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Faculty Perceptions of College Readiness: A Phenomenological Study at a Two-year College

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by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore how faculty at a two-year college experience college readiness in their classrooms. A phenomenological approach was used to understand the lived experiences of each college faculty participant. Data was gathered through six individual semi-structured interviews via Zoom. The participants were unlimited full-time faculty who teach entry-level coursework and were recruited via email from academic deans. All participants were assigned numbers for anonymity in the interviews, data analysis, and data descriptions. All research data was kept securely with password protection and/or only accessible to the researcher. This study uses Conley's Four Facets of College Readiness model (2007) as a theoretical framework. While this theory was a guide for the study, the analysis of the data was not limited by the framework. Findings of the study enlighten stakeholders of college readiness to the personal experiences of two-year faculty. Also included in the study are recommendations for further research.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The goal of this dissertation is to better understand how faculty perceive student college readiness at the two-year college level. There have been interventions in improving college readiness, however, there is a lack of agreement among stakeholders in college readiness of what is necessary to be successful. Decisions about college readiness often rely on quantitative data, such as test scores, to inform policies, programs, and approaches. First-hand data from the instructors who work with these students is lacking (Schrynemakers, 2019; Lawton, 2021; Alford, 2014; Harris et al., 2016, Conley, 2011). This research will qualitatively examine the perspective of college faculty at the two-year college level.

Background of the Study

College readiness has been a topic in education for quite some time since enrollment in colleges began to increase back in the mid-1800s. Legislation and political movements have played a large part not only in enrollment but over time have broadened access to those who may not have had educational opportunities in the past(Arendale, 2002). Federal agendas have created policies that are standardized based in hopes of creating college-ready students (Barnes et al., 2010). Many students feel that they will be prepared for college once they graduate high school. There have been many studies done on how well-prepared students feel they are and their perceptions of their readiness (Millar and Tanner, 2011; Farrell, 2009; Durbin 2021; Reed and Justice, 2014). However, college instructors do not always agree that they are prepared due to the lack of gaps that need to be closed. To be college-ready, some of the behaviors that contribute to college success include academic skills, academic knowledge, and support systems.

One way that many colleges measure readiness is by looking at test scores such as the SAT and ACT. According to the 2019 ACT College and Career Readiness report, “Readiness levels in English, reading, math, and science have all decreased since 2015, with English and math seeing the largest decline.” Thirty-seven percent of high school graduates meet at least three of four

benchmarks of college readiness set by the ACT standards (ACT, 2019). There is debate in education about how much test scores matter. Some colleges do not set any limitations or cut scores for admission. Research shows that grade point averages might be stronger indicators of college readiness than an assessment such as the ACT or SAT (Belfield and Crosta, 2014; Conley 2007). Many two-year colleges have placement exams, such as ACCUPLACER, to determine the readiness of college-level coursework for those who have not taken an exam like the ACT or SAT. If the assessment scores do not indicate the student is ready for college-level coursework, the student is placed into a remedial course(s). Students taking at least one remedial course at community colleges account for sixty-eight percent (Schrynemakers et al., 2019).

Test scores cannot be the only benchmark. Competencies in both academic skills and non-academic skills are needed. While math, English, reading, and writing are all important, the student's ability to be organized, adjust to new surroundings, set goals, and understand their strengths and weaknesses are all important in the higher education environment (Conley, 2005). Conley's facets of College Readiness include contextual skills and awareness, academic behaviors, key content, and key cognitive strategies.

Historically, there has been a substantial increase in college enrollment. In 1990, twenty-eight percent of 18- to 24-year-olds enrolled in postsecondary education as compared to the recent forty percent (McFarland et. al., 2019). Despite an increase in enrollment, according to Forbes (2021), less than fifty percent of undergraduate students graduate on time, and sixty percent earn a bachelor's degree after six years. At community colleges, this looks much worse with nearly twenty percent earning an award or certificate (Forbes, 2021). Completion rates are more difficult to measure at a two-year college where students may only attend with the intent of brushing up a skill or taking classes to transfer to another institution. Either way, students who enter without the skills necessary for success are contributors to these distressing statistics of completion. A study by Fevela et al., (2019) conducted on two-year college students from fall 2013 through spring 2017

shows that students with the highest probability of dropping out of a course included those who had an unsuccessful course, withdrew from a course, or had holds on their accounts. When entering college without core academic skills, it is assumed to contribute to retention rates. Two-thirds of community college students do not meet college readiness standards for math and English (Achieving the Dream, 2019). Retention and persistence are important topics in higher education. If we can discover what students need to be prepared for college, we could help reduce the number of students needing remedial coursework, which would ultimately increase college success rates.

There are many ways to look at college readiness and success factors. However, a national model for college readiness does not exist. Tierney and Duncheon (2015) suggest that without a clear description of college readiness, many students will not have a successful transition into higher learning. Meeting college admission standards does not mean that students will be able to perform college-level work (Cline et al., 2007). Understandably, high school students would leave high school feeling like they are prepared for college. When students enter higher education classrooms, instructors expect college-level work. Colleges have taken on the responsibility of remedial coursework, support structures, and college readiness approaches in an attempt to meet the needs of those students who are not entirely prepared.

The researcher was employed as a faculty member at the college of study during the duration of the research and I have practical experience in working with students entering higher education who have knowledge and context of the research subject. These experiences are both applicable and valuable. However, it could create a bias that may impact the research. I acknowledge these potential biases and acknowledge that gaining insight into other faculty perspectives helps to see from others what could be beneficial as a faculty. The faculty perspective can be beneficial for high school educators to understand the level of expectations and make adaptations in their classrooms. I have always been intrigued as to why a fair number of students in my classroom seem ill-prepared for college classes. I have taught both entry-level and program-

level coursework, in which I encountered varying levels of readiness. It is a personal frustration to spend extraneous time helping students with skill sets that would normally be expected at the college level. During an observation of a general education course in spring 2022, I witnessed that the instructor spent nearly thirty minutes instructing the class on how to submit assignments to the online learning platform in week seven of the class. Being able to utilize the online learning platform seemed to me to be a skill that would have been beneficial to learn prior to the classroom, such as during an orientation to college to prevent it from taking away time from content instruction and coursework. Collective perspectives of college faculty on how to adapt to varied levels of readiness would be useful in incorporating new strategies into my classroom.

Students name faculty support as vital to their success (Fevela et al., 2019). Therefore, understanding faculty perceptions can be helpful feedback to other faculty in finding classroom strategies. The college I am employed at, as well as other colleges, could benefit by working on readiness initiatives that would also presumably help retention and success rates of students. In addition, this research will add to the literature by giving a qualitative perspective on college readiness.

Theoretical Frameworks

College readiness, in this study, is based on the four facets as defined by Conley's 2007 research. These four facets are further described in Chapter Two The ideas brought forth by Conley's research overlap with Tinto's theory concerning student persistence and retention. Chapter Two will explore further how these theories relate to college readiness.

Tinto's Theory

One relevant theory to the research is Tinto's Theory of Institutional Departure. Tinto's theory associates three factors for reasons of student departure: academic difficulties, the inability of individuals to resolve their educational and occupational goals, and their failure to become or remain incorporated in the intellectual and social life of the institution. Given the state of the

pressure on the college system to increase retention, persistence, and completion, this is directly related to college readiness and the successful outcome of the students. Tinto's "Model of Institutional Departure" states that, “to persist, students need integration into formal (academic performance) and informal (faculty/staff interactions) academic systems and formal (extracurricular activities) and informal (peer-group interactions) social systems” (Tinto’s theory, 2015). Tinto’s model shows that student integration with both college and college culture is a strong predictor of success (Pleitz et al., 2015). According to Tinto, there are four main conditions to support retention: information/advice, support, involvement, and learning. Therefore, this theory can be applied to enhance the college and the faculty's contribution to retention.

Conley’s Facets of Readiness

The theoretical model used for this study is primarily Conley’s Facets of Readiness. A universal definition of college readiness does not exist, which contributes to the complexity of determining college readiness. For this reason, Conley created an operational definition of college readiness that states, “College readiness can be defined operationally as the level of preparation a student needs to enroll and succeed, without remediations, in a credit-bearing general education course at a postsecondary institution that offers a baccalaureate degree or transfer to a baccalaureate program” (Conley, 2011, p. 1). In a review of the literature on college readiness, it became evident that there is not a comprehensive approach to determining readiness. Determining college readiness cannot be isolated to just one item such as testing; it is multifaceted. This was why Conley developed the model of four facets and why this model was chosen for the study. The four facets that Conley determined are comprehensively important to college readiness include: key cognitive strategies, key content knowledge, academic behaviors, and contextual skills and awareness (Conley, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

While high schools feel they are preparing students for college, research shows that faculty feel differently. A study by Strauss (2013) found that eighty-nine percent of high school teachers identify their graduating students as college-ready, while only twenty-six percent of college faculty find entering freshmen are prepared for college-level work. Research has found that there has been a longitudinal decline in faculty perceptions of readiness (Schrnemakers et al., 2019). Fifty percent of the faculty respondents thought that there was a need for higher academic standards at both the secondary and post-secondary levels. It takes a significant amount of time out of the regular instructional plan to help students get to the level of expected readiness and competency when it comes to academic readiness. Lack of academic readiness causes stress for both the student and the faculty and can lead to students dropping the course due to being overwhelmed (Fevela, 2019).

The definition of readiness can be viewed and measured in different ways. Colleges use things such as placement tests, developmental education, and remedial education to determine readiness. High schools follow state standards, using benchmark testing for students during middle school and high school. There is a significant history of test scores being tied to admissions and college performance (Zwick, 2007). In the K-12 setting, these benchmarks are used to "grade" school and student performance (Just & Bruner, 2020). Research shows more of a correlation between grade point average (GPA) with college success than college preparedness exams such as the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) and the American College Testing exam (ACT) (Riley Bahr, et al., 2019). The ACT report from 2015 on College and Career Readiness stated in key findings that there is an opportunity for growth in meeting benchmarks

> While the percent meeting three or four ACT College Readiness Benchmarks went up slightly from thirty-nine percent to forty percent, the fact remains that fully thirty-one percent of the ACT-tested graduating class are not meeting any of the Benchmarks, which will make it difficult for them in their post–high school experiences (p. 3)." SAT data shows

that “in 2014, forty-three percent of high school graduates who took the SAT.

(CollegeBoard, p. 4)

If testing is the only indicator used in assessment by colleges to determine college readiness, there is a high number of students who are entering college underprepared. When such emphasis is placed on high schools to deliver high school performance benchmarks, an argument could be made that there is not enough time for other college readiness efforts and/or that the expectations of college instructors for college-level work are different than what is considered important in K-12 for college preparedness and success.

Testing is only one way to look at readiness. When students were asked about the components of college readiness, aside from academic skills, they list time management, the ability to apply oneself to a goal, and self-advocacy as important to success (Byrd & MacDonald, 2005). Even the ACT recognizes the need for skills in areas other than key content knowledge. ACT lists four domains as important to student success: academic skills, crosscutting capabilities (problem-solving and critical thinking,) behavioral skills, and educational navigation skills (National ACT, 2015). Colleges must address not only academic needs, such as remediation but also the non-academic concerns of students. For this reason, colleges have implemented programs such as first-year experience (FYE) to help students acclimate to the college environment, resources, and services such as learning resource centers and TRIO programs. The Federal TRIO Programs (TRIO) are Federal outreach and student services programs designed to identify and provide services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds.

There is a substantial need for colleges to address a gap in readiness from high school graduation to college. A large disconnect in the literature between readiness from the K-12 perspective and the college perspective exists. Currently, there is little congruency of goals regarding readiness or college-level expectations as well as high schools, high school students, and high school teachers feel as though students are graduating prepared for college. Faculty have

expressed concern over wanting more input regarding college readiness, yet their input is minimal at best (National Council of Teachers of English, 2014). This research will help address the gap in readiness by helping the college and faculty find solutions for incoming students to help them succeed. It will also address the need for an understanding of college-level expectations in high school academics and help to create a bridge between the differences in perspectives of readiness from high school to college.

Purpose of the Study

The primary goal of this qualitative study was to collect the faculty perspective of college readiness through semi-structured interviews. This provides college faculty, colleges, high schools, high school teachers, administrators, and other potential stakeholders with information that will be helpful to implement action to improve college readiness. With college faculty having little voice in decision-making regarding college readiness, this will add to the literature regarding the perspectives that would be useful in evaluating college readiness efforts at state and local levels. It will also help us understand the efforts made in getting students to a college-ready level. Adding to the current research from a faculty perspective is justified.

Research shows that high school stakeholders feel students are college-ready when they graduate high school (Khosraviyani et al., 2006, Strauss, 2013, National Council of Teachers of English, 2014). On average, more than forty percent of college students enter college needing remedial coursework (Khosraviyani et al., 2006). There is a lack of understanding why there is a disconnect of preparedness from high school to college and faculty have expressed concern that their input is not being utilized in education reforms and what decisions are being made in remedial reform (Schrynemakers et al., 2019). This study will address the lack of faculty perspective in research.

As a faculty member, the researcher has experienced a variety of levels of preparedness in my classroom. I have never been asked about college readiness by anyone, yet there are efforts

made at all colleges to address college readiness. This might be remedial work, student services, programming, etc. Legislators suspect that money tied to remedial education efforts is too much, but they have not talked to the people who teach college readiness courses (Flannery, 2014). Conley has contributed a significant amount of research in the subject matter of college readiness. In Conley's report for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in 2007, they argue that college readiness must have a comprehensive approach (p.1). Even the testing agency ACT acknowledges that college readiness is more than just a test score. Non-academic skills are also factors (National ACT, 2015). When it is acknowledged that a comprehensive approach is beneficial, why wouldn't the college faculty perspective be included in the understanding of college readiness? Quantitative data is useful in correlating exam scores to preparedness, but college faculty are the ones who see firsthand that some students in their classrooms are not college-ready. The input of faculty here is warranted. Alignment of curriculum is necessary for college readiness (Conley, 2018).

Due to the amount of research by Conley around college readiness, the researcher chose to use the comprehensive model of what they developed as the Four Facets of College Readiness as a framework. Conley was the founder, CEO, and one of several researchers for the Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC) for twelve years. Conley's model includes four areas both academic and non-academic related components to being college-ready which include key cognitive strategies, key content knowledge, academic behaviors, and contextual skills and awareness.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to gather insights through semi-structured interviews of entry-level college faculty and analyze the results to identify themes from their perspectives. This study seeks to answer the following research question and sub questions:

How do college faculty teaching entry-level courses describe and perceive student college readiness?

Sub questions:

What characteristics do college faculty feel contribute to prepared students?

What modifications do college faculty feel can be made to improve college readiness?

Research Design

The literature review in Chapter Two will provide the reader with numerous examples of how quantitative research methods have been used to address college readiness. What is missing from the research is the voice of the college faculty. One of the aims of this research was to bring forth this voice by utilizing qualitative research. "Qualitative research aims to address questions concerned with developing an understanding of the meaning and experience dimensions of humans' lives and social worlds. Central to good qualitative research is whether the research participants' subjective meanings, actions and social contexts, as understood by them, are illuminated" (Fossey et al., 2002, p. 717). The field of education places a significant amount of value on quantitative data; however, the value of qualitative data should not be ignored. Qualitative data provides context and understanding of a phenomenon.

A phenomenological approach was used to conduct semi-structured interviews to capture the perspectives of college faculty. The reality as witnessed by the interviewees regarding college readiness will generate unique perspectives as well as aid in the creation of themes. The theoretical perspective most often associated with qualitative researchers is phenomenology (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This allows faculty to share their lived experiences with student readiness and preparedness in their classrooms, which has some subjectivity based on their individual perspectives.

Information was obtained through semi-structured interviews using Zoom with seven faculty from a mid-sized, public two-year college of similar course difficulty, such as one-thousand-level or entry-level courses. A purposive sample of instructors who teach entry-level classes will be used. First-year students typically take entry-level classes that are most relevant to their program of study, therefore faculty from a variety of subject matters and programs will be

recruited. The interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes and were conducted and recorded using Zoom, which assisted with transcribing the responses. Transcription was sent to the interviewee to review for accuracy. During the interview, the researcher asked participants specific questions guided by the research questions and their perceptions of readiness. Follow-up interviews were a possibility, but not necessary. If needed, they would have been conducted via Zoom and transcribed. Interviews were coded, and emergent themes were identified. Significant statements will be grouped into meaning units, and a representation of the data will be formed through "what happened," "how the phenomenon was experienced," and the "essence" of the lived experiences of faculty (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 199).

Assumptions and Limitations

The participants chosen for the semi-structured interviews were college faculty of one public two-year college in the Midwest United States. The college location of the study is in an urban suburb of a major city, yet also near a rural demographic. There are unique differences between college campuses and the data collected in this study does not necessarily portray the story of all college faculty. While this might not tell the exact story of other colleges, there is still information to be gained and deserving of application regarding the subject matter of college readiness.

To recruit participants, the researcher utilized the academic deans at the college. Once the interview participants were selected, times were arranged to conduct the interviews via the online conferencing platform, Zoom. Potential concerns with the Zoom platform included potential technology issues, or a possible uncomfortableness or more comfortableness with using this technology, it was chosen because of the ease of accessibility to participants, the ability to record, and the ability to transcribe. It is assumed that participants were willing to tell the truth when asked questions, however, the subject matter does have the potential for faculty to possibly not be willing to completely disclose an answer due to the feeling of judgment by administration, myself,

students, or other faculty. It also is assumed that faculty will have concerns to bring up regarding college readiness. It would be highly unlikely that all interviewees believe their students are prepared for their classrooms. My personal bias and experiences as a college faculty needed to be kept in check to allow the research to conduct itself and for the faculty being interviewed to tell their story without any influence of bias or opinion in the interview or the writing.

Qualitative researchers attempt to get as close to their phenomena as possible. As Creswell & Poth (2018) state, "whether we are aware of it or not, we always bring certain beliefs and philosophical assumptions to our research. (p.15)." The researcher has their own lived experience as a faculty and it is necessary for a qualitative study to recognize my assumptions and beliefs and how they affect my research. My motivation for this subject matter is two-fold. First, I am curious about how my perspectives compare with other faculty members. Second, I am passionate about developing a deeper understanding of college readiness. A qualitative researcher may choose to incorporate their assumptions and beliefs into their study; however, I have chosen to let the interview data speak for itself and not let my assumptions guide any of the research. Ontologically, the researcher attempted to determine the reality through the perspectives of the research subjects.

Definition of Terms

College readiness is a difficult and complex term to which there is no universal definition. For this research, Conley's operational definition of college readiness will be used, which is included below. College readiness may also be referred to as "academic preparedness" "college-ready" "college preparedness" and "under-preparedness." Concerning college readiness, it can be viewed as related to "college success" in that if students are college-ready, they will have a successful completion of college. Traditionally, colleges measure success by pace of progression to completion, retention, award achievement, and post-graduation job placement (Blankstein & Wolfe-Esenbers, 2020). Other terms are defined as they appear in the study as a universal definition

may not be available. Also, in legislation, the term "college and career readiness" has been coined together. This study will focus only on college readiness.

"Remedial education" and "developmental education" are commonly used in the same context. Below is the definition of remedial education which is synonymous with developmental education. The definition of remedial education is also complex as individual colleges determine what remedial coursework and placement looks like for them (Jimenez et al., 2016).

College Readiness: "the level of preparation a student needs to enroll and succeed without remediation in a credit-bearing general education course at a postsecondary institution that offers a baccalaureate degree or transfer to a baccalaureate program" (Conley, 2011, p.11).

K-12 education: Kindergarten through twelfth grade education.

Postsecondary institution: "Post-secondary education is also known as "higher education," "third-level education," or "tertiary education." This can refer to the following options in which education is gained after obtaining a GED (General Education Development) test, or high school graduation: Community College, University, Diploma, or Non-degree seeking students (Summers, 2019).

Secondary education: "Secondary education is more commonly known as high school, but it can also refer to people who have taken their GED (General Education Development) tests or any equivalent around the world. (Summers, 2019)."

Limitations

The college used in this research is a two-year institution in which it offers diplomas, certificates, technical programming, and two-year degrees. The college does have affiliations with four-year institutions; however, this study only examined faculty perceptions from this one institution and may not represent the same factors as a four-year institution.

Summary

This chapter included background of the study, the theoretical framework, the problem with college readiness, and the reason for conducting the study. There is a lack of faculty perspective

being used in the big picture of college readiness and faculty are asking for their input to be heard in college readiness decisions. Included were possible limitations and assumptions and biases that I bring to the study.

The next chapter will further review the literature relevant to college readiness. The literature will review the history of college readiness and how there has been an increased demand for readiness efforts, yet an agreement on how to define or determine readiness has not been established. The reader will recognize the different efforts being made to get students college-ready, as well as a disconnect in students being college-ready from both a K-12 and college faculty perspective. Conley's model used for a theoretical framework will be further examined.

Chapter 3 will include the methodology used for the study for both data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 will explain the results of the data analysis and findings of the qualitative interviews, and Chapter 5 will include a summary of the results, discussion, and conclusion of the study. It will also include suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

College academic readiness has been an ongoing concern in postsecondary institutions. There is plentiful research on college readiness and an overall agreement in research that it is important, however, there is less agreement on what college readiness entails and how to measure it (Conley, 2010). While high school faculty and administrators believe they are academically preparing students for college, research indicates that college faculty think differently. A study by Strauss (2013) found that eighty-nine percent of high school teachers identify their graduating students as college-ready, while only twenty-six percent of college instructors find entering freshmen are prepared for college-level work. Schrynemakers et al. (2019) found a longitudinal decline in faculty observations of readiness. Fifty percent of the faculty respondents thought there is a need for higher academic standards at both the secondary and post-secondary level. Understanding faculty perceptions can add to the literature on college academic readiness, as well as provide insight for helping students be successful. Faculty perceptions can provide feedback to the college to help better adapt course offerings and programming that will contribute to student success in both K-12 and higher education settings.

This chapter includes search methods used for relevant literature, theoretical orientation, literature review, synthesis of research findings, critique of previous research, and a summary. The body of the literature review will cover the evolution of college readiness, the assessment of readiness, and commonalities in findings. A synthesis will explain that college readiness is complex, there is little research on faculty perspective, and the approaches colleges are using to support student success.

Methods of Searching

The use of the terms *college readiness* and *college preparedness* were used to start a basic search. Searching under the term *college readiness* provides more relevant results, however, sometimes the terms *readiness* and *preparedness* are interchangeable. There were very few results

when searching *faculty perceptions* of readiness. When comparing the results of *faculty perceptions* and *student perceptions*, student perceptions yielded more results. All of these terms were initially through the Minnesota State University Moorhead's (MSUM) Livingston Lord Library. As part of the library search, databases included Elton B. Stephens Company (EBSCO), Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), and Google Scholar. The researcher created a database that included peer-reviewed articles on college readiness and college readiness perceptions, books on college readiness and theoretical frameworks as well as a definition of college readiness. Once a source was cited in several articles, the researcher would seek out that reference and others to build the literature database. Any articles that were not available for online access were requested through the Livingston Lord Library for download or purchased, such as "College Knowledge," and "College and Career Ready," by David T. Conley through Amazon.

Theoretical Orientations of the Study

Conley's Four Facets

The purpose of this study derived from the researcher's experiences as a technical college faculty member. While there has been plenty of research done on college readiness, faculty perceptions of readiness are important to the database of the phenomenon. Conley researched expectations of college readiness concerning entry-level coursework and faculty performance expectations for more than a decade. During this time, they developed a comprehensive model of what students must develop or possess to be college-ready. The theoretical orientation followed for this study is Conley's "Facets of Readiness: Contextual Skills & Awareness, Academic Behaviors, Key Content, and Key Cognitive Strategies" (Conley, 2007). This model will be used as a comprehensive view of what it means to be college-ready. Figure 1 illustrates the model in which a description of each dimension will follow.

Figure 1

Conley's Four Facets of College Readiness

Note. Conley, 2007

These four components must all be present and interact. These four components will be described below. For example, if the student is not strong in key content, that will influence the component of contextual skills and awareness. Conley et al., (2011) provide the following operational definition of college readiness:

> The level of preparation a student needs to enroll and succeed – without remediation – in a credit-bearing general education course at a postsecondary institution that offers a baccalaureate degree or transfer to a baccalaureate program. Succeed is defined as completing entry-level courses with a level of understanding and proficiency that makes it possible for the student to be eligible to take the next course in the sequence or the next level course in the subject area (p. 1).

Conley's Facet of Key Cognitive Strategies

As part of Conley's four facets model, key cognitive Strategies are the behaviors that a prepared college student needs to learn, understand, retain, use, and apply content from a range of disciplines (Conley, 2007). The term "key cognitive strategies" refers to the habitual use of critical thinking to make strategic decisions in learning situations. Included in key cognitive strategies are problem formulation, research, interpretation, communication, and precision and accuracy.

Problem Formulation.

Problem Formulation is the process of using method-based approaches to solve complex problems. The student can develop and apply strategies and learn which strategy will provide the best result with repetition and practice.

Research.

Research is when the student can find applicable resources by collecting information from a variety of sources. Effective research requires an ability to determine credibility of the sources, consider ethical responsibility through collection and use of information, and apply the findings in solving problems or bringing forth an issue.

Interpretation.

Interpretation is when the student can analyze information to conclude strengths, weaknesses, similarities, and differences, and present this in an oral or written summary.

Communication.

Communication is when the student can provide a reasonable argument, use reason, defend or challenge a point or conclusion, and accept and respond to criticism of their argument.

Precision and Accuracy.

Precision and Accuracy are when the student is appropriate in choosing the precision necessary to come to a correct conclusion by applying content knowledge and appropriate use of the data, problem or thesis that is given.

Conley's Facet of Key Content Knowledge

Another facet of Conley's model is key content knowledge. Key cognitive strategy and key content knowledge are considered companions in successful academic preparation for college. Achieving key content knowledge includes "processing information so that its structure becomes more apparent and then applying that information by means of the key cognitive strategies"

(Conley, 2010 p. 35). The content knowledge is fundamental in order to comprehend the major academic subject areas such as reading and writing, mathematics, science, social sciences, world languages and the arts. Once students enter college, a higher level of skill is expected in these content areas.

Reading and Writing.

Reading requires a larger amount of material and many types of formats. Writing is used in almost every college course and is expected to be clear use, the correct style, and mostly free from errors in grammar, spelling, and usage. English requires already coming in with a foundational knowledge of reading comprehension, writing, and editing, researching, analysis, critique, and connection. Knowing how to read and dissect the content and knowing what the important information is to pull out of the reading, such as highlighted areas of key content is a prerequisite skill.

Mathematics and Sciences.

Students who are college-ready in math can conceptualize and figure out a problem without defaulting to a calculator. They can solve a problem and then interpret it back into a context, which requires coming to college with an understanding of mathematical concepts in a way that is more than just being exposed to the ideas of concepts and techniques. Science in college teaches students to think like a scientist; meaning evidence is used to hypothesize, conclude, challenge, and interpret. Using models and systems, students in college-level science courses will make sense of their study and apply it also in a laboratory setting. Social sciences are common entry-level college courses such as psychology, sociology, history, humanities, or economics to name some. Scientific methods that these courses have in common include the use of interpretation, evaluation of information, and conflicting claims. Theories and concepts are used to structure the details and think like a social scientist.

World Languages and the Arts.

World Languages is not simply about memorization, it is about learning the culture, and how to apply the context in a holistic way. The arts require an artistic vision in which the student can understand their role as an instrument of expression and make appropriate decisions on creation and performance of their art. For example: choosing the appropriate venue and display of a creation.

Conley's Facet of Academic Behaviors

Conley's four facets model includes academic behaviors which are necessary for academic success. Academic behaviors that stem from self-awareness, self-monitoring, and self-control are independent of a key cognitive strategy because they are not relative to a specific content area. Time management, prioritization of tasks, preparing for an exam, taking notes, using resources, communicating with teachers and organization fall into the overarching component of academic behaviors. Being able to assess one's current understanding of a subject matter and know what needs to be done in order to improve and apply strategies are part of self-monitoring. Once the level of knowledge is established, a college-ready student must be able to apply study skills in combination with the other three components of Conley's model.

Conley's Facet of Contextual Skills and Awareness

Lastly, Conley's model includes contextual skills and awareness, which refer to understanding how to function in the college setting, system, and culture. Knowing how to advocate for oneself and navigate resources is important to success. All of the pieces involved in navigating college can become overwhelming and confusing. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the admissions process, financial aid, and interact with many different backgrounds of people. Students enter college with a range of knowledge on how to navigate the processes. Those with little preparation may have added stresses of this learning curve in addition to being academically successful in their classes.

Phenomenology

This study used a phenomenological approach. According to Creswell and Poth (2018) "A phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals and their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 276). Regarding methodology, the authors also posit, that the methodology is "inductive, emerging, and shaped by the researcher's experience in collecting and analyzing data" (p. 21). The phenomenon in this study is college readiness. The researcher was focused on the experiences of community college faculty and how they perceive their students being college-ready. This was achieved by conducting semi-structured interviews of technical college faculty that teach entry-level courses. An ontological assumption was made while conducting the research in that the reality of the participants may be seen in different ways. The realities of the participants developed into themes in the findings. Moustakas (1994) explains that phenomenology reports how the participants view their experiences differently.

It is important that the researcher acknowledged the positionality of the research topic. This is known as the axiological assumption in qualitative research. The researcher admits that having their own experiences as a college faculty could be considered a bias. The experiences of the researcher were put aside to allow the research to tell the story of the phenomenon. The methodology used to collect and analyze the data will be further explained in chapter three. The researcher also is aware that their social position of being an educated white female, and beliefs professionally and politically are present in the role of conducting research.

History of Higher Education

The demand for the idea of a college-ready student can be associated with the growth and history of higher education. As enrollment increases, the number of students who might need support or lack certain skills increases. Students who enroll in college, no matter the timeframe, have a desire to reach a goal and be successful. To provide context of what college readiness is

today, a brief history of college readiness is provided. By understanding the history, one can understand what has influenced college readiness over time.

In 1870, under two percent of the college-aged population attended college in comparison to today in which college enrollment statistics show that over sixty percent of high school graduates are enrolling in college in 2023 (Hanson, 2023). Before the nineteenth century, college was available to a small proportion of people and considered to be a benefit of the elite (Drury, 2003) During the nineteenth century, more Americans gained access to college because of the passing of the Morrill Land Grant Acts of 1890 and 1892. Between the years 1800 and 1897, the number of higher education institutions went from 23 to 821 (Worldwide Learn, 2023). This act allowed students to take more non-theology-based educational programming.

Morrill Land Acts

The Morrill Land Acts had an agricultural influence that allowed people such as farmers to become educated to contribute to the growth of the country (Duemer, 2007). College access was increasing, as well as an expansion in course offerings. While the demand had been placed on agriculture and science due to the needs of the economy, other subjects grew to include social sciences, applied sciences, and professional training (Worldwide Learn, 2023). During this time frame, academic support services were limited to the privileged and the concept of college readiness was not a higher education topic; their primary focus was expanding access (Arendale, Mainstreamed academic assistance and enrichment for all students: The historical origins of Learning Assistance Centers, 2004). There also was not as much of a focus on obtaining a degree as there is today. In the early 1900's, the graduation rate was around ten to thirty percent. The goal of attending college during that time was not necessarily to obtain a degree, it was more than likely to obtain a skill (ProCon, 2023).

G.I. Bill

After World War II, another expansion in the college population came when the G.I. Bill was introduced in 1944. Those in the military now had an affordable college option that was more accessible because of the support of veterans getting an education, and the barrier of cost being lessened. This increased the number of college students from 1.5 million in 1940 to 2.7 million in 1950 (Worldwide Learn, 2023). The G.I. Bill contributed to the idea of higher education being a contributor to achieving the American Dream. In addition to the G.I. Bill, the federal government published the Truman Committee Report in 1948 in which a push for college education was made. The report addressed barriers based on economic fortune, race, sex, and religion, which resulted in another increase in college enrollment. While the Commission estimated that college enrollment would double by 1960, enrollment numbers met this mark by 1964 (Gilbert, 2010).

Civil Rights Act and the Higher Education Act

In 1965 the Civil Rights Act and the Higher Education Act also helped Americans to have more access to college education. In the 1947 Commission Report, a push for a broader participation of college education was made. During this time, the community college was also introduced (Gilbert, 2010). Having “universal access” to higher education in the report, reinforced the Civil Rights Act and the Higher Education Act to increase college enrollment of underrepresented populations as well as helping to remove barriers of low-income students (Gilbert, 2010).

Additional History

Changes in higher education can historically be associated with social change, legislation, and times of war (Arendale, Mainstreamed academic assistance and enrichment for all students: The historical origins of Learning Assistance Centers, 2004). During these times, colleges needed to make adjustments to support the changing student. The literature reviewed regarding this area of college readiness suggests that preparatory efforts, now more commonly known as developmental

education, have been in place throughout the history of higher education in the United States. Before public education was common, students entered college very underprepared (Arendale, 2002).

Once the increase in enrollment started after the Morrill Lands Acts, there was also an accelerated development of academic bridge programs such as college academic preparatory departments. Strategies used by colleges to increase the success of their students started with tutoring and have more recently been termed developmental education. Developmental education didn't gain attention until the 1940's. In the 1970's, a model known as the "Learning Assistance Center" became the approach used to best achieve college student success. A Learning Assistance Center broadened access to student services from just those who were considered underprepared to all students. Another difference in the LAC compared to previous remediation included adding human development concepts, such as the psychology of learning, educational technology, and corporate management into an operational rationale specific to higher education that is also included in concepts of Conley's model (Arendale, 2002, 2011).

Assessment

The assessment of college readiness can be tied to placement and test scores. There is a strong history of a correlation between test scores and success in college courses (Zwick, 2007). After assessment, nearly half of all college students are placed into remedial coursework, which provides concern about how many students are underprepared (Flory & Sun, 2017).

Remedial Coursework

When looking at national statistics the National Center for Education Statistics reported in their most recent report from 2015-2016 that forty-three percent have enrolled in at least one remedial course (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). In community colleges, sixty-eight percent of students needed at least one remedial course, which causes concern about the level of preparedness for postsecondary stakeholders including faculty (Schrynemakers I. , Lane, Beckford,

& Kim, 2019) “Complete College America (CCA) recently reported remediation rates at two- and four-year postsecondary institutions in 33 states. For students enrolling in higher education directly out of high school, the remediation rate was 53.8 percent at two-year institutions for the 27 states providing data, and 20.4 percent at four-year institutions for the 25 data-providing states” (Education Commission of the States, 2012, p. 1)

Despite how remedial coursework is common to colleges, there is debate on whether it is effective (Kurleander and Howell, 2012). In a study of three community colleges in New York, students who were placed at a remedial level and went straight into credit-bearing courses did better and were more likely to persist (Schrynemakers I. , Lane, Beckford, & Kim, 2019). However, Calcagno and Long (2008) also found that remedial math courses did not have any positive impact on course completion, or degree completion. Research reviewed shows a conflict in whether or not remediation works. Despite high expectations to attend college, the reality is that many students simply aren’t prepared to be successful after their high school graduation. When students are placed in remedial courses it increases the time to degree attainment and decreases the likeliness of completion. On-time completion rates for students who take remedial courses are consistently less than 10 percent (Jimenez et al., 2016). The trend of remedial coursework has shifted recently by allowing students to opt out of taking a remedial course, or by putting them into college-level coursework from the start.

More recently cut-off scores were evaluated and found that remedial courses functioned differently depending on the students’ level of preparedness. Using a different data analysis, Bettinger and Long (2009) looked at two-year and four-year colleges and found that students who took remedial coursework had increased persistence in comparison to those similarly prepared who did not have to take remedial courses.

Accountability Systems

In another attempt to address a lack of student postsecondary readiness, 30 states have designed accountability systems that include at least one measure of college and career readiness, including exams or coursework. However, states vary considerably in the specific measures used and in the way performance on these measures is assessed (Martin et al., 2016). Camara's study (2013) highlights how assessment scores can predict college readiness. More recent research indicates that some high school assessments may be in alignment with college admissions, however, there has also been evidence of misalignment in college outcomes (Fina et al., 2018). If colleges strictly use testing to determine readiness, this could lead to a misunderstanding of what is needed to remain in college and be successful.

General education classes are sometimes used as prerequisites to coursework. The failure rate in these classes can sometimes be high. It's hard to argue whether this is due to teaching, study habits, content knowledge, or other reasons.

Types of Assessment

ACT and SAT

One major source of assessment used to determine readiness is the American College Testing Exam, ACT. Key content knowledge in the core subject matters is important to college readiness (Conley, 2007). The 2019 ACT Report of College and Career Readiness states that readiness in English, math, reading, and science has declined since 2015 (ACT, Inc., 2019). 2015, The National Assessment of Educational Progress reported that thirty-seven percent met college-ready standards in math and reading, yet eighty-three percent graduated high school, and sixty-nine percent entered college (Nation's Report Card, n.d.). With a fair number of students testing low in core subjects, it is questionable whether the validity of test scores in high school supports readiness for college (Welch & Dunbar, 2011) (Theaker & Johnson, 2012).

History in assessment is examined in this study back to when access for veterans increased after World War II, the Scholastic Assessment Test, SAT exam was developed based on the army IQ test in 1926. The SAT exam was established to measure aptitude. In 1959, the ACT was developed to assess a student's knowledge rather than aptitude. The assessment in the ACT was meant to measure high school level competency and a more accurate assessment of college academic readiness, in turn gaining more popularity of use than the SAT (Carlton, 2022).

ACCUPLACER

Entrance placement tests, such as the ACCUPLACER, are also currently used by colleges. Placement testing in itself if complex. The ACCUPLACER was designed over thirty years ago to test incoming college students. It was developed to align with state college readiness standards and is similar to the SAT in content.

The content of the exam has been evaluated based on research and evidence from the CollegeBoard of what matters most for college success (CollegeBoard, n.d.). According to the CollegeBoard website, ACCUPLACER is a tool for colleges to use in order to assess student readiness for introductory credit-bearing courses and make reliable placement decisions. If a writing sample is used as a placement test requirement, who is best to assess the writing besides the faculty that teach those classes? Belfield and Crosta (2012) have shown that standardized placement tests like ACCUPLACER have "severe error rates," misplacing approximately 3 out of every 10 students. In a recommendations section of the 2019 ACT report, trends demonstrate that students with high levels of academic preparation are maintaining readiness, while those with low levels of academic preparation are falling behind (ACT, Inc., 2019).

NAEP

The way K-12 schools are assessed has also changed over time as test scores and benchmarks have become significant. In a 2003 report titled *Mixed Messages* (Conley 2003), it was found that many of these tests may assess high school academic skills, but do not align with

postsecondary knowledge. Since the late 1960's, the National Center for Education Statistics of the U.S. Department of Education, under the policy direction of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has tested students in grades four, eight, and 12 to measure knowledge and skills. However, this is only used to compare to other schools in the nation and started with volunteer participation. In addition to comparison to other schools, the goal of tracking changes in achievement of fourth, eighth, and 12th-grade students over time in mathematics, reading, writing, science, and in selected content areas was added by the NAEP in 1988 (Kessinger, 2011).

GPA

Another factor in college readiness in relation to K-12 preparation is GPA. One common way of determining readiness is by analyzing high school transcripts which assess course titles, perceived level of challenge, the number of units toward graduation, patterns in course registrations, and grades received (Conley, 2007). In a study using a decision tree method that was applied to high school and college transcripts to identify high school achievement and predict college performance in entry-level math and English courses, GPA was found to be the most consistent predictor. GPA was a better predictor than other factors in Belfield and Crosta's (2012) study on college placement exams. Students' college GPAs are approximately 0.6 units below their high school GPAs.

NCLB

In 1989, President George W. Bush implemented assessment in schools based on performance, named America 2000. This placed emphasis on meeting benchmarks, which were assessed in grade levels 4, 8 and 12, in order to be prepared to either enter the workforce or attend postsecondary education (Kessinger, 2011). There became more focus yet on assessment in the Bill Clinton Administration and in 2002 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was introduced. This increased accountability in K12 schools on "basic skills." NCLB was faced with a lot of criticism in the post-

secondary environment because they were seeing fewer students coming in with critical thinking skills and it was attributed to too much focus on basic skills. In an interview conducted by George Lorenzo of Workplace Monitor, the interviewee stated that postsecondary programs complained that students were not prepared with this set of standards and NCLB ended in 2015 (Lorenzo, 2021).

Common Core Standards

The next important development was the Common Core Standards, which started emerging in 2007. The focus of Common Core Standards was to have college and career-prepared students. It was faced with criticism that it would lower standards, however, the common core standards state that "no state should lower its standards." The goal of Common Core was to help alleviate remediation for students entering college (Porter et al., 2011). In fact, the standards stated: "The standards aim to align instruction with this framework so that many more students than at present can meet requirements of college and career readiness (Porter et al., 2011)." Initially, 46 states adopted Common Core Standards. As of May 2023, 40 are participating. Those that do not have either never adopted, repealed or partially adopted (Common Core States, 2023).

Louisiana's Model for Career and College Readiness

In 2010, a push for career readiness was added to college readiness. The State of Louisiana created a model for career and college readiness, and other states began creating similar models. The draft framework of Louisiana's plan is centered on five challenges that Louisiana students experience in significant numbers.

The framework document further describes how the planning process will address each challenge; however, the five pillars are: (1) Evidence of the challenge provides data to illustrate the challenge that Louisiana students and schools are facing. (2) Current efforts outline the initiatives already in place within each challenge area that will provide a foundation for the state plan in the challenge areas. (3) Impact measures are qualitative and quantitative identifiers that indicate

schools are on track to successfully resolve critical issues. During the planning process, school systems will consider which impact measures to achieve based on past results. (4) Long-term indicators are quantitative measurements of student learning, such as performance on assessments, graduation rates, college credit, or workplace credentials. These indicators comprise the bulk of the state's school rating and accountability system. (5) State support depicts specific opportunities and resources (Louisiana Department of Education, n.d.).

ESSA

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which was signed into law on December 10, 2015. It "requires that all students in America be taught to high academic standards that will prepare them to succeed in college and careers." (Perkins Collaborative Research Network, 2015). ESSA allowed more flexibility for states (Flory & Sun, 2017). Many states adopted Common Core to meet the requirements of ESSA.

In an empirical study by Fina et al. (2018), the progression of alignment of benchmarks which include Common Core and ESSA to assessments for college readiness can serve as a predictor of success (Fina et al., 2018). In origination, ESSA had six categories: (1) long-term goals; (2) consultation and performance management; (3) academic assessments; (4) accountability, support, and improvement for schools; (5) supporting excellent educators; and (6) supporting all students (Hackmann et al., 2019). ESSA originated under the Obama administration and was revised during the Trump administration. The original contained references to college and career readiness (CCR) that included academic standards in relation to college, postsecondary transitions, and career and technical education. The large pieces of the college and career readiness components of the plan were eliminated in the revised version. While college and career readiness were still a part of both versions, it was never a requirement for any emphasis in each state's plan.

In an analytical study of 52 plans from 50 states, Hackman et al., (2019,) found that how college and career readiness was implemented varied greatly from some having large sections of

college and career readiness to some that had none. In the analysis, it was concluded that very few state plans contained a vision for education that included CCR and described how they would leverage ESSA resources to assist them with achieving CCR visions in their K-12 educational systems. There was little consensus on the descriptions or goals of CCR. As a result of the change in ESSA by the Trump administration to remove some aspects of CCR, in 2018, the "Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act" (Perkins V) was signed into law by President Trump on July 31, 2018. This bipartisan measure reauthorized the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (Perkins IV) and continued Congress' commitment to providing nearly $1.3 billion annually for career and technical education (CTE) programs for our nation's youth and adults (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

Faculty Input on Assessment

The ability to determine whether a student is college-ready is difficult and complex with many factors. Once a student has graduated high school, it is up to the college in which the student attends to determine what coursework is appropriate. There is no standard definition of remedial coursework or common criteria set, therefore, colleges are making individual decisions on whether their students are ready and it is challenging to make a comparison of remediation as a whole (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). A newer trend in higher education is that too much time is spent on remedial coursework and some colleges are reducing the amount or even eliminating developmental courses (Schrynemakers et al., 2019). The existence of open-access institutions is questioned with some of these education reforms. Open access institutions, also referred to as open admissions, are institutions that have an unselective and non-competitive admissions process in which the only requirement is that students have a GED or high school diploma. How does a college respond? (National Council of Teachers of English, 2014). Regardless of the amount of remedial work that is taken, students are placed into college classrooms and faculty are responsible for teaching the course content. There is little research to contribute to faculty perceptions of

college readiness, yet they are the ones giving college-level work and assessments in the classroom. There has been a presence from higher education faculty expressing that they do not have input on remedial coursework and education reform (Daugherty, 2018) (Bradburn & Townsend, 2014).

When changes in education reform happen, faculty are often expected to make changes such as adapting curriculum and redesigning programming, which takes time and are typically done without compensation. Faculty input has been excluded or had minimal representation in federal, state, and local policy reforms (National Council of Teachers of English, 2014). One concern of college faculty is that the historical changes in legislation that relate to assessment benchmarks have placed a focus on "teaching to the test" rather than learning how to learn (Just & Bruner, 2020). In Conley's model of college readiness, there is much more to being successful in college than passing exams. While there has been research that states the concern of faculty having input in higher education decision making, there has been little research to understand what those faculty perceptions are (Bradburn & Townsend, 2014). In addition to no universal definition of remedial education, there is also no one common definition of college readiness. It has been left up to interpretation of so many different stakeholders that it becomes complex when using it for such important decisions that happen around higher education, especially reforms.

Components of College Readiness

Definition

College readiness is a term that is hard to define. A college degree is important for economic prosperity and is a requirement for many careers (Kuraender et al., 2019). Obtaining a college education is generally accepted as both a goal and value among students today. By eighth grade, over 80% of students indicate that they will earn at least a college degree and nearly half also expect to earn a graduate or professional degree (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000; Noeth & Wimberly, 2002; Schneider & Stevenson, 1999; U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Having increased enrollment and a projection of that to continue, there is an increased amount of pressure

for states to provide a definition for college readiness. This pressure comes from the educational reforms that have been discussed above.

When attempting to define college readiness, it is important to include both academic and non-academic skills. Non-academic skills have been shown to be related to college success (Allen et al., 2009). Many aspects have been brought together that involve components such as academic skills, content knowledge, and cognitive strategies (Convertino & Graboski-Bauer, 2018). The ACT reports on college readiness also suggest that college readiness is not strictly found in a test score (ACT, Inc., 2019) (National ACT, 2015). In March 2016, the midwestern state of Minnesota Department of Education brought together stakeholders in career and college readiness to reach the following well-rounded and holistic vision of college readiness: "A sufficiently prepared student is one who has the knowledge, skills, mindset, and experiences in the academic, workplace, and personal/social domains to keep learning and, beyond secondary school, to successfully navigate toward and adapt to an economically viable career. (Minnesota Department of Education, n.d.)"

The definition given by the Minnesota Department of Education and even Conley's more recent research include career readiness along with college readiness because it is associated with legislation goals that have grouped career readiness with college readiness (Conley, 2012, Conley, 2010). This further complicates the definition. This study will focus only on the college aspect of readiness.

One of the more widely used, comprehensive definitions of readiness comes from Conley, who prepared a definition of college readiness for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in 2007. Conley (2007) created an operational definition as: "the level of preparation a student needs to enroll and succeed – without remediation – in a credit-bearing general education course at a postsecondary institution that offers a baccalaureate degree or transfer to a baccalaureate program" (p. 5). If students succeed according to this definition, they should be able to understand college course expectations, cope with the content, and know the key intellectual lessons of the course.

They should also have an understanding of the college culture, and norms and have the mindset to make all of these happen (Conley, 2011).

Assessment

Previous research has similar categories of assessing college readiness. Similar themes in assessment include writing and reading skills, mathematic skills, organizational skills, time management, and self-advocacy. In a study by Convertino and Graboski-Bauer (2018), students were asked about what helped prepare them for college. Respondents answered solid writing skills, being given a workload similar to a college workload, appropriate rigor, organization, note-taking skills, time-management skills, and self-motivation.

Factors

In an executive summary produced by Policy Analysis for California Education, 2019, four factors were determined the most important for college education attainment. They include aspirations and beliefs, academic preparation, knowledge and information, and fortitude and resilience. A belief in success comes from a college-going culture, positive role models, and practices that encourage growth. Academic preparation might be affected by course choices and curricular offerings. Knowledge and information are important to persist, as well as fortitude and resilience.

Similarly, Byrd and MacDonald (2005) studied the perception of college readiness in first-generation college students. In this study, it was found that academic skills, time-management, the ability to apply oneself to a goal, and self-advocacy were the strongest themes. Participants responded that necessary academic skills included writing, reading, math, technology, and study skills. Reading and writing skills were the strongest responses to being most necessary.

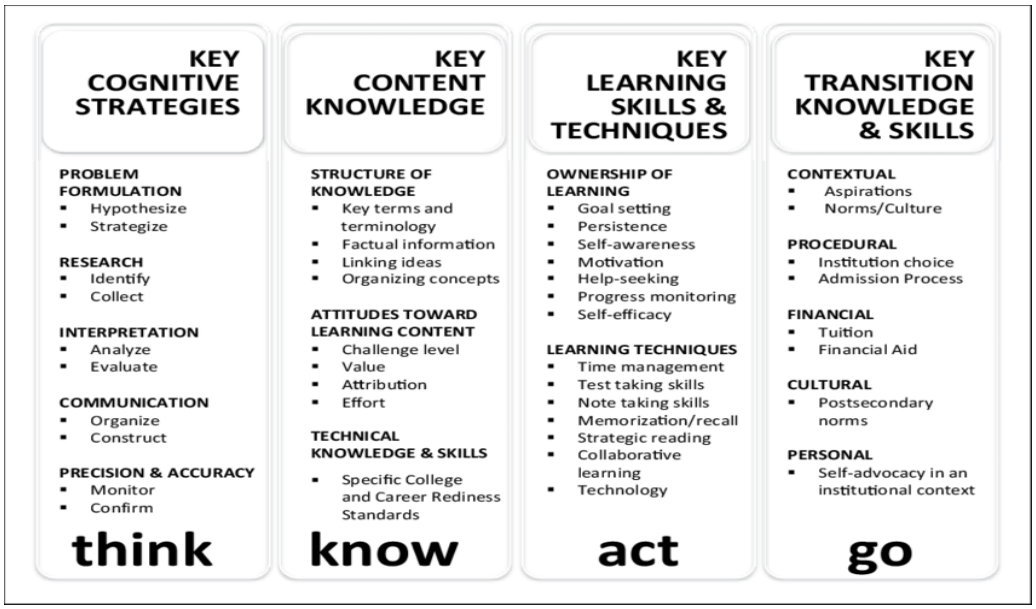
Participants in the Byrd and MacDonald study (2005) identified time management as a critical skill. Managing time outside of class and prioritizing other commitments was necessary for managing college coursework. Some participants responded that lack of time contributed to stress

in completing a course and being successful. Participants also responded that having a clear goal was valuable to self-advocacy and motivation. Self-advocacy was needed to be able to navigate a college system and seek help from resources available (Byrd & MacDonald, 2005). Strong student ownership has been shown to be a key factor in studies from Conley as well. Conley and French (2014) explain that student ownership helps students go beyond simply following instructions. It can even compensate for infective teaching practices. Conley and French (2014) state "Ownership of learning cannot compensate entirely for fundamental deficits in content knowledge mastery. However, students with strong motivation and drive, a desire to achieve goals, a belief in their own capacity for success, the ability to reflect on their learning strategies, and a willingness to persist in the face of obstacles can overcome specific shortcomings in English and mathematics content knowledge or obtain the knowledge necessary to succeed" (p.1018).

Key factors of Conley's comprehensive definition of college readiness include both academic (key cognitive strategies and key content knowledge) and non-academic (key learning skills and techniques and key transition knowledge and skills) keys to readiness. See figure 2 below.

Figure 2

Key Factors of Conley's Comprehensive Definition of College Readiness



Note. Conley, 2013

College Readiness Services

Colleges realize that students are entering institutions lacking the readiness skills to be successful in college. Student services are considered to be one of the most important components of academic success and a positive student experience. Effective student services help to create a connection with the college and less likelihood of dropout. According to Cioubano (2013), "the student services concept is used to describe the divisions or departments which provide services and student support in higher education. Its purpose is to ensure the student's growth and development during the academic experience" (p. 2). Not one single approach will help bridge gaps, therefore a variety of approaches are needed to foster readiness skills.

Tinto's Model of Institutional Departure

The need for a comprehensive model is recognized by Tinto's Model of Institutional Departure, and Conley's Facets of College Readiness. Tinto's Model of Institutional Departure states that to persist, students need integration into formal (i.e., academic performance) and informal (i.e., faculty/staff interactions) academic systems and formal (i.e., extracurricular activities) and informal (i.e., peer-group interactions) social systems (Tinto's Theory, 2015). Colleges have approached student services as both academic and social support as this is a factor in

retention. In a casual-comparative study by Reinheimer (2011), tutoring was shown to improve academic and social integration and was determined a factor in retention.

An argument could be made that colleges need to prepare for students who will be underprepared rather than placing the entire blame on the student. Colleges are taking new approaches to ease the transition to college and offer services to help student success. At a student ready college, the activity and resources are all kept with the student in mind to facilitate a progression to completion throughout and beyond college (Brown et al., 2022).

"One Stop" Resources

In an attempt to consolidate services in one area so that a student doesn't need to go to several different buildings or people to get their questions answered, some colleges have created a resource such as "One Stop." One stop is an approach used in the higher education system to help students get all of their answers in one place, rather than going from one service desk to another. According to Ezarik, 2022, colleges with one location for service-oriented departments can provide strong service interactions. Here, students can find answers to questions about paying for college, registration, financial aid, program information, student resources, graduation and much more.

First Year Experience

First Year Experience (FYE) is another way for colleges to help students transition to college. It is designed to help build a sense of community during the freshman year and is typically customized to the college's expectations. A summary of research-based objectives for FYE include:

- Increasing student-to-student interaction,
- increasing faculty-to-student interaction, especially out of class,
- increasing student involvement and time on campus,
- linking the curriculum and the co-curriculum, increasing academic expectations and levels of academic engagement, and assisting students who have insufficient academic preparation for college (Tambacia, 2016).

FYE programs can include small group conversations, connections with faculty, learning how to use the library, learning about resources, and who to go to for what (Schrader & Brown, 2008). Schrader (2008) states that FYE impacted student's attitudes toward academic and life skills. Astin's (1993) research has validated empirically what many of us experienced in college: "The student's peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years" (p. 398). Creating a sense of community, and bonding with fellow students is influential and most first-year programs have incorporated some sort of community building (Astin, 1993). Current research conducted by the National Resource Center for the First-Year Experience has found that over seventy percent of U.S. colleges and universities offer special first-year seminars to ensure that new students have at least one small class in which a primary goal is the development of peer relationships (Qingman et al., 2021).

TRIO

TRIO is a combination of services that are funded by the federal government, which was initially established to increase the postsecondary persistence and graduation rates of low-income students, first-generation students, and students with disabilities. Gaps exist in completion rates of students from disadvantaged populations in comparison to non-disadvantaged populations. TRIO services are designed to help students persist through degree completion whether it be a two- or four-year degree (U.S. Department of Education, 2023).

Academic Skill Building

Even though a comprehensive approach to college readiness is what is deemed appropriate, the highest sought services are academic services (Bryant et al., 2022). Almost three-quarters of the programs surveyed by the Minnesota Department of Higher Education in a 2015 study, identified academic tutoring, the teaching of study skills and time management, or another academic skill building activity as a "primary" service (Lewin & Sheff, 2015).

Students who utilize student services tend to have a positive experience and it does show to benefit the student. Unfortunately, nearly sixty percent of college students are unaware of the full range of resources accessible to them (Bryant et al., 2022).

"Student-Ready" Model

Another approach to bridging a readiness gap is that rather than placing blame on the K-12 system, or the student, colleges are adapting to a "student-ready" model. This is broadly defined as the college developing relationships with the student, creating and maintaining a sense of belonging, honoring strengths of the student as well as their needs, and facilitating connections socially and academically (Brown et al., 2022, Smith, 2022). Any student-ready concept put into action should be aligned with the mission of the institution and shared with the campus community. This concept holds student services and student programming accountable for student success and takes some of the overwhelmed feeling away from students as they feel the school is there to help them achieve their goals (Brown et al., 2022).

Community College Services

Research shows that college faculty from all college types (e.g., two-year, four-year, technical) believe that students are not as prepared as they should be to do college-level work in areas of critical thinking, problem-solving, analyzing results, conducting research and deep thinking (Conley, 2003; Conley, 2005; Conley et. al., 2008). Readiness approaches vary by the type of institution and student population they serve. Community colleges account for about one-third of college students in the United States. Many community college students do not enroll with a degree in mind. Students may enroll for a technical program, or simply to update their skill set and take a minimal number of courses. Most community colleges have non-selective admission policies. Once students apply to enroll, they usually take a placement exam to help appropriately place the student in courses. Another factor of the community college student is that they may have taken years off before attending college or are returning to college later on in adulthood. The typical two-year

college student age range used to be around 18 to 25, however, recent research conducted at Columbia University's Teacher College has shown that there's been a significant decline in enrollment to two-year institutions of recent high school graduates (Weissman, 2023).

The approach to readiness at a community college needs to take into consideration these factors. This presents a unique set of additional challenges to readiness.

Diversity and Socioeconomics

College students can be considered ready in many different ways. Students come from a variety of life experiences and academic experiences. In a report from the U.S. Department of Education titled "Strategies for Increasing Diversity and Opportunity in Higher Education," suggestions are made to increase diversity on college campuses based on the Supreme Court's ruling in Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President and Fellows of Harvard College and Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. University of North Carolina et al. ("SFFA"). According to the report, the Court The admissions practices of Harvard College and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill were found to violate the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution by considering the race of individual students. These findings emphasize the need for equal opportunity for students at all levels of academia. The report from the U.S. Department of Education highlights that K12 and higher education should invest in targeted outreach, place meaningful emphasis on student adversity, resiliency, and inspiration in admissions, increase affordability, cultivate supportive environments, and provide material support for students. In addition to this, it is suggested that states and institutions review their financial aid funding and approaches to aid to best accommodate students. In a mixed-methods study by Springer, there was a significant difference in domestic versus international students regarding college readiness. Domestic students reported higher perceptions of college readiness, however, the findings reported that both domestic and international students had similar grade point averages and the differences were in self-perception and not necessarily an indicator of ability. Testing measures used to

determine college readiness may function differently depending on race/ethnicity (Hood, 1998). In a study that accounted for race, it was found that the level of academic rigor in high school was more predictive of college completion in Black and Hispanic populations than compared to White students. Schools that have higher access to student support services suggest higher academic success (Klasik and Strayhorn, 2018). Targeted supports and diverse communities in higher education are encouraged.

In fact, education can empower students who are from lower income and/or diverse backgrounds by building on the wealth of their culture. A community cultural wealth model created by Dr. Tara J. Yosso was initially designed to "capture the talents, strengths, and experiences that students of color bring with them to their college environment" (Glasshammer). Yosso's model includes six areas of capital that "culturally disadvantaged" students bring to a classroom.

Aspirational capital refers to "the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers. This resiliency is evidenced in those who allow themselves and their children to dream of possibilities beyond their present circumstances, often without the objective means to attain those goals" (p. 77-78).

Linguistic capital includes "the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style… Linguistic capital reflects the idea that Students of Color arrive at school with multiple language and communication skills. In addition, these children most often have been engaged participants in a storytelling tradition, that may include listening to and recounting oral histories, parables, stories (cuentos) and proverbs (dichos)" (p. 78-79).

Familial capital refers to "those cultural knowledges nurtured among familia (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition… This form of cultural wealth engages a commitment to community well-being and expands the concept of family to include a broader understanding of kinship. Acknowledging the racialized, classed and heterosexualized inferences

that comprise traditional understandings of 'family', familial capital is nurtured by our 'extended family', which may include immediate family (living or long passed on) as well as aunts, uncles, grandparents, and friends who we might consider part of our familia. From these kinship ties, we learn the importance of maintaining a healthy connection to our community and its resources" (p. 79).

Social capital can be understood as "networks of people and community resources. These peer and other social contacts can provide both instrumental and emotional support to navigate through society's institutions. Mutualistas or mutual aid societies are an example of how historically, immigrants to the US and indeed, African Americans even while enslaved, created and maintained social networks… This tradition of 'lifting as we climb' has remained the motto of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs since their organization in 1896" (p. 79-80).

Navigational capital refers to "skills of maneuvering through social institutions. Historically, this implies the ability to maneuver through institutions not created with Communities of Color in mind. For example, strategies to navigate through racially hostile university campuses draw on the concept of academic invulnerability, or students' ability to 'sustain high levels of achievement, despite the presence of stressful events and conditions that place them at risk of doing poorly at school and, ultimately, dropping out of school' (Alva, 1991, p. 19)" (p. 80).

Resistant capital refers to "those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality… This form of cultural wealth is grounded in the legacy of resistance to subordination exhibited by Communities of Color… Furthermore, maintaining and passing on the multiple dimensions of community cultural wealth is also part of the knowledge base of resistant capital" (p. 80)

Diversity leads to more innovative, creative and critical thought which can lead to increased productivity in business. Colleges that are able to contribute to this workforce can add to a

competitive workforce and strong nation (U.S. Dept of Ed). Access to resources, and mindset impact the perception of readiness of both students and faculty.

Faculty Perceptions

Little research has been done on faculty perceptions regarding college readiness. According to the American Journal of Education (2019), many educators did not know how other educators handle readiness concerns or how others define college readiness.

According to Conley, a universal agreement among college faculty members is that most students are "underprepared for the intellectual demands and expectations" (Conley, 2019, p. 33). Externally, educators use feedback from student perceptions or high schools. There is plentiful quantitative data regarding assessment scores and college preparatory exam scores. High schools are basing college preparatory efforts based heavily on the quantitative data of benchmark performance. States can measure, with quantitative data, the results of meeting state standards. States are assessing benchmarks differently from one state to another, yet college preparatory exams are universal. Conley conducted a three-year study from twenty research universities in which meetings and reviews of more than four hundred faculty and staff members participated to study their input on content knowledge and cognitive skills. Faculty repeatedly identified that reading and writing were centrally important to college success (Conley, 2003). There is no disagreement between all education stakeholders that core subject knowledge is important.

If a student is meeting high school benchmarks, this doesn't necessarily mean they are prepared for college-level work. The ACT and SAT exams do not show overall successful rates of preparedness. The 2019 ACT report showed that thirty-six percent of students didn't meet any of the benchmarks. "College readiness is fundamentally different than high school competence" (Conley, 2007, p.6). Students are often surprised that if they enroll in a college course with what they believe is going to be the same course in college because of the name and description, are often surprised that the rigor of the college course is much different. College instructors have an

expectation that the student will be able to perform to a rigor of inferences, analysis, critical thinking, interpretation, evidence-based decisions and arguments, and conduct research. The high school teachers and college instructors have different expectations. For example, college coursework might have a student reading eight to ten books in the same while a high school class might be one or two (Conley, 2007).

In the emphasis of assessment from both K-12 benchmarks, college preparatory exams and college placement exams, there is little qualitative context given to the data. The qualitative data that do exist show that faculty perceptions of college readiness differ from those of high school stakeholders. The differences in expectations according to Conley (2007) are manifold and significant. In a study conducted by Reed and Justice (2014,) high school and college educators were asked about major student proficiencies and deficiencies concerning college readiness. In this quantitative study, the response rate was 34.1 percent (1,185 completed surveys) from 46 of the 50 states in the United States. Six areas were addressed in the study which includes: (1) academic maturity, (2) academic motivation, (3) learning styles, (4) assertiveness, (5) social and interpersonal skills, and (6) planning and goal setting. Of the areas surveyed, only assertiveness had the most alignment between high school educators and college educators. In every other category, high school educators felt students were more proficient than college educators. However, common responses from educators aligned with college readiness characteristics within a readiness definition, which were: student maturity, academic rigor, and student support (Duncheon & Munoz, 2019).

College faculty have internally dealt with the issues of college readiness in their classrooms by making assumptions based on their own personal experiences, and professional history (Duncheon & Munoz, 2019). This isn't necessarily by choice. Faculty have been expressing concern over having little input on college preparedness efforts. In a qualitative study by Lawton (2021) community college educators responded to the academic ability of their students by stating

some students are exceptional, but for the most part, there was an expression of students who were not prepared. In this study, multiple participants made comments referencing a severe lack of preparedness. This data developed from a research question asking faculty how they would describe the teaching component of their job in a study conducted to elevate the voice of community college faculty.

Educator stakeholders can improve student achievement through in alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment (Squires, 2012). Alignment in curriculum gets addressed at a state and local level for K-12, but there is justification for the addition of college expectations and college faculty input to increase alignment between high school and college. It has been acknowledged that increased collaboration between high schools and college faculty could increase college readiness (Alford, 2014; Harris et al., 2016; U.S. Department of Education, 2019; Conley 2011). Regarding college readiness, alignment should include a curriculum that builds towards a trajectory of college readiness level (McGaughy & Venezia, 2015). When faculty in Texas participated in an alignment of curriculum project in 2019, results suggested that the collaboration effort effectively better prepared students for colleges and universities (Ruiz, 2022).

Results of a study regarding a comparison of expectations for success of first-year college students and faculty indicate that students understand the academic expectations from faculty, but faculty do not believe that students demonstrate this understanding (Koslow Martin, 2010). In conclusion of a literature review, there is a missing voice from college faculty regarding what they experience in their classrooms. There has been acknowledgment of misalignment in curriculum, and expectations, however, little study has been done to display the narrative of what faculty are experiencing firsthand. Research also indicates that faculty observations and perspectives are lacking in educational decision making (Bradburn and Townsend, 2014; Daugherty, 2018; Flannery, 2014; Schrynemakers et al., 2019). In conclusions drawn from a quantitative study of faculty observations of remedial education, policymakers regarding reform would do well to

consider faculty perspectives (Schrynemakers et al., 2019). Conley (2010) stated that secondary schools must collaborate with colleges and universities to align entry-level college courses with secondary courses to maintain the quality and control of the quality of entry-level college coursework. This study provides insight into faculty perspectives regarding college readiness. A phenomenological approach provided the voices of experienced college faculty to weigh in on what they perceive as barriers to college readiness. As was detailed previously, the perspective of college readiness has relied specifically on quantitative assessment and survey data. This type of quantitative data lacks the lived experiences of college faculty who encounter this phenomenon year after year. Improved alignment between secondary schools and colleges may close the readiness gap by understanding faculty perceptions. Additionally, college stakeholders might utilize the data to better inform professional development, policies, and decisions that are impacted by college readiness.

Synthesis of Findings

The purpose of this literature review was to examine how faculty come to a perception of what college readiness looks like to them. College readiness has been a concern since enrollment began to increase and continues to do so. Findings in the literature revealed that an attempt at getting students college-ready has many factors. With the attempts being made at colleges to increase readiness, faculty perceptions show varied levels of preparedness when it comes to specific factors of college readiness. For example, college faculty felt students were moderately prepared for college in writing, science, and math, but not geography (Milson & Jo, 2013). This study specifically examined geography, therefore, more attention to that subject matter in preparedness may have contributed to that result. Overall, a perception of having a lack of college readiness is a consensus in the literature review.

The factors that lead to an overall perception of a lack of readiness can be attributed to several things such as testing, and an overall lack of definition of college readiness. Conley, being

one of the significant contributors to college readiness in research, has developed the Four Facets of College Readiness model, which includes academic and non-academic skills. After a review of the research, there is a large emphasis put on testing to determine readiness levels. This starts with academic testing relative to legislation to meet benchmarks in K-12, and college preparedness exams like the ACT, SAT, and placement testing. Key content knowledge in geography was the primary finding of lack of preparedness based on faculty perceptions in the study conducted by Jo and Milson (2013), and the faculty observations of college readiness conducted by Schrynemakers et al., 2019 resulted in faculty desire for higher academic standards. The term "the big test" originates from Lemann (2000) in which testing has become a focus of how the student and the school are judged. Some research indicates that there is a disconnect of alignment in test scores on state tests and college readiness, however, performance and testing vary from one state to another making it difficult to understand what a successful testing performance looks like (Conley, 2007). It is a regular practice for student preparation to be exam-focused, however, it is ineffective for college readiness (Welton & Williams, 2015).

Non-academic skills became acknowledged during the development readiness history when services were expanded to include non-academic supports such as FYE to give students knowledge of how to use the resources on campus (Schrader & Brown, 2008). Conley's model recognizes that academic and non-academic skills are both necessary for college success. However, these skills are primarily developed during K-12 through formative behaviors and cannot be entirely addressed by colleges at the entry-level.

Jo and Milson (2013) determined that there is a curricular expectations gap between the readiness in the seven goals determined for geography from high school teachers and college faculty (p.200). Reed & Justice (2014) also concluded that in the six areas of non-academic skills that were examined, there was a higher perception of readiness by high school teachers than college faculty (p.40).

There is a lack of faculty voice in college readiness when it comes to determining what factors are important, how those factors are assessed, and what aspects of preparation are working well or not. Faculty desire to have more of a seat at the table to determine college readiness efforts. With a fair amount of expression for this desire to have a voice in research, little faculty input is utilized. Instead, faculty, administrators, and colleges are left trying to get students college ready in order to have a successful college outcome. Not having a universal definition of college readiness makes assessing it a challenge, therefore, when students arrive at college, it's up to the college to assess their readiness and coursework placement (Conley, 2011, p. 1). A disconnection in an understanding of college readiness leaves colleges and college faculty with the burden of getting them ready and having a successful outcome. It takes a significant amount of time out of the regular instructional plan to help students get to the level of expected readiness and competency. Lack of readiness causes stress for both the student and the faculty and can lead to students dropping the course over their feeling of being overwhelmed (Fevela, 2019).

The goal of students, faculty, and the college is the same; to have a successful outcome. An examination of faculty perception of college readiness can add to the knowledge and decision-making factors of a college as well as within faculty members of the organization. There is an opportunity to use faculty perceptions to better tailor the approach of the college and classroom settings and to build on the qualities that students bring to the classroom in a diverse environment.

In "The Leader Within," it is discussed that many times faculty learn best from other faculty (Creasman and Coquyt, 2016). The college can utilize faculty input to review processes in which they assess readiness. An opportunity also exists for K-12 and states to examine their readiness processes with the knowledge of the expectations of college faculty. According to Porter & Politkoff (2012), no definition of college readiness exists relative to secondary and postsecondary teachers. Educational systems having an option to be proactive regarding preparation for expectations of college-level work could enhance the experience of the student, and the faculty.

Summary

The current reality of college readiness can be considered confusing. The lack of empirical evidence on best practices presents challenges when examining the impact of college readiness and college readiness programs. Readiness is not standardized in any way. It's up to institutions and states to determine what approach to take. The state-by-state approach in assessing by testing provides a limited data set on college readiness skills. There is a lack of alignment from college faculty expectations to the preparedness efforts that are made to get students to college. Faculty perceptions have been limited in college readiness efforts and stakeholders may use this research to understand the part they play in preparing college students. To understand college readiness in a specific two-year institution, a researcher must investigate the whole system and gain perceptions from various viewpoints. A qualitative phenomenological study will be the best means to gather data in the form of interviews and analyze the data. In the next section, I will discuss in detail the qualitative methodological approach for this study including the setting, participants, data collection, and data analysis methods.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This study seeks to fill gaps in the current literature on college preparedness by presenting faculty's perspectives. The importance of college readiness has increased in higher education due to, but not limited to, the increased number of students enrolled in college. Current research has placed a large emphasis on the use of quantitative data, such as test scores, to determine college readiness. More recent research has shown that a comprehensive model that includes both academic and non-academic skills is necessary to determine if a prospective student is indeed college-ready. For this reason, Conley's Facets of College Readiness will be used as the theoretical framework for this study. Conley's Model includes key cognitive behaviors, key content knowledge, academic behaviors, and contextual skills and awareness. These facets provide a more robust predictor of college readiness than test scores.

This chapter will detail the purpose of the study, research questions, research design, and the phenomenological methodology. First, the applicant selection process is explained. Then, the data collection procedure includes data gathering and analysis. Last, ethical considerations are discussed.

Purpose of the Study

High schools and high school teachers have a more positive outlook on how college-ready their students are after graduation compared to that of college faculty (Strauss, 2013). There is a lack of research from a faculty standpoint on observations of college readiness (Schrynemakers et al., 2019). It is hoped that this research will fill this void by providing college instructors a voice in this essential matter. In the college classroom, a lack of college readiness skills can result in students feeling overwhelmed and may result in them dropping the course altogether (Favela et al., 2019).

College student readiness is normally determined by reviewing test results. Many college-bound students take the ACT or SAT exams in preparation for their college application. These tests

are constructed to determine college readiness, however, the correlation with these exams shows that less than half of students who score at proficiency or higher are prepared for college-level coursework (National ACT, 2015, CollegeBoard n.d.). Research shows that there is more of a correlation with a student's high school GPA than there is with the ACT or SAT when determining college readiness (Riley Bahr, et al., 2019). Colleges might also use assessment exams to determine coursework placement, which results in some students being placed into remedial courses. This varies from college to college in how students are assessed and placed. Once a college determines the placement of a student into college coursework or remedial coursework, it is up to the college to give the student the best opportunity for success. Colleges use a variety of methods to accomplish this. Some colleges have a first-year experience program (FYE) where students learn how to navigate the college environment. All colleges offer some type of student services as described previously on pages 25-39 of Chapter Two.

There is more to determining college readiness than assessment, even though that tends to be the focus. Students and scholarly sources agree there is a non-academic component to college readiness that needs to be considered. College faculty that teach entry-level students in their classrooms experience college students with a variety of preparedness. The primary goal of this qualitative study was to collect faculty perspectives on college readiness through semi-structured interviews. The results may provide college faculty, colleges, high schools, high school teachers, administrators, and other potential stakeholders with information that will be helpful to implement strategies that increase college readiness. This study will add to the literature, which can be further examined at state and local levels, help to understand the efforts made in college readiness, contribute to student success efforts at colleges, and create a better understanding of the preparedness level gap between K-12 and college.

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

How do college faculty teaching entry-level coursework describe and perceive student college readiness?

Sub questions:

What characteristics do college faculty feel contribute to prepared students?

What modifications do college faculty feel can be made to improve college readiness?

Research Design

A qualitative study is used when an issue needs to be explored (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The design of this qualitative phenomenological study follows that of Creswell and Poth's (2018) intent for qualitative research as well as Moustakas' (1994) steps for conducting a phenomenological study. The definition of qualitative research provided by Creswell and Poth (2018) states:

> Qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes. (p. 8)

Qualitative researchers use an emergent process, meaning, the process cannot be too specific. According to Creswell and Poth (2018) "The key idea behind qualitative research is to learn about the problem or issue from the participants and engage in best practices to obtain that information" (p.44).

The methodological approach draws upon the works of Moustakas 1994, as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018, in which the researcher sets aside their own experiences to get a new examination of the phenomenon. As cited in Creswell & Poth, (2018) a phenomenological design where the narratives of faculty are used to tell the reality of their own lived experiences in their

classrooms. Creswell and Poth (2018) further explain that a transcendental phenomenology includes "bracketing out one's experiences and collecting data from several persons who have experienced the phenomenon" (p.78). Transcendental means "in which everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 78). Phenomenology assumes commonality in the data that is gathered, which the researcher is trying to seek.

Bracketing out can also be referred to as Epoché. *Epoché* is defined in the Moustakas (1994) text as a Greek word meaning to refrain from judgment; to abstain from or stay away from the everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things. Moustakas goes on to suggest,

> In the natural attitude we hold knowledge judgmentally; we presuppose that what we perceive in nature is actually there and remains there as we perceive it. In contrast, Epoché requires a new way of looking at things, a way that requires that we learn to see what stands before our eyes, what we can distinguish and describe. (p.33)

Moustakas (1994) argues that bracketing is seldom perfect. The process of searching for significant statements is necessary to best analyze the data to create meaning. Once the data is collected, the researcher reduces the information into themes and creates a textural description of what the participants experienced. A structural description is provided, detailing how it was experienced within its context. The ontological assumption made while conducting the research is that the reality of the participants may be seen in different ways.

This study demonstrates reasons to use a phenomenological approach to qualitative research. The intent is to gain the lived experiences of college faculty and their perceptions of college readiness, something missing in the existing literature. While college readiness is a broad and complex subject, this study will add to the comprehensive understanding of college readiness as told by the lived experiences of college instructors.

Procedures

Participant selection

A purposeful sampling was used to find college faculty that teach entry-level coursework. As explained in Chapter One, this research will be limited to one public two-year college. It is anticipated that the perspective of these faculty can be utilized by other colleges to help gain an understanding of college faculty perceptions.

It is recommended by Creswell and Poth (2018) that in interview research, 5 to 25 individuals who have experienced the phenomenon should be used (p.79). Seven college faculty were interviewed. The goal was to find instructors across multiple disciplines who teach entry-level coursework. Academic deans were used to find participants by sending emails to prospective full-time faculty who teach entry-level coursework. If the faculty answered in the affirmative, they were sent a disclosure of the purpose of the study. Since an academic dean is considered the supervisor of prospective subjects, it was important that the subject's identity remain anonymous. Participants only communicated participation with the researcher. Potential participants received notification that their interview would be conducted via Zoom and expected to last around 60 minutes. Those who emailed with interest were asked what subject they teach. It was the goal that the subject pool would include individuals from various disciplines. After the participants were selected, they received an informed consent form to read and sign. Since all participants are adults and would have anonymity, there was little risk of vulnerability. A sample of the Informed Consent can be found in the Appendix on page 128. After the researcher received the signed consent form, participants scheduled a time for the interview with the researcher via Zoom. Zoom was chosen due to the ease of scheduling, the ability to record interviews, and its transcribing features. Web-based interviews such as Zoom have the advantages of cost and time efficiency and time and space flexibility (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Protection of Participants

As mentioned previously, participants in the study were asked to sign an informed consent. The informed consent indicates that participation is voluntary and will not place the participant at risk. Participants were informed that they could withdraw their participation at any time, as outlined in the informed consent. Other than the commitment of time by the participant, it would not be disruptive to their work assignment. To keep anonymity the participants were assigned a number, rather than a name. Once assigned, this number was used throughout the research process and during data collection and analysis. Any data relevant to participants was kept on a secure personal computer that only the researcher could access.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted using semi-structured interviews. Participants were asked the same questions, and semi-structured interviews were chosen by the researcher to provide structure to the interviews while also allowing some flexibility to gain further understanding from the faculty's perspective. Moustakas (1994) suggests a general interview guide may aid in conducting a semi-structured interview. He asserts, "may facilitate the obtaining of rich vital, substantive descriptions of the co-research's (participant's) experience of the phenomenon" (p. 116). The researcher used a general guide to ensure participants were all asked the same questions in the same fashion.

Interviews were scheduled and conducted via Zoom, and participants were informed this would take approximately 60 minutes. Participants were notified their meeting would be recorded on Zoom for the researcher to review and transcribe the interviews. The researcher may conduct follow-up interviews if saturation is not reached. Password access is required for data. Recordings and transcripts were securely housed for the duration of the study and then deleted. If the researcher wishes to extend that time for any reason, the researcher would make an additional request of terms with the participant. After checking the Zoom transcription for errors, the interviewees were sent

the transcript for review to ensure the accuracy of their statements and to ensure no message was lost.

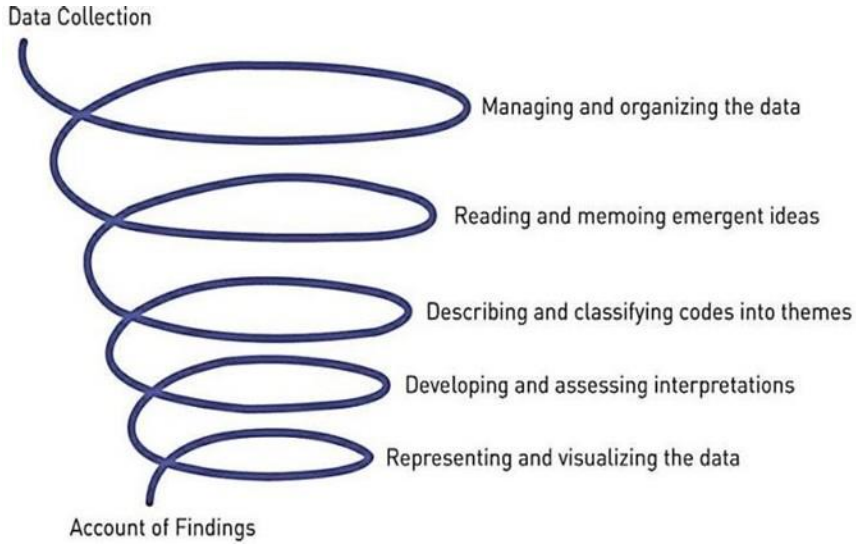
Another benefit to having a Zoom interview was that non-verbal context, such as body language, postures, and gestures, could be noted and reviewed. During the interviews, the researcher made notes regarding non-verbal's, thoughts, or questions. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) discuss that the ability to review non-verbal's is a strength of a web-based platform. The authors also mention technology issues and data security as a weakness. As mentioned previously, data security was addressed by having a password-protected meeting and storing the data securely (p. 115-117).

Data Analysis

The data in this study was collected in the form of semi-structured interviews of full-time college faculty that teach entry coursework at a Midwestern two-year college. The researcher will make notes during the interview to document non-verbal observations, thoughts, or questions. The general process that qualitative researchers use for data analysis is to prepare and organize the data, reduce the data into themes through a coding process, and represent the data in figures, tables, or discussions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For this study, the data analysis spiral in Creswell and Poth (2018) will be used. This process is represented as a spiral of five steps in which the researcher processes data through analytic circles as the image represents.

Figure 3

Creswell and Poth (2018) Data Analysis Spiral



Note: Cresswell & Poth, 2018

Creswell and Poth (2018) suggest a template for qualitative researchers specific to phenomenological analysis, which is a modified version of Moustakas' template (1994). These items are embedded in each area of the data analysis spiral. It involves the following:

- Describe personal experiences with the phenomenon under study.
- Develop a list of significant statements.
- Group significant statements into broader units of information.
- Create a list of "what" the participants in the study experienced with the phenomenon.
- Draft a description of "how" the experience happened.
- Write a composite description of the phenomenon (p.201).

Managing and Organizing the Data

Early in the research process, the researcher typically creates a file system to organize data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To ensure data security, password-protected storage was used on the researcher's computer. The data was kept in its own specific folder. According to Creswell and

Poth, (2018), researchers should make plans for long-term data storage (p.186). The researcher plans to keep the data from this study until the end of May 2025.

Reading and Memoing Emergent Ideas

The transcription of the interviews was completed with the web platform Zoom. Agar (1980) states "read the transcripts in their entirety several times. Immerse yourself in the details, trying to get a sense of the interview as a whole before breaking it into parts" (p. 103). Memoing can help with coding development and was taken while reading and to record thoughts. According to Creswell & Poth, (2018) memoing includes taking notes and sketching reflective thinking. Tracking the development of ideas aids data analysis and can enhance the explanation of data.

Describing and classifying codes into themes

As mentioned previously, finding the significance of the story from the participants is key in qualitative research representation. It is difficult to perfect bracketing, therefore, during analysis, it is important to use the concept of *epoche*. *Epoche* is used in phenomenological research to focus on the description of the experiences of the participants and limiting the interpretations of the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition to quality transcription, Silverman (2013) states that computer programs can enhance reliability in data analysis. The NVivo software helps to organize, categorize, and analyze qualitative data. According to Creswell and Poth, in the process of the data analysis spiral, codes are "the heart" of qualitative data analysis (p.189). Coding is the process of creating labels of themes that are found during the analysis of the interviews and observations. This narrows the information to focus on the important themes. As described by Wilcott, (1994) it is "winnowing" the data, and not all of it will be used. How many codes are used can be debated, and whether they are counted. Regarding coding, Creswell & Poth (2018) state that finding significant statements, sentences or quotes is part of this process and is "central to qualitative research and involves making sense of the text collected from interviews, observations and documents" (p. 190.) For this study, themes were created to have consistency and ease of

revision through categorizing with the aid of NVivo software. The proper development of themes through coded data is key to interpreting the data.

Developing and assessing interpretations

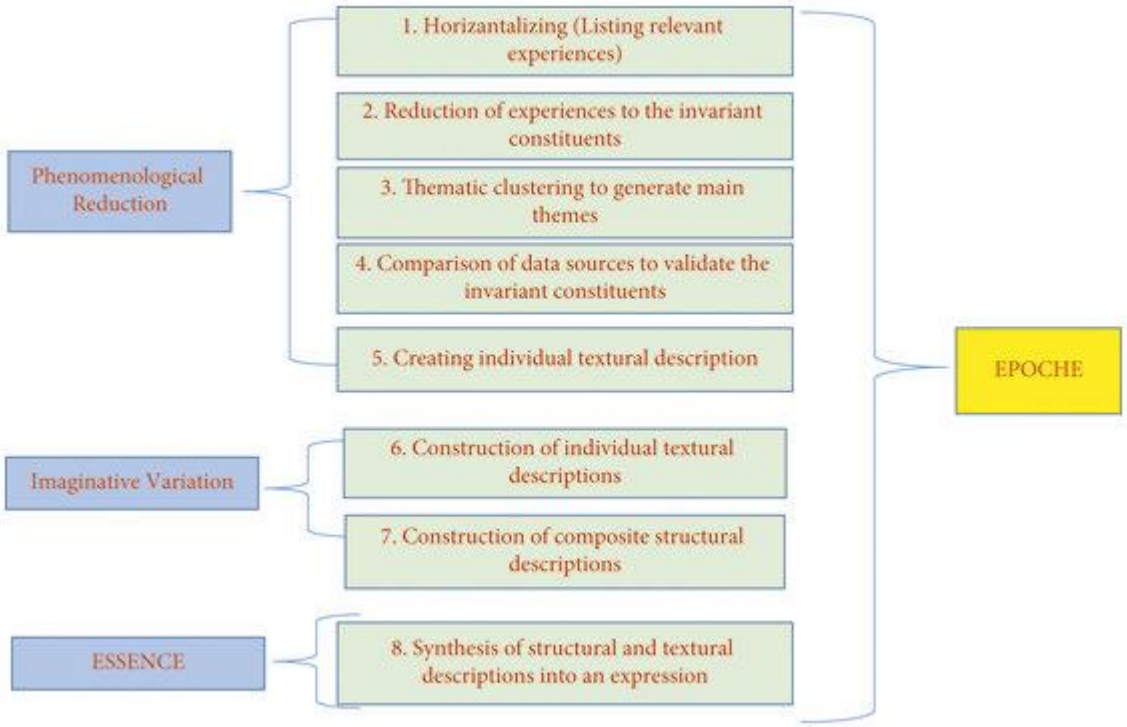
Interpreting data is making sense of the lived experiences that were told by the participants through a considerate judgment of themes and analysis. Themes help to create a larger meaning of the data. During this stage of data analysis, the researcher will analyze interpretations gathered from the literature review and research the data gathered. The researcher needs to be aware of "alternative understandings" when interpreting data and "challenge one's own interpretations through comparisons with existing data, relevant literature, or initial hypothesis" (Creswell and Poth, 2018 p.195).

Representing and visualizing the data

In a phenomenological analysis, Creswell and Poth (2018) create a simplified version of Moustakas' (1994) method as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Moustakas's steps in phenomenological data analysis (1994)



In this stage of the data analysis spiral, the researcher should create a description of "what" the phenomenon was that the participants experienced (textural description). Next, draft a description of "how" the experience happened (structural description). Lastly, write a description that includes both the textural and structural descriptions that will explain the "essence" of the phenomenon studied (p. 201). Giori (2009) suggests that the researcher take an analytic approach in which she "read for a sense of the whole, determine meaning units, transform participants' expressions into psychologically sensitive expressions, and then write a description of essence (p.201-202.)"

Instruments

Role of the researcher

Qualitative research consists of the researcher being the key instrument (Creswell & Poth, 2018). When the researcher is the main instrument for the study, "the researchers convey their background, how it informs their interpretation of the information in a study, and what they have to gain from the study" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 44). This is referred to as reflexivity.

Reflexivity also leads to transparency of the researcher and their background. The researcher plays an important role in qualitative research by best capturing the story of the participants. By using Zoom for the interviews, the researcher could re-visit the interviews to make sure detail is included. Zoom will also aid in transcription. It is vital to have a transcription that will produce verbatim quotations (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Previous Knowledge and Bias

The researcher must acknowledge their positionality of the research topic. The researcher's own experiences as a college instructor for over 12 years may create a personal bias in the study. The researcher acknowledged previously that they have had first-hand experiences with college readiness in their classrooms. I have experienced the frustration of spending a significant amount of time with students who do not seem ready. At the same time, I have experienced those who excel in the college environment. This is one of the curiosities for choosing the focus of the study. Another bias may come from being a college student myself and reflecting on my level of preparedness. The idea of bracketing is used to set aside personal bias and experience the phenomenon in a new way from the perspective of the participants (Mousakas, 1994). I am aware of my personal biases but must set them aside to gain the full potential of the study. By setting aside bias, I can gain new perspectives that I can use in my own classroom or college work. Using a phenomenological approach, it will allow the experiences of the participants to be examined and presented.

The researcher also acknowledges their own possible unconscious biases of race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and education. Creswell and Poth (2018) assert,

> Ethical practices of the researchers recognize the importance of subjectivity of their own lens, acknowledge the powerful position they have in the research, and admit that the participants or the co-construction of the account between the researchers and the participants are the true owners of the information collected. (p. 33.)

Qualifications

The researcher's training and experience conducting interviews come from formal classes contained in the Doctor of Education program at Minnesota State University, Moorhead. Specific to qualitative research was ED 705 Qualitative Research Methods. Within this course, interviews were used for the field research project and were supervised, guided, and analyzed by the course instructor. In addition, texts that were used routinely throughout the program provided direction on how to conduct a qualitative study. The texts used primarily for this research were Creswell and Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design* (2018) and Bloomberg and Volpe, *Completing your Qualitative Dissertation* (2019).

Ethical Considerations

The risk to participants in the study was minimal. The semi-structured interviews were transcribed and stored on a password-protected computer. The participants' names were not used. Each participant was assigned a number during transcription which is used in documentation.

Ethical considerations as outlined in Creswell and Poth's (2018) framework pose types of ethical issues that may arise in qualitative research. This framework was utilized for this study and explains considerations for timelines during the research process which include before the research study, beginning to conduct the study, collecting data, analyzing data, reporting data, and publishing the study (p. 55-56).

IRB

Before conducting the study, the researcher obtained IRB approval from the Minnesota State University, Moorhead, IRB board. The researcher submitted the approval form as well as the informed consent that the participants were given and was granted approval for the study. The informed consent included the purpose of the study, that their participation would remain anonymous, that their participation was voluntary, and they could withdraw at any time. Ensuring participant confidentiality and anonymity were critical to participation and honest responses.

Confidentiality

Participants in the study must be assured that their told experiences will not impact their teaching or instruction assignments at the college. To have meaningful dialog and participation, the participant's anonymity is protected, and they are made aware of the data protections in the informed consent. This also involved making sure participants understood their names were removed during data analysis and reporting. To protect the participants, an identifier/pseudonym was assigned to their data and stored on a password-protected computer. Any additional notes were kept on the same password-protected computer. The identifier/pseudonym will be deleted after member checks are finished.

Member Checks

Conducting member checks enhances the credibility of the study. To ensure accuracy, participants were emailed a transcript of their interview as well as a link to the Zoom recording. In this study, member checks were completed only for transcription. The participants were requested to carefully examine and, if necessary, provide additional information to improve the accuracy and clarity of the transcript. The process of seeking credibility of the findings and interpretations is considered by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to be “the most critical technique for establishing credibility” (p.314).

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to better understand the lived experiences of college faculty regarding college readiness. To capture the phenomenon of the participants, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to get information specific to the study while allowing flexibility for dialogue.

This study used a sample size of seven participants as guided by Creswell and Poth (2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) state, "researchers can interview from 5 to 25 individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon" (p. 79). A purposeful sample allowed the researcher to gather a useful amount of data. A convenience and criterion sampling was used to find participants who were accessible and most applicable to the phenomenon being studied. Participants were found via academic deans by email in which the participants understood the study matter, their confidentiality, and an informed consent in which they could withdraw from the study at any time.

Data analysis was guided by Creswell and Poth's (2018) data analysis spiral. Data was intentionally managed and organized with a plan for security and anonymity. The researcher used memoing to aid in code development as well as help with accuracy in member checks. NVivo software helped to create codes and themes, and then were represented by the researcher.

IRB approval was obtained, which included informed consent to minimize risk to participants. In the informed consent, participants were explained how their data and anonymity would be protected. They also had the opportunity to review their recorded interview and transcription. In addition, the researcher used bracketing to reduce bias from their personal experiences. The process of bracketing as explained by Moustakas (1994) is to "bracket out one's experiences and collect data from several persons who have experienced the phenomenon" (p.78).

Chapter four will provide the findings of the study, a presentation of the data collected, a presentation of the data analysis, and the findings and results of the study in detail.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to discover the essence of the lived experience of two-year college faculty with college readiness. Previous chapters provide the introduction, literature review, and research design. Chapter four describes the researcher's role as a two-year college faculty member and how this experience helped inform the study. A description of the participant sample is given to provide context of the participants while maintaining anonymity. Next, the research methodology and data analysis are broken down into themes based on the guiding research question and sub-questions as stated by the participants. Finally, a synthesis and summary of chapter four will be provided.

Researcher's Role

Embedding reflexivity into the research experience is important to a phenomenological study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It must be acknowledged that the researcher has their own lived experiences as a college faculty member. I became interested in the experiences of other faculty regarding college readiness by their own lived experiences in their classroom. In over 12 years of experience, I have observed a decline in students' initiative to learn, as their needs in the classroom increased. Conversationally, colleagues within my discipline have expressed frustration with unprepared students, which significantly hinders productivity in a fast-paced program. I was curious whether faculty outside of their own department were encountering similar academic issues and if there were strategies that could enhance the learning environments.

Historically, instructors who teach in technical fields receive little to no training on pedagogy in general and how to teach (Minnesota State, n.d.). In my experience, most technical instructors who are hired as permanent faculty are required to take a short three to four credit courses for teaching and learning competency.

My work experience and training specific to my program was drawn upon my training colleagues in the workplace. In addition, I completed both a bachelor's and a master's degree while

teaching full-time. This experience of being a student also had an impact in my approach to teaching in that I could reflect on what worked well and what didn't from a student point of view. I experimented with various strategies in the classroom and was dealing with concerns related to college readiness. To better understand the experience of the participants in the study, it required me to suspend my judgement, or as Moustakas explains, using Epoche to separate my own experiences from theirs.

Coursework within the Ed.D program also helped to prepare me for this study. Most specifically, ED 705 Qualitative Methods in Educational Research. This course included coursework specific to methodology, interview protocol, a fieldwork project, data analysis, coding projects, and issues in qualitative research such as ethical concerns and positionality. The textbooks for the program included *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design, 4th edition,* by *Creswell and Poth, and Completing your Qualitative Dissertation, 4th edition,* by Bloomberg and Volpe. The textbooks enhanced my research capabilities by guiding me through the entire process of qualitative study, from selecting a topic and writing a proposal to presenting my findings and planning future studies. It provided both an overview and practical guidance for conducting high-quality qualitative research.

Description of the Sample

The two-year college in which the participants were faculty, is located in a suburb of a metropolitan area in the Midwest. The college offers technical programs, degree and non-degree programs. Participants were recruited via academic deans There were seven participants who all teach full-time and teach classes that are entry-level. All of the participants hold at least a Master's degree, which was the majority level of education. Some participants hold multiple degrees, which is represented in the figure below. Since the college offers technical degrees, a sample of general education and technical program instructors were pursued to participate. The demographics of the participants are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Sample

Demographic Characteristic	Number
Gender	
Male	3
Female	4
Year's teaching	12-29
Years at current college	12-25
Instruction area	IT, English, Philosophy, Mathematics, Sociology, Fire
Highest level of education	
Master's	8
Doctorate	2

The participants in the study were all full-time faculty that teach entry-level coursework. To become a credentialed teacher at the college of study, it requires a level of education beyond what the students in that program area can achieve, therefore, all co-researchers have a minimum of a four-year degree. Participant One has thirteen years of teaching experience at the institution of study. They have a Master's degree in education. Prior to teaching, they worked in the IT technology sector. Participant Two has twenty-one years of experience at the institution of study, and thirty-five years of teaching experience overall in the subjects of reading and English. Participant Three has twenty-four years of teaching experience, with 20 of those years being at the institution of study and four being at a four-year institution. They have a PhD in Philosophy for their educational background. Participant Four has been teaching for twenty-nine years at the two-year college level, sixteen of which are at the institution of study. They hold a bachelor's degree in mathematics and psychology. Participant Five has twenty-eight years of teaching experience at the two-year college level. Twenty-five of those years have been at the institution used for this study. They hold a master's degree in sociology. Participant Six has been teaching for twelve years. Prior to teaching, they worked in their program field of law enforcement and EMS. They also hold part-

time employment at a high school level career academy. They hold a master's degree in Social Studies and certificates/diplomas in the firefighting and EMS areas. Participant Seven has been teaching for twenty-two years at the two-year level. Sixteen of those have been at the institution of study in the IT field. Prior to teaching, they worked in the field of IT while pursuing their education and finally attaining a PhD.

Research Methodology Applied to the Data Analysis

Creswell and Poth's (2018) Data Analysis Spiral was used as a starting framework for data analysis as provided previously on page 63. In the methodological approach which draws upon Moustakas's work, 1994, posits that the researcher sets aside their own experiences to understand the participant's experiences. Moustakas called this phenomenon Epoche, and it was used throughout the study. During the data analysis process, it was discovered that the data analysis spiral itself didn't go in depth to include an important part of phenomenology, determining the essence of the experiences. The process of engaging in the experience of each participant , or co-researcher as Moustakas called them, is key to understanding their experiences.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven participants via Zoom. The researcher used Zoom's transcription feature to transcribe the interview. I initially proofread the transcripts individually, without performing any analysis. Then, the transcriptions were carefully reviewed and proofread multiple times while watching the recorded interview to ensure transcription accuracy. Multiple reviews while also watching the recording allowed me to become close to the co-researchers' description of their experiences. In addition, member checks were conducted by having the co-researchers review their transcript. All seven co-researchers approved their transcript accuracy. Data was stored on a password protected computer and backed up to a protected cloud server.

The process of data analysis continued by following Creswell and Poth's (2018) Data Analysis Spiral by uploading transcripts into Nvivo to begin organizing data. I employed a

deductive preliminary analysis method, using printed copies of the transcripts. This involved identifying important information from each transcript by circling words that could be used as codes and highlighting sentences that related to emergent ideas or preliminary codes through open coding. This also included memoing that helped to develop the codes. Creswell and Poth (2018) state, "coding is the heart of qualitative data analysis and helps researchers develop themes through interpretation" (p. 189). A list of seventy-five codes were initially developed from the transcripts. Codes were imported into Nvivo to begin the process of organizing associated data within the transcriptions, which also helped to create emergent codes and eventually themes that formed a common idea. Transcripts were reviewed many times until a point of saturation was met.

Nvivo was used to organize information related to each theme and code within each transcript. This helped to pull out relevant information from the participants in order to report the data further discussed in this chapter. Once the data was organized, I was able to develop textual descriptions of what the participants experienced as well as structural descriptions of how they experienced it. This combination of descriptions conveys the essence of the lived experience (Creswell and Poth, 2018). The analysis lead to the development of five themes, which derived from the data gathered through interviews and review of transcripts.

As I explained earlier in this chapter, much of what I know and understand about qualitative data analysis comes from what I learned after completing ED 705 Qualitative Methods in Education in my doctoral program at MSUM. It was here that I was introduced to the Data Spiral Analysis proposed by Creswell and Poth (see Chapter Three). My experiences in developing codes and themes respected the five steps contained in the Data Analysis Spiral and I am comfortable performing these endeavors. As explained previously, this phenomenological research study observed the steps of data analysis advanced by Moustakas (1994). During the coding process, I found out quickly that the spiral analysis will only take me so far. There are additional phases contained in Moustakas' method of data analysis. Throughout this chapter and the next, I will be

intentional about utilizing not only the terminology of Moustakas, but also reference his nine steps in data analysis. Table 2 below is my attempt to exhibit the similarities and differences between the Spiral Analysis and Moustakas' steps of data analysis.

Table 2

Spiral Analysis and Moustakas Comparison

	Creswell & Poth – Spiral Analysis	Moustakas
Step One	Managing and organizing the data	Managing and organizing the data
Step Two	Inductive Coding: Reading and memoing emergent ideas (capture initial impressions and thoughts that may guide further analysis)	Horizontalizing (Listing all relevant expressions or horizons)
Step Three	Describing and classifying codes into themes (this process is iterative, and you may need to revisit and revise your codes and themes as you gain deeper insights into the data)	Reduction of experiences to the invariant constituents (cluster horizons into themes)
Step Four		Thematic clustering to create core themes (experiences)
Step Five	Developing and accessing interpretations (assess the validity and reliability of your interpretations, it's important to engage in member checking or seeking feedback from participants)	Comparison of multiple data sources to validate the invariant constituents (observations, field notes, focus groups)
Step Six		Constructing of individual textural descriptions of participants: The textural description is a narrative that explains participants' perceptions of a phenomenon.
Step Seven		Construction of individual structural descriptions. This step is based on the textural descriptions and imaginative variation. By using imaginative variation, researcher imagines how experience occurred and then, he creates the structures.
Step Eight		Construction of composite structural descriptions: After researcher writes the textural description for each co-researcher, researcher should incorporate the textural description into a structure explaining how the experience occurred.
Step Nine	Representing and visualizing the data (create tables to summarize key	Synthesizing the texture and structure into an expression: Researcher should create

	findings or use charts and diagrams to visualize the relationships between themes or sub-themes)	two narratives for each co-researcher, including textural describing "what" occurred and structural describing "how" it occurred. Researcher lists the meaning units for each co-researcher. Researcher should write composite narratives from the third person perspective representing the group. This step is the synthesis of all narratives for the group as a whole…**the essence.**

Presentation of Data and Results of the Analysis

The five themes that were discovered after the analysis are presented in this section. Context is given for each co-researcher's experience by providing direct quotes from the participants in relation to the research question and sub questions. The presentation of the data is represented by individual co-researchers as guided by Moustakas steps six through eight, in which a textual description from each co-researcher is provided within each experience, leading to a structural description regarding how the experience occurred. Initial codes that were created to represent experiences are listed in **Figure *5*** below.

Figure 5

Experience One: Emergent Codes

Cognizance

The experience of cognizance was a result of the emergent codes that were discovered during data analysis. These initial codes included such things as awareness, knowledge, and understanding that created an overarching experience named “Cognizance.” Cognizance refers to understanding a co-researcher's perception of their students' preparedness levels in various areas, which directly impacts college readiness. During the research, all co-researchers were asked questions about the academic and non-academic abilities of their students. The answers to these questions were analyzed as part of the broader experience of cognizance. The interviews revealed both positive and negative perspectives on aspects of college readiness. Although some co-researchers felt that students were prepared for their courses, most reported an overall decline in readiness.

All co-researchers were asked interview questions based on Conley’s four facets of college readiness:

1. Cognitive Strategies
2. Academic Knowledge
3. Academic Behaviors

4. Contextual Skills and Awareness

This model of academic readiness was presented to the co-researchers, and most indicated that the model well-represented their expectations on what it means for college readiness. Regarding Cognizance, P1 offered the following:

> I love all these cognitive strategies. I lump them into what I do as an instructor is help my students develop learner agency. Some come with it, some are experts in other areas as they've already developed some of those skills, and some have not developed any of those skills. In a perfect world, they would come with all of these skills developed to a readiness level.

P1 also stated, "academic behaviors to me align with professional behaviors. Self-awareness is a big important thing. We talk a lot about self-awareness, being proactive, and self-monitoring." Some co-researchers felt that a level of preparedness has something to do with their academic goals, whether they are getting a certificate, diploma, degree, or going onto a four-year school.

P1 additionally offered,

> I would say that the majority of my students are able to see the big picture and to say I understand this now. The reason for that might be because I'm at a two-year institution. I'm working with students who need to prepare themselves for a career.

P2 offered,

> It depends on what they're going after. I see the students who are not prepared in my subject area and it's my job to prepare them for general education courses. I may help them a bit differently if they are non-degree versus degree-seeking students.
>
> Having confidence and persistence to work through coursework and navigating college puts students in a better position to be successful.

P3 explained, “Being able to work through and not give up are part of the non-academic skills that are so important, and it’s true with real-life skills.” In addition to the four facets, cognitive readiness was also described by P3 as “Ideally, all of the students would have these qualities, but they come in with varying levels of them. It also could include intellectual humility and consistency and being aware of cognitive deficits.”

P3 additionally offered,

> Readiness is whether students are coming out of high school prepared or for the workforce. Do they have the reading and writing skills to be successful in our courses? There is a baseline needed. There are a lot of non-academic elements that I call intellectual virtues like having a growth mindset, and grit.

P3 further explained,

> I don’t expect students to have knowledge of my academic discipline, but I do expect them to have basic academic skills such as what does a paragraph look like. However, you define college readiness, I would be shocked if it hasn’t been in decline over the last few years.

P3 stated,

> It’s a total mixed bag of preparedness. I’ve had plenty of students who’s cut scores were not great, but they do just fine in class. It’s hard to make a claim that if students would have taken a developmental class that they would have passed critical thinking. Not necessarily. Cut scores are more important going into a course such as math.

P3 summarized, “I see a huge range. But I describe our best students are as good as students anywhere. We do have our lower end in that we have an automatic admission and that is what we are as a college.”

P3 also stated,

> Last week I asked a student why they didn’t turn in the first 2 homework assignments, and she said she tried to find them but couldn’t, because she couldn’t navigate the learning

> management system. It's like just sitting in class and not paying attention at all. She gave up within 2 minutes of trying to do it. But, on the other hand, I had a student who added the course in week 3, and he's brand new to college, and is all caught up. It's such a range. But again, these non-cognitive side of things are so important. And it's true as with real-life skills."

P4 described confidence as being cognizant of mistakes and learning from them. They argued,

> Students who can feel comfortable to make mistakes but build from them and have the confidence to go on is empowering. If the student is confident that they have the knowledge necessary to start the class, they can be successful.

Regarding non-academic related skills, all participants thought this was of significance to readiness. P4 called it "academic maturity," and explained that as "do you understand how important it is to get your assignments? Do you check to know where your assignments are? Do you communicate with the teacher? Do they understand what it is to be a student?"

P4 stated,

> Students need confidence. Their own belief and perception of their knowledge and abilities is a strong indicator of how they will do. I don't know if all these strategies just need to be developed or if it's also their own capabilities and attitudes.

Professionalism was a common topic that was brought forth by the participants as important to cognizance of interactions and handling of academic work. At a college that is preparing students for the workforce and possibly further education, they feel it's important to make sure they develop this trait. P5 stated "I put non-academic skills under the umbrella of professionalism. In my experience, students have been progressively becoming less professional in just their dealings with homework." Many co-researchers described readiness as having an academic component, and a non-academic component. For example, P6 stated, "There's the academic readiness, and then there's the social-emotional readiness."

In terms of academic readiness and academic skills, many co-researchers did not want to make generalizations about their students. However, most of the instructional areas represented by the co-researchers have removed cut scores or other developmental barriers as they were not necessarily good indicators of being successful in their classrooms. One co-researcher represented mathematics, in which placement testing makes sense due to the incremental nature of the subject.

In general preparedness of academic skills, P6 offered, "I don't think they have it (academic knowledge and skills,) because I don't see them retaining information, they don't see the big picture, and are looking for immediate gratification. There's a lack of preparedness across the board." P7 stated,

> I think they need to possess all of these skills and I think for the most part they are lacking in all of them. I would say, when I first started teaching, the students were more prepared and that has that has been declining ever since. I have no evidence to show you that that's true. But just empirical. It seems like every year it gets less.

The co-researchers described readiness similarly based on their responses. It was also discussed that students today differ from students from the past. P6 reflected, "Twenty years ago, if a student had a problem, they would troubleshoot it. Now if they can't work through it, they email right away and say 'Hey, I can't do this." Readiness for a college-level course was described by P7 as "The student would have the aptitude and desire to successfully complete coursework."
P7 stated,

> I would say academic skills are kind of low. If a student has academic skills, they're going to go to a university. The reason they come here is they want hands on experience. The students that graduate high school with an academic mindset are going to go onto a university, so that's not who are students are.

P7 offered, "I'm excited to say the develop and progress throughout but as an incoming student, these skills are low to moderate."

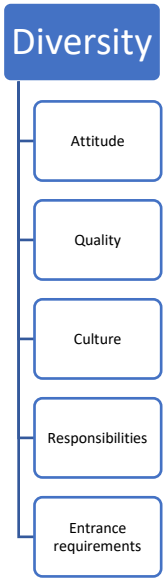
P7 offered,

> One indicator of some sort of academic preparedness is their level of communication for instance emails. I use the official email of the college, and a lot of students change that email to their personal email, so if I get an email that comes from Gmail, I'm reluctant to provide too much information. Is that a disassociation with the college because they are reverting back to something they already know? They are not even close to being professional. They don't tell me who they are, what class or what section they are in. I think twenty percent of the students are fine, but I would say a lot of them struggle in that area, especially when they are incoming.

In summary, the co-researchers presented that there is a baseline of academic skill that is needed for college-level coursework. In addition to that, academic behaviors are a large factor in success. Academic behaviors may vary depending on the level of education pursued, including certificates, two-year degrees, or four-year degrees. Many students at the institution are focused on entering the workforce, so faculty are emphasizing professionalism to align with industry expectations.

Figure 6

Experience Two: Emergent Codes



Diversity

As mentioned in experience one, students come to college with a variety of levels of preparedness. One common experience that was discovered was the diverse background that student come to the college with, which was discovered by sifting through emergent codes. The initial codes that created this experience included culture, English as a second language, open-access, attitude, expectations, and environment. An important aspect of college is the varying attitudes that students bring, shaped by their prior experiences. The experiences in relation to experience two are presented below.

> P1 explained diversity in a fashion that educational environments are varied, and offered
>
> My perception is that they haven't been in an educational environment where intelligent academic behaviors were an expectation. Where their knowledge, if you use Bloom's taxonomy, was really just at phase one, I'm gonna tell you something, can you repeat it? Great, let's move you onto the next grade.

P1 described,

> I think students are shocked when I tell them we have a four-hour class once a week, but then you also have to plan for at least four hours of homework. They don't feel they have the time. No one told them they have homework for every hour of class or sometimes double. Until students live it, they don't have the context for that. So as a faculty members, we have to be aware of all those students, how to move them forward, or find the resources to support us.

Some participants felt that diverse background can provide a sense of motivation.

P2 recalled,

> I get the best of immigrant populations teaching in some of my developmental courses because they want to pursue an education. They want to make their lives better and the lives

> of their kids. They're excited to be in the post-secondary education system in the United States.

Cultural background significantly impacts college preparedness. P2 offered, "We have a large immigrant population and students that have gaps in their education. Sometimes some of my students don't know how to formulate a question in English, because grammatically, it's not easy." They further explained, "They don't view reading and writing as a process, so we teach the strategies needed so students can better apply that process in their next coursework."

The responsibilities of the students that come to the college was another aspect of a diverse background. Many of the students are parents, have jobs or multiple jobs, financial obligations to family or other obligations in which college may not always be able to be their priority.

P2 stated,

> Many of my students are excited to be in the educational system in the United States. Can all of them be successful? They have a lot going on. Having taught here for over a decade, a lot of our students have kids and they're not very well off financially. They don't have a lot of support around them. We have single mothers and other things like that. Sometimes it's too much for them and college is the thing that needs to go.

This cultural diversity brings different understandings of academic expectations. For example, P2 offered "The way the American educational system views plagiarism isn't the same as many other cultures. Some cultures feel they can take information from anything or anyone and call it their own."

P3 commented, "Mindset shows that talent is not the major predictor of success. In my experience, we have a lot of students who are not straight-A high school students. They didn't necessarily have a positive association connected to their educational experience. It's not about whether you're smart enough, it's do you have the persistence to keep at this."

P3 offered this example,

> If you're a first generation, immigrant student, it's different navigating K12 or other systems that we have in the U.S. Equity is a huge issue. If you're not first generation, your family has some familiarity with the processes of some of these systems.

Another aspect is the varied degrees of educational experiences. Co-researchers mentioned the varied experiences in K12. P4 offered "There's such a variety in high schools. One high school might teach a course with the exact same title as another high school, but the level of rigor is completely different."

P5 reflected,

> This college has the least prepared students. That could be because we are an open-entrance institution. The less responsibilities a student has, it seems the easier it is to complete the work. I don't know if it's their level of preparedness always, it might be that they just don't have the time. Just seeing how many people work full-time, have families, and are trying to take classes, it doesn't work.

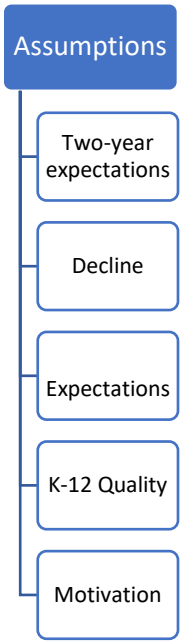
P6 stated that responsibilities have to do with time planning and noted " It's those non-academic skills that they just don't follow through. They don't plan their time well. They don't have the skills to be self-directed."

P7 shared, "There not a consistent level of academic preparedness as they come in. Even in the metro area, a student who graduates from one city is different from a student from another or from another country."

In summary, students entering college are coming with an extensive variety of experiences. Not one high school experience is the same. The standards are varied, and the cultures are varied. Many students carry a load of responsibilities other than college coursework.

Figure 7

Experience Three: Emergent Codes



Assumptions

The researcher identified assumptions of readiness levels that were discovered during the data analysis process. This is significant because it helps faculty understand why students come to their classrooms with different levels of preparation. Initial codes that eventually developed the experience "assumptions" included: K-12 Education, educational quality, experience, thoughts, and impressions. It can provide information in what leads up to whether they are prepared. The majority of respondents believed that overall, there has been a decline in readiness for college-level academic standards.

P1 said, "I have a strong desire that they will come with the skills necessary, but we are a two-year open access institution. I have to be willing to work with the students and so I don't have that expectation." P3 offered,

> The more I talk with high school teachers, it seems like the pre/post Covid-19 academic standards are lower and lower. Even things like expecting students to follow complex directions. I think we have an increasing crisis in K-12 education and the range of quality of instruction and education.

Many participants mentioned the difference in the quality of K12 experiences. P3 put it, “I fear we’re going to see those disparities more and more at our level.” P4 stated, “The K12 teachers are doing their job, they’re teaching what they’re supposed to be teaching, but the student experiences are very different based on what school they went to and how much they put into it.”

The prevailing assumption among many researchers is that the decrease in readiness can be attributed to the regulation of K-12 systems. These systems are required to adhere to state standards, meet specific benchmarks, and guide students through their educational journey until graduation. P7 commented,

> You must go to high school, but you don’t have to go to college. So, on some level, there’s a different level of self-interest. I would say that high schools no longer prepare students for college. High schools just try to get them through the required curriculum. I have no anecdotal evidence of this, and don’t want to point fingers, but for the students we see here, I don’t think the high schools are preparing them.

P7 stated,

> I can tell you firsthand that there’s a lack of standards and a lack of accountability in elementary and high school now. Kids aren’t allowed to fail. And so if they come here, if you didn’t do the work, I’m not going to pass you. That’s not something their used to coming in. That’s been a massive change I think in the last five years or so.

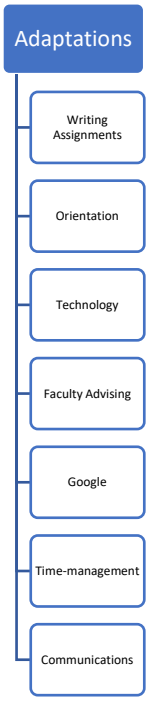
Another assumption made is the college pathway where students are directed to take certain courses based on their abilities. P7 offered,

> I think the schools have an idea of what colleges need. I just don’t feel like they’re doing a good job preparing students for it. I think they’re good at preparing a group of students for it. Those students probably would have been successful either way. I think the student we see are the ones getting missed or are just coasting through and the schools are just letting them because they are not going to be the four-year school candidates.

In summary, it's assumed that two-year students are going to come in with some type of deficiency related to intellectual development in academic and non-academic skill areas. This is exacerbated by the fact that most of the institutions of study are open access. Faculty at the college assume that standards in high schools have changed and have been lowered. There is also a different level of motivation as high school students are required to go to high school, and teachers are expected to pass them. College is a choice for most, and that can be a positive thing as there's more drive to complete the work to reach an end goal.

Figure 8

Experience Four: Emergent Codes



Adaptations

In their years of experience, all co-researchers have made changes to their approach to delivering quality content to improve classrooms and outcomes, as is a natural tendency of any teacher. How writing assignments are given was one modification that many instructors mentioned. Experiences by the co-researchers regarding adaptations are explained below.

P1 offered, “writing has become really important for students, our ELL students specially to remedy this I do have my students do more speaking and presentations to demonstrate their academic knowledge. Now it's more put your camera on, tell me what you know. Explain it in your own words.” P1 stated, “Now I use more conversation.” The understanding of responsibility among participants is that they need to help foster and develop the student to the extent they feel appropriate. P1 asserted,

> I think educational learning systems are responsible to start developing these cognitive strategies earlier, but it’s complicated because our students come from all over the world, but I think it’s a societal responsibility. My true belief is that I’m responsible for all of it. Any place where there’s a gap, it’s my responsibility to either fill that gap or find the resources to fill that gap.

Part of forming the expectations of a college-level course is to keep the students aware of what is going on in the course and the college environment. All participants utilize the learning management system to notify students of important information. P1 commented, “I feel like our average student is prepared in this area (college knowledge), but I also send reminders to let them know what they need to do. Emails, and texts, are critical to keep them aware.”

P3 offered, “My assumption was that after Covid-19, technological readiness would improve because they did school online. But still, something basic like how you save a file somewhere and then find it again, what I think of as basic technology literacy has declined, and I was surprised because I assumed students would have had those skills.” P3 added, “I do think it’s our responsibility to meet students where they are, whatever that looks like.”

P4 suggested, “We have to be aware that students are changing. Students have Google right in front of them. They can Google everything, and it’s a whole different way of learning, understanding, and gaining knowledge.” As most of the participants have eliminated cut scores in

their programs, many mentioned that they take it upon themselves to help advise the students based on abilities they see in the students. P4 posited,

> I give my students a readiness tests a week before class (in addition to the ACCUPLACER). I give them eight questions and I take a glance at that. If they can get most of them correct, we're good to go. Some students can't answer a single question. If they cannot, they have not been placed appropriately and I work with the advisors to help direct them to another class.

P5 recalled,

> I teach more classes online than prior to Covid-19. My on-campus course has really demonstrated how many questions students have. Being a physical body in person, in front of them, they feel they can ask questions about anything college related. I have no idea who they ask these questions to as an online student, but the recent on campus class I taught was the most work I've done for that class in years, just with the questions and things they needed. Maybe it just that there was a person they could talk to versus trying to navigate online.

P6 also offered,

> I don't have a lot of writing assignments. Students do not want to put the effort into writing due to technology available to them such as Chat GPT, so I have them do a project instead. You can't really use Chat GPT for projects.

The ways in which students learn is changing. Google was also brought up by most participants. Because of technology, participants are noticing lack of academic behaviors that are needed for college level work. P6 went on to state,

> My quizzes are based off the book and can be retaken as many times as they want. The high score is what's recorded because I'm not using those online quizzes as a true measure of assessment, more to make sure that they're getting exposed to the content. I know that some

> students aren't even going to buy the book. They're just going to Google the answers. And they're going to go through it. But by making sure they can retake it. At least, I'm making sure that they're exposed to the same content as somebody who's reading those chapters. The successful students are the ones who can look beyond the quick answer and can reason, interpret and critically think.

P7 had this to say regarding Google:

> They (students) need to be inquisitive. They must be curious. They want to learn and problem-solving is a challenge. I think we live in an environment now where everything can just be Googled so we don't have to think about problems anymore. We can just instantly find an answer. Self-awareness doesn't exist. They Google stuff and use Chat GPT rather than do the work they will go find the answer.

When asked about adapting to students' readiness levels, P7 stated "We have no restrictions to our program, but once they come in, if a student is really struggling, then we kind of steer them into different majors within the umbrella of our field"

To summarize, co-researchers find it challenging to evaluate students' knowledge based on their backgrounds when it comes to writing assignments. Hence, they tend to assign more discussion or speaking tasks that allow students to demonstrate their learning through means other than writing. Faculty feel they are responsible to fill gaps that are missing for their students to be as successful as possible in their courses. It was a surprise by some that with the recentness of Covid-19 and online learning, that some students lack online skills. In contrast, the internet is utilized at a much higher rate than it used to be in faculty experiences in their classrooms. The use of Chat GPT and Google to access information is very prevalent and has resulted in less time spent on thought processing. Adaptations are made to assignments and advising based on student readiness.

Figure 9

Experience Five: Emergent Codes

Supports

Most of the co-researchers explained that their teaching has been formed by their own experiences. The idea of "support" originated from evolving codes that were crucial for understanding how faculty help students who may not be fully prepared for college, and how the college's resources, such as advising and orientation, can assist with this. It also encompasses how instructors support their students and their teaching methods. Many of the co-researchers have been students themselves at various points in their educational and personal journeys. The experiences regarding support are stated below.

Faculty felt that modification to an orientation process could provide better awareness of skills that will help them be successful. Coaching and mentoring were also mentioned to continue support of the student beyond initial advising or orientation, several participants mentioned that there is a mentoring or coaching aspect of teaching.

P1 stated, “We talk a lot about being proactive. When they ask how they are doing in the class, I say, you tell me. I think self-monitoring is an area where I’ve done the most coaching because they’re hard to change those environments or those behaviors when they come with that behavior.” P1 offered, “I learned that students don’t come with specific cognitive strategies nor

their awareness of talents and skills that they have but have never been asked to use them." P1 stated, "Historically we teach how we were taught, and something needs to interrupt that. I can't teach the way I learned. Something interrupted that for me, and I was able to see, that there is a much better way to help students develop learner agency and become the professionals they need to be."

The co-researchers also mentioned orientation as a way to guide and support incoming students. P1 stated "In a perfect world, students would be prepared. Could a new student orientation address some of these things? Possibly, but they have so many things to just get this student-oriented that things like academic behaviors get ignored." P1 went on to explain that being supportive in their mind also means setting an example; "I'm an example of a lifelong learner, and I'm a full-time student too. These are the times I must study. Giving them real examples and being a role model for them is beneficial." P1 stated, "It would be nice if time management and responsibilities were part of orientation."

P2 offered, "I feel like the only way some of the advising/orientation aspects will work is if they are shown in the context of a class they're taking. The mandatory orientation won't stick. I give them a little tour, walk them to all of the resources, and am a first trainer to the online learning management system."

P3 suggested, "I know we have a required online orientation. I have to believe it could be greatly improved and would help." P3 went on to explain,

> I think that kind of thing (understanding non-academic skills) should be part of an orientation. You have a couple of slides that show what growth mindset looks like. It would be helpful to use language that shows them success is available to everyone.

One commonality in responses from co-researchers has been the positive experiences with advising. P3 offered, "The academic advisors here are pretty flexible. They help me shift students

around without having them miss deadlines and incur fees." P3 has approached their teaching style to be supportive of students' lives, adding,

> I have very flexible deadlines and basically accept any late work, because for some of our students their life goes off the rails for a bit and I don't want to be the thing that prevents them from getting back on.

P5 stated, "I have heard my colleagues blame stuff on the high schools, but at the institutional level equity and accessibility means meeting students where they are. I've evolved a lot on that, but also recognizing there's only so much you can do." P5 also reflected, "I think I took a stance early on in my career that I needed to be, tough. You needed to have this. You needed to have that. That's what students need to do. And that's how you get through. I am starting to understand the stresses that the students have to endure just to get through the day is amazing." P5 also shared,

> I took classes on our campus, and it opened my eyes to what students might need. I took every good thing I could take out of that class I took and implemented it into mine. Now they get more attempts on their quizzes, and get more time to turn in assignments, I'm also learning that providing more feedback for students on their work is better for them to understand their scores. I was given a rubric that allowed for more feedback, adapted it to my own class and it is amazing. It is much clearer for the students.

P6 postulated,

> There's been a slow change because of technology. They are used to instant gratification. As soon as they see something, they click on it and have a twenty-second attention span. I call it Tik-Tok Syndrome. COVID-19 accelerated that because high school students got used to instead of going to school eight hours a day, as soon as they can finish a task, they have the rest of the day to do whatever they want. So, I think it's going to fall more and more on colleges to figure out strategies to make sure students are prepared to be successful.

When asked about support systems at the college, P7 added "Incorporating my own advising into my courses (helping students with pathways) is something that's happening more and more. Students tell me they are in touch with their advisors and overall that process goes just fine." P7 explained, "I think other than if there was a mandatory first-semester advisory skills building class, there's not much more the colleges can do."

Instructors have made modifications to their assignments and coursework to better support students through trial and error and suggestions from other colleagues. P7 reflected,

> One thing I have students do is just repetition. I give them a task, and if they don't get a perfect score, I have them do it again, and then I allow them to repeat the task up to three times, and then I take the highest score. The other thing I have incorporated is more discussion boards. So even though they are doing a technical task, I have them talk about it, trying to trigger an affective type of learning.

P7 suggested that supporting students also means increased work stating, "The strain on the instructor comes from extra office hours, and extra time. The students seem needier. Rather than troubleshoot, they give up and email me."

In summary, co-researchers believed that orientation helps with student support, but the processes could be improved. The college advisors do a good job in supporting the students and the faculty, and faculty try to support student advising within their classrooms as well. This, obviously, can be time-consuming. What exacerbates the situation is the high number of students in each course. The results also exposed that many times faculty make adaptations based on their own experiences as a learner or ideas from colleagues.

Synthesis

The essence of the lived experiences the co-researchers had regarding college readiness was explored through a lens of Conley's Four Facets of College Readiness. Interview questions around the four facets provided the lived experiences of the co-researchers regarding how they view

college readiness, their firsthand experiences, and ways to support students. Co-researchers unanimously agreed that college readiness encompasses more than just test scores and academic skills. They emphasized that it must also include behavioral components such as attitude and perseverance.

Ideally, every student would possess a well-rounded and well-developed set of academic and non-academic skills. However, not every student meets this ideal. Many students come with a skill set that needs to be developed and empowered. In contrast to some students being underprepared, it was brought forth that student's enrolled in academic programs in a two-year environment, especially technical courses, are motivated to get out into the workforce or add additional skill sets. This is a different type of motivation seen in a K-12 environment in which students are required to attend and teachers are expected to meet academic standards. Another factor in attempting to examine college readiness is the variety of backgrounds that students come to college with. One K-12 school is not the same as another in terms of quality and rigor. Students also have different cultural backgrounds or may be immigrants.

When examining students' overall level of readiness, co-researchers expressed a concern for a trending decline in college readiness. The level of readiness perceptions amongst the co-researchers varied. The co-researchers who taught technical programs felt a lesser degree of readiness than those who teach general education classes. Co-researchers attribute much of the concern to technology and getting instant answers to their work, rather than taking the time to troubleshoot or figure things out.

Taking on many responsibilities is one reason that students get stretched thin, as they attempt to juggle work, families, financial obligations, and school. Instructors have adjusted their approach to students due to their various commitments and diverse backgrounds. Their initial teaching methods were based on their traditional educational experiences. However, over time, they have adapted to the evolving student population by offering accommodations such as extra test-

taking time, increased discussions, fewer writing assignments, multiple attempts at assignments, and extended deadlines. Faculty also rely on the help of resources at the college such as advisors and tutoring centers. Feedback given by the co-researchers regarding student supports included suggestions of making orientation a more robust experience.

Summary

Chapter Four presents the experiences shared by the college faculty co-researchers in this qualitative study. Data gathered from seven co-researchers provided five themes that emerged to explain the research question and sub-questions. The lived experiences of these participants revealed the details of their perceptions of college readiness. In Chapter Five, the researcher will summarize the results, discuss them and draw final conclusions based on the study. This chapter will also compare the findings with previous literature, discuss limitations, and provide recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The aim of this phenomenological study was to investigate how two-year college instructors perceive college readiness in their classrooms. This was accomplished by interviewing seven faculty members to better understand their lived experiences. Chapter Five provides a summary of the results, a comparison to the literature given in Chapter Two, and conclusions based on the results of the study. Interpretations of the findings, implications of the study, and recommendations for future research are also discussed.

Summary of the Results

This study was necessary to give prominence to the insights of faculty members at two-year colleges regarding college readiness. The literature review uncovered a noticeable lack of faculty involvement in addressing college readiness, making the findings of this study an important addition to the existing gap in research providing the faculty perspective. The findings of this study are significant as they provide a valuable understanding of the challenges and experiences faced by faculty in their teaching environments.

The research questions that guided this qualitative study looked to answer the following:

How do college faculty teaching entry-level courses describe and perceive student college readiness?

Sub questions:

What characteristics do college faculty feel contribute to prepared students?

What modifications do college faculty feel can be made to improve college readiness?

The results were derived from semi-structured interviews of seven college faculty that teach entry-level coursework. Based on the data collected through interviews, five main experiences emerged that best reflect the lived experiences of college readiness that were presented in Chapter Four.

The research findings indicate a misalignment between high schools' confidence in preparing students for college and the opposing views of college faculty. High schools have relied

on benchmark testing as a means to assess students' academic abilities. However, college faculty in this study have expressed reservations about the efficacy of benchmark testing as an accurate indicator of students' preparedness for higher education. College faculty expressed concern about K-12 being a system that has regulation and standards, and the teachers are required to prepare their students based on these standards. It is assumed that they are also encouraged to pass students and to simply get them through graduation.

The standards for college readiness are largely based on state and federal laws and do not fully consider the expectations of college instructors. There isn't a single definition for college readiness, but an operational definition provided by Conley in 2011 describes it as "the level of preparation a student needs to enroll and succeed without remediation in a credit-bearing general education course at a postsecondary institution that offers a baccalaureate degree or transfer to a baccalaureate program" (p.11). This emphasizes the need for better alignment and improvement in the education system at the state level to address college readiness more comprehensively and to create a bridge from K-12 to college.

The findings of this study revealed that college faculty view readiness expectations in similar ways. Many of the co-researchers agreed that there is academic and non-academic readiness. The co-researchers shared that readiness comes in varied levels and ideally, all students would come to any higher education institution prepared. The co-researcher who utilized assessment tests for placement into their classes believed that students were prepared. Those who didn’t utilize placement tests, had an overall agreeance of there being a decline in preparedness. This decline in academic skills was primarily expressed as inconsistent educational backgrounds and the idea that K-12 systems are responsible for graduating students and each school might have different expectations. For example, a student attending one high school might have had a different quality of education than a student from another school. These differences are also true for the student who comes from another country.

Non-academic ability regression was attributed by the co-researchers to student expectations of a transactional learning environment like high school. Co-researchers also experienced students having less ability to troubleshoot, and critically think to complete their work. In addition, the attitude to become successful makes a difference in the student's ability to do well. Having confidence and believing that they can be successful is part of getting through their college academic journey. These findings also support an examination of K-12 standards in regards to college readiness.

This study presents the faculty perspective of viewing students with not only diverse backgrounds, but a high range of responsibilities outside of their academic pursuits. Many co-researchers experienced students who are trying to juggle family obligations, financial responsibilities, work, raising kids, and trying to manage a variety of adult life duties. In addition, the two-year colleges where the co-researchers were from were open-access institution, therefore, there are no restrictions for admittance. This open access feature adds to the variety of preparedness in the classrooms.

Discussion of Results

The findings of this study add to the current literature, especially for two-year institutions. The phenomenon of college readiness was explored through asking questions regarding perceptions of readiness in both academic and non-academic areas, and support systems, and it opened up areas of discussion for assumptions that are made in why students arrive at the readiness levels they do. This study adds context to previous research by allowing a firsthand account of two-year college faculty perceptions. This data provided support to Conley's operational definition of college readiness discussed previously. The data gathered aligns with the idea of bridging the gap between the expectations of K-12 systems and college-level coursework. There was a large amount of input from co-researchers that a two-year institution differs from a four-year, however, some of this data could be applied to both platforms of academia.

The results were limited by exploring perceptions of college readiness based on Conley's Four Facets. Future research could present more detailed data. While the co-researchers discussed some assumptions about why students have declined in readiness, there was not a correlation made with having to adapt to a lower preparedness level may have lowered the standards in their own delivery of the coursework. Faculty members take different approaches to their work based on how current students come into their classrooms. This would be an opportunity for further exploration as to what extent expectations have adapted or changed over time.

Comparison of the Findings

Theoretical Framework

The researcher used Conley's Four Facets of College Readiness as the primary framework. Interview questions were framed using the four facets to understand the perceptions and lived experiences of college readiness. Through these four facets, the researcher was able to explore readiness as described by the co-researchers and create a description of the "essence" of these experiences of the college faculty. This allowed the researcher to provide rich descriptions of the phenomenon of college readiness.

By using Conley's Four Facets the essence of college readiness could analyzed through one of the most commonly used descriptions of college readiness. This framework enabled the researcher to investigate four critical areas for obtaining a comprehensive understanding of faculty lived experiences, highlighting the framework's robustness. The researcher would recommend using Conley's Four Facets as a framework for future qualitative studies investigating college readiness. For studies that wish to look more closely at one of the four facets of readiness, this model could be used to obtain a more detailed perspective.

A secondary theory utilized was Tinto's theory of departure to understand the lived experiences of two-year college faculty. The researcher used semi-structured interviews to gather data regarding the perceptions of readiness thru a lens of support systems that are in place for

students, academically and non-academically. This added a layer of understanding of what contributes to college-success.

Previous Literature

Previous literature on college readiness is plentiful with the exception of faculty perspective. This study gathered the perspectives of experienced full-time faculty from two-year colleges. Much of the current data on college readiness is quantitative, as test scores, GPA and placement exams are commonly used to determine readiness levels. Previous literature has provided data around college-readiness; however, this study adds the essence of the faculty experience to understand what it is like for faculty teaching two-year college students.

Much of the literature review included legislative milestones that shaped how the educational system has changed over time. More current legislation such as ESSA, (Every Child Success Act) has left states to create their own adaptation of plans in which some states include college readiness and some do not. Data analysis showed that faculty view K-12 regulation as part of the concern in readiness. While faculty believe K-12 teachers are doing what they are supposed to be doing regarding their academic standards, faculty also feel concerned about standards not doing as good of a job preparing students for college-level expectations. P6 posited, “High school has become so much more task-oriented. There’s been a lack of standards and a lack of accountability. In addition, kids aren’t allowed to fail.”

Previous literature showed that there is no one universal definition to college readiness (Conley, 2011). This was discussed by co-researchers as an experience in diversity. Students come to college with such a variety of experiences and backgrounds that it is hard to expect any one certain level of readiness even though the qualities of readiness. The literature also indicated that there is no universal definition of remedial education (U.S. Department of Education, 2017), therefore, colleges have been using placement testing to determine whether remedial education is needed. Co-researcher responses were limited regarding remediation and placement testing. P4, a

mathematics instructor, held a unique perspective on the significance of placement exams and remedial coursework in preparing students for his courses. P4 believed that these measures were crucial due to the incremental nature of learning in mathematics, making the exams essential for student readiness.

In previous studies, faculty members have expressed concerns about not having input in remedial coursework and education reform (Daugherty, 2018; Bradburn & Townsend, 2014). Due to the open-access nature of admission to the college, faculty members in the study stated that they have removed cut scores and some prerequisites because they were seen as barriers to their programs and not as direct indicators of success.

The literature also illustrated that faculty do not have as much representation in federal, state, and local policy reforms as they would like (National Council of Teachers of English, 2014). As was stated previously, the co-researchers also believed that K-12 is required to follow educational policies, academic standards, and graduate students. The quality of K-12 education differs significantly across student populations. Many are advocating for the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to ensure more equitable educational opportunities (Squires, 2012). This condition creates an opportunity for K-12 schools and colleges to engage in meaningful conversations about the expectations at the college level. For example, co-researchers noted that a high school algebra class at one school may differ in rigor and quality compared to another school. P7 states “There’s not a consistent level of academic preparedness. A student who graduates from one city of the metro is different than another or it could be they could be coming from another country.” This variation can also be influenced by the motivational level of the students and their level of engagement. The co-researchers emphasized the significance of attitude as a key element for achieving success. This insight was revealed as an emerging code during the analysis of the data.

Having an attitude of determination and "grit" was discussed by many co-researchers. P1 shared that a student may develop an attitude based on previous academic experiences and that by fostering a positive attitude or growth mindset is important to student success. Having a growth mindset is important to achieving goals. The current literature also supports the idea that adopting a mindset of success is beneficial. Aspirations and beliefs, academic preparation, knowledge and information, and fortitude and resilience were reported by the Policy Analysis for California Education, (2019). Similarly, Byrd and MacDonald (2005) found that academic skills, time-management, the ability to apply oneself to a goal, and self-advocacy were important themes.

Many co-researchers related self-advocacy to being curious, inquisitive, seeking out resources and persistence. P3 stated, "It's not about a matter of whether you're smart enough to do this necessarily, it's about do you have the persistence." Conley and French (2014) explain these qualities as part of student ownership, which means going beyond simply following instructions. Co-research responses are also in alignment with this as their descriptions of expectations. In regards to a definition of college readiness, P6 explained "There's a social-emotional readiness, and do they have the ability to complete self-directed work? To complete things on time? To adapt as needed whether it's in their personal lives or within the school?" P7 adds, "Self-awareness I would say doesn't exist."

An interesting discovery from our co-researchers data was the emphasis on non-academic skills, particularly professionalism. Professionalism stands out from what was found in previous literature as a key component of college readiness. Co-researchers found professionalism to be lacking. P5 explained "Student have been progressively becoming less professional in their homework, emails, and quizzes. It seems as though they just want to get it done quickly. They don't want to write it out professionally. Grammar and professionalism are lacking."

Conley's research (2003, 2005, 2008) showed that college faculty from all different types (e.g., two-year, four-year, technical) believe that students are not as prepared as they should be in

order to do college level work in areas of critical thinking, problem solving, analyzing results, conducting research and in deep thinking. This presents a unique challenge in a two-year open access institution where academic goals vary.

Most co-researchers felt that the existing student support systems in place were helpful. There was a strong positive response regarding advising at the institution of study. This helped faculty in having flexibility with course placements and having support in their work to help students succeed by being in the correct sections or courses and to move them when necessary. Research has shown that having a student-ready college helps facilitate completion (Brown et al., 2022). One area where this institution could improve is in providing a more comprehensive orientation and onboarding process for new students. P6 suggests the implementation of a first-semester college 101 course, focusing on topics such as "student success" or "orientation to college."

Interpretation of the Findings

This study is consistent with previous research on college readiness. However, it provides firsthand insight into the experiences of two-year college faculty in dealing with college readiness in the classroom. It has given a voice to faculty who were previously overlooked in research. The co-researchers have contributed significant insights to the literature by providing their lived experiences of this phenomenon.

The co-researchers viewed college readiness through both the academic skills lens and the non-academic skills lens. The ideal student would come to college proficient in Conley's Four Facets. In the co-researchers own words, some of the qualities would include grit, curiosity, problem-solving ability, professionalism, persistence, critical thinking, humility, confidence, and a baseline of academic skill. Some of the co-researchers assumed that students with higher skill sets are more likely to attend a four-year college rather than a two-year college. Ideally, the students entering their classrooms would possess some of these higher skill sets, but in reality, most are

lacking or still developing them. The co-researchers had varied input on how well-prepared students are. Technical faculty believed students were low to moderately ready in all aspects, while general education instructors felt, while there has been a decline over time, it was a readiness level they would expect and could work with. Faculty have a level of expectation that would be the ideal student and they do have some of those in their courses. They also have an understanding that at a two-year institution, they are not going to get ideal students.

Faculty teaching technical courses must commit to more student contact hours compared to general education courses, primarily because of the hands-on nature of in-person labs. Additionally, students in technical programs often carry a full-credit load, intensifying their time commitments. Consequently, attending classes for technical program students entails a substantial time investment, given the inclusion of lab components, as well as the additional time required outside the classroom for coursework. Technical instructors also have a level of expectation that a student will be prepared by their lecture portion of the coursework to be able to apply that knowledge and problem-solve in a lab situation. This was emphasized by P6 and P7 that this also adds a strain to the time to the instructor if students need more help outside of class. Many times, this can go beyond set office hours. The perception in level of readiness in technical faculty was lower than that of general education instructors. Since this study was limited to seven co-researchers, future researchers may want to compare and contrast the lived experiences of technical faculty versus general education faculty.

Faculty take different approaches to helping students develop these skills, such as providing their own orientation to their class and spending time teaching about mindset, and making sure students know the resources that are available to them. Many co-researchers believed they are responsible for helping develop skills that may be lacking. Some had different opinions on filling the gaps in skills. Some felt responsible for all gaps, requiring significant time investment. They did agree that it is important that a student take accountability for their education as well.

Students have changed over time into becoming more transactional by believing that if they show up, they deserve a passing grade. The way they approach their work has also changed with technology being quicker and easier than using critical thinking or problem-solving skills. It is quicker to email and ask the instructor to solve the problem than to try figure it out for themselves. Students want answers without having to study or put in much effort. This may be an opportunity for K-12 educators to incorporate more critical thinking into their assignments.

Becoming a college instructor at a two-year college does not necessarily require teaching experience, therefore, the co-researchers initially began their teaching methodology as being similar to their own experiences as students, which for the most part included a four-year institution. Over time they have adapted their methodology to be aligned with what students need when they arrive to college. When asked about any adaptations that have been made to their classroom approach in response to readiness levels, many co-researchers mentioned fewer writing assignments and more discussions.

Co-researchers discussed adding multiple attempts on exams and adding time to timed exams as testing on the learning management system as an adaptation they have made. While co-researchers felt that K-12 had a tendency to want to pass all students, it didn't seem to correlate that this could be a way of making accommodations to the way students arrive at college from K-12. They have adapted assignments to include more information processing in class or through discussion than using exams as a main indicator of content knowledge.

Limitations

Qualitative research requires the fair-mindedness of the researcher. The interpretation of the data is one that still derives from the researcher, hence, the importance of Moustakas's Epoche, where the investigator, "sets aside their experiences as much as possible, to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 78)." The researcher must still make an interpretation while setting aside their own bias.

A suggested sample size for a phenomenological study is up to 10 participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study was limited to seven co-researchers. The study provided a unique perspective on the readiness of general education and technical faculty, offering valuable insights into the dynamics of preparedness at a two-year institution. One limitation to the study was amount of representation of general education faculty and technical faculty, as the study revealed varied opinions from the two regarding the level of readiness. A more enriched understanding could be captured by expanding the research to a larger sample size, or more institutions.

The study was conducted at a Midwestern two-year institution in which the student population is diverse. It is an open-access institution, which creates a variety of readiness levels based on the educational and cultural backgrounds of its students. Not every college has the same demographic, or entrance requirements, however, there is still value to the data.

While this study provides a voice to two-year faculty and much of the information is valuable to any college, it is limited to the faculty that were involved at this institution. Full-time faculty were used in the study since the researcher wanted instructors with actual experiences with the phenomenon. All the faculty that participated in the study had at least ten years of experience and this seemed important to the study to explain that there has been a decline in readiness over time.

This study focused on the two-year college perspective and did not specifically explore K-12. In order to bridge a gap in expectations, better understanding what is happening in K-12 regarding college readiness could be explored to know where improvements could be made.

Implications of the Study

This study aimed to fill the gap in faculty input on college readiness. While existing data on this topic is mostly quantitative, this study provided valuable insights into faculty experiences with this issue, offering qualitative data to enrich the existing knowledge base. Co-researchers offered

experiential data to support the qualities of readiness that Conley has developed with the Four Facets of Readiness model.

Theory

The purpose of this study was not to create new theories or to disprove existing theory, but to add to the meaning of the existing literature by providing qualitative data from firsthand accounts of two-year college faculty experiences. The primary theory used for the study, Conley's Four Facets model of college readiness, incorporates both academic and non-academic characteristics that are important for college readiness. Conley emphasizes that the four facet areas need to become habitual practices that a student need to learn, understand, retain and use (Conley, 2007). This study provided evidence that these areas are consistent with what college level expectations are.

The second theory within this study was that of Tinto's Theory, in which Tinto states there are four main conditions to support student retention: information/advice, support, involvement, and learning. This adds to the belief that faculty feel access to resources and support are important to successful student outcomes for those that need it. Instructors and students need to have an active role in the involvement of their coursework.

Practical Implications

Enrollment trends in colleges change over time, but the diversity of the student population will continue to increase everywhere. With the recent Supreme Court ruling of *Students for Fair Admissions*, the Biden-Harris administration released a report titled "Strategies for Increasing Diversity and Opportunity in Higher Education" (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). This report calls for colleges to advance diversity on college campuses. The input provided by the co-researchers of this study provides insight into the challenges of having an open-access institution with such a diverse background of students. Some co-researchers offered that culturally, students may come from other countries that hold different standards than the U.S. For instance, P2 stated

"We have large immigrant populations and lots of students with gaps in their education. The way the American system uses plagiarism in post-secondary education is different from most other cultures." The findings of the study revealed that this diversity is not only cultural but local in K-12 experiences. The research findings indicated a wide disparity in the high school experiences and the quality of education received. Furthermore, the level of student motivation was observed to be distinct between high school and college environments. The practical implications of this study can be used to examine state-wide reforms in an attempt to create more equal experiences in K-12.

K-12 education institutions play a crucial role in preparing students for high school graduation and, in some cases, college readiness. Although certain states have integrated college readiness into their K-12 standards, the actual implementation methods vary significantly and warrant further examination. Some K-12 institutions may view college readiness as holding college fairs and offering college tours. Regardless of the disparities, the supports students need in preparation and success in their educational journey is of utmost importance.

The cost of a college education and cost of living has significantly increased over the past decade or so. Because of this, it is more likely that students will carry the stress of added financial responsibilities such as working and carrying debt loads. Since 1980, the cost of attending public universities in the United States has nearly tripled. As a nation, the collective student loan debt in the U.S. is approaching $1.77 trillion (Rivera, 2023). Some co-researchers have revealed that the students they encounter frequently manage a multitude of responsibilities, including their academic pursuits. Some expressed that students are trying to work full time and attend college. This requires some type of time-management component to the existing coursework. Educators are adjusting their curriculum by incorporating more lenient deadlines and offering opportunities for students to revise their work, thus providing support for the students' various obligations. This is an area where instructors could review their practices, as well as an opportunity for advisors to recommend credit loads that will be best for the student's success.

Other adaptations that faculty have made that were brought forth included having fewer writing assignments due to the difficulty for some students to write proficiently. Instructors believed it was not always the best indicator of knowledge, however, instructors also felt there was a lack of professionalism in writing a simple mail. If instructors are preparing students for the workforce or to move on to a four-year institution, at a minimum, professional writing standards are important. The data presented here may have practical implications. For example, K-12 education could focus on improving writing skills to include professionalism, better preparing students for further education. College instructors could also examine whether this approach is beneficial for students in the long run, as most workplaces will also expect a level of professional writing. Some co-researchers asserted that the orientation process at the college of study could be improved. Suggestions were made to make it more robust and to include non-academic and academic components that are important to their success.

Recommendations for Future Research

The remainder of Chapter Five will discuss the recommendations for future research. These recommendations are based on the findings of this study and the identified lack of qualitative data found in the literature review.

Recommendations from the Data

While this study focused on a two-year college that includes many different types of certifications, it would be worthwhile to study additional two-year institutions including the traditional community college. It would be appropriate to understand college readiness from institutions that are transfer institutions, those that transfer credits into a four-year institution, in comparison to a high workforce driven, technical institution.

The programs at the institution of study have attempted various approaches to reduce barriers for students to enter their classes, including the removal of certain prerequisites and/or placement scores. However, this study did not explore these approaches or their level of success.

There is current research on GPA and standardized tests as indicators of success, but there is potential for further research at the two-year college level to determine if the same high placement scores result in student success.

Recommendations from the Limitations

One recommendation would be to further explore a comparison of general education faculty and technical faculty in their possible differences in perception of readiness. This study was limited to seven participants from a variety of disciplines to get an overall assessment of readiness from two-year college faculty. A larger sample size including an equal number of both general and technical programs would be beneficial to investigate this possible difference.

Recommendations from the Data and Design

Many co-researchers in the study revealed that there isn't one great solution to remedial coursework or placement testing as being strong indicators of success. A final recommendation for further study could be to develop a longitudinal study that would explore successful remediation measures. Additionally, the research could be divided by specific programs and departments.

Conclusion

Summary

This qualitative phenomenological study explored the perceptions of the lived experiences of full-time two-year faculty regarding college readiness. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather firsthand data to capture the essence of the co-researcher's experiences. This study reinforces previous literature in the area of college readiness, and in addition, adds a faculty perspective that is lacking in the data. The results of this study highlighted the continued growth of diversity and cultures in the student population which in turn pose challenges to preparedness levels. College readiness includes both academic and non-academic elements. Through increased collaboration of the K-12 system and higher education, better alignment can be made in college readiness efforts before and during their tenure in higher education.

Researcher's Reflection

Upon reflection of this study, the researcher has realized the importance of Epoche in the qualitative research process and appreciates the varied experiences by each research participant. As a researcher, it was important for my own experiences and curiosities of the phenomenon to not bias the experience of the co-researchers. The researcher's desire to better understand what other faculty experience was beneficial to her own understanding of college readiness factors. The literature review justified the study in revealing a gap in qualitative data from college instructors. The rich lived experiences of the co-researchers hold immense value in the realm of college readiness. Through this study, the researcher hopes to bring awareness and a deeper comprehension to the roles and challenges faced by full-time college faculty. Furthermore, the researcher aspires for the voices of college faculty to resonate in policy discussions concerning college readiness, ensuring that their insights inform decision-making processes in an effective manner.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent

Project Title: Faculty Perspectives of College Readiness: A Phenomenological Study at a Two-year college

Investigators: Jackie Jackson, Doctoral Student, Minnesota State University Moorhead

Dr. Michael Coquyt, Advisor, Minnesota State University Moorhead

Dear Participant,

The following information is provided to you to decide if you wish to participate in the present study. Your consent is being given voluntarily. You may refuse to participate in the entire study or any part of the study. If you choose to participate in the study, you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative effect on your relationship with me, your department, or with Minnesota State University Moorhead.

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experience of two year college faculty of college readiness. Particularly, the researcher is interested in gaining a deeper understanding of how faculty's experiences can help stakeholders in higher education. The phenomenological qualitative research design will consist of interviews with faculty who have experienced this phenomenon.

Your participation in this study will require a one-hour interview and an additional 30-minute interview if a follow-up is deemed necessary. Once transcribed, you will have an opportunity to review the transcript. The interviews will be conducted via Zoom. These Zoom sessions will use a protective passcode to enter the meeting.

To protect the identity of participants, each participant will be assigned a pseudonym, which will be used to identify that participant throughout the data collection and in the analysis of the individual case record. The participant identifier/pseudonym document will be stored electronically in a file on a password-protected personal computer and housed in a password protected folder within that computer. After the member checks are completed, the identifier/pseudonym document will be permanently deleted.

Further, to help protect your confidentiality, the storage of data and notes will be kept in a secured location accessible only to the researcher (and not on any Minnesota State campus or on any Minnesota State owned computers or storage). This project will involve making an audio recording of your interview conversation. The digital audio recording, accompanying notes and transcriptions will be kept on a password-protected computer (again, not owned by Minnesota State). Information from this study will be kept until the end of May 2026, at which point all information will be destroyed.

This study will involve minimal risk and discomfort. The probability of harm and discomfort will not be greater than your daily life encounters. Risks may include emotional discomfort interview questions. The benefits associated with your participation are the information about your experience, and the opportunity to participate in a qualitative research study.

Please get in touch at any time with questions about this study. You may contact Jackie Jackson, Minnesota State University Moorhead, 612-730-8452 or Dr. Michael Coquyt, Minnesota State University Moorhead, 218-477-2019. Any questions about your rights may be directed to Dr. Lisa Karch, Chair of the MSUM Institutional Review Board, at 218-477-2699 or by email at irb@mnstate.edu.

Acceptance to Participate: *Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above, and you have given consent to participate. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty after signing this form.*

Signature of Participant	**Date**
Signature of Researcher	**Date**

Thank you for your time and consideration.