiency or complete the reading sequence before taking general education courses.

Characteristics of Students in Developmental Courses

Developmental reading students comprised 26.5% of students within the Fall 2018 first-time degree/certificate-seeking cohort (*N* = 3,499; TCC-IRA, 2019). At the time this manuscript was prepared, this was the college's most recently updated data. The table below depicts the general population of developmental student enrollment and the reading enrollment from which the primary sample is taken. As reported to IPEDS, the unduplicated headcount of all MCC students in Fall 2018 was 23,778 (TCC-IRA, 2019).

Fall 2018 student demographics were used because the most recently reported data at the time of the preparation of this manuscript were published in 2019.

Table 1

First Time Degree/Certificate Seeking Reading Students

Reading Placement Level	Count	Percentage
College-level (CL) reading	2,187	62.5%
Developmental reading (any level)	1,228	35.1%
Corequisite	669	19.1%
1 level below CL	318	9.1%
2 levels below CL	241	6.9%
Placement Unknown	84	2.4%
Total	**3,499**	**100%**

Note. Developmental reading student placement derived from comprehensive data set from Fall 2018 (N=3,499; TCC-IRA, 2019).

Participant Selection

The researcher used snowball convenience sampling to select a sample of participants who share the common experience of being adult learners who are developmental reading students. According to Creswell (2009) this type of sampling is most appropriate when the researcher specifies the characteristics of the population of interest (i.e., adult learners who are enrolled in developmental reading classes at a community college) and locates participants with those characteristics. The participants were developmental reading students at Multi-campus Community College who met the following cut-off criteria: (a) ACT score of less than 19, (b) SAT score of less than 510, or (c) Accuplacer Next Generation Reading Test score of less than 262, and (d) enrolled

in READ 0113 Introduction to Academic Reading or READ 0123 Critical Academic Reading. It is important to note that some students who enrolled in these courses in the Fall of 2020 were placed using temporary high school GPA (i.e., less than 3.2) or GED Language Arts (i.e., less than 165) cut-off scores because of the impact of COVID-19 on the administration of standardized tests.

The reading courses are zero-level college courses worth three credit-hours. The course catalog describes READ 0113 as a course that "teaches students basic reading skills necessary to improve comprehension, build vocabulary, and develop interest in reading" (catalog.tulsacc.edu). The subsequent course, READ 0123 or Critical Academic Reading "provides students an opportunity to enhance skills and techniques taught in Introduction to Academic Reading. [It] Emphasizes locating central themes and/ or main ideas, distinguishing between major and minor details, drawing logical conclusions, and recognizing purpose and tone" (catalog.tulsacc.edu).

In accordance with college information policy (https://www.tulsacc.edu/student-resources/student-records), the researcher requested the names and email addresses of all instructors and students teaching and enrolled in the two courses. The researcher emailed the instructors to encourage them to invite students in their classes to participate in the study. She followed up with an email to students, reminding them about the invitation from their instructors and invited them to reserve an appointment to interview and to invite a friend to participate. The target range of participants was 6 to 8 students with a goal of reaching data saturation.

Data Collection

After students committed to participate, they scheduled 60-minute interviews to be conducted virtually via the Zoom platform. Some participants warranted follow-up interviews to clarify responses in their initial interview. Interview is an effective method to collect student voices. In the beginning of the interview, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and informed them that the session was being recorded so it could be transcribed later. The scholar asked questions according to the protocol and interjected follow-up questions to allow students to elaborate on themes that were likely to emerge from the discussion in the interviews. She began with grand tour (Spradley, 1979) questions to establish trust and comfort. Next, she guided the participants along a path of questions to examine their existing biases regarding reading and reading-related experiences and to help them express any frustrations or triumphs associated with taking developmental reading courses in college. Near the end of the interview, the researcher invited students to share additional information they thought could be meaningful.

The interview protocol was developed based on concepts in the literature review and the research questions. Research questions included in the appendix were developed using questioning protocol recommendations (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). The researcher based the questions on determining students' feelings about reading, assuming that many students are protective of being perceived as struggling adult readers (Doran, 2017; Grubb & Gabriner, 2013). In an article initially designed as a classroom tool for professors teaching qualitative research or qualitative interviewing, Jacob and Furgerson (2012) guide new researchers to use descriptive interviews to elicit broad categories of information as provided by students' own perspectives. The authors outline a series of

steps that encourage researchers to nurture participants' urge for storytelling. In keeping with Jacob and Furguson's (2012) recommendations, the researcher included experience-based questions grounded in the literature related to developmental reading students. Within the scripted, open-ended questions, she addressed whether participants have had particular experiences related to reading and feelings of stigma. She began with their interests to make students feel successful before moving to more challenging or controversial questions. In addition to creating broad, expansive questions, the researcher also created prompts to help redirect responses that diverted from the topic or to elicit more specific information. Lastly, the interviewer prepared a shorter follow-up interview to clarify responses.

Beginning in the spring of 2020, MCCC and other colleges adjusted teaching and learning practices after a pandemic outbreak of the novel corona virus CoViD-19. In the spring of 2021, students were primarily learning remotely in response to CDC and campus recommendations regarding on-campus class and meeting sizes. To exercise caution and to comply with health and safety protocols at the research site, recruitment and interviews began online.

The researcher recruited participants through invitations from their instructors via email and LMS announcements. Nine students responded and expressed their intention to participate, and three students persevered to participate in zoom interviews. The initial IRB anticipated a greater student response within one semester. To expand the number of participants to reach date saturation, the researcher renewed the IRB and recruited again in January 2021. She asked instructors to invite students by email and LMS announcements again. Because more students and classes had returned to campus-based

course, the researcher also extended verbal in-person invitations to classes that met on campus. No online students responded. Two students from face-to-face classes responded. Both students scheduled interviews the same day they asked about the invitation. The Spring 2022 interviews were conducted in-person with the interviewer and participant wearing masks in compliance with campus and CDC recommendations.

Data Analysis

After transcribing the interview data, the researcher applied the framework approach (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Smith & Firth, 2011). In the data management stage she became familiar with the data by identifying initial themes, developing a coding matrix, assigning data to the themes in the coding matrix. Next, in the descriptive accounts stage, she synthesized the data and refined themes, identified associations, and developed abstract concepts. Lastly, in the explanatory accounts phase, she developed patterns within the themes and concepts established in the previous stages. She also reflected on the data collection to ensure accurate portrayal of students' voices, mitigated the potential for misrepresentations, and interpreted the findings to explain emerging themes and concepts. These stages of analysis created space for decreased nuance and increased adaptability in the application of concepts and themes.

Positionality

The philosophical paradigm is social constructivism, wherein learning occurs collaboratively and cooperatively because of the participants' interactions in a group. The researcher, who is an associate professor and faculty department chair at the college, has previously observed the cognitive and affective processes students experience while participating in reading courses. Her acknowledged bias is that a small percentage of the

students in the study had potential to engage with her through participation in a student organization she advises or through indirect contact as a department chair. To some extent, she may have contributed to or been a source of their anxiety, if they felt intimidated by her position of privilege as a professor or chair. In her own teaching, the author has witnessed students' expressions both of frustration and of elation about their self-perception as readers. As a course instructor, she had the opportunity to respond to frustration and even to assuage students' anxieties by further explaining reading strategies and learning processes.

Trustworthiness

To manage credibility and trustworthiness, the researcher presented students with a transcript of their individual interviews and shared themes, concepts, and findings that emerged from the collective set of interviews. The author shared the transcript of each student's interview to allow them to preview and accept that they are comfortable with their portrayal in the interview. She also shared the collective themes and concepts that emerged and asked students (a) if her findings seemed to represent their thoughts, (b) if they wished to clarify their ideas, and (c) if they were still comfortable with the author using their interview in this manner. To acknowledge and bracket her embedded bias, the researcher maintained a reflective journal. Additionally, she validated her findings with related results in existing literature surrounding college student responses to reading course-taking or to developmental course-taking in general.

Delimitations

This study is delimited to a subset of students who are enrolled in developmental reading courses at a multi-campus community college. Students who have been referred to enroll in reading courses but have not yet taken them are excluded from participation in this study. Other students with developmental course placements (e.g., math and writing) may possess similar experiences but may not be enrolled in developmental reading courses. Another delimiter of the study could be the timing in the semester of the administration of the survey. If the survey is administered early in the semester students may perceive stronger senses of stigma conflated the uncertainty of a new course. Later in the same semester after students have settled into the course and listened to shared experiences from classmates, they may feel less shame than at the onset of the semester.

Limitations

The external validity threats of this study are related to population and time. The students in the study were not randomly selected. They are students at a specific community college, so the results may not be replicated to other states, regions, or types of community colleges. Temporal validity is a concern because the implications of the results of the study could change as time passes and as perceptions and attitudes about developmental learning evolve. Expanding the sample or replicating it at other sites could improve the validity of the study.

There are few threats to the internal validity of this study. The most challenging threats are differential selection and attrition. The sample used was a convenience sample based on students who selected to enroll in courses at the research site. Some students simply did not wish to participate in the survey. Some students were enrolled in courses

the researcher teaches, or they may have been her former students. A few of those students may have participated because they believed their engagement was favorable to impressing the researcher who is also a professor at the college.

Other potential limitations to this specific study are that students may not have been honest in their responses due to trust with the researcher, stigma associated with the topic, or trauma from past reading experiences. To mitigate the potential of triggering stigma or past trauma, the author began each interview by creating a safe and non-anxious presence. She offered students the opportunity to end the interview at any point that the conversation felt uncomfortable. Another limitation that this study will not be able to capture the experiences on non-participants. There are potential systematic differences between participants and non-participants. Perhaps those who choose to participate may feel less stigma, have more self-confidence, or may be more engaged on campus, with faculty, or in student organizations. Thus, findings could be biased toward these individuals.

CHAPTER IV

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection occurred during the spring semesters of 2021 and 2022. Prior to the start of the semester, MCCC and other colleges adjusted teaching and learning practices after a pandemic outbreak of the novel corona virus CoViD-19. In the spring of 2021, students were primarily learning remotely in response to CDC and campus recommendations regarding on-campus class and meeting sizes. The principal investigator recruited participants through invitations from their instructors via email and LMS announcements. Nine students responded and expressed their intention to participate, while only three students followed through to participate in zoom interviews. A greater student response was expected within one semester. To expand the number of participants in order to reach data saturation, the researcher renewed the IRB and recruited again in January 2021. She asked instructors to invite students by email and LMS announcements again. Because more students and classes had returned to campus-based course, the researcher also extended verbal in-person invitations to classes that met on campus. No online students responded. Two students from face-to-face classes responded. Both students scheduled interviews the same day they asked about the invitation. The Spring 2022 interviews were conducted in-person with the interviewer and participant wearing masks in compliance with campus and CDC recommendations.

Description of the Study Participants

Five adult community college students participated in interviews. Three of the participants were female and two of the participants were male. Three of the students were traditional aged students defined as under age 24, and the two older students were

parents of elementary school children. Four of the students mentioned some combination of cultural, language, or linguistic diversity in their interviews. Four of the participants were enrolled in Critical Academic Reading, the second course in the developmental reading sequence which assigns college-level reading proficiency. One participant was enrolled in Introduction to Academic Reading, the first course in the developmental sequence. Three of the students were enrolled in classes that met on campus (one who participated in a zoom interview), and two were enrolled in classes that met synchronously via the Zoom meeting platform.

Table 2

Descriptive Summary of Participants

Alias	Age	Enrolled hours, Major	Described self as
Andrew	28	9 hours, Information Technology	Dad, Christian, Black, male, happy
Farida	41	9 hours, Programming	Female, Muslim, mother, from Syria
Tana	23	6 hours, Psychology	Home-schooled, Native American/Caucasian, female
Joshua	18	12 hours, Pre-Dentistry	Bilingual, Hispanic and middle eastern
Amber	19	9 hours, Art	*Preferred not to describe herself*

Note. Descriptions derived from transcribed interviews.

Andrew, 28, described himself as a single dad who was striving to set an example for his son and daughter. He identified as a Christian and acknowledged that he would not have overcome obstacles in his life without divine help from God. He was admitted to the college in 2011, but life circumstances, including working full-time and caring for his young children, deterred his enrollment in classes. Andrew lost his job during the onset of the CoViD-19 pandemic, creating an opportunity to enroll in classes fulltime in the

Spring of 2021. At the time of the interview, he was enrolled in Critical Academic Reading, the second course in the reading sequence.

Farida, 41, was a non-traditional, fulltime student in her forties. She described herself as Muslim and worked part-time as a duty assistant at the school her children attended. She was an immigrant who studied English as a foreign language before moving to the US as an adult. A friend, who had previously completed the ESL program, encouraged Farida to take classes at the college to improve her communication in English. She initially applied in 2015 and waited five years to enroll in classes. By the time she enrolled, her written and spoken English had surpassed the scope of the ESL program, and she enrolled in the Critical Academic Reading course and routinely took 9 hours per semester.

Tana described herself as a home-schooled 23-year-old who is “Native American slash Caucasian, more Native American.” While taking classes part-time, she worked full-time at a locally headquartered national convenience store. She credited content from the Critical Academic Reading course with filling in gaps in the reading and study strategies she practiced in home school education.

At age 18, Joshua was the youngest of the participants. He was admitted as a concurrent high school student through a partnership with his school district and the community college. This was his first semester of classes. Though he exceeded the admissions criteria in science and math, he fell short of having reading proficiency and therefore needed to complete Critical Academic Reading before continuing to liberal arts general education requirements. (Critical Academic Reading is a prerequisite to many courses and assigns reading proficiency to students who lack qualifying test scores.) He

had recently started his first part-time job and was working on campus in a federal work study position. Self-identifying as Middle Eastern and Hispanic, Joshua grew up speaking, reading, and writing in Spanish and in English. He was a student in the Critical Academic Reading class.

Amber was a 19-year-old art major who was interested in graphic design. She was the only student in this study taking Introduction to Academic Reading, the first class in the reading sequence. Unlike most of the participants, there was no delay between her decision to apply to college and her enrollment in classes. She applied, was admitted, and enrolled in classes in the same week. Amber explained that she had struggled in school and had not expected to be accepted into any college or program and was excited to be taking college classes.

The students in the study were enrolled in a two-course developmental reading sequence. One student – Amber – was enrolled in the entry level course, Introduction to Academic Reading which focuses primarily on deconstructing meaning from academic texts. The remaining students were enrolled in the second course – Critical Academic Reading which delivers strategies for advancing vocabulary, engaging with interdisciplinary texts, and examining authors arguments. The second course is more advanced and assigns college-level reading proficiency.

Data Analysis and Results

Upon initial review of the interview transcripts, students did not explicitly express any incidents of negativity, discouragement, or stigma in their impression of themselves, of their experiences, nor of their impressions of the courses. They described their experiences as, “God placed me in this course,” or “at the end of the day I really needed

this course." In their comments, students went so far as to recommend that other students take the developmental reading course. Overall, students seemed pleased with their course-taking and excited about the roles the courses fulfilled in continuing their path through education at the community college. Students expressed gratitude and appreciation for having remained in the course after they had doubts whether they needed the course. All of the students discussed interesting components of the curriculum, instructors, or materials that enhanced their studying or interest in reading.

A more thorough review of transcripts revealed students' unintentional use of deceptive rhetorical grammar to qualify their approval of the courses by using qualifiers like "actually" and "to be honest" to distract from and mask their feelings of inadequacy or stigma tied to deficit narratives. Rhetorical grammar refers to the way speakers and writers use sentence patterns, semantics, and syntax to influence how listeners and readers receive their messages. In teaching written composition, instructors ask students to explore how language functions to influence audience. Both deliberately and incidentally, speakers tend to add qualifying phrases like "as a matter of fact" before sharing false information or uncertain facts to encourage credibility. Researchers explain that unconscious or conscious masking is a coping mechanism for people who experience stigma in variety of contexts (Ortiz, 2001; Matsunaga, 2007; Pearson & Rose, 2021). For one study participant, after explaining why he didn't tell his friends and peers that his course is a developmental reading class, the student deflected by explaining "to be honest, what people in the classes are learning, a lot of people don't know." A more intentional secondary examination of students' interview responses helped the researcher to recognize codes among responses from the participants.

A tertiary review of the transcripts and their derived codes revealed a collection of themes and sub-themes. In contrast to the first four participants, the final participant was enrolled in the Introduction to Academic Reading course while the others had been enrolled in Critical Academic Reading. Despite that difference, her responses were consistent with those in the other course. One noteworthy outlier in responses from the last participant is that she did not recognize her developmental reading course as what she described as "remedial." Instead of masking or expressing stigma, she was surprised that she had not been assigned to enroll in such a course. Despite that deviation of course impressions, her responses aligned with the themes other students expressed as well.

Thematic Findings

Themes that emerged from the interviews were (a) life challenges as barriers, (b) perception of oneself and other readers, and (c) the relevance of personal goals in reframing stigma.

Table 3

Sample Codes and Themes

Quote	Code	Theme
"but then I ended up having a child"	Detours from college	Barriers, life challenges
"I […] start the paperwork and get the ID, but, again, something happened."	Barriers to enrollment	Barriers, life challenges
"I always wanted to further my education."	Personal goals	Lived experiences, self-perception
	Continued	
"They [are] just ready to get it over with."	Struggle with course-taking, connection to classmates	Lived experiences, observations of others
"I feel like remedial kind of has a bad rap…"	Course appreciation	Lived experiences, course taking
"It just breaks down the skills that you're supposed to have	Course description	Lived experiences, course taking

(continued)

Quote	Code	Theme
and what you're supposed to do so well.”		
“I wasn't really sure why I had to do a developmental course, but low key at the end of the day, I'm kind of glad.”	Masking	Reframing Stigma
“… but I just try to just go with the flow and just hope for the best and pray for the best.”	Religious coping, faith as coping mechanism	Reframing Stigma

Note. Quotes derived from transcribed interviews.

Life Challenges as Barriers. For many community college students, “life happens” and attending classes becomes a less important priority when compared to providing food, shelter, and safety for oneself and one’s family. Three students detailed the barriers that influenced or delayed initial enrollment in college, expressing ideas such as Andrew’s confession: “I had my son right out of high school.” Farida sighed before declaring, “That’s a long story,” and detailing the five-year cycle of false starts and detours that delayed her eventual enrollment in classes. Their responses suggested that despite their intentions to enroll in college, the barriers that interfered with initiating that goal are meaningful and seemed to carry more significance than the decision itself. Andrew, Farida, and Tana revealed that they had always wanted to attend college, but working or starting families and having children became more immediate priorities.

In Andrew’s case, he became a dad shortly after graduating from high school, which led him to seek fulltime employment instead of classes. The arrival of a second child made work for income a greater priority and a barrier to college. Later, losing his wife made him the sole provider for his two children, and college became more elusive until the onset of the CoViD-19 pandemic: “So I had switched jobs, and then COVID came, and it was actually easier for me to actually enroll in school to further my

education." He was faced with the decision of finding a new job or taking the opportunity to enroll in college with the support of income from unemployment insurance.

Farida shared a similar story: "I want to continue my college since high school but I have a weird thing come into my life and change my dream and make me slow down. I get married and get kids." Going to college had always been her dream. After getting married and having children, she chose to be a full-time caregiver until her children were old enough to attend school full-time. During the interim, she attempted to start classes once. She described the challenges that punctuated her five-year effort toward enrollment, "That's a long story, but it's still in my mind and I want to do it. Each year, I have this [goal], but each year I have something or whatever happen, but I want to do it." She applied, gathered the necessary paperwork, and even had a student ID card made before realizing she wasn't ready to take classes. Eventually, though, she did enroll.

Life happened differently for Tana. She began working immediately after high school and succeeded at work right away, gaining promotions and earning more money. The success at work fueled her commitment and work ethic, which made her an asset to her employer. She considered going to school, but her class schedule would conflict with her work schedule and interfere with the needs of the business. If she were to alter her job position to better accommodate her classes, the decrease in pay would alter the lifestyle hard work had afforded her. Though the relationship with her company was mutually beneficial, eventually she decided to stop putting work first and focus on education as a path to her career goals.

These life challenges and decisions to delay enrollment are consistent with barriers mentioned in longitudinal studies initiated by The National Center for Education Statistics in 2002 and 2009. The studies followed a national sample of students who were 10th graders in 2002 and 2009 by administering surveys to students, parents, and school officials during the students 10th and 12th grade years. Researchers collected high school transcripts and periodically administered postsecondary surveys. According to the 2002 study, students delayed college enrollment because of financial concerns or a preference to work. For the 2009 cohort, affordability was also a concern. Andrew, Tana, and Farida described needing to work to support their families or their lifestyles instead of enrolling in college immediately following high school.

Lived Experiences as Readers

Oneself As Reader. The perception of oneself as a reader was a recurring theme among the participants. Most participants imagined themselves as readers with a complicated love for the craft. Reading enjoyment is an important component of reading proficiency (Alvermann, 2003; Smith, Smith, Gilmore & Jameson, 2012; Wigfield, et al., 2016). Within the same interview, sometimes within the context of the same question, students expressed complicated ideas about their history and relationship with reading. Joshua shared that he learned to read early, at age 3 or 4. He also acknowledged that he didn’t enjoy reading, but that he was always interested because his mom would make him read. Part of his discussion implied that he struggled with reading, and his mom pushed him because she believed he should read more to compensate for and overcome that struggle. Andrew recognized himself as struggling reader stating that, “Even through school I took extra reading. I had to take extra reading classes because I was a little bit

delayed." He went on to describe a bike accident in his childhood. He remembers flying off the pegs of a bicycle and bumping his head… hard. He never received any type of treatment or diagnosis. After reading an article about reading and brain trauma in his college reading class, he believes he probably suffered a concussion or damaged his frontal lobe during the accident. He further believes that because he was just learning to read around that time the probable brain injury impeded his reading comprehension, and that encountering the article now, twenty-plus years later, is a fateful explanation of why he reads more slowly.

Farida has a love-hate relationship with reading. She learned to read in Syria and loves to read in her native language. Her challenge is that reading in English is harder, so she feels insecure, less competent, and more frustrated. She finds herself stopping and starting, sometimes looking for translations to confirm her interpretations. This isn't an anomaly. The MCCC director of global learning, who also teaches a first-year seminar to international students, calls this type of translation the "double work" akin to learning in a foreign language (personal communication, June 2021; also Bogulski, et al., 2019). He described two primary scenarios of studying and approaching assignments. In one, students translate as needed, often line-by-line, while they read, study, play-back lectures, and complete assignments. In the other scenario, students read, study, and complete assignments in their native language before translating them back to English. Both methods are effective, and both essentially double the completion time for assignments. When Boguluski and colleagues (2019) analyzed the costs and benefits of students learning new words in their target language, they noticed that students preferred to rely on reading and studying in their native or dominant language for the automaticity of

cognition. During her interview, for example, Farida asked me to repeat or explain questions, and some of her responses included pauses and the type of "ummm" that signifies thinking of an appropriate word. As a result, the recording for her interview was two-to-three times longer than the others.

For Tana, reading must have purpose for her to enjoy it. Her descriptions of herself as a reader are telling: "I've always been a reader since before I can remember. Since I was a little kid I've always really loved it." Her voice was upbeat and excited when she began telling her reading narrative. Then it trailed off before she paused, and her voice seemed quieter when she added, "I don't really love to read." It was as if she was admitting it to herself as much as she was confessing it to me. Perhaps she realized in that moment that she doesn't read for enjoyment as much as she once did. For a person who has been as career-focused and purpose-driven as Tana has, it makes sense that she enjoys reading psychology articles and other informational texts, which are meaningful for her major.

Amber's limited reading proficiency had little impact on her self-perception as a reader. She shared that her high school English and spelling scores had been so low that she expected to be placed in "remedial" classes and would be happy to be there. Not realizing how developmental studies courses work, she was pleasantly surprised to be placed in a "college" reading course. Her new pride for the college English class has bolstered her confidence. She admitted that while this was not her favorite class in high school, she's beginning to enjoy reading more. To demonstrate her newfound love of reading, she shared an unsolicited retelling and review of the book she had been reading for class.

Reading enjoyment and reading proficiency are so interrelated that when I asked about their experiences with reading, students responded in terms of their enjoyment of reading. Farida exclaimed, “I love reading! I read a lot in my language.” Researchers have previously demonstrated positive correlations between students who read well and students who enjoy reading (Alvermann, 2003; Smith, et. al, 2012; Wigfield, et. al, 2016), and the inverse is also true – poorer readers do not enjoy reading (Hoeft, 2012). When asked about his early reading, Andrew admitted simply, “I just didn’t enjoy it.” In addition to proficiency and enjoyment, various types of early trauma may impact a student’s performance and attitudes about reading (Green, 2020). Andrew’s aforementioned bicycle accident is a relevant example of a traumatic experience that could have had an effect on his disdain for or poor performance in reading.

Observations of Classmates. In addition to how students see themselves as readers, it is noteworthy that the way they each perceive themselves aligned with the way other participants described their classmates. Students had a strong sense of who they perceived belonged in developmental reading classes and why they themselves were in the courses. There was confirmative overlap in their descriptions of who they are or why they placed into the courses and who they perceive takes the courses alongside them. When asked to describe what kinds of students take developmental reading classes, three students offered themselves as models of the types of students to enroll. When asked to introduce themselves or to tell about their own placement experiences, their personal stories mirrored the characteristics other participants had listed to answer, “what kind of students take developmental reading classes?” Two students included themselves in the response: “somebody like me” and “people in my same situation.” More than one student

described their classmates as foreign or second language learners, older students or students who had been out of school for longer periods of time, and students who were responsible for their shortcomings for various reasons such as not taking school seriously.

Four students corroborated that students who needed language support enrolled in developmental reading classes. Tana explained, "I mean, there's a lot of kids who had ... English was their second language. So they struggled a little bit more with the vocab and just being able to understand what they were reading." Andrew mentioned the same struggles among classmates and identified the vocabulary development skills taught in the class as helpful. Two students saw themselves as English language learners. Farida and Joshua acknowledged that they spoke, read, and wrote other languages, and appreciated the benefits of using Word Power (Lewis, 1991), the curricular tool used in the course to enhance vocabulary through the exploration 72tymologyy, word roots, and affixes. Additionally, one of the bilingual students shared that a bilingual friend had recommended taking courses at the college specifically because of the language support she had experienced as a student who struggled with English and spoke another language at home.

The average student age at MCCC is 27, so it stands to reason that all five students mentioned advanced age as part of the description of their classmates. Three of the students related to that description. They self-disclosed being among the older students in the class. They also revealed that they had delayed enrolling in college for years while prioritizing other life events – marriage, raising children, and working. Andrew acknowledged, "Some of them are younger, but most of us are older." Farida confessed relief that she was not the only older student in her classes. She also noted that

many of the students in the reading class were younger and she related more to the instructor than to her classmates.

Reframing Stigma. Students described the assumption that students themselves play a role in the underpreparedness that leads to enrollment in developmental reading classes. This internalization of blame is an expression of self-stigma. As defined earlier in the manuscript, internalized stigma happens when the experience of self-stigma leads to psychological distress and a diminished self-concept (Herek, 2007, 2009). One student proclaimed that he "should have learned everything I needed to learn" while attending a local high school known for academic excellence but that his stubbornness and teenage distractions were barriers to his high school success. Another student blamed herself and others like her for being out of school for several years. When discussing the choice to enroll, most of the participants listed things they might have done differently to be better prepared for college.

Purpose-driven Perseverance. The participants used their personal goals to reframe stigma about reading classes. To them, their purposes outranked their circumstances. Each interview began with a discussion that included students' personal goals. Consistently, the students expressed that completing the reading class is part of their path to complete their learning, career and life goals. Andrew saw completion of the reading class as preparation for Composition I, and a path to degree completion to provide a better life for his son and daughter. Tana, who wants to be a "counselor for young girls," acknowledged that the first step toward that goal is returning to college. Amber, the art major who wants to become a graphic designer, was excited to take these prerequisite classes that get her closer to more creative courses in the art department.

Joshua's purpose-driven motivation was both practical and financial. His long-term goal was to major in medicine, and he made a financial decision to save money by attending a community college first. Though he did not initially believe he needed a reading course, he felt that the study strategies he learned would help him with the heavier reading in his advanced medical courses. His words articulated a sentiment other students expressed as well: "At the end of the day, we're all here to learn […] Everyone's path to success and all that is just different. What matters is that you get there."

Religious Coping. Andrew accepted his placement in the course as divine intervention. He explained that if God had not directed him to this class, he would not be experiencing growth. People who experience stigma or trauma often use faith and spirituality as coping mechanisms. This reframing of stigma, known as religious coping, is characterized by relying on faith to assuage the negative outcomes of stress or trauma (Koenig, et al., 1998). Andrew also discussed the benefit of how language growth from engaging in vocabulary lessons had changed the way he communicated with others. He reported that he felt more comfortable in conversations with college graduates at work, and he believed his coworkers treated him with more respect because he began to speak more intelligently. Further, he testified that his expanded vocabulary was a way to enhance his children's intelligence. He called the vocabulary book "a blessing" that he plans to pass to his children.

Appreciation of Course Experiences. Another approach to students reframing potentially stigmatizing experiences was in expressing appreciation for the course, the content, or the instructor. The participants perceive their reading classes as being helpful and preparing them for success in other classes or life outside of school. College reading

classes encourage students to reflect metacognitively on the problem-solving one does while reading. As part of the reflective process, students are asked weekly to reflect on how they have use strategies and how the strategies work for their reading needs.

The participants' self-perception and the associated self-stigma was grounded in their values, lived experiences, and life choices. Overarchingly, the way they see themselves is reflective of how they compare themselves to ideals expressed as acceptable or expected in college or in society at large.

CHAPTER V

Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Mining findings from the interviews was a gradual process. In the midst of recording the live interviews, elements of the stigma the researcher had anticipated were not obvious. Students' responses to interview questions were optimistic endorsements of their courses, experiences, and instructors. It seemed initially that the participants felt no stigma about their courses in the moment, nor had they felt stigma at any point in the past related to their college course-taking. Upon re-reading the transcripts and carefully listening to the recorded interviews multiple times, the researcher recognized hesitation in students' responses and noticed careful wording that disguised thoughts that betrayed the inspiring images they wanted to portray of their course experiences. Stigma is nuanced, and as defined in the introduction of this manuscript, stigma is a social concept; it is a perception that one is flawed, inferior, unworthy, or less acceptable than others (Vogel, et al., 2006). Social concepts are complicated and can be difficult to describe because they are subjective and based in perception and the nuance of one's point-of view.

Quantifying or describing stigma is challenging. Researchers who study stigma are like doctors who study pain. Regarding pain or stigma, the object of study seems elusive. Patients in various stages of medical intervention or treatment are asked to describe their perception of pain on a familiar ten-point scale ranging from a blissfully-happy-face to an excruciatingly-distressed-face. Doctors have no objective indicators or standard measurements for pain. They must rely on what patients report about their pain. In a like manner, researchers have no standardized system of measuring stigma (Link, et al., 2004), and they must rely on the reported perceptions of stigmatized people.

Like pain, stigma is also relative. The regularity, conditions, and circumstances of occurrence impact how people experience pain or stigma. Many people have banged a toe on a piece of familiar furniture. The first time one bangs a toe in the middle of a night on the corner of a particular dresser seems to be the most painful. Eventually, during nighttime trips the walker learns to avoid the corner, but the next time the same toe connects with the corner of the dresser, it seems to hurt less. The walker has become more familiar with the path of the furniture's position and is more conditioned to the sensation of stubbing the toe. In this study, students were more likely to describe incidents of stigma that occurred early in the semester, and as they grew more familiar with the course and its content, they seemed less phased by stigma later. Andrew shared that he had been less likely to tell friends he was taking a developmental reading class at beginning of the semester. By the time of the interview near the end of a semester, Andrew had spent several weeks in the class and had become more familiar with it, sharing that "they should take the class and check it out for themselves."

For Joshua, while timing was one factor, the conditions under which he experienced the class also helped mitigate stigma. To compare, pain behaves in the same way. Scalding one's lip while sipping unexpectedly hot coffee during a mundane drive to work is painful and unsettling. However, experiencing the same coffee disaster on a rainy day *when a distracted driver intersects 60 mile-per-hour traffic on a two-lane road and causes a four-car pile-up resulting in one's coupe being sandwiched between an SUV and the hood of a sedan* diminishes the hurt of the burnt lip. Joshua may have been unsettled by having to take a reading class he deemed unnecessary, but in the larger scheme of things, the reading class was a small step in his overall plan for success in his

medical field course work. The reading course was one of three prerequisites he was assigned to complete before enrolling in the first-year courses for his program. Joshua acknowledged that it would be disappointing to arrive in his medical terminology or anatomy and physiology classes and feel lost without the tools to read effectively.

The participants in the study also demonstrated that circumstances matter. Like fear of pain, fear of stigma plays a role in pain deterrence or avoidance of behaviors, even beneficial behaviors. One study explained that diabetes patients who rely on self-injections of insulin to regulate blood sugar levels intentionally skipped insulin doses due to fear of injection pain, not wanting to interrupt daily activities, and feeling embarrassed (Peyrot, et al., 2010). For a patient who has traditionally been afraid of needles and avoided injections, the thought of depending on daily injections must seem daunting, but the circumstance of needing the life-saving intervention eventually outweighs the fear. In this study, Farida experienced fear of being an older student in the class and also of struggling to read more in a new language. She explained the fear she felt in the beginning: “I want to prove myself, but I was afraid because it's hard to me to understand all words I don't know, or how can I do a test or how can I do homework?” In part, that fear kept her from enrolling for five years. She explained how after attending the reading class and learning new ways to navigate reading in English, she felt more confident and more competent about her literacy and about taking additional classes, including those that will require her to learn computer languages. Her triumph in the class was a testament to the destigmatizing shift in mindset that occurred after improving her reading practice. Farida share these words of wisdom: “It's hard to get the first step, but when you

get the first step, it's not a big deal. You just need to challenge yourself and keep going and you're going to do it."

Discussion of the Findings

The findings in this phenomenological study illustrate the nuance of how stigma emerges – when, where, to what extent, under what conditions students experience it. This study adds context to aid in discussions among developmental educators who discuss among themselves the phenomenon that adult learners in developmental education may feel stigmatized. Students in this study described (a) stigmatized conditions – life challenges as barriers to course-taking, (b) public and self-stigma – perception of themselves and others (see p. 34), (c) nuanced stigma – appreciation of course experiences despite shortcomings, and (d) perceived stigma – the relevance of personal goals in reframing challenges (see p. 34). These themes validate the anecdotes shared among practitioners and prior studies discussion obstacles students face.

Andrew and Jade described previous "extra reading" and special education reading classes during K-12. Their stories align with studies which posit that college placement into developmental reading classes is typically preceded by a long history of reading struggle and reading support in the students' K-12 reading experiences (see p. 18; Falk-Ross, 2002; Good, 1998; Lesley, 2004). Jade alluded to literacy challenges that predated her college experience when she explained that, "it's because my English scores in high school was low. So I was expecting, because of my ability to spell is absolutely terrible, to be placed in a remedial class." Referring to his elementary and secondary school learning experiences, Andrew revealed, "I had to take extra reading classes because I was a little bit delayed."

As mentioned earlier in this manuscript, “literacy is a constructive process that draws on social and cultural practices” (see p. 21; Allat, 2017; Frankel, et al., 2016). Language and culture are inextricably linked. Anyone who has learned to read and write in a new language will recall lessons and experiences related to the culture of speakers of that language. While studying a new language, students are often invited to explore music, art exhibits, and native cuisine because knowing the vocabulary of a language is only portion of understanding it. When experiences are available, new language students are encouraged to study abroad or practice some form of immersion in the culture of the language. Farida and Joshua affirmed the cultural aspects of literacy in its social context. Farida, an immigrant student, alluded to the cultural nuances of learning English as a foreign language while immersed in a culture where English is widely spoken. Joshua, whose parents represent two diverse cultures in addition to their shared English-speaking American culture, acknowledged speaking only Spanish and English. His mother encouraged him to read in English from a young age. In a family with such varied language backgrounds, their literacy decisions seem to draw on social and cultural practices connected to public education and English-rich language standards in the local community.

Andrew’s discussion of how he deliberately masked his enrollment in a developmental class, “I don’t really say it is a developmental reading, […] I just say a regular English class,” demonstrates perceived stigma (see p. 34; Corrigan & Watson, 2002). He seemed to internalize the stigmatized condition of being identified as a developmental reading student and hoped to protect himself from public stigma which

encourages reactions of discrimination (also p. 34, Corrigan & Watson, 2002). Other participants didn't demonstrate perceived stigma as directly.

Transformative learning (see p. 41; Mezirow, 1997) is a key pillar in adult education and evident in the students' voices in this study. Students learn, grow, and reframe experiences "through self-reflection and interpretation of new experiences" (p. 41). In some form or another, each of the five participants expressed appreciation for challenges they had overcome in their path to enrollment, in being placed in developmental reading courses, or in completing the courses. Andrew transformed his thinking to embrace vocabulary development as an asset in communication outside of class. Farida transformed her language challenges into opportunities to expand her access to reading audiobooks for learning and for leisure. Tana realized a new way of engaging with literature by accepting the transformative practice of annotating text. Joshua, who thought the college reading course was unnecessary, reframed his perception of the class after realizing how well the strategies supported studying for other college courses. Amber expressed her transformative experience of enjoying an English class for the first time: "English wasn't my favorite subject back in high school. But now, I actually kind of like it. It started grow on me."

In reviewing the transcripts, other relevant ideas emerged that were not related to the students' discussion. In the first three interviews, the students mentioned the CoViD-19 and pandemic-related ideas. Students also mentioned zoom classrooms or the modalities of their courses.

Limitations

The point in the semester what the interviews were scheduled impacted students' perceptions of the course. Presumably, students' perceptions of and appreciation for the course change with their experience. Earlier in the semester before students have had opportunities to apply the reading strategies introduced in the course, their experiences are limited, and they may feel more indifference or negativity about their enrollment. Several weeks into the course students have benefitted from the intervention of the curriculum and, as typical of transformative learning, they are more likely to report positive conclusions from their experiences. As these interviews were conducted in the fourteenth and fifteenth weeks of a sixteen-week semester from students who were successfully completing the course, their opinions were skewed optimistically based on their pleasant interactions and course results. This is an opportunity for further research. Future studies should test how these perceptions change at specific points within a student's college experience.

Some limitations that complicated data collection were changes in physical distancing protocols, digital literacy challenges, and students' discomfort with consent forms. The first set of interviews were conducted virtually, from recruitment to interview. Some potential participants struggled with reading or responding to encrypted emails and scheduling interview appointments through an electronic assistant. By contrast, when physical distance protocols permitted in-person recruitment, students asked questions, scheduled interview appointments, and signed consent forms within several minutes.

The MCCC IRB team recommended that the researcher deliver the informed consent and wellness statement in writing in addition to explaining both in the beginning

of the interview. The wellness statement included referrals to counseling resources, a local crisis hotline, and the national suicide prevention hotline. The combination of the informed consent form and mental wellness disclaimer or either message alone. While most participants did not comment on the consent form, one participant seemed visibly uncomfortable about it and asked questions about what harmful things she needed to do. Coincidentally, she was the only participant who chose to share no descriptions when asked to tell as little or as much about herself as she wished. Each student acknowledged the wellness disclaimer with a question, giggle, or a raised brow. One student jokingly asked, “what am I getting into?” before agreeing to proceed with the interview.

Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

This study has addressed gaps in the research regarding students’ own perceptions of stigma related to developmental reading courses or developmental course-taking in general, but broader research would further inform practitioners in the field. In addition to increasing the scale of this study, there are other circumstances that might yield different student perceptions. Types of institutions where students might have varied perspectives are those in states that don’t have stand-along reading programs, institutions in states where students have broader access to Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs, and institutions that award college credit for reading instruction.

Adult Basic Education. This study was conducted at a college in Oklahoma. Adult learners in the state don’t have access to state-sponsored adult basic education (ABE) programs. Because of that, students who enter may have a broad range of previous educational experience, including low literacy and limited numeracy. Oklahoma offers GED and HiSET testing for students who did not finish high school. Most of the test

preparation and testing is delivered by career technical schools, community organizations, and correctional facilities. Struggling learners who live in states with broader ABE programs (e.g., Texas, Nevada, North Carolina), have more opportunities to develop college-ready competencies before entering college. In Oklahoma, would-be ABE candidates enroll in introductory-level developmental classes. This consideration yields to a wider possibility of variations in students' experiences and perceptions for studies conducted in ABE-serving states.

Peer-to-peer Relationships. Another consideration is the occurrence of peer-to-peer relationships formed among students. The research site is a non-residential community college, and the students who attend are commuters who drive to campus to attend classes and then leave to attend to various obligations like attending classes on other campuses, off-campus employment, or parenting and other caregiving. While the college encourages participation in clubs and organizations that contribute to students' extracurricular and cocurricular engagement, students are less likely to build the types of bonds students develop when living in shared spaces continuously over a prolonged period. The limited peer-to-peer relationships may diminish the notion that their classmates' opinions matter, and therefore any feelings of social stigma or honor become less relevant. The impact of peer-to-peer influence on course selections is another area where further research may inform practices.

Student Age and Lived Experience. Similar to the aspects of non-residential campuses, many of the students who attend classes at the research site are older than traditionally aged students; approximately 32% of students are older than 24 years old (2022, College website: http://ira.tulsacc.edu/content/institutional-data). Older students

have more lived experience, and are more likely to be introspective about their course placement related to the impact of having spent multiple years away from the classroom.

Social Capital and Stigma. As demonstrated by Andrew's denial to his friends that his course is anything but a regular English course, social capital is important. Despite the value he found in taking the class, it was meaningful to him that friends didn't realize he was enrolled in a college reading class. This phenomenon suggests that intersections between stigma and social capital (Putnam, 2000) may make social capital theory more nuanced. Typically, in higher education, social capital theory generally suggests that social networks help students to achieve success. It seems here that maybe those networks can reinforce stigma. Though the context differs, another intersection of stigma and social capital exists among people who oppose vaccinating their children and use social capital to build a network of support against the stigma of anti-vaccination (Reich, 2020). Further research might suggest that students in developmental courses may benefit to broaden their social networks. Another lens through which researchers could examine is the context of adult/non-traditional students who may not engage with campus in the same way as tradition students.

Credit-bearing or Integrated Reading Courses. Many institutions, including some in Oklahoma, have eliminated isolated reading instruction in favor of integrated reading and writing (IRW) models. The IRW approach is an efficient method of accelerating students' completion of developmental English courses by compressing developmental reading and developmental writing courses together. In such programs, students no longer enroll in standalone reading courses and may perceive the combined course differently than they think of the reading course. In a few institutions (e.g., Rose

State in Oklahoma), students earn college credit for their reading classes. Students for whom college reading classes are integrated with composition courses or credit-bearing may report different experiences related to stigma in taking reading courses.

Covid 19 and New Virtual Spaces

Perhaps it goes without saying that CoViD-19 changed the landscape of education in many ways. Prior to the spring semester of 2020, all developmental reading classes at this multi campus community college were held in classrooms on campuses. Though the college offered asynchronous online classes, they were not offered to reading students. Reading students could choose between two modalities – *traditional*, where students met in classrooms for two 80-minute sessions each week for 16 weeks, or *blended*, where students met in classrooms for 80 minutes a week and participated online for the other 50% of their coursework. The traditional modality was most prevalent. Then, consistent with colleges across the country in March 2020, MCCC acted quickly to create opportunities for students to learn virtually in response to the call for physical distance to mitigate the spread of the then newly identified SARS-CoViD-19 virus. MCCC created a course delivery modality that met synchronously for the same seat time as the traditional courses. Instructors used video platforms in the Blackboard LMS or the Zoom meeting platform. They called the new modality “online live” as an alternative to the existing asynchronous “online” learning modality. The novel *online live* modality remained after the onset of CoViD-19, and it seems likely to continue in perpetuity.

Conclusion

Is it possible that students don't feel as stigmatized as faculty perceive them to? Perhaps it's the faculty who feel the stigma. After all, faculty are they who remain in development reading classrooms semester after semester, year after year. Students move on. Their time in developmental reading classes is short lived. For students, perhaps it represents a fraction of their college experience for which any perceived stigma evaporates after they internalize the strategies that enhance their studies beyond their involvement in the courses.

Within the past decade, Developmental Education has experienced a number of reforms. With reforms like integrating reading and writing instruction (IRW) or eliminating reading programs, reading education seems to have experienced the brunt of that change. When other states (e.g., Texas) began to implement IRW, educators in Oklahoma prepared for directives to follow the trend by attending conferences, inviting IRW scholars, and developing curricula for integrated course models. In the summer of 2016, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education proposed to require corequisite remediation for 75% - 90% of students who demonstrated the need for developmental education (Corequisite, 2016). Many colleges eliminated standalone reading courses, added IRW courses, or combined developmental reading courses with college-level Composition courses to accelerate students' completion of gateway courses. Without classes to teach, reading professors and other practitioners retired or were otherwise separated from institutions, taking instructional capital with them. Today, Oklahoma institutions are recognizing a new challenge: more students are struggling with reading and study skills.

The preparation of this manuscript spanned 4 years. During that time, changes emerged at the research site. One change reflected in the manuscript was the renaming of the courses in the developmental reading sequence. At the beginning of this study the courses in the 2-course sequence were called Reading I and Reading II, then Reading Foundations I and Reading Foundations II. The researcher and her colleagues used preliminary insight from this study and results from an informal study of students' perspectives to change the course names to Introduction to Academic Reading and Critical Academic Reading. The revised names are more descriptive of the course content and carry less stigma than simply named Reading I & II. One student in this study who had struggled with reading in K-12 reported that she hadn't expected to take "regular" classes and was surprised that she was placed in "this real college class." Changing the names of courses is a small but meaningful investment in the destigmatization of developmental reading course-taking.

The implications of destigmatizing reading extend beyond the classroom. Stigma also hinders sense of belonging and help-seeking behaviors. As described in stigma theory way (see p. 37), society uses stigma to keep people out, keep people in, or keep people away. When students are led to believe that they are less worthy of engagement in the academy based on their developmental enrollment status, they are less likely to take advantage of tuition-included amenities such as tutoring services, honors programs, scholarship applications, or job opportunities including federal work study. When students fail to recognize their own belonging, they also fail to acknowledge their cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005; e.g., social capital, acquisitional capital) that has made them successful as parents, workers, creators, and citizens.

It is important for institutions and faculty to ask themselves, "What role do we play in stigmatizing students' perception of developmental reading?" As acknowledged in the review of relevant literature, students who have experienced public stigma are prone to feeling self-stigma regardless of the time passed between the encounter and the feeling (Pryor & Reeder, 2011). Institutional practices are blameworthy, at least in part, when it comes to perpetuating structural stigma (see p. 13) around developmental reading. Participants in this study were advised to get these classes "out of the way" before taking other general education courses. One student reported being advised that he could test out of the course. Such innocuous-seeming advice has the unintentional impact of casting developmental reading classes as unnecessary nuisances, expensive ones to boot. Institutions would better serve students by acknowledging the important role reading plays in critical thinking, social responsibility, and becoming a well-educated scholar.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol

The interview protocol is as follows:

Introduction and informed consent: Before we begin, I want to remind you that our conversation here today is confidential. I am recording this interview so that I can listen to it and transcribe it later. Then I will delete it. I have prepared a few questions about reading and your reading classes here are the college. At the end I will give you an opportunity to tell me anything else you think is important for this interview. This interview is part of a study about adult students in college reading classes, and I am writing about it to learn more about what students think and to help earn a doctorate degree. If at any point in the interview you feel uncomfortable, please raise your hand. We can end the interview at that point, or you may choose to continue.

Wellness Services offers health education, short-term counseling and connection to resources for everyday needs. To text with a crisis counselor, text RELIEF to 741741. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is available 24/7 at 1-800-273-8255. If you need to speak to a counselor immediately, please call Family and Children's Services COPES line at 918-744-4800 24 hours a day/7 days a week. For more information, please visit www.cc.edu/Wellness or e-mail wellness@cc.edu.

Are you ready to continue?

I'll begin recording now. I will call you by your name, but when you see the transcript, you will be Student Number ___.

Questions:

1. Tell me about how you decided to enroll at Tulsa community college?

2. What have your experiences with reading been like? (Follow up prompts: When did you begin reading? Do you enjoy reading? What kind of reader are you?)
3. Describe your experience of being placed into a developmental reading course? (When did you know you would take a reading course? Was this your choice or a recommendation from your advisor?)
4. Tell me about your thoughts and experiences since you learned that you would take a developmental reading course?
5. What kind of conversations have you had with other people about developmental reading courses? (possible prompts: at the college, in your family, among your friends and classmates, …) Follow up: Do you think people have treated you differently? How so?
6. What kind of people take reading classes in college? (Follow up: What do these people bring with them? What do they need from the class?)
7. For some people, the words we use matter. When thinking about your current college experiences, how does the term "developmental" versus "remedial" make you feel in regard to your reading course?
8. Have you used any college resources for reading? Which one? In what ways? Follow up: What types of campus resources or support would be beneficial for someone like yourself?
9. We're at the end of our interview. Are there things you want to say about college reading that I didn't ask you about?
10. Last question – how would you describe your identity or demographics?

Close interview.

Reassure confidentiality.

Explain next steps:

If anything in today's interview made you feel uncomfortable, please follow-up with mental wellness services. There are free, confidential services available at ████ and in the community. ████ Wellness Services offers health education, short-term counseling and connection to resources for everyday needs. To text with a crisis counselor, text RELIEF to 741741. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is available 24/7 at 1-800-273-8255. If you need to speak to a counselor immediately, please call Family and Children's Services COPES line at 918-744-4800 24 hours a day/7 days a week. For more information, please visit www.████cc.edu/Wellness or e-mail wellness@████cc.edu.

I will also send the same list of resources in email.

In the next couple of days, I will email you the transcript from this interview. After you read it, you get to decide if it represents the conversation we had here today.

After I have completed several interviews, I will look for trends in what students are telling me, and I will write a report that summarizes what I think students mean. I will share that report with you to ask if I have your blessing to proceed with sharing your thoughts (anonymously, of course).

APPENDIX B

Date: Feb 4, 2021 4:48:17 PM CST

TO: Kayla Harding Forrest Lane
FROM: SHSU IRB
PROJECT TITLE: Adult Learners' Experiences of Stigma in Developmental Reading Courses
PROTOCOL #: IRB-2020-350
SUBMISSION TYPE: Initial
ACTION: Approved
DECISION DATE: February 3, 2021
ADMINISTRATIVE CHECK-IN DATE: February 3, 2022
EXPEDITED REVIEW CATEGORY: 6. Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.
7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Restart 2020 (COVID-19 update): The IRB has released specific guidelines for easing or transitioning existing IRB-approved studies or any new study subject to IRB oversight to in-person data collection. Please be advised, before ANY in-person data collection can begin, you must have IRB approval specifically for the conduct of this type of research. Please see the IRB response page for COVID-19 here.

ATTENTION RESEARCHERS! Effective Monday, July 27, 2020, the IRB has revised its online office hours to 12-2 on Zoom Monday through Thursday. These will be permanent office hours. To access Zoom during the IRB's office hours, click here. Just in case, here is the meeting ID: 712-632-8951. **SEE YOU ON ZOOM FROM 12-2 MONDAY-THURSDAY!**

Greetings,

The above-referenced submission has been reviewed by the IRB and it has been Approved. This study received expedited review, and the IRB determined that a renewal submission is needed, but only in the form of an administrative check-in submission. You will receive an email notification on the anniversary of this study approval, which will be on February 3, 2022. This study approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Since Cayuse IRB does not currently possess the ability to provide a "stamp of approval" on any recruitment or consent documentation, it is the strong recommendation of this office to please include the following approval language in the footer of those recruitment and consent documents: IRB-2020-350/February 3, 2021/February 3, 2022.

Modifications: Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please submit a Modification Submission through Cayuse IRB for this procedure.

Incidents: All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please submit an Incident Submission through Cayuse IRB for this procedure. All Department of Health and Human Services and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

Study Administrative Check-In: Based on the risks, this project does require a renewal in the form of an Administrative Check-In procedure. This means you are required to administratively check in with the IRB on an annual basis. February 3, 2022 is the anniversary of the review of your protocol. **To get started with your next Administrative Check-In procedure, you will submit a Renewal Submission through Cayuse IRB. A reminder email will be sent to you on the anniversary of your most recent approval of** *Adult Learners' Experiences of Stigma in Developmental Reading Courses.*

Please note that all research records should be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project. If you have any questions, please contact the Sharla Miles at [redacted] or [redacted] Please include your protocol number in all correspondence with this committee.

Sincerely,

Chase Young, Ph.D.
Chair, IRB
Hannah R. Gerber, Ph.D.
Co-Chair, IRB

APPENDIX C

From: Jennifer Ivie Barth <[redacted].edu>
Sent: Monday, March 29, 2021 11:58 AM
To: Kayla Harding <[redacted]@[redacted].edu>
Cc: Institutional Review Board <irb@[redacted].edu>; Alicia Uddin <[redacted].edu>
Subject: RE: [redacted] IRB Application Submission [IRB-21-01]

Dear Kayla,

Thank you for submitting your application for your dissertation project to the [redacted] Community College Institutional Review Board. Your diligence in the process helps ensure our students are protected during your research. The full board has voted to approve your study with the following final changes. Once you have made these changes, please send copies of the updated documents to irb@[redacted].edu. Then, you may proceed with data collection. This approval is good for one calendar year from this date. Please keep in mind that you may have additional approvals here at [redacted] that you must gain before you may begin collecting data.

The following changes must be completed BEFORE data collection begins.

- For the interview protocol, please move the mention of resources available if they become uncomfortable to the beginning of the interview. Additionally, provide the list of resources at the start of the interview, and again at the end, and again in all follow up emails.
- Update the list of resources following these guidelines: The BHS/Student EAP 24/7 1-800 number is no longer a support that is available, she needs to remove it from the list. I think she should instead include the specific information about the specific [redacted] resources on the counseling and coordination website.

Once these changes have been made, please send copies of the updated documents to irb@[redacted].edu for our records.

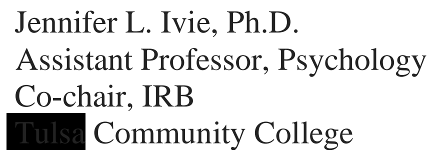
Additionally, reviewers provide additional feedback that doesn't require specific changes for approval, but rather for you to consider as a researcher. If you do many of the changes listed below, please send copies of updated documents as well.

- There is still some concern of coercion by using their instructors to invite them to participate in your study.
- Additionally, there is still some concern that the informed consent form you created for SHSU is too long and cumbersome for developmental reading students to possibly understand. And, the slimmed down version is missing

some information specific to the fact that you're looking at stigma and not just their experiences in taking reading courses.

Again, thank you for your application and good luck with your research endeavors.

Thank you,
Jennifer



Jennifer L. Ivie, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Psychology
Co-chair, IRB
Tulsa Community College

VITA

Education

Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX

Doctor of Education in Developmental Education Administration

Dissertation: The influence of stigma on help-seeking among developmental reading students.

Northeastern State University, Tahlequah, OK

Master of Education in Reading

Thesis: Biliteracy in Writing: A study of students who use their native language syntax to for English reading comprehension

Langston University, Langston, OK

Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education

Langston University, Langston, OK

Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Education

Tulsa Community College, Tulsa, OK

Associate of Arts

Professional Experience

Tulsa Community College, August 2009 – Present

Associate Professor of English Developmental Studies

Spring 2003 – August 2009, Adjunct Faculty

Tulsa Public Schools

(Independent School District #1), August 1997 – Sept. 2009

Certified Reading Specialist, August 2006 – September 2009

Public School Teacher, December 2005 – September 2009

Reading Interventionist (Para-teacher) August 2003 – December 2005

Professional Presentations

Harding, K. G. (2019 November). College English Expectations. Workshop presented at Tulsa Community College and Tribal Nations Achievement Summit. Tulsa, OK.

Harding, K. G. & Bankston, C. (2019 November). Building literacy capital within the developmental classroom. Demonstration presented at the meeting for the Oklahoma Association for Developmental Education, Tulsa, OK.

Harding, K. G. & Bankston, C. (2019 September). Building literacy capital beyond the developmental classroom. Demonstration presented at Tulsa Community College Professional Development Day. Tulsa, OK.

Harding, K. G. & Ivie, J. (2019 April). Minding the racial equity gap: We've got to take about race. Conversation facilitated at the Institute for Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. Tulsa, OK.

Harding, K. G. & France, K. (2018 February). Shhh... They're developmental education students. Paper presented at the meeting of the National Association for Developmental Education. National Harbor, MD.

Harding, K. G. Robison, V., & France, K. (2018 February). Believing in their voices: Faculty bring student voices to life using smart phones and a video app. Paper presented at the meeting of the National Association for Developmental Education. National Harbor, MD.

Harding, K. G., & Kirkpatrick, G. (2017 May). College English Expectations. Workshop presented at Tulsa Community College and Hispanic Foundation Achievement Summit. Tulsa, OK.

Harding, K. G., & Muse, S. (2017 February). College English Expectations. Workshop presented at Tulsa Community College and NAACP Achievement Summit. Tulsa, OK.

Coggins, L., France, K., Friske, J., Harding, K. G., Muse, D., Phillips, L., Robison, V., & Teel, S. C. (2017 March). When Life Gives You Mandates Make Lemonade. Paper presented

at the meeting of the National Association for Developmental Education. Oklahoma City, OK.

Harding, K. G. (2017 February). Nelson Denny Student Performance and Self-Perception. Paper presented at the meeting of the Southwest Association for Education Research. San Antonio, TX.

Coggins, L., France, K., Friske, J., Harding, K. G., Muse, D., Phillips, L., Robison, V., & Teel, S. C. (2016 November). Adult Learning Theory. Workshop presented at Tulsa Community College Professional Development Day. Tulsa, OK.

Coggins, L., France, K., Friske, J., Harding, K. G., Muse, D., Phillips, L., Robison, V., & Teel, S. C. (2016 October). Adult Learning Theory: What We Learned at the Kellogg Institute. Workshop presented at Tulsa Community College "Stayonference". Tulsa, OK.

Harding, K. G., Dickens, M. D. & Muse, S. (2016 February). College English Expectations. Workshop presented at Tulsa Community College and NAACP Achievement Summit. Tulsa, OK.

Harding, K. G., Dickens, M. D. & Muse, S. (2016 January). College English Expectations. Panel presentation presented at The Believe Conference. Tulsa, OK.

Harding, K. G. & Robison, V. (2015 March). Developmental Reading Re-Placement: A Retest Initiative. Poster session presented at the meeting of the National Association for Developmental Education. Greenville, SC.

Daily, K., Davis, V., Harding, K. G. & Robison, V. (2014 October). Developmental Reading Re-Placement: A Retest Initiative. Paper presented at the meeting of the Oklahoma Association for Developmental Education. Stillwater, OK.

Harding, K. G. (2014 November). Myths About Developmental Reading. Workshop presented at Tulsa Community College Day of Vision. Tulsa, OK.

Daily, K., Davis, V., Harding, K. G. & Robison, V. (2014 March). Two Colleges' Redesign Reading Placement. Paper presented at the North Texas Community College Consortium Spring Conference. Plano, TX.