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Exploring Factors Influencing the Transition of Adult Students From Noncredit to Credit Community College Courses

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Exploring Factors Influencing the Transition of Adult Students From Noncredit to Credit Community College Courses

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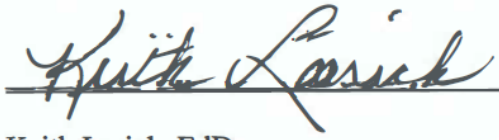

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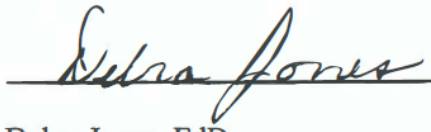

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ABSTRACT

Exploring Factors Influencing the Transition of Adult Students From Noncredit to Credit Community College Courses

by Kevin Baker

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the factors that former Adult Basic Education (ABE) students perceived were important in their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework offered at 2 community colleges in San Bernardino County and Riverside County, California, using Schlossberg's (1984) transition theory and 4S system elements. A second purpose of this study was to determine which factors facilitated or hindered their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework.

Methodology: This qualitative research study utilized a phenomenological approach to explore the transition experience of former ABE students. Semistructured interviews were used to discover the perceptions of former ABE students who successfully transitioned from noncredit to credit coursework.

Findings: Eight findings resulted from the analysis, including 5 elements that were important to ABE students' successful transition in the areas of faculty, family, and financial support and the students' desire for personal growth and fulfillment including advancement in their careers. Three findings were related to overcoming language and work barriers and learning coping strategies. An unexpected finding emerged related to the need to develop self-confidence.

Conclusion: Seven conclusions were presented related to the navigation of complicated institutional systems, the importance of support services, the importance of faculty and

counselor support, student's inexperience in dealing with unexpected challenges, the need to better support limited English learners, the vital importance of financial aid, and the applicability of Schlossberg's (1984) theory to understanding the ABE students' transition experiences.

Recommendations: Recommendations included increasing the collaboration among community colleges and adult education programs, developing a model ABE transition training program for staff, developing local policies to assist ABE student transitions, collecting and analyzing transition data to support ABE student transition programs, providing dedicated local funding for ABE transition, and including support for ABE student transition within the Cal Grant awards program.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The United States has grown into a world power in large part by having a well-educated workforce (Goldin & Katz, 2008). However, the most significant departure of human capital from the workforce looms with the retirement of the baby boomer generation. This reduction in the workforce is expected to leave virtually all industries with an enormous need for skilled job replacements (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007). Although many of the positions vacated will create a workforce gap in jobs that require a minimum of a postsecondary credential, or what the U.S. Department of Labor calls middle-skill jobs (Holzer & Lerman, 2007), a 2010 report by the U.S. Department of Education reported that approximately 12% of adults in the United States lacked a high school diploma, and data from the U.S. Census American Community Survey show that the number of Californians between the ages of 18 and 24 with less than a high school diploma was 13.9% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015).

The United States cannot meet the needs of the workforce through a sole focus on the K–12 pipeline. To bridge the workforce gap, policy makers and postsecondary education leaders must maximize the educational level of adult learners to increase student achievement, create positive student outcomes, and break the cycle of adult learners who have fallen through the cracks in the system (Jones & Kelly, 2007). The need to increase the success rate of all adults in postsecondary education is critical (Kis & Field, 2013). Furthermore, Kirsch, Braun, Yamamoto, and Sum (2007) outlined three converging factors that will continue to change the nation's future: a demographic shift caused by higher immigration, inadequate literacy skills for large segments of the population, and the increased need for a better educated workforce. In a more recent

report, the California Department of Education (CDE, 2011) supported Kirsch et al.'s (2007) finding that there are three forces driving the need to educate adults in California: demographic shifts, educational challenges, and workforce demands.

The findings from Kirsch et al. (2007) and the CDE (2011) report illustrate the converging factors that result in widening gaps within the workforce and the need for a skilled workforce. Adult education schools and community colleges have long served as the primary method in California for adults to improve their academic skills and acquire occupational training. Although adult students have consistently accessed these educational opportunities, completion rates in both systems are not sufficient to meet the demands of the economy (Johnson, Cook, & Mejia, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education [USDOE, OCTAE], 2015; Zafft, 2008). Policy makers and postsecondary leaders continue to face challenges on how to improve the adult education school and community college systems to prepare students to successfully enter and persist within the workforce (National Commission on Adult Literacy, 2008; USDOE, 2014).

Background

Since the start of adult education in California in the early 1850s, it has remained an important part of the state's educational system. The first adult school classes were sponsored by the San Francisco Board of Education and focused on literacy and numeracy skills and vocational pathways (West, 2005). In 1910, Fresno Junior College became California's first community college and would change noncredit adult education in the state (Fresno City College, n.d.).

The adult schools operated by K–12 districts and the community colleges are the state's primary providers of adult education (M. Taylor, 2012; Torlakson & Harris, 2015). The California State Board of Education originally administered adult schools and community colleges (Torlakson & Harris, 2015), but in 1963, all statutes that related to junior colleges were placed in a separate section, Title 5, of the Education Code (San Diego Continuing Education [SDCE], 2018). The Stiern Act of 1967 changed the governance structure of the California Community Colleges (CCC) and established the Board of Governors to oversee them (SDCE, 2018).

The CCC system, which has 2.1 million students attending 114 colleges, is the largest postsecondary institution in the nation and serves as an open access institution to a diverse student population seeking a postsecondary credential or certificate (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office [CCCCO], 2018). It also serves as an entry point to higher education for many unprepared and underprepared adult students. In 1991, Senate Bill 1874 added noncredit adult education as an essential mission of the community college system (CCCCO, 2006; M. Taylor, 2012), and in 2014, 9.3% of the students were enrolled in basic skills or noncredit courses (B. W. Harris, 2016). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2016) also found that approximately 46.5% of community college students are considered nontraditional, that is, they are older students, students who work full time or students without a traditional high school diploma. Community colleges are called upon to increase the achievement of noncredit adult basic education (ABE) students, to close achievement gaps for adult learners, and to increase the student transition rate into credit-earning college-level coursework.

Theoretical Foundations

This study was built upon several theoretical theories of adult development to understand how different factors affect adult education students' transition from noncredit ABE courses to community college credit courses. Theories that are commonly classified as stage/phase and life-span theories include the notion of transition. These theories focus on the coping strategies adults must work on to get through the transition process.

Life Structure Theory

The first theory, life structure or stage/phase theory, posits that all adults progress through a similar sequence of age-related periods (Levinson, 1986). This theory includes alternating *structure-building* and *structure-changing* (transitional) periods. According to Levinson (1986), the primary task is to "form a life structure and enhance our life within it" (p. 7), and the primary structure-changing task is to "reappraise the existing structure, to explore possibilities for change in the self and the world, and to move toward commitment to the crucial choices that form the basis for a new life structure in the ensuing period" (p. 7). This theory stresses the individual's relationship with other individuals or groups, institutions, or social movements in the individual's environment (Levinson, 1986).

Constructive-Development Theory

The constructive-development theory by Robert Kegan is a cognitive model that addresses the cognitive, social, and emotional development of individuals' personal meaning making (P. G. Love & Guthrie, 1999). In constructive-development theory, meaning making refers to the physical activity of making sense of one's experience

through discovering and resolving problems (Kegan, 1982). Similar to Levinson's (1986) theory, Kegan (1982) theorized that individuals go through five orders of consciousness. This theory stresses balancing and rebalancing subject (self) and object (other) as the construct meaning.

Life-Span Theory

Life-span or life-event theory is a model that focuses on the role of adaptation in continual influences on an individual's life (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2012; Creel, 1996). According to the life-span theory, the adaptation process can come in different forms (i.e., growth, maintenance/resilience, and regulation of loss) throughout the life span (Anderson et al., 2012). The theory suggests that events in an individual's life, not age, determine the course of development (Anderson et al., 2012; Creel, 1996).

Cognitive Appraisal Theory

Cognitive appraisal is a stress and coping theory developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) that is a conceptual model of the relational meaning that an individual constructs through interactions with the environment. In cognitive appraisal theory, two processes—cognitive appraisal and coping—are identified as critical mediators of stressful person–environment relations (Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, Delongis, & Gruen, 1986). Folkman and Moskowitz (2004) defined coping as "thoughts and behavior that people use to manage the internal and external demands of situations that are appraised as stressful" (pp. 746–747). Folkman et al. (1986) defined "cognitive appraisal as a process through which the individual evaluates whether a particular encounter with the environment is relevant to their well-being" (p. 92).

Theoretical Framework

Schlossberg's transition model provides a framework through which to better understand the experience of noncredit ABE students' transition to community college credit coursework (Anderson et al., 2012; Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006; Schlossberg, 1981, 1984). The theory provides a structured framework for analyzing the transition process:

- The type of transition (anticipated, unanticipated, or nonevents);
- The degree to which one's life has been altered (changes in roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions);
- Where one is in the transition process (considering a change, beginning the change, or sometime after the change); and
- The resources one can apply to making it a success (each individual approaches the transitions in a unique way, depending on the 4Ss). (Schlossberg, 2011, p 161)

Sargent and Schlossberg (1988) defined transitions as events or nonevents that alter adult lives. Schlossberg (1981) viewed the study of transition as a process that requires "the simultaneous analysis of individual characteristics and external occurrences" (p. 3). Schlossberg also understood that transitions occur over time, whether they are moving in, moving through, or moving out. The foundation of the transition theory is dependent on an individual's perceptions of the transition, limitations and resources, and ability to cope with the transition.

An updated framework by Anderson et al. (2012) reaffirmed the specific elements to Schlossberg's (1981) model and is the framework best suited for this study. According

to Anderson et al. (2012) and Schlossberg (2011), four major factors influence transitions: situation, self, support, and strategies. This is known as the 4S system:

- Situation refers to an individual's situation at the time of the transition. Does the individual view the transition as positive or negative, voluntary or imposed, or benign?
- Self refers to the kind of strengths and weaknesses an individual brings to the transition. What is the individual's previous experience in similar transitions?
- Support refers to what help is available at the time of transition. Support could be from intimate relationships, family, friends, coworkers, institutions, or community organizations. Types of support can be both negative and positive.
- Strategies refer to the coping strategies individuals use to deal with a particular transition.

The Schlossberg (1981) model using the 4S system elements served as the theoretical framework for this study. The transition framework originally developed by Schlossberg (1981, 1984) allows student services practitioners to understand the impact of change through a structured approach. According to Schlossberg (2011) and Anderson et al. (2012), most transitions are not related to a person's age but to the transitions that occur. When adults go through transitions in their life, they often return to education to upgrade their skills (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 2011). Schlossberg's transition model provides the framework to address the academic and personal needs of adult learners, and Schlossberg's 4S system elements provide a deeper understanding of an individual's appraisal of the transition and the impact of the transition on an individual's life (Anderson et al., 2012).

Barriers of Adult Education to Community College Transition

The ability of students with adult basic skills to pursue postsecondary education has become increasingly more difficult, thus creating bigger gaps in adult education success outcomes. Hanover Research (2014b) found that even though there are many benefits to postsecondary education, adult education students' participation can be sporadic. Research has shown that adult education students with low basic skills must overcome numerous barriers to transition from noncredit to credit courses at a community college. These challenges include lacking a high school diploma or a general equivalency diploma (GED), lacking college readiness, and lacking the ability to balance schoolwork with family and work responsibilities (Jobs for the Future, 2004; USDOE, 2010). The literature indicates several key factors ABE students face in transitioning to community college, which include situational barriers, institutional barriers, and dispositional barriers (Cross, 1991).

According to Cross (1991), situational barriers may include a lack of time, financial issues, home and job responsibilities, lack of transportation, and lack of childcare. Institutional barriers may include lack of articulation between ABE and postsecondary institutions, inconvenient course schedules, and lack of support services (USDOE, 2010). Studies have shown that adults with low basic skills have difficulty accessing educational opportunities. Dispositional barriers are those related to one's self-perception or attitude. Kasworm (2008) noted, "Adult learners experience significant anxiety and self-consciousness about their acceptance, place in a collegiate environment, and ability to perform as undergraduate students" (p. 28).

Legislation Impacting Adult Education

In 1964, with the passage of the Economic Opportunity Act, the ABE program was established (USDOE, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 2013). Between 1964 and 1968 two other pieces of legislation were passed: the Adult Education Act of 1966 and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act Amendments of 1968. The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 and its reauthorization in 2013 called for greater collaboration between K–12 adult schools, community colleges, and employers to help adults seeking postsecondary education and employment (SDCE, 2018). In California this call for greater collaboration led to the passage of Assembly Bills 86 and 104, which called for the formation of consortia to develop programs that support education and workforce services for adults and assistance in the transition to postsecondary education (Torlakson & Skinner, 2016).

Workforce Investment Act of 1998. The commitment to adult education by policy makers continued in 1998, as the ratification of Public Law 105-220 created the WIA and established the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act. WIA contains five subparts: Title I–Workforce Investment Systems, Title II–Adult Education and Literacy, Title III–Workforce Investment Related Activities, Title IV–Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998, and Title V–General Provisions. The purpose of WIA was to consolidate, coordinate, and improve employment, training, adult literacy, and vocational programs.

To assess the effectiveness of WIA and other eligible programs, the federal legislation body created the National Reporting System in 1999 (Hanover Research, 2015). The system has three core indicators of effective performance:

1) demonstrated improvements in reading, writing and speaking English, numeracy, problem solving, and English-language acquisition; 2) placement in, retention in, or completion of postsecondary education, training, unsubsidized employment, or career advancement; and 3) receipt of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent. (West, 2005, p. 87)

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014. President Obama signed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) into law in 2014. WIOA reauthorized the WIA and amended its Title II (West, 2005). Title II governs the federally funded adult education programs. The purposes of the federally funded adult education programs are fivefold:

(1) assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and economic self-sufficiency;

(2) assist adults who are parents or family members become a full partner in the education development of their children;

(3) assist adults in completing high school;

(4) promote transitions from adult education to postsecondary education and training through career pathways; and

(5) assist immigrants and English language learners

   a. improve reading, writing, math, speaking, and comprehending the English language,

   b. acquire understanding of American government, individual freedom and responsibilities of citizenship. (USDOE, 2014, Section 202)

Assembly Bill 86 of 2013. Assembly Bill 86, Section 76, Article 3 (AB 86), signed into law in 2013, charges the CDE and the CCCCO to jointly implement an adult education planning process to better serve adult learners in the state (California Legislative Information, 2013). The intent of AB 86 was to expand and improve the provision of adult education by forming regional consortia (Hanover Research, 2014a). The legislation allocated $25 million to the consortia to address the following five areas:

- elementary and secondary basic skills, including classes required for a high school diploma;
- classes and course for immigrants in English as a second language, citizenship, and workforce preparations;
- education programs for adult with disabilities;
- short-term career technical education programs; and
- programs for apprentices (Torlakson & Harris, 2015).

Assembly Bill 104 of 2015. With the passage of Assembly Bill 104 (AB 104) by Governor Brown in June 2015, AB 86 became the Adult Education Block Grant and began the transition from planning to implementation (Torlakson & Skinner, 2016). AB 104, Section 84915, requires the CDE and the CCCCO to work in partnership to develop a plan to allocate funds to consortia from the federal Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, Title II of the federal WIOA, and the federal Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. Under AB 104, Section 84906(b)(8), the California legislature outlined what consortia must include in their adult education plan to "improve integration of services and to improve transitions into postsecondary education and the workforce" (California Adult Education Program, 2019, p. 11). The intent of this legislation is to

implement activities and expand and coordinate programs that support education and workforce services for adults (Torlakson & Skinner, 2016).

Statement of the Research Problem

According to the National Commission on Adult Literacy (2008), the United States cannot meet its 21st-century economic and social needs unless it transforms the current adult education system. According to the American Community Survey, more than 10% of California's population over 24 years of age have less than a ninth-grade education, and another 9% attended high school but did not receive a high school diploma (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). While a significant body of research on educational attainment and college readiness in the United States focuses on K–12 reform, there is a lack of research on the lived experiences of adult education students and the barriers faced in their transition to taking community college credit courses (Alamprese, 2005; CDE, 2011; Reder, 2007; Zafft, 2008; Zafft et al., 2006).

Adult schools operated by K–12 school districts and community colleges are the main providers of programs for adults and both provide the same level of education for adults needing basic and workplace skills (M. Taylor, 2012). However, this dual delivery system has led to challenges in the delivery of adult education in the state. The delivery systems for adult learners in open enrollment postsecondary education prevent adult schools and the CCC from effectively aligning and reducing the barriers students face transitioning from noncredit to credit-bearing courses at community colleges (Alamprese, 2005; Joint Committee to Develop a Master Plan for Education, 2002). Enacted in June 2013, AB 86 has served as the basis for California adult education and community college noncredit programs to conduct an examination of their programs to transition

adults into credit-bearing college courses (California Legislative Information, 2013). On June 23, 2015, Governor Jerry Brown signed AB 104, formerly the Adult Education Block Grant, and now called the California Adult Education Program into law. The primary goal of AB 104 is to distribute funds to consortia for coordinating programs that support education and workforce services for adults in their region (Torlakson & Skinner, 2016). Although these laws provide policies and funding to incentivize the coordination of efforts, no information is available on whether the transition process for students has improved.

Becoming workforce ready requires students to obtain the basic academic and technical skills needed to be successful in programs that lead to an associate's degree or certification. Adult students lacking basic academic skills often enroll in noncredit ABE programs with the intent of earning a high school diploma and pursuing a community college degree or technical certificate to improve their employability. Regardless of the students' intent, the number of students moving from noncredit to credit pathways in community college continues to remain low (Academic Senate for California Community Colleges [ASCCC], 2019; Alamprese, 2005; SDCE, 2018). There is a general lack of understanding of adult learners' experiences in transitioning from noncredit to credit-bearing coursework in community college, including the supports and barriers encountered. There is also a lack of research on the conditions necessary to move students more rapidly from noncredit basic skills coursework to credit-bearing courses.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore and describe the factors that former ABE students perceived were important in their transition from

noncredit courses to credit coursework offered at two community colleges in San Bernardino County and Riverside County, California, known as the Inland Empire, using Schlossberg's (1984) transition theory and 4S system elements. A second purpose of this study was to determine which factors identified by former ABE students facilitated or hindered their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework.

Research Questions

Central Research Question

What is the lived experience of former ABE students perceived as important to their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework offered through two community colleges in San Bernardino County and Riverside County, California?

Research Subquestions

1. What factors do former ABE students perceive were important in their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework offered through two community colleges in San Bernardino County and Riverside County, California, using Schlossberg's (1984) transition theory and 4S system elements?
2. What factors do former ABE students perceive facilitated or hindered their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework offered through two community colleges in San Bernardino County and Riverside County, California?

Significance of the Problem

Adults who attend noncredit adult basic skills programs to obtain a high school diploma or GED often list obtaining a postsecondary diploma as a goal of their education (Patterson, Zhang, Song, & Guison-Dowdy, 2010; USDOE, OCTAE, 2015). In a report by the USDOE, OCTAE (2019), 76% of adult students in adult basic skills programs in

2015–2016 received a high school diploma or its equivalent. Of those who completed, 29% entered postsecondary education. Over 20% of California's adult population does not have a high school diploma and half lack a ninth-grade education (CDE, 2011). The percentage of adult education students in California who complete a high school diploma or GED and transition into postsecondary education is 79% and 45%, respectively. The lack of an educated and skilled workforce is costly to both the institution and the growing need of the California workforce (ASCCC, 2019). The link between adult education and the economy is as follows:

> California has the eighth largest economy in the world yet faces sobering challenges to its long-term competitiveness. Too many working-age adults are ill-prepared for the demands of the 21st century workplace. Educational attainment levels are not keeping pace with the knowledge and skills necessary for complex, high-wage jobs that fuel the California economy; many adults lack the basic skills needed to ensure self-sufficiency. Further, underemployment and unemployment have devastating effects on communities as well as on individuals and the economy. (CDE, 2011, p. 1)

There are numerous studies on the workforce gap in California, and most involve reform in the state's K–12 and higher education institutions (CDE, 2011). Although there have been previous studies on the challenges faced by and support services available to nontraditional students, there is little research on the strategies used by ABE students who continue their education despite these challenges (Humpherys & Acker-Hocevar, 2012; USDOE, 2010). With a better understanding of adult students' lived experience, postsecondary institutions can do more to help students achieve their goals.

This study was designed to provide insights into the lived experiences of ABE students who successfully transition to the community college to complete their educational goals. Using Schlossberg's (1981) transition model, this study contributes to the research base that examines the strategies used by noncredit ABE students and provides a better understanding of the transition process. When administrators have a better understanding of these students' perceptions, they will be better able to design programs and policies that support adult students in their transition. For example, they will be able to provide training for administrators and counselors on improving student transitions, provide priority enrollment for ABE students, and improve data collection processes to better identify barriers. Student services professionals and staff will be better able to design programs on stress and time management, study skills, and orientation to college (Alamprese, 2005). Additionally, with increased understanding of the strategies used by ABE students, the ABE students themselves will benefit, and all students can benefit from programs and policies that ease the transition process.

Definitions

The following terms are defined for relevance to this study and to clarify the theoretical framework.

Adult education. Adult education provides lifelong educational opportunities and services to adult learners who are age 18 and older. These opportunities and services are to address the unique needs of individuals and communities by providing adults with the knowledge and skills necessary to participate effectively as citizens, workers, family members, and consumers of goods and services (CDE, n.d.).

Noncredit course. Students who enroll in noncredit community college courses do not receive any type of college credit or official grades that appear on a transcript.

Noncredit courses require no fees and can only be offered in specific areas detailed in regulation and Education Code 84757.

4S system elements (situation, self, support, and strategies). The 4S system elements are the four factors that influence an individual's ability to cope during a transition (Anderson et al., 2012).

Self. Self refers to an individual's inner strength for coping with the transition (Anderson et al., 2012).

Situation. This refers to an individual's situation at the time of transition (Anderson et al., 2012).

Strategies. These are the coping strategies individuals use to take charge during their transition (Anderson et al., 2012).

Support. This refers to the support available to an individual at the time of transition (Anderson et al., 2012).

Transition. This refers to any event or nonevent that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles (Anderson et al., 2012).

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The WIOA was signed into law on July 22, 2014, and is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training, and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. It was the first legislative reform of the public workforce system in 15 years (Torlakson & Skinner, 2016).

Delimitations

The focus of this qualitative study was a group of 15 adult education students from three community colleges in San Bernardino County and Riverside County, California, and their transition experience from a noncredit ABE program to a for-credit college program at one of these three community colleges. An additional delimitation was that the study included only students between the ages of 18 and 35 who had successfully completed six units of for-credit coursework.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter I provided an introduction to the study, background information, statement of the research problem, purpose statement, research questions, significance of the problem, definitions, and delimitations for this study. Chapter II contains a detailed review of the literature related to the theoretical framework, demographic and background characteristics of adult education students, adult education in the United States and California, the role of the community college in adult education transition efforts, gaps in the research, and a conclusion. Chapter III provides the study methodology, the data collection process, and a description of the sample population. Chapter IV includes an analysis of the data and a discussion of the findings. Chapter V includes a summary of the major findings of the study, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

California faces sobering challenges to its economic competitiveness because many adults are ill-prepared for the demands of the 21st-century workforce (CDE, 2011). Adults transitioning from adult education programs into a California community college face many challenges (Alamprese, 2005). To meet these challenges California passed AB 86 in July 2013, and consortia were formed to create seamless transition paths leading to postsecondary education (Gaer, Hicks, Lynch-Thompson, May, & Stanskas, 2014). This study explored the lived experiences of former adult basic education (ABE) students to understand the factors that affect adult education students' transition from noncredit ABE courses to community college for-credit coursework.

A review of the literature was conducted to examine the transition experiences of ABE students attending a 2-year public California community college in San Bernardino and Riverside counties in California, known as the Inland Empire. The literature review is organized into four main sections. The first section covers the history of California's two adult education systems and the current organizational structure. The second section offers a theoretical framework for the study by explaining related foundational theories along with Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory. The third section covers student transition issues and related literature on the challenges of the transition from adult education to community college that affect this population. The last section provides an in-depth review of legislation affecting adult education, including an in-depth review of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and the Adult Education Block Grant. The chapter concludes with a summary of the gaps in research related to the noncredit to credit transition for ABE students.

Community colleges have a role in providing access for adult education students, who need to keep their cost down, stay close to their community and finish quickly (Cohen, 2003). Research has shown that the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic had a strong negative influence on community college enrollments, which highlighted the urgency to address the needs of nontraditional adult students who are at risk of leaving school due to the impact of the pandemic (Brock & Diwa, 2021; Center for Community College Student Engagement [CCCSE], 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a steep decline in enrollments at community colleges among nontraditional adult learners. Studies have shown that following the onset of the pandemic in 2020, the enrollment at community colleges experienced nearly an 11% decline from Fall 2019 to Fall 2020 (NCES, 2019, 2020). The research has suggested that this will result in a large deficit in postsecondary skills over the next few years (Brock & Diwa, 2021).

History of Adult Education in California

California's adult education system has existed since 1856 (West, 2005). Initially serving mostly Irish, Italian, and Chinese immigrants, the adult schools focused on literacy and numeracy skills and vocational pathways in drafting and bookkeeping (SDCE, 2018). From 1868 to 1871, John Swett, who served as the first principal of San Francisco's adult evening school, convinced the governing board to make adult education courses and programs tuition-free (SDCE, 2018; West, 2005).

During the 1900s, legislation was passed that led to the growth of adult education programs in California. In 1902, California amended its constitution, which led to the development of public secondary schools. In 1910, the state added an additional

amendment to the constitution mandating state funding for public high schools (West, 2005). The existence of adult evening schools was tested in *Board of Education v. Hyatt* (152 Cal. 515) in which the California Supreme Court ruled that adult schools could exist as a separate entity (West, 2005). The California state legislature continued to support the expansion of adult education with the passage of the Part-Time Education Act of 1919, which mandated that schools provide continuation education for minors and basic education classes for adults (West, 2005).

In 1927, the CDE was reorganized, and the Division of Adult Education was created. At the same time, adult education's purpose was shifting "from policies to remove educational handicaps toward the concept of organizing resources to improve the community" (West, 2005, p. 5). By the end of the 1920s, adult education had grown to more than 250,000 students.

Adult education suffered major setbacks during the 1930s and the Great Depression. During the early part of the decade, it was recommended that adult schools be closed or consolidated or their programs be absorbed by the junior college system. Junior colleges began to provide more adult education during this time. By the end of the decade, adult education enrollment had grown to more than 500,000 students (West, 2005).

In 1940, the federal government requested adult schools to provide training for defense workers. From 1940 to 1945, approximately 1 million California workers were trained in classes related to civilian defense, first aid, flying, office skills, truck driving, and maintenance (West, 2005). At the end of the 1940s, rising immigration and returning veterans led to more than 800,000 adults participating in adult education (West, 2005).

Enrollment in adult education during the 1950s grew steadily as the population in California increased. By 1957, there were 380 adult education programs with an enrollment of 1 million adults (West, 2005). During this period, adult education programs were run by the CDE's Bureau of Adult Education. The federal government expanded its role in adult education during the 1960s in response to the need to remove barriers and improve the economic conditions of disadvantaged persons (West, 2005). Another significant development in the 1960s was the change in governance that junior colleges underwent in California. CCCCO (2006) explained that "in 1963, all statutes that pertained to junior colleges were placed in a separate section of the Education Code [Title 5] and established the Board of Governors of the California Junior Colleges, which was subsequently renamed California Community Colleges" (p. 5).

Since the early 1970s, California's two systems have delivered adult education. The CDE and the California Community Colleges (CCC) have struggled to determine the delineation of functions to avoid duplication of efforts (West, 2005). During this time adult education programs were provided by 183 school districts and 94 community colleges. Senate Bill 94 was signed in 1972 and took effect in March 1973, requiring community colleges to have a formal agreement on delineation of functions to offer noncredit instruction within a K–12 school district (SDCE, 2018; West, 2005). In 1978, California voters passed Proposition 13, which devastated adult education programs across the state. Property taxes were reduced by more than 50%, funding for adult education was cut by more than $350 million, enrollments dropped by more than 500,000, and 10,000 faculty were laid off (SDCE, 2018; West, 2005). As a result of these changes, adult education programs were reduced to seven instructional areas.

Adult education continued to struggle in the 1980s to delineate functions between K–12 adult education schools and community colleges. At the same time, Assembly Bills 2196 and 1626 established different funding levels for community college credit and noncredit programs. Noncredit adult education programs were funded at a level more in line with K–12 adult schools (West, 2005). In 1988, California taxpayers passed Proposition 98, mandating a percentage of the general fund require the allocation of adequate funding for K–12 schools and colleges (SDCE, 2018; West, 2005).

In 1990, legislation passed that consolidated adult education by removing the references to 13th and 14th grades from the Education Code. Noncredit instruction was added to the mission and function of CCC (Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, 2006). Also, during this time, adult education reform efforts were advocating the pairing of adult education programs with postsecondary education and training (SDCE, 2018).

In 1998, President Bill Clinton signed Public Law 105-220, the WIA, which repealed the Adult Education Act and established the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (SDCE, 2018). WIA was designed to consolidate, coordinate, and improve employment, literacy, and vocational programs to help remove barriers for adults seeking training (SDCE, 2018; West, 2005). During the same time the CCC system added "advancing California's economic growth and global competitiveness through education, training and services that contribute to continuous work force improvement" to its mission (SDCE, 2018, p. 37).

Adult education continued to grow in the 1990s, increasing from 1,216,698 in the 1992–1993 school year to 2,395,825 in the 1998–1999 school year (SDCE, 2018). Issues

on the delineation of functions between K–12 adult schools and community colleges remained contentious (West, 2005). In 1997, the Joint Board Committee on Noncredit and Adult Education was formed by members of the State Board of Education and the governing board of the CCC (SDCE, 2018; West, 2005). The statewide joint committee focused on how to address current unmet needs and how to ensure a cost-effective and integrated system. The recommendations in the report were as follows:

- "Clarify joint authorization to offer noncredit and adult education
- Create a formal structure for joint development and implementation of a policy for noncredit and adult education
- Develop strategies for ensuring student success
- Redistribute unused existing resources
- Encourage school and community college districts to make fair-share distributions
- Determine the cost of implementing endorsed changes
- Equalize reimbursement rates within and among segments of the adult education system, the K–12 system, and the community college credit and noncredit system
- Finalize and distribute program standards
- Develop a coordinated data system
- Clarify the scope of authorized instructional categories
- Permit reimbursement for work-based education
- Establish reciprocity for instructors in noncredit and adult education

> The recommendations and action items received minimal support because of limited funding and disagreement between the legislature and the governor" (SDCE, 2018, pp. 39–40)

In 2006, State Bill 361 passed, which provided supplemental funding for noncredit instruction. State Bill 361 also required that career development of college preparation courses be sequenced and lead to certificates focused on transition to credit courses or employment (CCCCO, 2006). At the same time in the CCC system, the Basic Skills Initiative was established. The initiative provides grants to colleges to support innovative reforms in basic skills education and to focus on transition from noncredit to credit programs (ASCCC, 2019).

In 2013, two reports, *Restructuring California's Adult Education System* by the California Legislative Analyst's Office and the Little Hoover Commission's report *Serving Students, Serving California*, focused on why there are two systems offering similar adult education programs (SDCE, 2018). Since the early 1900s, this issue has gone unresolved and remains a point of contestation (M. Taylor, 2012). In July 2013, Governor Brown signed into law AB 86, which established consortia consisting of one K–12 school district and one community college district to develop regional plans for adult education (SDCE, 2018). California legislature provided AB 86 $25 million in funding for community college districts and K–12 districts to develop coordinated adult education plans.

In July 2015, AB 104 passed, and the California legislature appropriated $500 million to support the Adult Education Block Grant program (Torlakson & Skinner, 2016). AB 104 serves as the implementation phase of the Adult Education Block Grant

program. Since the establishment of Adult Education Program, the state has had no comprehensive data on program outcomes for students (Legislative Analyst's Office, 2019). A report by the California Legislative Analyst's Office found misalignment between both the K–12 adult schools and community college consortium members (Torlakson & Oakley, 2018). These misalignments included the following:

- different funding rules,
- different fee policies,
- different instructor qualifications, and
- different student identifiers.

Torlakson and Oakley (2018) noted that these inconsistencies prevent greater coordination among the consortia to better track how students move between adult education schools and community colleges.

Theoretical Foundations

This section includes an exploration of some of the theories that serve as theoretical foundations for Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory, which served as the theoretical framework for this study. This section also includes a discussion on Levinson's (1986) life structure theory, Kegan's (1982) constructive-development theory, and Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) cognitive appraisal theory. These theories are important to consider when examining Schlossberg's (1981) theoretical framework because they help to understand the complexity of transitioning into college.

Life Structure Theory

Levinson (1986) proposed life structure theory, which describes the underlying pattern of a person's life at a given time. According to Levinson, adults develop in an

organized order and a nonchanging pattern. Composed of transitional periods each lasting about 5 years, life structure theory consists of alternating series of structure-building and structure-changing (transitional) periods. The transitional periods are distinguished by three chronological periods: early adulthood, middle adulthood, and late adulthood. Early adulthood consists of five periods, including two building periods and three transition periods. The transitional periods include the early adult transition, from age 17 to 22; the entry life structure for early adulthood, from age 22 to 28; and the age 30 transition, from age 28 to 33. The building periods include the culminating life structure for early adulthood, from age 33 to 40; and the midlife transition, from age 40 to 45. Middle adulthood consists of the entry life structure for middle adulthood, from age 45 to 50, and the age 50 transition, from age 50 to 55. The final period, called late adulthood, consists of two transition periods: the culminating life structure for middle adulthood, from age 55 to 60, and the late adult transition, from age 60 to 65 (Levinson, 1986). Although Levinson's theory is listed under adult development, his focus is on change instead of development (Aktu & Llhan, 2017). How adults psychologically change in the periods rather than develop is at the center of his theory (Aktu & Llhan, 2017; Levinson, 1986).

Life-Span Theory

Bridges's (1980) life-span theory on transition model gives a conceptual picture of transition. In his life-span theory, transition involves a natural process of disorientation and reorientation that marks the turning points in an individual's personal development and self-renewal. Transitions result as individuals internalize and come to terms with the details of their new environment that the change brought (Bridges, 2019).

Similar to Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory on moving in, moving through, and moving out, Bridges' theory is composed of three phases: endings, neutral zones, and beginnings (Creel, 1996). Bridges (2019) explained that for transitions to be successful, individuals need all three phases in that order.

The first phase begins with an ending, characterized by a feeling of loss or letting go of the old outlook, realities, attitudes, values, and self-image (Bridges, 2001). There may be a feeling of sadness and anger as one resists this ending. The second phase, the neutral zone, is characterized by a state of confusion between the old reality and the new. The initial sense of immobilization between the old and the new can last a few months or years (Bridges, 2001, 2019). The final phase in the transition theory is the new beginning and involves the individual's new understandings, values, attitudes, and identity. During this phase, the hold on the old sense of identity is relinquished and the new reality is accepted (Bridges, 2001, 2019). Schlossberg (1984) asserted, "We can thus view the task of moving in as ending something else and the task of leaving as the opportunity for a new beginning" (p. 15).

Constructive-Development Theory

Constructive-development theory is based on the premise that development is a function of qualitative shifts in perception (Kegan, 1982). In Kegan's constructive-development theory, development is seen as a process of transformation of consciousness throughout the life span (K. Taylor, 1999). The theory includes five types of transformations (orders of consciousness) that are sequential and hierarchical: two are associated with childhood and three with adulthood. The study examined the two most common transformations of adulthood that are likely to occur in higher education

settings. The first is the move into adult consciousness that occurs at the end of psychological adolescence, and the second is the transformation of that perspective as an individual moves into midlife change (K. Taylor, 1999).

The third order of consciousness denotes the move from adolescence into young adulthood. According to Kegan (1982), during the third order of consciousness, individuals become capable of empathy and the capacity to take another's viewpoint, valuing other individuals intrinsically. Individuals' view of relationships expands to value the connections they represent and to integrate the needs and desires of others into their own worldview (K. Taylor & Marienau, 1997).

During the transformation to fourth-order consciousness, individuals develop the capacity for tasks such as setting limits, maintaining boundaries, and preserving roles (Reeves, 1999). The individuals have feelings rather than being had by them, and as a result the individuals are aware of and act on choices versus being at the mercy of imperatives (K. Taylor, 1999). K. Taylor and Marienau (1997) noted,

> If the student is developmentally ready to make the shift and the environment is sufficiently encouraging, taking greater responsibility for one's own learning results not only in a transformed perception of what learning is about . . . but also a new perception of the self-as-learner. (p. 6)

Cognitive Appraisal Theory

Cognitive appraisal is the process by which individuals evaluate whether an encounter with the environment is relevant to their well-being and in what way (Folkman et al., 1986). According to Folkman et al. (1986), during primary appraisal, individuals determine whether they have anything at stake in the encounter. In addition, individuals

evaluate the encounter or circumstance as positive or negative and whether an event is harmful or threatening or as a challenge to overcome (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). During secondary appraisal, individuals determine whether they can do anything to overcome an event or prevent harm, or to improve the prospects for benefit, and ask "What can be done about?" (Folkman et al., 1986; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Giacobbi et al. (2004) noted,

> Events appraised as controllable are associated with coping efforts aimed at resolving the situation (i.e., problem-focused coping) while situational events perceived as outside of one's control usually require coping efforts intended to alter one's reactions or interpretations of the situation (i.e., emotion-focused coping). (p. 3)

Theoretical Framework

Developed by Schlossberg (1981), college transition theory describes the transition experience of adult students returning to college. Schlossberg's (2008) transition framework presents a model for understanding the perceived demands and coping strategies adults use in transition. Schlossberg (1981) noted, "A transition is not so much a matter of change as of the individual's perception of change. A transition is a transition if it is so defined by the person experiencing it" (p. 7). Schlossberg (2008) defined transition as "any event that alters the person's roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions" (p. 10). A model of the theory is shown in Figure 1.

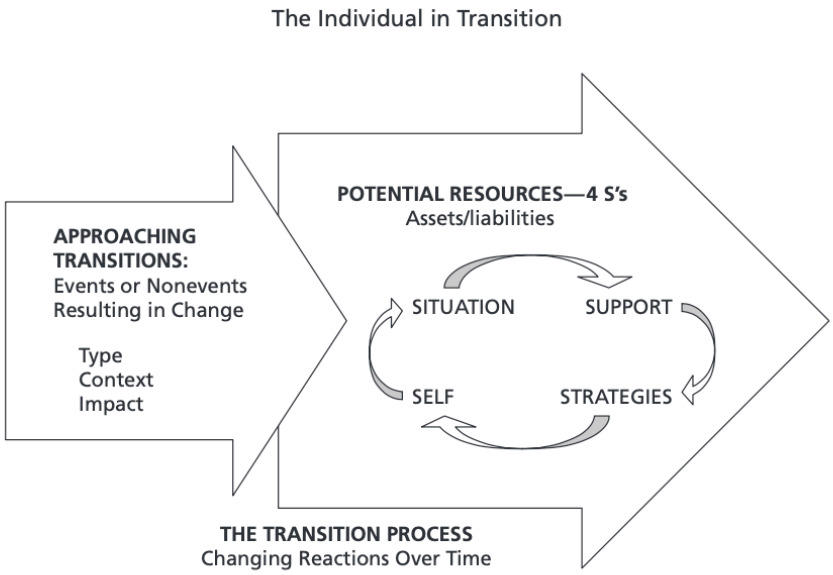

Figure 1. Schlossberg's transition process. From *Counseling Adults in Transition: Linking Schlossberg's Theory With Practice in a Diverse World* (4th ed.), by M. L. Anderson, J. Goodman, & N. K. Schlossberg, 2012, p. 39, Springer. Copyright 2012 by Springer.

The three types of transitions are anticipated, unanticipated, and nonevents. Anticipated transitions consist of predictable and expected life events such as marriage, the birth of a first child, or starting a first job. Unanticipated transitions are comprised of unpredictable, nonscheduled events that involve crises and disrupt the normal routine such as being fired, divorce, or the premature death of a spouse. Nonevent transitions are events that are expected but never occur such as a marriage that does not happen or a child never born (Anderson et al., 2012). To understand the meaning of transition, one must understand an individual's appraisal of the transition as positive or negative, the context of the transition, and the impact the transition has on the individual's life (Anderson et al., 2012). Anderson et al. (2012) stated that how adults respond to change regarding college attendance and how they adapt to the transition depends on the coping

resources available to them. Anderson et al. (2012) noted that four major factors influence an individual's ability to cope during transition (see Figure 2).

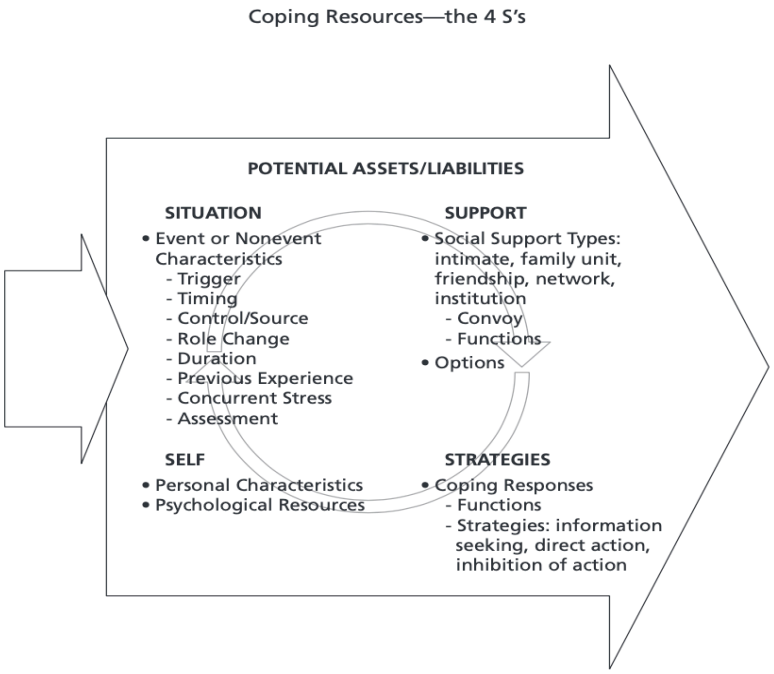

Figure 2. The 4S model of transitions. From *Counseling Adults in Transition: Linking Schlossberg's Theory With Practice in a Diverse World* (4th ed.), by M. L. Anderson, J. Goodman, & N. K. Schlossberg, 2012, p. 62, Springer. Copyright 2012 by Springer.

According to Anderson et al. (2012), the 4S system of situation, self, support, and strategies describes four major factors that influence how an individual copes with transitions.

Situation

A person's situation at the time of transition event is perceived differently for each person, and each transition is determined based on triggers: what set off the transition; timing: how does the transition relate to one's social clock; control: what aspects of the transition can one control; role change: does the transition involve role change; duration: is the transition seen as permanent or temporary; previous experience

with similar transition: how has the individual met similar transitions; concurrent stress: what and how great are the stresses facing the individual now, if any; assessment: does the individual view the situation positively, negatively, or as benign (Anderson et al., 2012).

Self

A person's self brings both assets and liabilities to the transition. Schlossberg (2008) identified two characteristics of the self that are relevant for individuals as they cope with transition: personal and demographic. These characteristics include socioeconomic status, gender, age, stage of life, health, ethnicity, and psychological resources.

Support

Support makes up the third "s" and is key to handling stress. Supports systems help individuals mobilize their resources and can come from family, friends, and the institutions or communities they are a part of (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 2008, 2011).

Strategies

Strategies is the fourth "s" in the transition system and includes coping techniques. Coping techniques are a set of psychological resources that individuals use to cope with transition. Pearlin and Schooler (1978) identified three types of coping responses that individuals use in transition: (a) modify the situation such as negotiation, discipline in parenting, and advice to alter the source of strain in the transition; (b) look to control the meaning of the problem by providing positive comparisons, selectively ignoring, or substituting rewards to neutralize the threat; and (c) help to manage stress

after it has occurred such as denial, passive acceptance, or withdrawal, which help individuals accommodate the stress without being overwhelmed.

Barriers to Successful Transition From Adult Education to Community College

Adult students returning to education face decisions and barriers to complete their educational programs (Comings, 2007; Kasworm, 2003). In a survey conducted in 1981 and updated in 1991, Cross identified obstacles that adult students perceived as barriers to their learning. Cross (1991) found that these barrier types fall into three broad categories: situational, institutional, and dispositional (see Figure 3).

Situational Barriers

- Cost, including tuition, books, and child-care
- Not enough time
- Home responsibilities
- Job responsibilities
- No transportation
- No place to study or practice
- Friends or family don't like the idea

Institutional Barriers

- Don't want to go to school full time
- Amount of time required to complete program
- Course aren't scheduled when I can attend
- No information about offerings
- Too much red tape in getting enrolled
- Don't meet requirements to begin program

Dispositional Barriers

- Afraid that I'm too old to begin
- Low grades in past, not confident of my ability
- Not enough energy and stamina
- Don't enjoy studying
- Tired of school, tired of classrooms
- Don't know what to learn or what it would lead to
- Hesitate to seem too ambitious

Figure 3. Perceived barriers to learning. Adapted from *Adults as Learners: Increasing Participation and Facilitating Learning*, by K. P. Cross, 1981, p. 99, Jossey-Bass.

Situational Barriers

Situational barriers were the most cited in the survey (Cross, 1991). The situational barriers mentioned the most often were cost and time. Financial issues, especially for older adults, are a crucial concern and can prevent adult students them from entering or completing college (Hardin, 2008). In addition to funding their education, adult students must also be able to provide for their families (Hardin, 2008). Cross (1981) noted that "people who have the time for learning frequently lack the money, and the people who have the money often lack the time" (p. 100).

Situational barriers can also include a lack of resources available to adult students (Alamprese, 2005). Adult students have often been away from the educational environment for extended periods of time and may have difficulty navigating the unfamiliar college environment (Zafft, 2008). Situational barriers are unique to each adult student and cannot be removed by a college (Hardin, 2008).

Institutional Barriers

Institutional barriers were the second most cited barrier on the survey (Cross, 1991). Institutional barriers are erected by colleges through their policies, procedures, and red tape that can cause hardship for adult students (Hardin, 2008). Policy factors affecting their transition may include lack of financial aid for part-time students and lack of alignment between education, workforce development, and other government organizations (Hanover Research, 2014b; USDOE, 2010). Cross (1981) grouped institutional barriers into five areas: "scheduling problems; problems with location or transportation; lack of courses that are interesting, practical, or relevant; procedural problems and time requirements; and lack of information about programs and

procedures" (p. 104). Inconvenient locations and schedules were the most complained about institutional barrier (Cross, 1991).

Dispositional Barriers

Dispositional barriers were the least cited barriers in Cross's (1991) survey findings. Dispositional barriers are related to adult learners' attitudes, self-perceptions, and anxiety based on prior experience (Cross, 1991; Hardin, 2008; Kasworm, 2008). Adult students' poor educational backgrounds can lead to poor self-image and can lead them to isolate and alienate themselves and to not take advantage of the available resources on the college campus (Hardin, 2008; Kasworm, 2008). Cross (1991) noted, "The 'real' importance of dispositional barriers is probably underestimated" (p. 106). She stated that social norms dictate it is more acceptable to say external factors such as time or cost, rather than a lack of ability, are reasons for adult student academic deficiencies.

Student Support Strategies

In contrast to the barriers previously identified, studies involving adult education students and community colleges have identified different support services that have positively impacted student persistence and transition (Achieving the Dream, 2018). Multiple studies have identified counseling and advising as key services related to increased student persistence (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; I. Love, 2019). Financial aid in the form of grants, scholarships, and work-study is another key support service that studies show increase student persistence and transition (Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, 2005; Kazis et al., 2007).

Characteristics of Adult Basic Education Students

Based on a review of the literature, there are several characteristics associated with adult education students. The NCES indicated that adult education students are more likely to display the following characteristics:

- delayed enrollment after high school,
- enrolled part time for at least part of the academic year,
- working full time (35 hours or more per week) while enrolled,
- financially independent from parents,
- have dependents other than a spouse,
- a single parent,
- did not complete high school, or
- lack basic academic and technical skills (Rabourn, BrckaLorenz, & Shoup, 2018).

Based on the number of characteristics, adult learner persistence is negatively affected (Choy, 2002). Choy (2002) noted that adult learners with at least two of the characteristics "met their objective of bachelor's degree completion at a rate of 16.9%, compared to 53.9% of traditional students with the same goal" (p. 14). Conversely, Horn and Carroll (1996) found that adult learners with four or more characteristics were less likely to stay in school or earn a degree.

Legislation Impacting Adult Education

Workforce Investment Act of 1998

The WIA, established in 1998, pivoted the federal agenda and charted a major new direction for adult education and literacy in the United States (SDCE, 2018). Prior to the WIA, states administered their adult education programs under the requirements of

the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1966 (West, 2005). The main goals of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act were to (a) enable adult learners to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills, (b) provide adults with sufficient basic skills for them to be successful in the workplace, and (c) enable adults to continue and complete high school, but it had no objective to increasing postsecondary education access for adult learners (West, 2005). Unlike the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the WIA "reflected the emerging national belief that the economic needs of the country were inextricably linked to the success of education and employment programs for underserved adult learners" (SDCE, 2018, p. 36).

Enacted in 1998 under President Bill Clinton's administration with the ratification of Public Law 105-220, the federal agenda for adult education changed focus. Authorization of the WIA repealed the Adult Education Act and established the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (West, 2005). The aim of the WIA was to consolidate, coordinate, and improve employment, training, literacy, and vocational programs (USDOE, 2013).

The WIA offered basic grants to states, from the USDOE, to enhance activities for adult education and literacy programs (Milana & McBain, 2014). The initial act included five sections that focused on the nation's employment and training system: Title I–Workforce Investment Systems that contained six chapters, Title II–Adult Education and Literacy that contained four chapters and 19 sections, Title III–Workforce Investment-Related Activities, Title IV–Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998, and Title V–General Provisions (SDCE, 2018). These five titles paved the way for the

reformation of the complex ABE delivery system and served as the basis for the formation of a new one-stop delivery system (SDCE, 2018).

Under Title I of this legislation, the one-stop delivery system was established to meet the needs of the local service delivery area (USDOE, 2013). Each local one-stop identified required partners to integrate programs, services, and governance structures into a single system (U.S. Department of Labor, 1998). One of the key concepts of the one-stop delivery system was to foster greater interagency cooperation among job training, education, and employment services in one location (Roumell, Salajan, & Todoran, 2020).

The enactment of the WIA brought a focus on accountability for adult education providers. To assess effectiveness in achieving improvement of adult education and literacy program activities, the federal legislation established the National Reporting System (Little Hoover Commission, 2013). The National Reporting System required adult education programs to use specific indicators and to report their successes annually to the USDOE. The core indicators include the following:

1. demonstrated improvements in reading, writing and speaking English, numeracy, problem solving, and English-language acquisition;
2. placement in, retention in, or completion of postsecondary education, training, unsubsidized employment, or career advancement; and
3. receipt of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent. (West, 2005, p. 87)

Federal legislation originally authorized WIA funding to support adult education over a 5-year period from 1998 to 2003 (West, 2005). Twenty-two bills to reauthorize

the WIA were introduced between 2003 and 2014 but none became law. Congress prolonged WIA programs through annual appropriations until the enactment of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA; Milana & McBain, 2014; SDCE, 2018).

Reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998

The reauthorization of the WIA in 2014 created the WIOA, which represented the first major reform in the U.S. workforce system in over 10 years. It also underscored the interrelatedness of the federal programs that support employment services, workforce development, adult education, and vocational rehabilitation activities (USDOE, 2014). Although this reauthorization was 10 years overdue, it included changes that addressed the transition to postsecondary education for adult learners.

The WIOA reauthorized federal funding to make the transition from ABE to postsecondary education and training a focus of the act (Jacobson, 2017). The WIOA still retains five titles under the WIA and expands the transition to postsecondary education through career pathways. Davidson (2017) noted, "Title II legislation focuses on integrated education and training (IET) models, which combine the adult education and literacy activities with workforce preparation activities and training" (p. 29). This allowed ABE students to concurrently gain the necessary education and training to meet the needs of the local workforce.

California Assembly Bill 86 of 2013

In response to a California Legislative Analyst's Office report in 2012, Assembly Bill 86 (AB 86) established consortia between K–12 adult schools and the CCC (West, 2005). Across the state, 70 consortia were formed, each comprising at least one K–12

school district and one community college. Legislation appropriated $25 million to the CCCCO to serve as the fiscal agent and to distribute to consortia for a 2-year planning and implementation process (ASCCC, 2019). Each consortium determines who serves as its fiscal agent. The purpose of the consortia is to create seamless transition paths to credit courses and the workforce (Gaer et al., 2014). A 2018 SDCE report added, "Smooth bridging from noncredit to credit and from noncredit to workforce is fundamental for the success of many of the students in the community college system" (p. 51). AB 86 served as the catalyst and structure for restructuring adult education in California. This piece of legislation established the planning phase for consortia that began July 1, 2013, and culminated June 30, 2015. The transition from planning phase to the actualization and implementation of the Adult Education Block Grant program (AB 104) occurred during the 2015–2016 year. This legislation was supported with a $500 million commitment from the state legislature (Torlakson & Harris, 2015).

California Assembly Bill 104 of 2015

The Adult Education Block Grant (AB 104) was the major education trailer bill that accompanied the state's budget of 2015–2016 (Torlakson & Skinner, 2016). Prior to this groundbreaking legislation, K–12 adult education and community college noncredit programs operated separately with oversite divided between CDE and the CCCCO (Torlakson & Skinner, 2016). The 2015 budget act provided $500 million to continue Proposition 98 funding to regional consortia in two parts: (a) maintenance of effort and (b) need-based funding (Torlakson & Skinner, 2016). The California State Legislature increased that amount to $536 million in 2019–2020. AB 104 established a governance structure for consortia regarding key adult education funding streams (Mortrude &

Cielinski, 2017). AB 104 also funds programs in seven adult education instructional areas:

- elementary and secondary reading, writing, and mathematics,
- English as a second language and other programs for immigrants,
- workforce preparation for adults entering or reentering the workforce,
- short-term career technical education with high employment potential,
- preapprenticeship training activities,
- programs for adults with disabilities, and
- programs designed to develop knowledge and skills that enable adults to help children succeed in school (Torlakson & Skinner, 2016).

In a 2018 report to the state legislature, the following educational milestones were identified for ABE students: (a) completion of high school diplomas or their equivalents; (b) completion of postsecondary certificate, degree, or training programs; and (c) transition to postsecondary education (Torlakson & Oakley, 2018). AB 104 also established metrics to track enrollment data sets between K–12 adult education and community college. This included the following:

- transition from English as a second language or ABE into adult secondary education programs,
- transition into transfer level math or English,
- completion of six or more college credits, and
- completion of college for credit certificates and degrees (Torlakson & Skinner, 2016).

Conclusions

This chapter provided a literature review on the history of adult education. The chapter included a review of (a) theoretical foundations, (b) barriers to successful transition, (c) characteristics of ABE students, and (d) legislation affecting adult education. Foundational theories provided an understanding of how different factors affect an individual's transition. Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory served as the structured framework to analyze the transition process, which included the type of transition, the degree to which one's life has been altered, where one is in the transition process, and the resources one has to make a successful transition. A synthesis matrix (Appendix A) summarizes the pertinent sources within the literature review to provide context to the study variables and to support the validity of the study and this literature review. In the next chapter the researcher will present the methodology for the study that outlines the research design, population, sampling frame, sample, instrumentation, validity and reliability, data collection, data analysis, and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

Chapter III outlines the qualitative phenomenological methodology used for this study designed to investigate and understand the transitional experience of former adult basic education (ABE) students attending a 2-year public community college in San Bernardino County and Riverside County, California, known as the Inland Empire. This chapter also begins by revisiting the purpose statement that justifies the reason for the study along with the central research question and subquestions related to the issue to be investigated. In addition, the chapter includes the research design, a description of the population and sample, the instrumentation, the data collection procedures, the data analysis, the limitations, and a summary.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore and describe the factors that former ABE students perceived were important in their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework offered at two community colleges in San Bernardino County and Riverside County, California, known as the Inland Empire, using Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory and 4S system elements. Another purpose of this study was to determine which factors identified by former ABE students facilitated or hindered their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework.

Research Questions

Central Research Question

What is the lived experience of former ABE students perceived as important to their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework offered through two community colleges in San Bernardino County and Riverside County, California?

Research Subquestions

1. What factors do former ABE students perceive were important in their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework offered through two community colleges in San Bernardino County and Riverside County, California, using Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory and 4S system elements?
2. What factors do former ABE students perceive facilitated or hindered their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework offered through two community colleges in San Bernardino County and Riverside County, California?

Research Design

The study included a qualitative phenomenological research design and method. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) noted, "The goal in qualitative research is to understand participants from their own point of view, in their own voice" (p. 323). Through qualitative inquiry, participants are able to share stories from their point of view. Qualitative research is defined as follows:

> Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquire,

> the collection of data in a nature setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflectivity of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem. (Creswell, 2007, as quoted in McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 320)

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to capture the lived experiences of the participants. Phenomenology asks the foundational question, "What is the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon for this person or group of people" (Patton, 2002, p. 104). Additionally, McMillan and Schumacher (2010) wrote that "when using a phenomenological design, the researcher needs to suspend, or bracket, any preconceived ideas about the phenomenon to elicit and better understand the meanings given by the participants" (p. 346). Therefore, the lived experiences of the participants in this study were explored to provide a synthesis of the meanings and essences of the participants' experiences.

Data collection in qualitative research involves using interviews, observation, and written documents as techniques to understand a social phenomenon from the participants' perspective (Patton, 2002). For this study, structured interviews were conducted with 10 former ABE students from two community colleges in the Inland Empire. In addition, written artifacts were collected from the schools to better understand the transition experience of students from noncredit ABE to enrollment in credit-bearing community college coursework. Interviews were conducted using the Zoom video platform. An interview guide that included a standard set of questions was used to elicit information from the participants to explore their lived experiences in the

transition process. The data from the interviews were collected during Fall 2020 and then organized and analyzed to identify themes and findings to answer the research question.

Population

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) defined a population as "a group of elements or cases, whether individuals, objects, or events, that conform to specific criteria and to which we intend to generalize the results of the research" (p. 129). Based on a review of the literature, there are several characteristics associated with ABE students as follows:

- delayed enrollment after high school,
- enrolled part time for at least part of the academic year,
- working full time (35 hours or more per week) while enrolled,
- financially independent from parents,
- have dependents other than a spouse,
- a single parent,
- did not complete high school, or
- lack basic academic and technical skills (Rabourn et al., 2018).

In this phenomenological study, the researcher, through the lens of Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory, described former ABE students' perception of factors that led to their successful transition. The population for this study was former ABE students who successfully transitioned from noncredit courses to credit courses in the California Community Colleges (CCC) system.

According to the CCCCO (n.d.) website, there are 114 community colleges in the system. In 2016–2017, there were a total of 2,196,927 students enrolled in CCC. In 2017–2018, there were 37,421 former ABE students enrolled at a California community

college, and there were 1,776,440 regularly enrolled students attending a California community college during this time who did not participate in ABE, as shown in Table 1. Therefore, the population for this study were the 37,421 former ABE students taking noncredit courses who transitioned to enrollment in community college credit-bearing courses.

Table 1

California Community Colleges (CCC) Enrollment for the 2017–2018 School Year: Study Population

CCC enrollment	Total
Students	2,196,927
Noncredit ABE students	37,421
Non-ABE students	1,776,440

Note. From "Adult Education Pipeline: Overview," by Cal-PASS Plus, 2017 (https://www.calpassplus.org/Launchboard/Adult-Education-Pipeline.aspx).

Sampling Frame

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), the target population "is often different from the list of elements from which the sample is actually selected" (p. 129), which they termed the *sampling frame*. Both the target population and the sampling frame should be clearly identified for the purposes of research study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Researchers use a sampling frame for reasons of time, cost, or geographical accessibility; therefore, the researcher chooses a population from within a larger group. In this study, the researcher narrowed the population down to two community college districts in Riverside and San Bernardino counties. The target population in this study was former ABE students currently attending two community colleges in Riverside and San Bernardino counties in California. A pseudonym for the

colleges are Community College District 1 (CCD 1) and Community College District 2 (CCD 2), which offer ABE coursework. According to the Cal-PASS Plus (2017), there were 82 ABE students enrolled at CCC 1 in the 2017–2018 school year and 16 ABE students who transitioned to credit postsecondary courses. CCC 2 had 84 ABE students and 29 ABE students who successfully transitioned. The sampling frame for this study included the 45 former ABE students attending a 2-year public community college in San Bernardino County or Riverside County, California (see Table 2).

Table 2

Population of ABE Students and Former ABE Students at CCD 1 and CCD 2

Enrollment	CCD 1	CCD 2	Total
ABE students	82	84	166
Former ABE students	16	29	45

Note. ABE = adult basic education; CCD 1 = Community College District 1; CCD 2 = Community College District 2. From "Adult Education Pipeline: Overview," by Cal-PASS Plus, 2017 (https://www.calpassplus.org/Launchboard/Adult-Education-Pipeline.aspx).

Sample

Roberts (2010) noted, "When you don't have an opportunity to study a total group, select a sample as representative as possible of the total group in which you are interested" (p. 149). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) defined a sample as a "group of individuals from whom data are collected" (p. 129). The sampling methodology used for this study was purposeful. According to Patton (2002), "Purposeful sampling is to select information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study" (p. 46). There are no rules for determining sample size in qualitative research. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), sample size can range from one to 40 or more participants. Similarly, Patton (2002) wrote, "Qualitative inquiry typically focuses on

relatively small samples" (p. 46). Therefore, the sample size for this study was 10 participants. The purposeful sample included five former ABE students from each of two community college districts in the Inland Empire (see Figure 4).

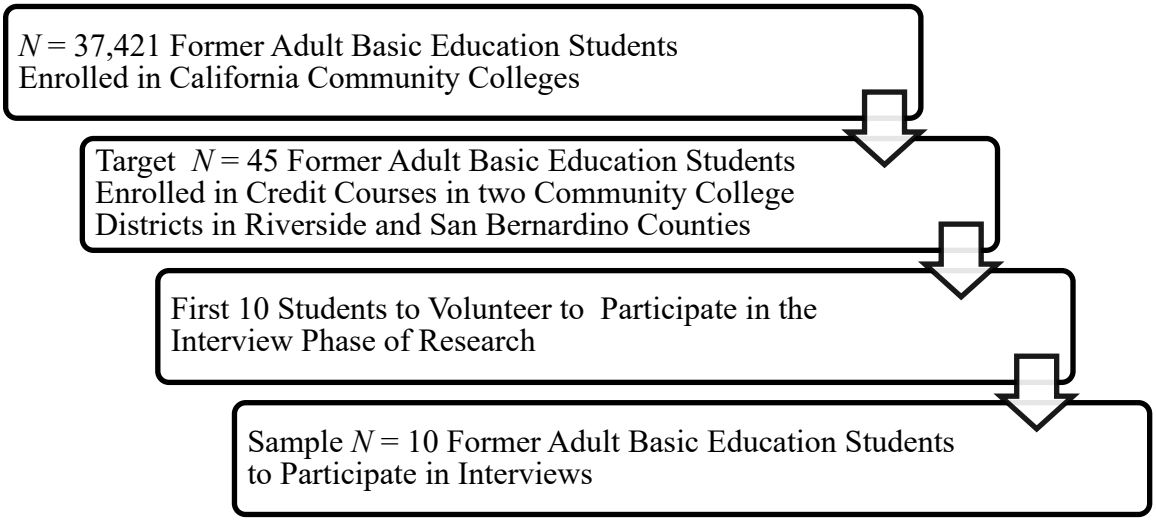

Figure 4. Sample selection of former adult basic education interview participants.

The 10 participants were selected from the larger population if they met the following criteria (see Appendix B):

1. they were former ABE student
2. they successfully transitioned to one of the three selected community college districts
3. they were currently enrolled in one of the three selected community college districts
4. they completed six or more credit units
5. they volunteered to participate in the study
6. they were over 18 years of age

Prior to identifying a sample from the two community college districts, the researcher obtained a letter providing permission to conduct the study within each of the community college districts. The researcher reached out to the vice presidents of student services via email and received permission to conduct the study (see Appendix C). After

permission had been obtained, the researcher contacted the directors of adult education via email at the community colleges to identify participants who met the selection criteria.

The participants who met the selection criteria were contacted via email by the researcher and were sent an invitation letter explaining the purpose of the study (see Appendix D). The emails included instructions on how to respond to the researcher to show interest in participating. The first 15 students who responded were selected to participate. The following list describes the selection protocol used:

- The researcher provided the directors of adult education in each of the participating community college districts with the selection criteria for the study.
- The researcher asked the directors of adult education to email out invitation letters, provided by the researcher, to qualifying participants.
- The first five students from each of the college districts to contact the researcher and confirm their participation were selected for the study.
- A list of alternates was maintained in case the selected participants were unable to complete the interview process.

Instrumentation

Researchers are considered an instrument for data collection and analysis for qualitative research. Patton (2002) reported, "The credibility of qualitative methods, therefore, hinges to a great extent on the skill, competence, and rigor of the person doing fieldwork—as well as things going on in a person's life that might prove a distraction" (p. 14). To maintain the credibility of the qualitative research study, the researcher employed rigorous self-scrutiny throughout the study.

The researcher chose to use a phenomenological interview format to gather data. Patton (2002) noted, "We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe" (p. 340). A phenomenological interview focuses on the meaning of the lived experience of participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Semistructured open-ended interview questions were used to record the perceptions of the former ABE students regarding factors that assisted in their successful transition from noncredit to credit course at the community college. All interviews were recorded using the Zoom video platform. The researcher used semistructured open-ended interview questions based on the review of the literature, the study's research questions, and Schlossberg's (1981) transition framework augmented by her 4S system elements. The four factors that influence transitions are situation, self, support, and strategies. The alignment table was developed to ensure that all four of Schlossberg's 4S factors (Anderson et al., 2012) were covered in the questions (see Appendix E).

Patton (2002) noted that open-ended questions allow participants to respond in their own words and share their own perspectives. The questions were developed to capture responses in alignment with the purpose of the study and the research questions. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) noted the importance of conducting a pretest and pilot test of the interview questions. The questions were revised based on feedback from an expert in adult education and participants in the pilot test. The pilot test was used to identify any areas the researcher may have had bias. Prior to the interviews, the participants received the following documents by email that explained the purpose of the study, a description of the research process, and confidentiality:

- Invitation letter (see Appendix D)
- Informed consent form (see Appendix F)
- Audio/video release form (see Appendix G)
- Participant's Bill of Rights (see Appendix H)

Validity

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) explained, "Validity, in qualitative research, refers to the degree of congruence between the explanations of the phenomena and the realities of the world" (p. 330). Patton (2002) noted that validity depends on the careful instrument construction to ensure it assesses what it is designed to assess. Qualitative researchers use various strategies to enhance the validity of their study. These strategies include prolonged and persistent fieldwork, triangulation, participant language, mechanically recording data, member checking, and participant review (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The validity of this study was enhanced through using the strategies noted in Table 3.

Table 3

Strategies Used to Enhance Validity

Strategy	Description
Participant language; verbatim accounts	Obtain literal statements of participants and quotations from documents
Mechanically recorded data	Use of tape recorders, photographs, and videotapes
Member checking	Check informally with participants for accuracy during data collection; frequently done in participant observation studies

To further support the validity of the study, the researcher used the literature identified in the synthesis matrix (see Appendix A) to review and validate the interview

questions. The interview question alignment table (see Appendix E) illustrates the connections between the research questions, interview questions, and specific literature sources. The research questions were also reviewed by an expert in adult education to ensure the questions were clear and appropriate for understanding the perceptions of the community college student participants.

Reliability

Patton (2012) explained that an instrument is considered reliable if it provides consistent results. Instruments that are reliable produce results that can be replicated by other researchers. In qualitative research, researchers can apply multiple approaches to increase the reliability of a study. One approach suggested by Patton is for a researcher to take a position of neutrality during the study. Patton noted, "Any credible research strategy requires that the investigator adopt a stance of neutrality with regard to the phenomenon under study" (p. 51). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), "The researcher needs to suspend, or 'bracket,' any preconceived ideas about the phenomenon to elicit and better understand the meanings given by the participants" (p. 346). Another method used to ensure reliability was using an interview protocol developed by the researcher and approved by experts in the field of qualitative research.

To increase the reliability of the interview questions, the researcher pilot tested the interview protocol with two former ABE students who met the selection criteria and were not included in the study. The pilot test was conducted via the Zoom virtual platform, and the researcher provided the participants with an overview of the study, read each interview question, and gave each participant the opportunity to respond. The students were provided a list of interview feedback reflection questions (see Appendix I).

An observer with a doctoral degree from Brandman University who was familiar with the interview process watched the interviews and also provided feedback using the same reflection questions. Based on the feedback, the researcher revised the interview protocol.

Data Collection

Before any data were collected, the UMass Global University Institutional Review Board (UMIRB) reviewed and approved the data collection process (see Appendix J). Prior to submission of the UMIRB application, permission to conduct the study at each site was sought and approved by the vice president of student services (see Appendix C) at each of the community college districts. After permission was granted, the researcher contacted the directors of adult education in each district to email the letter of invitation to the participants (see Appendix D). Participants who indicated their interest in participating in the study were contacted by the researcher via email. The email included the following:

- Invitation letter (see Appendix D)
- Informed consent form (see Appendix F)
- Audio/video release form (see Appendix G)
- Participant's Bill of Rights (see Appendix H)

Data collected for this study came from 10 separate interviews: five with former ABE students from CCD 1 and five with former ABE students from CCD 2. Verbal consent from each participant was given prior to each interview conducted via Zoom at the participant's convenience. The same interview protocol (see Appendix K) and in-depth semistructured open-ended interview questions (see Appendix L) were used for

each participant. The interviews were conducted by the researcher and lasted 30–60 min. The aim of the interview process was to gain a deep understanding of the lived experiences of former ABE students on their successful transition from noncredit to credit courses by using Schlossberg's (1981) transition factors. Additional probing questions were used to elicit deeper responses from the participants when necessary. Each interview was recorded and transcribed using Express Scribe Transcription Software (https://www.nch.com.au/scribe/index.html) and then reviewed by the researcher for accuracy. The transcripts were assigned a numbered identifier to ensure participants' privacy and the confidentiality of responses. In addition, the researcher secured all research data, video recordings, and other documents on his private password-protected home computer accessible only to the researcher. After 3 years, all video recordings, study transcripts, and other documents are destroyed.

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, pages of field notes and interview transcripts must be analyzed, summarized, and interpreted to identify patterns in the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The researcher used a four-phase model for the inductive analysis of the data collected from the interviews (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) defined inductive analysis as "the process through which qualitative researchers synthesize and make meaning from the data, starting with specific data and ending with categories and patterns" (p. 367). In this model, McMillan and Schumacher provided the following steps for analyzing data:

- Organize and transcribe data into segments
- Code data

- Describe and categorize data
- Develop patterns

To ensure the validity of the analysis process, the researcher followed these steps to identity themes and patterns from the interviews. The researcher coded the interview questions and used NVivo qualitative computer software for analysis to identify themes using the frequency of responses. Also, for triangulation purposes, the researcher collected artifacts from each of the community college districts. Artifacts included organizational documents and publicly available items relevant to the population and sample set. After the themes and patterns were identified, the researcher organized the themes by research questions to categorize identify the findings of the study.

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) noted that reliability "is established by determining the extent to which two or more persons agree about what they have seen, heard, or rated" (p. 182). To increase the reliability of the data, an expert qualitative researcher, or interrater, with experience using NVivo was selected to code 10% of the data and identify themes. The themes generated by the expert were compared with the researcher's analysis of the same information to calibrate and ensure consistency and reliability of the coding process. The findings were found to have an interrater reliability of 88% (Roberts, 2010).

Limitations

Limitations as presented by Roberts (2010) "are usually areas over which you have no control" and "may negatively affect the results or your ability to generalize" (p. 162). There were multiple limitations to this study:

- The small sample size included only 10 former ABE students.
- The data collected were limited to only two of the 72 CCC districts.
- Using Zoom to record the interviews did not allow the researcher to fully observe the nonverbal actions of the participants.
- Data collected were based on individual participant experiences and perceptions and varied widely from person to person and from population to population.
- Although the researcher used NVivo, interrater reliability coding, and other methods to help ensure accuracy and objectivity, there may have been themes from the interviews that were missed or misidentified.
- Because of the use of the qualitative phenomenological methodology, the researcher became the instrument in collecting data. Thus, researcher bias could have led to the misinterpretation of data.

Summary

This chapter included the study purpose statement, central research question, and research subquestions. The chapter outlined the research design, population and sample frame, instrumentation, and data collection and analysis procedures. Finally, the chapter concluded with the limitations and summary. Chapter IV presents the data and findings of the study.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

Overview

This chapter describes the phenomenological approach using Schlossberg's (1984) adult transition theory as a framework to investigate the transition experience of former adult basic education (ABE) students who successfully transition to credit college coursework. In addition, the purpose of this study, the research questions, research design, description of the population and sample, the instrumentation, the description of data collection, and an explanation of data analysis are included. This chapter concludes with a brief summary of the findings.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore and describe the factors that former ABE students perceived were important in their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework offered at three community colleges in San Bernardino County and Riverside County, California, known as the Inland Empire, using Schlossberg's (1984) transition theory and 4S system elements. A second purpose of this study was to determine which factors identified by former ABE students facilitated or hindered their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework.

Research Questions

This study was guided by one central research question and two research subquestions.

Central Research Question

What is the lived experience of former ABE students perceived as important to their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework offered through two community colleges in San Bernardino County and Riverside County, California?

Research Subquestions

1. What factors do former ABE students perceive were important in their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework offered through two community colleges in San Bernardino County and Riverside County, California, using Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory and 4S system elements?
2. What factors do former ABE students perceive facilitated or hindered their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework offered through two community colleges in San Bernardino County and Riverside County, California?

Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

This study was conducted to explore and understand the perception of former adult education students in reference to their transition from noncredit to credit coursework; therefore, a qualitative approach was used. To collect the data, a phenomenological perspective was the method most appropriate for the type of research needed to collect data from former ABE students. According to Patton (2002), "Phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences" (p. 104). One-on-one interview via the Zoom platform was used to gather data. Semistructured open-ended interview questions were the data collection instruments that were used for this study. The method used to ensure good qualitative

questions included a field test, interview protocol critique, and revisions as needed to get to the final phase and approved questions (McMillian & Schumacher, 2010).

UMIRB reviewed and approved this study prior to data collection. Permission was also obtained from the two community college adult education program directors to begin data collection. Initial contact with potential participants was made through the college's Adult Education Program. Letters of invitation to participate were provided to each adult education program director along with selection criteria. The invitations included instructions for responding to the researcher to express interest in participating in the study.

Population

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) defined a population as "a group of elements or cases, whether individuals, objects, or events, that conform to specific criteria and to which we intend to generalize the results of the research" (p. 129). According to Patten (2012), the population is "the group in which researchers are ultimately interested in" (p. 45). For this study, the population was former ABE students who successfully transitioned from noncredit community college courses to credit community college courses.

Sampling Frame

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) explained that the target population "is often different from the list of elements from which the sample is actually selected" (p. 129), which they term the sampling frame. They also stated that it is "important for researchers to carefully and completely define both the target population and sampling frame" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 129). The target population for this study was

former ABE students currently attending community colleges in a 2-year public community college in San Bernardino County or Riverside County, California.

Sample

The sample population consisted of 10 former ABE students. The study used purposeful sampling for the qualitative approach. According to McMillian and Schumacher (2010), purposeful sampling is when the researcher "selects a sample that is representative of the population or that includes subjects with needed characteristics" (p. 138). The purposeful sample included students from each of two community college districts in Bernardino County or Riverside County, California. Participants who met the selection criteria were contacted via email and sent an invitation letter explaining the purpose of the study. The first five students from each district who responded were selected to participate.

Data Collection

The central research question and subquestions guided the development of the interview questions. Interview questions were organized using Schlossberg's 4S system elements. Prior to the beginning of the interviews, the researcher ensured participants were informed of their rights and freely gave their consent to be interviewed for the study. The researcher asked participants whether they would be okay being video recorded and informed them that the recording would be used for transcription purposes only. Each participant acknowledged that they signed the audio/video release form and informed consent form and received a copy of UMass Global University's Research Participant's Bill of Rights. Additionally, the researcher informed participants that their responses would be anonymous. As a result, each participant was assigned a number

given in the order of their interview. After being asked the demographic questions, the researcher began the interview.

Demographic Data

Ten students were interviewed who met the selection criteria. To maintain confidentiality of the students, there were no references to specific names of colleges in the transcripts and instead each college and participant was assigned a number based in the order of the interviews. The 10 participants who participated in the interviews came from diverse backgrounds. There were seven females and three males who participated in the study. They ranged in age from 20 to over 50 years and had completed between nine and 60 credits (see Table 4).

Table 4

Demographic Data of Study Participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Credit units completed
1	Female	25	40
2	Male	41	60
3	Female	32	24
4	Female	30	26
5	Female	50+	16
6	Female	23	15
7	Male	39	30
8	Female	35	35
9	Female	20	9
10	Male	35	24

Presentation and Analysis of Data

The presentation of the data and analysis consisted of 10 interviews from former ABE students who met the criteria in the sample selection. Transcripts of each interview were completed and checked for accuracy. Researcher reviewed the transcripts to

identify common themes found. In addition to the interviews, the researcher collected artifacts from publicly available sources. The artifacts were coded following the same coding scheme as the interviews. A minimum of three comments was used to establish a theme. Data were inputted into NVivo to identify the frequency of items and specific quotes related to each theme. The analysis of the artifacts supported two of the eight major themes: faculty/counseling and financial support. A second researcher was used to code 10% of the data to help establish the reliability of the study. The results of the analysis were reported for the central research question and the two research subquestions. Direct quotes were used to illuminate themes when appropriate. The data provided in this chapter reflect the lived experiences of the participants interviewed.

Major Theme Results for the Central Research Question

The central research question asked, "What is the lived experience of former ABE students perceived as important to their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework offered through two community colleges in San Bernardino County and Riverside County, California?" Participants identified several factors that inspired them to consider and eventually transition to the community college, which are presented in this section. Table 5 identifies the themes based on the data collected.

Table 5

Frequency of Codes Exploring the Central Research Question

Theme	Participants	Frequency	Artifact frequency
Personal growth and fulfillment	8	30	0
Career aspirations	10	20	0

Personal growth and fulfillment. Personal growth and fulfillment are the intrinsic factors that motivated the students to consider and transition to the community college. This theme is a result of the coded responses given by eight participants and mentioned 30 times during the interviews. The primary factors that emerged during the interviews related to this theme include participant's references to ambition, capability, and self-determination.

Ambition. Participants viewed ambition as an overarching term that encompasses internal factors such as desire. Participants spoke passionately about wanting more out of life. For example, Participant 1 stated,

> I arrived at the point where I felt I wasn't doing what I have to. I wasn't studying what I really like, and I just wanted to study abroad. So, I moved to the U.S. … I start to understand what I like and that's where I started like shaping my, my directions and decided to where I want to be and go.

Participants 2, 6, and 7 all reported that going to college has always been something they wanted to do. Participant 2 stated,

> I have my girlfriend. She is finishing up a double bachelor's at Cal State San Marcos and I was just like man, I don't even got my high school diploma. . . . Just seeing what she was doing, her accomplishments. It made me want to achieve the same kind of goals.

Participant 6 stated, "So I finally realized, you know, what am I going to do without, you know, a GED or a high school diploma." Participant 7 vehemently explained, "I gotta stop procrastinating and get this going. Getting my GED has always been a goal of mine;

I regret not finishing high school but was very determined to get my GED and further my education."

Capability. Capability refers to a participant's ability, skills, and competence level. Participants' responses indicated that they did not feel capable of successfully completing their ESL class, but they were motivated after completing their classes. Participant 4 responded, "When I started, like taking the ESL classes, like noncredit ESL classes, I never think that I will pass. And when I finished that program, I was able to take like English 101." Participant 9 declared after completing ESL classes, "I feel proud of myself, because it was something that I didn't expect it for me to do to."

Self-determination. Participants demonstrated self-determination when encountering negative forms of motivation. Negative motivation occurred when participants turned outwardly negative situations into positive opportunities, for example, when discussing situations that impacted their transition to credit classes. Participant 3 and Participant 8 shared their experiences related to having to help the family and dropping out of high school to do that. Participant 1 and Participant 6 reported having to make huge sacrifices to come to the United States. Eventually, they were determined enough to overcome the time it took to enter the country. Participant 1 explained, "So I moved here, and you know, took me, it took me probably 3 years, to be able to move to the U.S., it wasn't an easy process. I had to sacrifice a lot to do that." Participants 1, 3, 6, and 8 shared how their experiences appeared to be genuine examples of extrinsic motivational factors that for them induced intrinsic motivation.

Career aspirations. Career aspirations were viewed by participants as an overarching term that encompass internal motivational factors such as the desire to get a

better job. This theme was a result of the coded material expressed by all 10 participants and was mentioned 20 times during the interviews. The primary factors related to this theme that emerged during the interviews included participants' references to it being easier to get a good career. Participants consistently reflected on their need to find a good job. Participant 3 said that her return to school was, in part, motivated by the job:

> I'm an MA, I have been an MA, a medical assistant for, you know, 11 years now. But I don't just want that title. So, it motivated me to complete my GED and start credit classes so that I can get to the career goal that I've always wanted."

The theme of career aspirations was apparent when Participant 5 provided a vivid account of why a return to school was so important. She stated that in Japan she worked as a licensed registered nurse for over 10 years, but when she moved to the United States, she was unable to transfer her educational training:

> My education background in Japan, I am a registered nurse. So first I was going to transfer my education to the U.S., but it was already like 20 years ago, so they didn't accept it. They advised me to start over as you know, a beginning college student. Then I thought about I have three young children at the time and then it will take forever to finish to complete to become a nurse in U.S. So, I just didn't start anything. But currently all my children are adults now. So, I'm going back to do something for myself.

Participant 1 and Participant 7 spoke about going back to college was something they wanted to do. Participant 1 stated, "It's easier to get a career here compared to Europe." While Participant 1's response was brief, there is a clear indication that going to college is something she primarily wanted for herself. In fact, she spent 3 years trying

to come to the United States even though her entire family stayed in Europe. Similarly, Participant 7 explained,

> I'm just trying to get my foot in the door with, like environmental compliance jobs with either city, county, state, somebody, okay. If I get my foot in the door, then you know, then I'll go back to school in the spring and finish BA degree.

Of the 10 participants interviewed, Participants 5, 1 and 7 showed the strongest internal sentiments related to transitioning to college for personal reasons.

Research Subquestion 1

The participants were asked interview questions that would yield data on Research Subquestion 1, which asked, "What factors do former ABE students perceive were important in their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework offered through two community colleges in San Bernardino County and Riverside County, California, using Schlossberg's transition theory and 4S system elements?"

Participants identified several extrinsic factors that were important for them in their transition to the community college. Themes that emerged included (a) faculty/counselor support, (b) financial support, and (c), family/peer support. Table 6 identifies the themes based on the data collected.

Table 6

Frequency of Codes Exploring Research Subquestion 1

Theme	Participants	Frequency	Artifact frequency
Faculty/counselor support	10	28	11
Financial support	8	14	6
Family/peer support	8	16	0

Faculty/counselor support. Faculty/counselor support is provided by the ABE instructor and the counselors brought into the classroom throughout every phase of the transition process. The theme of faculty/counselor support was mentioned by 10 participants, 28 times during the interviews. Faculty/counselor support from ABE programs was reportedly an important motivational factor that led to participants transitioning to credit courses at the community college. Each participant was asked, "Were academic supports helpful in your transition to college credit classes, and how did they help you?" Without hesitation, all 10 of the participants reported that consistent support from faculty and counselors critically impacted their decisions to plan and transition to the community college.

Participant 9 responded, "The counselors and professors want you to finish college; they motivated me a lot to finish. That was something I didn't expect." Similarly, Participant 6 replied, "We were able to ask questions that allowed us to understand how and what to do." She stated, "I want to give all the credit to my counselor, honestly, they did change the life of people."

Participant 8 expressed similar sentiments, speaking highly of the counseling that she received from the ABE counselor. She shared that "because of her [counselor], I am where I am now."

Financial support. Financial support is received through grants and scholarships. The theme of financial support was mentioned by eight participants, 14 times during the interviews. One of the key reasons participants chose to start in noncredit ABE before transitioning to the community college was directly tied to

finances. Of the 10 participants in the study, eight highlighted this theme as one of the top reasons.

Participant 1 pointed out the cost of being an out-of-state student: “But obviously, if I wanted to go to school, I had to pay as an out-of-state student, so even community college classes would be about $2,000 per classes. So, the best option was taking noncredit classes to start.” She also noted the value of financial aid and scholarship she received at the community college: “Because last semester my computer broke, like the week of my midterm. And yeah, I got this grant, and I was able to get my laptop right away. Yeah, that was great.”

Participant 3 noted that the financial aid she received was a big deal: “The 1st year I signed up in 2019, it was just to cover my expenses and that was enough. That’s all I cared about.”

Family/peer support. Family/peer support refers to the mother, father, and sibling who provided verbal encouragement and support throughout every phase of the transition process. Nobody does this alone. Each of the participants spoke about the importance of family in motivating them. The theme of family/peer support was mentioned by eight participants, 16 times during the interviews. While describing family, participants reported that their siblings, nieces, and children contributed to their successful transition. Sometimes the support the family provided was not financial, and

most of the time it was in other forms by assisting with homework and managing such things as transportation and technology.

Participant 6 stated, “My sister did push me. She encouraged me to not give up and to look at the bright side.” She further explained, “My sister was telling me, ‘You’re almost there, look at the light at the end of the tunnel,’ so that motivated me to continue.”

Participant 9 shared how her daughter helped her when she did not think she could do the work: “The main supporter was my daughter. Without her help, I don’t think I could finish all the assignments.”

A few participants conveyed that they did not have family support. Participant 8 described herself as her own support: “Well, my family’s very, I don’t want to say closed minded, but it wasn’t really a, you know, keep going you’re almost there.” Participant 10 commented, “I’m here by myself. I’m not married, and I have no family around me, so I support myself.”

Several participants identified the importance of peer support in their perseverance and transition efforts. Participant 4 expressed the importance of her peers encouraging her not to give up on her decision to attend college: “My classmates, ESL students, they wanted to finish college and they motivated me.” Similarly, Participant 1 spoke of her peers as being amazing: “We’re all in the same situation, so we all help each other.”

Overall, the general message was the same. Family and peers play a vital part of the transition in helping provide a wide variety of supports. Whether it was starting at the community college to save money, working while in school, obtaining particular

scholarships, or having family and peer support has made the transition easier for these students.

Research Subquestion 2

Research Subquestion 2 asked, "What factors do former ABE students perceive facilitated or hindered their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework offered through two community colleges in San Bernardino County and Riverside County, California." The following themes are the result of the data collected (see Table 7).

Table 7

Frequency of Codes Exploring Research Subquestion 2

Theme	Participants	Frequency	Artifact frequency
Language barriers	6	12	3
Work schedule conflicts	6	16	0
Coping strategies	10	15	0

Language barriers. Language barriers can lead to isolation and keep individuals from fully participating in their community. Sixty-eight percent of students enrolled in adult education programs across the state identified a language other than English as their native language with Spanish as the largest. Other languages identified included Chinese, Vietnamese, Arabic, and Russian (WestEd, 2018). The theme of language barriers was mentioned by six participants, 12 times during the interviews. While most participants were from the United States, two were from Europe and Japan. The language barrier

included participants who spoke little to no English when they started taking ABE classes.

Participant 1 shared that when she first arrived in the United States, her English was not that good. She further explained, "And it was a little bit, you know, culture shock being there in a school for the first time, because I've never been to an American school before. So, everything was different, and my English wasn't that well." Participant 5 shared that coming from another country and not knowing English was difficult. Additionally, Participant 10 expressed how difficult online classes are for students who have English as their second language.

Work schedule conflicts. Work schedule conflicts refers to the balancing of work, personal, and academic responsibilities. Adult education students experience barriers when classes are not available when they need them after work or on weekends. The theme of work schedule conflict was mentioned by six participants, 16 times during the interviews. Six of the 10 participants mentioned their job in a negative manner—as a barrier, as consuming time, and not being allowed the flexibility to schedule classes when offered. Participant 2 explained that he had barriers getting into classes that conflicted with his work schedule. Similarly, Participant 4 and Participant 9 shared that because they both work two jobs, they find it hard to manage their time between work and school.

Coping strategies. Coping strategies refers to the things people do to avoid being harmed by stressful situations. The theme of coping strategies was mentioned by 10 participants, 15 times during the interviews. Coping strategies help people manage stress, redefine the situation, and identify actions that will resolve the situation it (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). The primary coping factors related to this theme that emerged during

the interviews included participants' references to organizing activities and utilizing support services.

Organizing actions. Most participants acknowledged the multitude of tasks they needed to complete, ranging from coursework assignments to working two or more jobs and scheduling time with family. Four of the 10 participants discussed the use of time-management strategies, such as a setting up a regular schedule to complete work. Participants 2, 3, and 7 mentioned scheduling classes with their sons or daughters. Participant 2 shared, "I was going to school with my daughter. I tried to plan; I planned a lot of my schedule around being able to help her go to class." Participant 7 added, "I took classes online. I made sure, I made sure to take easier classes online and harder classes that I knew I needed help with. I scheduled those ones for in-person classes."

Utilizing support services. All of the participants mentioned having great faculty and counselors and felt they were critical for an effective transition. Throughout the interviews, participants consistently shared how frequently faculty and counselors served as a source of information and influenced their transition to the community college.

Participant 1 explained that in Europe they do not have counselors at school: "But like having that counselor for noncredit classes is crucial; it's very important. Because, thanks to her, we were able to like, I was able to ask her questions and understand, like how and what to do."

Participant 6 had a similar experience with her GED instructor when she transitioned to the community college: "And, when I transitioned over to the community college, like the counselor she was super, super, super helpful and nice. And she helped set up everything for me. She made it as easy as possible."

Participants 7, 8, and 10 spoke highly of their GED professor and the counseling they received from their GED program. All conveyed that their active engagement with their faculty and counselors have been essential in driving their planning efforts to successfully transition to higher education.

Alignment of Themes With the 4S System of Adult Transition Theory

The researcher organized the themes using the elements of the 4S system, and the data were presented using the 4S system of adult transition theory (Anderson et al., 2012) as an organizing tool. The 4S system is comprised of the four elements of situation, self, support, and strategies, which when taken together provides a tool for individuals to analyze and understand their transition experiences. Table 8 shows the alignment of the Schlossberg (1984) framework to the study's resulting themes. The eight themes emerged from 151 frequencies of coded data. All four of the 4S elements aligned with the themes describing the lived experiences of the participants in this study. The 4S element of support had the most themes in alignment, which were identified in this study. The elements of situation and self each had two themes in alignment, and the element of strategies had one alignment.

Table 8

Schlossberg's Framework Aligned to the Study's Resulting Themes

Theme	Self	Situation	Strategies	Support
Personal growth and fulfillment	X			
Career aspirations	X			
Language barrier		X		
Work schedule conflict		X		
Faculty/counselor supports				X
Financial supports				X
Family/peer supports				X
Coping strategies			X	

Summary

Chapter IV presented the data and findings of 10 semistructured interviews conducted at two community colleges in San Bernardino County and Riverside County, California, using Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory and 4S system elements to develop the questions. The study explored the lived experiences of 10 former ABE students who successfully transitioned from noncredit to credit community college classes. Overall, participants described their transition experience positively and some would like to continue their education further. Chapter V presents the findings, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for action as well as further research.

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

The aim of this phenomenological study was to understand the transition experience of former adult basic education (ABE) students attending a community college through the lens of Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory. Included in this chapter is the purpose statement, research questions, research methods and data collection procedures, population, and sample. Major findings are then presented, followed by the researcher's conclusions, implications for action, and recommendations for future research. The chapter closes with concluding remarks and reflections.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore and describe the factors that former ABE students perceived were important in their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework offered at two community colleges in San Bernardino County and Riverside County, California, known as the Inland Empire, using Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory and 4S system elements. A second purpose of this study was to determine which factors identified by former ABE students facilitated or hindered their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework

Research Questions

This study was guided by one central research question and two research subquestions.

Central Research Question

What is the lived experience of former ABE students perceived as important to their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework offered through two community colleges in Bernardino County and Riverside County, California?

Research Subquestions

1. What factors do former ABE students perceive were important in their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework offered through two community colleges in Bernardino County and Riverside County, California, using Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory and 4S system elements?
2. What factors do former ABE students perceive facilitated or hindered their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework offered through two community colleges in Bernardino County and Riverside County, California?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework through which the researcher set out to view and make meaning of the data collected for this study was Schlossberg's transition theory (Anderson et al., 2012; Goodman et al., 2006; Schlossberg, 1981, 1984, 2011; Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995). Schlossberg views transitions in an integrated way in which everyone is always engaged in the transition process, whether moving in, moving through, or moving out of a situation. Further, in order to assist someone in successfully navigating through a transition, Anderson et al. (2012) envisioned three steps: (a) approaching transitions: involving identifying the transition and how it will change a person's life as well as where the individual is in the transition process, (b) taking stock of coping resources: the 4S system, and (c) taking charge: strengthening

resources. Figure 5 shows a full model of the 4S theory. The resources that Anderson et al. described fall under four categories and in any given situation can be viewed as assets to a successful transition or liabilities, depending on how they are viewed by the individual and how they assist in the transition or make the transition more difficult.

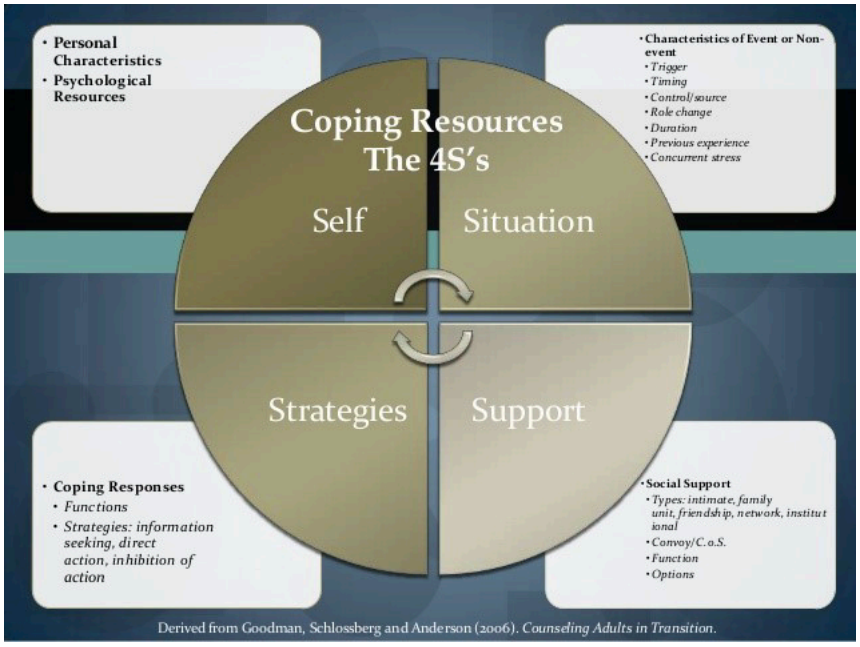

Figure 5. Schlossberg's transition theory 4S model. From *Counseling Adults in Transition: Linking Practice With Theory* (3rd ed.), by J. Goodman, N. K. Schlossberg, and M. L. Anderson, 2006, p. 127, Springer.

The 4S system includes examining the situation, the self, the support, and the strategies. An understanding of the situation includes an examination of elements such as the trigger for the transition, the timing, the source or level of control over the situation, whether a role change is involved, the duration of the transition, previous experience with similar transitions, concurrent stress, and one's assessment of the transition as positive or negative. An understanding of the self in terms of coping assets and liabilities includes an awareness of one's personal characteristics and psychological resources, including

socioeconomic status, gender and sexual orientation, age and stage of life, state of health, ethnicity/culture, ego development, outlook (optimism and self-efficacy), commitment and values, and spirituality and resilience. Support can be varied and can include family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, classmates, strangers, organizations, institutions, and so forth. Lastly, strategies can vary greatly as well but can be viewed in three categories, according to Anderson et al. (2012). First, responses that modify the situation to alter the source of strain include negotiation, optimistic action, self-reliance versus advice seeking, and exercise of potency versus helpless resignation. Second, responses that control the meaning of the problem to cognitively neutralize the threat include positive comparisons, selective ignoring, and substitution of rewards. Last, responses that help the individual manage stress once it has occurred include emotional discharge, self-assertion, and passive forbearance. The ratio of assets to liabilities helps to explain "why individuals react differently to the same type of transition and why the same person reacts differently at different times" (Schlossberg et al., 1995, p. 57).

Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

The study included a qualitative phenomenological research design and method. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) noted, "The goal in qualitative research is to understand participants from their own point of view, in their own voice" (p. 323). Qualitative research is defined as follows:

> Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquire,

> the collection of data in a nature setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflectivity of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem. (Creswell, 2007, as quoted in McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 320)

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to capture the lived experiences of the participants. Phenomenology asks the foundational question, "What is the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon for this person or group of people" (Patton, 2002, p. 104). Additionally, McMillan and Schumacher (2010) wrote that "when using a phenomenological design, the researcher needs to suspend, or bracket, any preconceived ideas about the phenomenon to elicit and better understand the meanings given by the participants" (p. 346). Therefore, the lived experiences of the participants in this study were explored to provide a synthesis of the meanings and essences of the participants' experiences.

Data collection in qualitative research involves using interviews, observation, and evaluation of artifacts as techniques to understand a social phenomenon from the participants' perspective (Patton, 2002). For this study, structured interviews were conducted with 10 former ABE students from two community colleges in San Bernardino and Riverside counties in California. In addition, written artifacts were collected from the schools to better understand the transition experience of students from noncredit ABE to enrollment in credit-bearing community college coursework. Interviews were conducted using the Zoom video platform. An interview guide that included a standard set of questions was used to elicit information from the participants to explore their lived

experiences in the transition process. The data from the interviews were collected during summer of 2021 and then organized and analyzed to identify themes and findings to answer the research questions.

Population

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) defined a population as "a group of elements or cases, whether individuals, objects, or events, that conform to specific criteria and to which we intend to generalize the results of the research" (p. 129). The population for this study was former ABE students who successfully transitioned from noncredit community college courses to credit community college courses in the California Community Colleges (CCC) system. According to the Cal-PASS Plus (2017) website there were 37,421 former ABE students enrolled at a California community college during the 2017–2018 academic year.

Sampling Frame

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), the target population "is often different from the list of elements from which the sample is actually selected" (p. 129), which they termed the sampling frame. The target population in this study was former ABE students attending Community College District 1 (CCD 1) and Community College District 2 (CCD 2). According to the CCCCO Management Information System (2017), there were 82 ABE students enrolled at CCD 1 in the 2017–2018 school year and 16 ABE students who transitioned to credit postsecondary courses. CCD 2 had 84 ABE students and 29 who successfully transitioned. The sampling frame for this study included the 45 former ABE students attending a 2-year public community college in San Bernardino County or Riverside County, California.

Sample

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) defined a sample as a "group of individuals from whom data are collected" (p. 129). The sampling methodology used for this study was purposeful. The use of purposeful sampling was chosen because "purposeful sampling is to select information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study" (Patton, 2002, p. 46). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), a sample size can range from one to 40 or more participants. Therefore, the sample size for this study was 10 participants. The purposeful sample included five former ABE students from each of the two community college districts in San Bernardino County and Riverside County, California. For this study, participants were selected from the larger population if they met the following criteria:

1. they were former ABE student
2. they successfully transitioned to one of the two selected community college districts
3. they were currently enrolled in one of the two selected community college districts
4. they completed six or more credit units
5. they volunteered to participate in the study
6. they were over 18 years of age

Major Findings

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to explore and describe the transition perceptions of former ABE students who attended two community college districts in San Bernardino and Riverside counties in California. The data collection and analysis identified themes that emerged from the students' perceptions regarding their successful transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework at the community

college. Frequencies were grouped together into codes that became themes. These themes were used to answer the research questions. The major findings emerged from eight themes that related to the research questions.

Major Findings for Central Research Question

The central research question asked, "What is the lived experience of former ABE students perceived as important to their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework offered through two community colleges in San Bernardino County and Riverside County, California?"

Major Finding 1: Personal growth and fulfillment. Personal growth and fulfillment is important to students' transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework. This theme represented the coded data expressed by eight of the 10 participants. The way in which students discussed their personal growth and fulfillment was in alignment with Schlossberg's 4S element of self, which Schlossberg considered integral to a student's successful transition. Anderson et al. (2012) noted that a student who perceives a stressful time as an opportunity rather than a challenge is the first step for a successful transition.

The participants in this study all made an active and personal choice to return to school. This supported Comings's (2007) findings that students returning to school to complete a basic education program choose to participate in educational programs. Adults have an active and conscious part in the decision to further their education. Participants' responses led to the reasonable conclusion that they had a strong sense of self-efficacy that resulted in their successful transition from noncredit to credit courses. Several participants recounted overcoming obstacles and anxiety successfully in their

transition. Although some participants doubted their abilities, no participants gave the impression they were not capable of transitioning into the credit courses after completing their ABE courses.

Major Finding 2: Career aspirations. Career aspirations is important to students' transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework. This theme represented the data coded expressed by all 10 participants. The coded data revolved around frequencies regarding the ease of getting a good career. Career aspirations refer to intrinsically cultivated desire. Several participants expressed that they had desires to work in personally enjoyable or fulfilling career fields. In this case, career aspiration is concerned with fulfilling the basic needs associated with ambition and self-determination. Research has suggested that adult education students have low career aspiration because of their lack of connections between adult education programs and postsecondary education (USDOE, 2010). This study revealed that when connections are high, adult education students are more likely to have high career aspirations and are more inclined to transition to the community college.

Major Findings for Research Subquestion 1

Research Subquestion 1 asked, "What factors do former ABE students perceive were important in their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework offered through two community colleges in San Bernardino County and Riverside County, California, using Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory and 4S system elements?"

Major Finding 3: Faculty/counselor support. Faculty/counselor support is important to students' transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework. Faculty/counselor support represented the data coded expressed by all 10 participants. A

key element of Schlossberg's 4S model is the type of support an individual receives. Once participants enrolled into an ABE class, the level of engagement with faculty and counselors was unanimously repeated as important. Participants' expressed how their faculty tutored them, especially reading and writing. They also shared how their counselors assisted them with applying to college and making the entire process easy. In addition, participants regularly mentioned how the positive support and motivation they received from faculty and counselors helped them to transition (Comings, 2007).

Major Finding 4: Financial support. Financial support is important to students' transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework. Financial support represented the data coded expressed by eight of the 10 participants. Participants credited their decision to transition, in part, on the availability of financial support in the form of grants and scholarships. One student recounted how one semester her computer broke the week before midterms, and with the help of grants, she was able to get a new laptop and continue her classes. Another participant related how financial aid paid for her classes and that was how she was able to attend school. More pointedly, the majority of the participants suggested that the transition would not have happened in the absence of financial aid programs. Research has found that removing financial barriers and providing financial support for students reduces psychological stress and increases academic performance (Cadaret & Bennett, 2019; Cross, 1981; Hardin, 2008).

Major Finding 5: Family/peer support. Family/peer support is important to students' transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework. Family/peer support represented the data coded expressed by eight of the 10 participants. Anderson et al.'s (2012) research consistently showed that factors consisting of family and peer support

affect adult education students' ability to enroll in college after completing their adult education program. Participants reflected on how their families encouraged and inspired them from the moment they decided to return to school and up to the point that they actually transitioned into credit courses. Several participants mentioned how the positive support they received from their peers helped motivate them to transition. Research has revealed that peer support positively affects students' ability to transition to college (Berg, 2010). Participants regularly mentioned how the positive support they received from their peers helped motivate them to transition from noncredit to credit college courses. Moreover, if participants had peers in their lives who held the same ambition of going to college, the peer support provided further motivation to transition. This is in line with Schlossberg's support element, which states people receive support from belonging to groups. These groups can provide information and help others acquire and perceive more control over their situation (Anderson et al., 2012). Participants from this study reinforced the relevance of support factors in adult education students' successful transition to higher education.

Major Findings for Research Subquestion 2

Research Subquestion 2 asked, "What factors do former ABE students perceive facilitated or hindered their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework offered through two community colleges in San Bernardino County and Riverside County, California."

Major Finding 6: Language barriers. Language barriers can lead to isolation and hinder students' transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework. Six of the 10 participants expressed language barriers. Several participants recounted how they

overcame this seemingly insurmountable obstacle. Most participants began by taking ESL classes. Passing their class motivated them to continue toward their educational goals. Participants responses led to the reasonable conclusion that they had a strong sense of self that resulted in their successful transition to college. This is in line with Pearlin and Schooler (1978) who stated that psychological recourses are the "personality characteristics that people draw upon to help them withstand threats" (p. 5). This includes self-efficacy, which enables individuals to tackle this barrier and cope effectively.

Major Finding 7: Work-related barriers. Work-related issues are an important barrier to students' transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework. Work-related barriers represented the data coded expressed by six of the 10 participants. Most of the participants in the study found challenges with the scheduling of the classes and the need to work. The requirement to work while attending school limited the participants' ability to take classes they needed. Participants had to make the decision, at times, to work or take a required class. Inconvenient scheduling times of classes is aligned to Cross's (1991) barriers categories. Cross stated that "inconvenient locations and schedules are the most complained about institutional barrier" (p. 104).

Major Finding 8: Coping strategies. Coping strategies are important to students' transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework. Coping strategies represented the data coded expressed by all 10 participants. Schlossberg (2008) noted that students with a strong selection of coping skills who perceive the changes as an indispensable part of a positive new future will experience less traumatic stress reactions. Research has suggested the adult students' poor educational backgrounds can lead to poor

self-image and can cause them to not take advantage of available resources (Hardin, 2008; Kasworm, 2008). Participants mentioned learning time management techniques because they had to work two job, and others shared how they took easy classes online and the courses they needed more help with in person. Participants' use of organizing actions and utilizing institutional resources to navigate their transition aligned with the elements of Pearlin and Schooler's (1978) research particularly "responses that modify the situation" (p. 6) to affect the outcome. Participants' strategies were different, but all expressed that the strategies used helped them have a better transition experience.

Conclusions

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 and subsequent reauthorizations of this legislation helped pave the way for ABE students to successfully access higher education. However, ABE students continue to access higher education at a much lower rate than traditional students. In addition, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic had caused families to cancel their college plans. Research has shown that the field of study with the largest drop in enrollment is basic skills (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2021). This study examined the transition experience of former ABE students who successfully transitioned from noncredit to credit coursework within two community college districts in San Bernardino and Riverside counties in California. Based on the findings, this study produced five conclusions.

Conclusion 1: Students Who Get Individualized Assistance Are More Prepared to Transition

Based on the findings in this research study, it is concluded that adult education students transitioning from noncredit to credit coursework need individualized assistance

from the community college to successfully navigate the complicated institutional systems. This assistance can be in the form of academic advising, tutoring, goal setting, and orientation to college. Although ABE students progress through the basic skills noncredit coursework, preparing for success in the college-level coursework is perceived by the participants as much more difficult. It cannot be assumed that students are prepared to do it on their own. Advisement on the community college campus is a vital instrument for transitioning ABE students. Students were provided information on the transition process including how to register for classes and financial aid. To assist in the transition process and to avoid unnecessary delays, the ABE student relied on guidance given by the ABE instructor and counselor. This advisement was usually provided through the adult education course but could also come from the counseling center at the community college. In addition to advisement, students also identified support services such as tutoring as important to their success at the community college. These services could also assist students with their confidence and stress management. This is in agreement with Schlossberg's 4S system of support that recognizes external help is available (Anderson et al., 2012).

Conclusion 2: Students Who Learn Coping Strategies Are More Prepared to Overcome Barriers

When adult education students transitioning from noncredit to credit coursework are inexperienced in how to deal with unexpected challenges and stressful circumstances, learning coping strategies within a safe environment can help them overcome barriers and remain in school. Based on the research, prior to enrolling into an adult education program, most participants had limited exposure to postsecondary education. A review

of the literature suggests that most adult education students often have not successfully acquired vocabulary, math, and writing skills. Students who participated in classroom discussions, spoke with instructors to get help with work, and took advantage of support services, such as tutoring, developed the coping strategies to be successful. Adult education students' transition can be further supported through institutional improvements. The adult education students' awareness of the resources available can reinforce their inner strength and ability to cope with the transition (Anderson et al., 2012).

Conclusion 3: ESL Participation Has a Positive Impact on Student Motivation and Course Success

When adult education students who are limited English speakers transitioning from noncredit to credit coursework experience receive targeted ongoing assistance from the community college, they are better enabled to succeed in their coursework. Several of these students relied on the adult education program to better their language skills. Many of the adult education students began with limited English skills and started in the ESL class. This provided the students with the motivation and confidence before attempting to engage in college-level courses.

Conclusion 4: Financial Aid Has a Positive Impact on Student Persistence

Financial aid, in the form of grants, scholarships, and work-study, provided through the college is crucial to ensuring adult education students transitioning from noncredit to credit coursework experience are able to take care of their basic needs and focus on reaching their educational goals. Students identified receiving financial aid as a crucial factor to their successful transition to community college. Some participants

shared that working two jobs did not allow them to take classes in the morning. This need to work kept them from taking required classes, which delayed their transition to college. This is in agreement with other researchers who have stated that money is a crucial concern and can prevent students' transition and completion of college (Anderson et al., 2012; Cross, 1981; Hardin, 2008).

Implications for Action

The experiences of each participant provided an in-depth story of factors leading to a successful transition into credit courses. Each participant indicated a motivating factor for transitioning to the community college as well as overcoming seemingly insurmountable barriers to successfully transition to college. The realization of these factors lends some inclination as to what can be done to improve the transition experience related to successful transition. Based on the findings and conclusions, the following implications for action are suggested by the researcher.

Implication 1: Increase Collaboration Among Community College and Adult Education Programs

It is recommended that the community colleges and adult education programs collaborate to develop ongoing systemic policies and procedures to ensure administrators, faculty, and counselors understand how to best support ABE students through the transition process. Community colleges need to provide greater access to counselors for advising students. Adult education students rely on proper advisement to meet their transfer goals, and without this advising, fewer students would succeed in transitioning to college.

Implication 2: Develop a Model ABE Transition Training Program for Staff

It is recommended to reshape existing training programs to align with Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory. These training programs need to be strategically designed for adult education students as a way to build their self-confidence. The use of Schlossberg's 4S elements in this training program could be used to provide faculty, staff, and administrators with the knowledge and resources to effectively support adult education students.

Implication 3: Develop Local Policies to Assist ABE Student Transitions

Community College Board of Governors must develop policies and regulations to ensure ABE students are given the best opportunity to transition and succeed in college-level, credit-bearing coursework. Community College Board of Governors must reevaluate the actions undertaken in the past to aid adult education students to successfully transition to college and to determine further courses of action to facilitate this process. Transition programs should be in every community college specifically designed to support ABE students' successful transition to college.

Implication 4: Collect and Analyze Transition Data to Support ABE Student Transition Programs

The CCCCO in collaboration with the community college districts should collect and analyze local data to ensure that policy makers, local governing boards, and administrators have the data necessary to make improvements that increase the rate of successful transition and persistence of ABE students in college. In addition, the CCCCO and the CDE should develop a coordinated data system that tracks students

throughout their educational journey. This would also aide in creating system-wide transition practices.

Implication 5: Local Boards Must Provide Dedicated Funding for ABE Transition

Board of Governors must provide dedicated annualized funding in their budget to increase the support services resources and personnel so that all transitioning ABE students have an individualized plan for success and optimal support services to achieve their educational goals. The WIOA of 2013 and all resources that have materialized as a result of this effort are simply not enough when it comes to helping and supporting adult education students' transition to college. The misalignment and different funding rules between the K–12 adult schools and the community colleges prevent greater coordination of services and negatively effect adult education students' access to support services needed for successful transition.

Implication 6: Include Support for ABE Student Transition Within the Cal Grant Awards

The Cal Grant Program must provide specific funding and eligibility criteria to provide financial aid for tuition, books, and subsistence for ABE students transitioning from ABE to postsecondary education. Adult education students' financial situations cause significant barriers to their persistence and transition to postsecondary education. In addition, institutional barriers erected through policies and procedures cause challenges for adult education students attending part time. Lack of financial aid for part-time students negatively affects their transition.

A summary of the major findings, conclusions, and implications for action are shown in Table 9.

Table 9

Chart of Major Findings, Conclusions, and Implications for Action

Major finding	Conclusion	Implication for action
Personal growth and fulfillment	Students who get individualized assistance are more prepared to transition	Increase collaboration among community college and adult education programs
Career aspirations	Students who learn coping strategies are more prepared to overcome barriers	Develop a model ABE transition training program for staff
Faculty/counselor support	ESL participation has a positive impact on student motivation and course success	Develop local policies to assist ABE student transitions
Financial support	Financial aid has a positive impact on student persistence	Collect and analyze transition data to support ABE student transition programs
Family/peer support		Local boards must provide dedicated funding for ABE transition
Language barriers		Include support for ABE student transition within the Cal Grant awards
Work related barriers		
Coping strategies		

Recommendations for Further Research

This qualitative research study was limited to understanding former ABE students' perceptions of the factors that influence their successful transitions from noncredit to credit coursework at the community college. A deeper investigation must occur that ascertains exactly how these factors can be better understood in order to increase ABE students' transition rates. The following recommendations for future research are identified:

1. It is recommended that a replication study be conducted using a larger population of students from multiple locations to determine the factors important for ABE student transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework offered within CCC.
2. This study focused on students who successfully transitioned into community college credit courses; therefore, it did not take into account students who did not successfully transition. It is recommended that a multiple case study method be conducted for the purpose of comparative analysis on students who were successful and students who were unsuccessful in the transition.
3. This study focused largely on participants who experienced transition when they were in their early 30s and above. It is recommended that a phenomenological study with students in their late teens and early 20s be conducted. A study of former ABE students in their late teens and early 20s may provide further insight into how Schlossberg's 4S model applies to younger transitioning students.
4. It is recommended that a sequential exploratory mixed methods study be conducted to analyze the ways in which faculty, counselors, and/or staff perceive factors as influencing ABE students' successful transition into credit coursework.
5. It is recommended that a quantitative study be conducted with administrators, faculty, and staff on their perceptions of effective strategies for increasing ABE student transition from noncredit to credit-bearing coursework.

Concluding Remarks and Reflections

As the researcher for this study, I was honored to have a chance to work with each participant. It was humbling to hear their lived experiences. As analysis of their stories began, a realization of the uniqueness of each individual became a reality. Each story

was not just a number or code on the paper; it was a life and the life of a family that was unfolding for the better. Each participant made the choice to transition, to move forward, to not give up, and to do whatever it took to bring that better life into reality.

As a researcher and educator, it is life changing to see the relevance of interaction with students. All participants indicated at some point the importance of ABE faculty and counselors. Therefore, it is important to recognize students and spend time encouraging them throughout the transition process. This is not time wasted by the educator; it is time invested.

Some adults chose the ABE path because of different life circumstances. Despite the reason, the same goal was in every participants' mind—to transition and continue their education. All of the participants had a very positive outlook or disposition toward their education, and something occurred in their life that caused them to stop their traditional educational progression and chose this alternative route.

A participant stated, "Like don't be afraid to level up. It's not too late to level up." This statement sums up the motivation and determination of these participants. Educational systems that work together can be effective in helping make the transition a reality to more individuals.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Synthesis Matrix

Source	History of Adult Education	Theoretical Foundations	Theoretical Framework (4S)	Barriers to Transition	Legislation Impacting Adult Education	Characteristics of ABE Students
Schlossberg, Anderson, & Goodman, 2012		x	x	x		
Alamprese, 2005	x			x		
ASCCC, 2009	x					
Aktu, Llhan, 2017		x				
Bridges, 2001		x				
Bridges, 2019		x				
Bruno, Burnett & Galizio, 2016	x					
CCCCO, 2006	x					
Creel, 1996	x					
California Adult Education Program (2019)					x	
Calif Adult Education website					x	
CDE, 2011	x			x		
Comings, 2007				x		
Choy, 2002						x
Cross, 1991				x		
Davidson, 2017					x	
Folkman, Lazarus,		x				

Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis, Gruen, 1980						
Folkman, Moskowitz, 2004		x				
Folkman, et al, 1986		x				
Giacobbi, et al, 2004		x				
Gaer et. al, 2014	x			x		
Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006		x	x	x		
Hanover Research, 2014				x		
Hanover, 2015				x		
Humpherys, and Acker-Hocevar, 2012				x		
Hardin, 2008				x		
Horn,1996						x
Jacobson, 2017					x	
Kegan, 1982		x				
Kasworm, 2005				x		
Kasworm, 2006				x		
Kasworm, 2003				x		
Little Hoover Commission, 2013					x	
Lazarus and Folkman, 1984		x				

Love, & Guthrie, 1999		x				
Levinson, 1986		x				
Milana, & McBain, 2014				x	x	
Mortrude & Cielinski, 2017					x	
Patterson et al. 2010	x					
Reder, 2007				x		
Reeves, 1999		x				
Rabourn, et. al, 2018						x
SDCE, 2018	x				x	
SDCE, 2017						
Schlossberg, 1981		x	x			
Schlossberg, 1984		x	x			
Schlossberg, 2011			x			
Sargent & Schlossberg, 1988			x			
Schlossberg, 2008			x			
Taylor & Marienau, 1997		x				
Taylor, 1999		x				
Torlakson & Oakley, 2018	x			x		
Taylor, 2012	x					
Torlakson & Harris, 2014					x	
Torlakson, & Skinner, 2016					x	

Torlakson, & Harris, 2015	x					
USDOE, 2010				x		
USDOE, 2013					x	
USDOE, 2014					x	
U.S. Department 2015	x					
USDOE, 2019	x			x		
USDOL, 1998					x	
West, 2005	x				x	
Zafft, 2008				x		
Zafft, Kallenbach & Spohn, 2006				x		

APPENDIX B

Letter to Director of Adult Education

Dear Director of Adult Education,

I am currently a doctoral candidate in Organizational Leadership at Brandman University working on the data collection portion of my study. I was given your name by your vice president to assist in identifying participants for the study. I am looking to interview former adult basic education students on their lived experiences who have successfully transitioned from noncredit adult basic education to college credit courses. The criteria for this study are:

1. The participant must be a former adult basic education student;
2. The participant successfully transitioned to one of the three selected community college districts;
3. The participant is currently enrolled in one of the three selected community college's districts;
4. The participant has completed six or more credit units;
5. The participant volunteered to participate in the study;
6. The participant is over 18 years of age.

Thank you for your assistance, if you have any further questions, I can be reached at xxx@mail.brandman.edu or by cell xxx-xxx-xxxx.

Respectfully,
Kevin Baker
Doctoral Candidate
Brandman University

APPENDIX C

Community College Recruitment Request Letter

Vice President of XXX Community College

Dear Participating Community College,

I am currently a doctoral student at Brandman University working on the data collection portion of my study. I am seeking permission to interview former adult basic education students attending your college. The purpose of this study is to identify and describe the factors that former adult basic education students perceived were important in their transition from noncredit to credit coursework offered at three community colleges in the Inland Empire. This study will use a phenomenological methodology to research this population. The information provided in connection to this study will be kept confidential. All data will be reported without reference to any individual(s) name, or institution(s). Participants can at any time skip a question or stop the interview. The interviews will be documented using video recording through a zoom link. Once the interviews have been transcribed by the researcher the recordings will be destroyed.

If your college or the participant has any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, you may write or call the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, at 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

Thank you for consideration of my request and allowing me to connect with your adult education program to identify participants. If you have any further questions, I can be reached at xxx@mail.brandman.edu or by cell xxx-xxx-xxxx.

Respectfully,

Kevin Baker

Doctoral Candidate
Brandman University

APPENDIX D

Electronic Participant Invitation Email Letter

Hello, my name is Kevin Baker and I want to congratulate you on your accomplishment and enrollment into college! I am a doctoral candidate in Organizational Leadership at Brandman University and this interview will be used as part of my research to complete my dissertation. I am looking to interview former adult basic education students on their lived experiences who have successfully transitioned from noncredit adult basic education to college credit courses.

I am asking your assistance in the study by participating in an interview which will take from 30-60 minutes and will be set up at a time convenient for you through a virtual zoom link. Your participation would be completely voluntary, and all information would remain confidential and stored on a password protected computer that only the researcher has access to. You will be free to stop the interview and withdraw from the study at any time.

Please call or send an email to the contact information below of your interest in participating in this study. Your participation would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your consideration

Respectfully,

Kevin Baker
Ed.D Candidate
xxx-xxx-xxxx
xxx@mail.brandman.edu

APPENDIX E

Alignment Table

PURPOSE	INTERVIEW SCRIPT
The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore and describe the factors that former adult basic education (ABE) students perceived were important in their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework offered at two community colleges in the Inland Empire, using Schlossberg's transition theory components of: • Approaching Transition: Transition Identification and Transition Process, • Taking Stock of Coping Resources: The 4 S System, • Taking charge: Strengthening Resources. A further purpose of this study was to determine which factors identified by former adult basic education (ABE) students facilitated or hindered their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework	
CENTRAL QUESTIONS OR RESEARCH QUESTONS	INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Central Question What is the lived experience of former adult basic education (ABE) students perceived as important to their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework offered through two community colleges in Inland Empire?	• **What** motivated you to enroll in adult education courses at the community college?
Sub-Question What factors do former adult basic education (ABE) students perceived were important in their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework offered through the through two	• **Please** describe your decision to transition from adult basic education to community college-level courses. • **What** was the most challenging aspect of your transition to the college? • **What** support was most helpful in your transition to the college?

community colleges in Inland Empire, using the components of • Approaching Transition: Transition Identification and Transition Process, • Taking Stock of Coping Resources: The 4 S System, • Taking charge: Strengthening Resources.	• **What** barriers did you face prior to enrollment at the community college? • **What** strategies or practices have helped you in your transition to college? • **What** strategies or practices have made your transition to college more difficult? • **Now** that you've transitioned to community college, how has this transition impacted your life?
Sub-Question What factors do former adult basic education (ABE) students perceived facilitated or hindered their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework offered through two community colleges in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties, California?	• **Please** describe any factors that hindered your transition. • **Please** explain what factors were the most important in helping you transition into credit course work at the community college.

APPENDIX F

Electronic Informed Consent Form

Date: May 27, 2021

RESPONSIBLE EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATION: BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY 16355 LAGUNA CANYON ROAD IRVINE, CA 92618

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Kevin Baker, M.A., Doctoral Candidate

PURPOSE OF STUDY: The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore and describe the factors that former adult basic education (ABE) students perceived were important in their transition from noncredit courses to credit coursework offered at three community colleges in the Inland Empire.

By participating in this study, I agree to participate in a one-on-one interview with the researcher. The one-on-one interview will last between 30 – 60 minutes and will be conducted via zoom. Completion of the interviews will take place in June 2021

I understand that:

a) There are minimal risks or discomforts associated with participating in this research. I understand that the researcher will protect my confidentiality by keeping my any materials collected stored on a password protected computer that only the researcher has access to.

b) I understand that I will not be compensated for participating in this study.

c) Any questions I have concerning my participation in this study will be answered by Kevin Baker who can be reached by email at xxx@mail.brandman.edu or by phone at (xxx-xxx-xxxx)

d) My participation in this research study is voluntary. I understand that I may refuse to participate or may withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. I can also decide not to answer particular questions during the interview if I so choose. Also, the researcher may stop the study at any time.

e) I understand that the interview portion of the study will be video/audio-recorded, and the recordings will not be used beyond the scope of this project.

f) I understand that the video/audio recordings will be used to transcribe the interviews. Once the interviews are transcribed, the video/audio and electronic interview transcripts will be destroyed after the interview has been transcribed.

g) I understand no information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be so informed, and my consent re-obtained.

h) I understand that if I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, at 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Please select your choice below.

Clicking on the "AGREE" button indicates that you have read the informed consent form and the information in this document and that you voluntarily agree to participate.

If you do not wish to participate in this electronic interview, you may decline participation by clicking on the "DISAGREE" button.

_____AGREE: I acknowledge receipt of the complete Informed Consent Packet and "Bill of Rights." I have read the materials and give my consent to participate in the study.

_____DISAGREE: I do not wish to participate in this electronic interview.

APPENDIX G

Audio/Video Release Form

Research Title: *Exploring Factors Influencing the Transition of Adult Students from Non-Credit to Credit Community College Courses*

RESPONSIBLE EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATION: BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY 16355 LAGUNA CANYON ROAD IRVINE, CA 92618

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Kevin Baker, M.A., Doctoral Candidate
I understand that the interview may be video recorded per the granting of my permission. I do not have to agree to the interview be video recorded. In the event that I do agree to have myself video recorded; the sole purpose will be for video analysis to support data collection related to the researcher's study. I also understand that I may at any time withdraw my permission for video of me to be used in this research study.

ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Please select your choice below.

_____I hereby give my permission to Kevin Baker to use any videotape material taken of myself during his research on (research subjects name). The videotape material will only be used for this research and the video recording will be destroyed after the interview has been transcribed.

_____I don't give permission to for video of me to be used in this research study.

APPENDIX H

Research Participant's Bill of Rights

BRANDMAN University Chapman University System

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Research Participant's Bill of Rights

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.
2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.
3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.
4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.
5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.
6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.
7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.
8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.
9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.
10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the Brandman University Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The Brandman University Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.

APPENDIX I

Interview Feedback Reflection Questions

1. How did you feel about the interview?
2. Do you think you had ample opportunities to describe the factors that were important in your transition from noncredit courses to credit course work at your community college?
3. Did you feel the amount of time for the interview was ok?
4. Were the questions by and large clear or were there places where you were uncertain what was being asked?
5. Can you recall any words or terms being asked about during the interview that were confusing?
6. And finally, did I appear comfortable during the interview?

APPENDIX J

BUIRB Approval Letter

From: **Institutional Review Board** my@brandman.edu
Subject: BUIRB Application Approved As Submitted: Kevin Baker
Date: July 16, 2021 at 8:19 AM
To: kbaker@mail.brandman.edu
Cc: painswor@brandman.edu, buirb@brandman.edu, vsmithsa@brandman.edu

IB

Dear Kevin Baker,

Congratulations, your IRB application to conduct research has been approved by the Brandman University Institutional Review Board. This approval grants permission for you to proceed with data collection for your research. Please keep this email for your records, as it will need to be included in your research appendix.

If any issues should arise that are pertinent to your IRB approval, please contact the IRB immediately at BUIRB@brandman.edu. If you need to modify your BUIRB application for any reason, please fill out the "Application Modification Form" before proceeding with your research. The Modification form can be found at the following link: https://irb.brandman.edu/Applications/Modification.pdf.

Best wishes for a successful completion of your study.

Thank you,
Doug DeVore, Ed.D.
Professor
Organizational Leadership
BUIRB Chair
ddevore@brandman.edu
www.brandman.edu

APPENDIX K

Interview Protocol

The following script was used by the researcher to ensure consistency. All participants received the same information and were asked the same questions by the researcher during the interviews.

Script

My name is Kevin Baker and I am currently and administrator with Mt. San Jacinto Community College District. I'm a doctoral candidate at Brandman University in the area of Organizational Leadership. I'm conducting research to better understand the transition experience from noncredit adult basic education coursework to credit community college courses.

I want to thank you for agreeing to participate in the interview. The interview will last about 30 minutes to an hour. The questions I am asking are the same for everyone participating in the study. I may ask some follow up questions if I need further clarification. The information you provide will, along with the other study participants, hopefully will provide common factors that contributed to your successful transition.

Informed Consent (required for Dissertation Research)

The information you provide in connection to this study will be confidential. All of the data will be reported without reference to any individual(s). or institution(s). If at any time during the interview you want to skip a question, or stop the interview, please let me know. For ease of our discussion and accuracy I will record our conversation as indicated in the Informed Consent.

You returned the Informed Consent and Brandman Bill of Rights I sent you via email? Do you have any questions or need clarification about either document?

Do you have any questions before we begin? Okay, let's get started, and thanks so much for your time.

APPENDIX L

Interview Questions with Additional Probes

1. What changes in your life have motivated you to continue your education at the community college?
2. Tell me about your decision to transition from adult basic education to college?
    a. Probe: Can you elaborate on that?
3. What barriers did you face prior to enrollment at the community college?
    a. Probe: During enrollment?
    b. Probe: After enrollment?
4. What academic supports were most helpful in your transition to the college?
    a. Probe: Please describe
5. What financial supports were most helpful in your transition to the college?
    a. Probe: Please describe
6. What social supports were most helpful in your transition to the college?
    a. Probe: Please describe
7. Can you explain what factors were the most important in helping you transition into credit course work at the community college?
    a.
8. Can you describe any factors that hindered your transition?
    a. Do you feel that your concerns were addressed by the college faculty and staff?
    b. What could the college do to improve the transition process?
    c. What was your overall experience in the transition process?

Closing Remarks

Do you have any additional information on your transition process that you would like to share?
Do you have any additional comments to add to our conversation that I haven't asked you and you?
Thank you so much for volunteering to participate in this research project.