"Off From Lost": Generation 1 Learners' Transition From Adult ESL to Developmental Education

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“OFF FROM LOST”: GENERATION 1 LEARNERS’ TRANSITION FROM ADULT ESL TO DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION

by

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Immigrant students access community colleges with increasing frequency (Teranishi, Suarez-Orozco, & Suarez-Orozco, 2011); however, the majority of research focuses on Generation 1.5 students who completed K-12 education in the U.S. Generation 1 learners are defined in this study as adult immigrants (Rumbaut, 2004) and adult learners (Knowles, 1970) who began American education in adult ESL. Learners’ unique experiences and social roles motivate their transition to higher education and produce distinct linguistic and cultural needs. Many immigrant students begin in developmental education (Teranishi, Suarez-Orozco, & Suarez-Orozco), which is strongly influenced by the adult learning theory of andragogy (Knowles, 1968). This multiple case study explored how Generation 1 learners experience transition into developmental education, conceptualized as placement testing, advising, tutoring and integrated reading and writing class at one community college.

Findings indicate that learners exit adult ESL when they feel it no longer meets their academic and personal needs. Transition is a complex process by which learners’ identities become sites of contestation as they negotiate membership into imagined communities of various college spaces. Misalignment between learners’ understandings of what it meant to be a college student and college expectations, which were rarely explicit, resulted in others’ delegitimization of learners’ participation or rejection of the
learners’ chosen identities. Learners’ participation rights were dependent upon their abilities to apply symbolic capital to gain acceptance of their specific identities. The study highlights essential differences between Generation 1.5 students and Generation 1 learners based on learners’ multiple social roles and previous experiences; the work problematizes andragogy (Knowles, 1968) suggesting that educational contexts powerfully shape Generation 1 learners’ transitions. The work concludes with practical applications for supporting Generation 1 learners in developmental education.
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This dissertation is dedicated to Al Share, Labiba, Mariam, Olan, Qadira, Rebecca, and other Generation 1 learners transitioning to enact their desired roles in the multiple imagined communities of their new home country.
Preface

I began this research in the summer of 2014, employing a reiterative process (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011; Merriam, 1998) of data analysis as I collected additional observations and interviews. At the time, Barack Obama was finishing his second term in office, and his talk of free community college and the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy shaped federal and institutional discourses about immigrant students which were often (although not always) supportive. And then on November 8, 2016, Donald Trump was elected the 45th President of the United States.

Trump’s election had an immediate effect on discourses about immigrants in and out of institutions of higher learning. Whereas I had previously observed learners being encouraged to share their immigration experiences at the data collection site, in the weeks following Trump’s inauguration, a student without papers was threatened with deportation by a classmate. The college felt like a different institution; the national attitude felt different, too. On January 17, 2017, Trump issued Executive Order 13769 which banned incoming travelers from seven predominantly Muslim nations. All six of the learners in this dissertation were from or had lived in countries on the ban list.

Nearly a month later—two days after I sent my dissertation to the readers, The New York Times headlined a piece entitled, “Immigrants Hide, Fearing Capture on ‘Any Corner’” (Yee, 2017) describing mounting fear even among immigrants with legal permanent resident status, like five of the six learners in this study. (The sixth became a U.S. citizen during data collection.)

In today’s political climate, a dissertation about the ways adult immigrant learners access various forms of symbolic capital, including their experiences as refugees, to
transition from adult ESL to developmental education may appear out of touch with reality or even to depict immigrants as attempting to capitalize on past trauma for academic gains; however, I attempt to describe these learners’ efforts to present themselves as students in the context of Gee’s (1996) notion of discourse as an “identity kit” (p. 127) and to examine the sites of contestation (McKay & Wong, 1996) which emerge from their positioning efforts within multiple completing discourses. Through such a framework, identity enactment, or the foregrounding of specific characteristics, is a natural activity, neither shameful nor conniving, in which all humans engage while demonstrating connections to (or distance from) others.

In this dissertation, I present research on a previously understudied group of immigrant students and attempt to honor their linguistic and academic abilities as well as their perseverance as they situate themselves within the multiple discourses surrounding transition. I argue that community college educators have a duty to recognize and serve their immigrant students. Failure to explore the Generation 1 learner experience inadvertently contributes to the hostile language infusing our country’s immigration debate. It is my hope that recognizing the strengths Generation 1 learners bring to transitioning, and thus their colleges, can help change the tone of conversations about immigrants and reiterate their invaluable contributions to our nation. Rather than allowing our silence as educators to make us complicit in the threats from which some immigrants now hide, it is our duty to support immigrant learners as they claim their right to engage in discourses about immigration and education: issues which shape their identities but which, as this dissertation illustrates, they can also shape through their interactions with others.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“So I Decided to Go Back to School”

At the end of her first quarter as a college student, Rebecca presented a powerpoint to her ENGL0960 class about her decision to begin college. In 2009, five years previously, Rebecca had temporarily left adult ESL to return to South Sudan in search of her younger sister who had disappeared in the persistent Khartoum-South Sudanese hostilities. Ultimately Rebecca was able to call her sister who was being held hostage but not to stay for her sister’s eventual release. The trauma Rebecca experienced during her return visit haunted her back in the U.S. “So this was my life. I couldn’t get it out of my mind,” she explained to her ENGL0960 classmates, “I thought what am I going to do to get this out of my mind? So I decided to go back to school.” Rebecca then described her detailed journey completing adult ESL, GED study, taking and re-taking the college’s placement exam, and her work that quarter in ENGL0960.

“You are so strong,” Rebecca’s classmate, Hank, told her during the question-and-answer time, “I just want to say that your accent has gotten much better this quarter. What language do your children speak with you?”

The question momentarily confused Rebecca, “I don’t speak with them. I just take them to school in the morning, then I pick them up and I sleep for two hours and go to work and come home. Do it again.” Rebecca did not share her first language, Nuer, or that she also spoke Amharic and Arabic; however, as she took her seat, she told the students that her children were fluent in English. Her classmates’ faces did not indicate whether they understood Rebecca’s grueling schedule or how it contributed to her limited interactions with her children; instead, echoing only a portion of Rebecca’s presentation, Hank’s comment emphasized the importance of her experiences as a refugee. (Observation Notes, December 15, 2014).

Rebecca was a night-shift medication aide and single mother of five when she began ENGL0960, the first of City Community College’s two-course developmental English sequence. I had met her younger children when she brought them with her to campus so she could visit her instructor’s office hours during their winter break. That day, our visit had been cut short when her oldest son suddenly called her for a ride because his father had not picked him up at school as promised. Rebecca had immediately left the college to drive across town and bring him home. Although she had
previously confided in me, Rebecca did not share with her class that as an over-worked, single mother, she often found it difficult to communicate with her American-born children who rarely understood their mother’s Sudanese values and did not share her first language. Although Rebecca’s comment about not speaking with her children was hyperbolic, it spoke of her cultural, as well as linguistic struggle to communicate with her children. It was a struggle Hank and her other American-born classmates had never experienced, and they were deaf to hearing it in Rebecca’s presentation. Instead, through their selective hearing, Rebecca’s classmates made assumptions about her based on their beliefs about being a refugee and single mother. In juggling her responsibilities studying, parenting, working, and providing for her family in Africa and the U.S., Rebecca perceived her college transition as a way to make peace within herself, and she viewed her progression through adult education as an indication of her success as a student. However, this view often conflicted with others’ perceptions of her as an English language learner, a view which emphasized the distance between Rebecca and her classmates and missed the complexities of Rebecca’s projected identity. Rebecca’s engagement with others as she decided whether and how to respond to their partial legitimatization of her identity shaped her ability to participate as a full member of her ENGL0960 class and the college community.

Rebecca’s story of progressing through adult English as a Second Language (ESL), the GED program and preparation for the college placement test while working full time and caring for her family is a common one among adult emergent multilinguals.

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1 The fields of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages and Second Language Acquisition have employed a variety of terms to refer to students who learn English as an additional language. In order to emphasize these students’ linguistic abilities and recognize their multilingualism as an asset, I use the phrase “emergent multilinguals” (Jessner, Allgauer-Hackl, & Hofer, 2016) to refer to those whom others
(Peirce Norton, 1995) and non-traditional college students (Hand & Miller Payne, 2008; O’Donnell & Tobbell, 2007), both commonly represented in the community college. Because of their open-doors, open-access policies, flexible scheduling and affordable tuition, community colleges are particularly attractive to immigrant students (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Dowd, 2007; Teranishi, Suarez-Orozco, & Suarez-Orozco, 2011), like Rebecca. Like many of the students they serve, community colleges can occupy a marginalized place within the research on higher education (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014); however, the community college is also an important point of entry for immigrants who enter the U.S. as adults and must begin their American education in adult ESL without access to the acculturative and socialization processes of the K-12 system (Harklau, 1999/2000; Olsen, 1997).

I refer to students such as Rebecca as Generation 1 learners, a group I define as adult immigrants\(^2\) (Rumbaut, 2004\(^3\)) and adult learners (Knowles, 1970) who began American education in adult ESL. Because developmental education classes are often among the first college classes immigrant students attempt (Hodara, 2012; Teranishi, Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2011), the current study examines Generation 1 learners’ transition experience through developmental education’s placement testing, advising, tutoring and remedial coursework. Although stories like Rebecca’s abound within developmental education, little research has systematically examined the transition

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\(^2\) I use the term “immigrant” to refer to all individuals migrating to the United States, regardless of purpose or legal status.

\(^3\) Although the literature recognizes adult immigrants as those who enter the U.S. at this age, 21 years is the maximum age for high school eligibility in the state of Nebraska (Nebraska Department of Education, 2014), so this study’s sample will include individuals arriving in the U.S. after 22 years of age and who enter the educational system as adult learners (at least 25 years of age; Knowles, 1970).
of students like Rebecca. This dissertation begins with the assumption that the failure of
developmental educators to recognize the existence of Generation 1 learners as a unique
subset of the developmental student population limits our ability to understand their
educational goals and support their efforts to reach those goals.

This study begins a conversation between adult ESL and developmental education
about a population of students the two programs share and between the community
college where I conduct my practice and the university where I write my research.
Writing a dissertation is an exercise in liminality, and this dissertation is no exception.
This dissertation was written between the ivory tower and the trenches, between the
educational fields of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages and
Developmental Education, and between the theories of investment (Peirce Norton, 1995;
McKay & Wong, 1996) and andragogy (Knowles, 1968). This is a study in and of the
margins—the application of the spaces between theories to understand a marginalized
section of the student population within a marginalized space of the educational system.

Like the majority of developmental educators and adult ESL instructors, I believe
strongly in the inter-related nature of research and practice, even though the teaching load
can make research time prohibitive. The data collection occurred while I taught annual
loads of four to five classes per quarter—four quarters per year as a full-time instructor at
City Community College (CCC) and two classes per semester as a graduate teaching
assistant at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. As an adult ESL teacher and a
developmental English instructor, I drew upon my own liminality to deepen my
understanding of the experiences of Generation 1 learners as they navigated the space
between adult ESL and developmental education at one community college.
This multiple case study presents the research from over two years of data collection documenting the transition experience of six Generation 1 learners in their first quarter of developmental education (i.e., a developmental English class and use of developmental supports) at City Community College. My hope is that the conversation begun through this study will encourage other discussions about the ways that we perceive our students and how those perceptions shape our ability to serve them. Drawing from other literature on inbetween spaces (Baynham & Simpson, 2010; Sarroub, 2002), I examine the inbetweenness of adult ESL and developmental education, and I argue that we as educators must work as our students do to draw from our multiplicity of resources and imagine an identity for ourselves as educators.

**Organization**

The dissertation is organized into five additional chapters, each of which is briefly described below.

**Chapter 2** provides a review of the literature from the several fields in between which this dissertation study lies. The chapter begins by defining Generation 1 learners and identifying their presence in the literature on adult immigrant English as a Second Language research and practice. The second section places Generation 1 learners within larger discourses on immigration and immigrant education, the latter of which has focused on Generation 1.5 students, a group defined as being foreign-born but U.S. K-12 educated (Rumbaut & Ima, 1988) and thus having experienced through that education American acculturative (Harklau, 1994/1999), racializing (Olsen, 1997), socialization (Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, 2001) and academic processes (Harklau, 1994/1999; Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). The third section identifies
community colleges as a contextual reality of Generation 1 learner transitioning including a discussion of adult ESL and developmental education, along with influential political structures and learning theories. The section concludes by summarizing the limited research on Generation 1 learners transitioning into community college.

**Chapter 3** describes the case study methodology I employed to understand the Generation 1 learner transition experience. The chapter begins with a discussion of the study’s theoretical framework drawn from Knowles’ (1968) theory of andragogy, Bourdieu’s (1991) notion of symbolic capital, Peirce Norton’s (1995) investment theory, and McKay and Wong’s (1996) notion of learners’ identity and language use as sites of contestation. Peirce Norton and McKay and Wong conceptualize spaces of learning as imagined communities of practice (Anderson, 1991; Lave & Wenger, 1991) in which learners’ participation is considered to be more or less legitimate and can vary in the learner’s claims to a central or peripheral role. Through a combination of these theories, this study examined learners’ efforts to enact their identity as college students within the imagined community and the level to which their participation was legitimated by other, more powerful members, such as their instructors or other classmates.

The chapter then explains the research design as a multiple case study (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009) best suited for understanding Generation 1 learner transitions because of case study’s ability to examine the close relationship between the cases (i.e., transitioning Generation 1 learners) and their surrounding context (i.e., the developmental education supports within the community college system). The next section summarizes the study context including the three different transition paths available to learners hoping to enter transfer credit-level courses (i.e., composition or other courses that can be
Chapter 4 presents cases of the six learners. Although the cases illustrate the unique transition experience of each learner, they are presented in a standard format to increase readers’ ability to make comparisons between learners’ experiences. The cases begin with a vignette or a quote from the learner as a way of introduction. This is followed by a discussion of the learner’s previous educational experiences, abroad and in the U.S. Next the learners’ multiple social roles are discussed, followed by his or her decision to leave adult ESL and transition in developmental education. The learner’s experience in each of the four areas of developmental education support is summarized, followed by unique aspects of the case. Each case then closes with connections to the broader Generation 1 learner transition experience.

The cases are organized into three sections based on the amount of conflict between others’ legitimization of the learners’ student identity and the learners’ personal struggle against that external positioning. Chapter 4 thus opens with Rebecca and Al Share’s cases, as learners who were largely considered by their instructor to have *legitimized, peripheral* participation in the imagined community of their ENGL0960 classroom and whose personal goals left them largely unconcerned about others’ acceptance of the learners’ student identity. Next, I present the cases of Labiba and Qadira, who struggled greatly against external *delegitimization* of their participation and
emphasis on other aspects of their multiple social roles; these learners’ efforts to control their identity narrative were hindered by their limited access to symbolic capital within the imagined community of their developmental English classes. Finally, I conclude with the cases of Olan and Mariam, two learners who experienced success at exercising their agency to forefront their chosen identity as their participation was *legitimized* and *centralized* in the imagined community based on other community members’ acceptance of the learners’ college student identities. Although Chapter 4 provides examples of others’ response to learner participation, the causes and consequences of *legitimized* and *delegitimized* participation are explored in the following chapter.

**Chapter 5** presents the cross-case analysis findings beginning with a summary of the six learners’ transition experiences leaving ESL and attempting the placement test. The chapter’s second section highlights key differences between Generation 1 learners, as highlighted in the study, and Generation 1.5 students, as identified in the literature. The following section summarizes the findings of a taxonomic analysis (Spradley, 1979) of learners’ verbatim speech of ways to be a student. The analysis contrasts with instructor described college expectations about the ways to be a student and illustrates important misalignment between learners’ beliefs about the ways to be a college student and college expectations of the same. The section proceeds with an analysis of learner participation efforts and agentive responses to others’ assessments of their participation within the imagined community of the classroom and college. It explores learners’ responses to others’ (il)legitimization of the learners’ specific identities, particularly through learners’ resistance within the sites of contestation which emerge when other community members challenge learners’ participation efforts. The fourth section analyzes learner persistence
as a form of symbolic capital and a function of the previous discussion of legitimized and delegitimized participation. The chapter concludes with a discussion of future research directions resulting from the study’s limitations.

**Chapter 6** summarizes the theoretical and practical implications of the work. The chapter discusses recognition of Generation 1 learners as a unique group within the student population as a necessary component to the field of developmental education’s social justice mission. The chapter further notes how failure to acknowledge learners’ multiple identities and the symbolic capital they apply in their participation contributes to the continued misalignment between instructor expectations for students and learners’ desired identities. The chapter concludes with practical implications for collaboration between adult ESL and developmental education as well as recommendations to better serve Generation 1 learners through the four components of developmental education.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Who are Generation 1 Learners?

In her seminal work on adult immigrant ESL students in Canada, Peirce Norton (1995) introduces Mai: a young woman who had immigrated from Vietnam as an adult, worked full time and played an essential caregiving role in her family when she enrolled in adult ESL with the dream of one day earning an accounting license. Although Peirce Norton does not refer to Mai as such, she exemplifies the group I refer to as Generation 1 learners. Stories of Generation 1 learners, like Mai, who have not been educated in the American K-12 system, are common in the literature on adult ESL (Almon, 2010/2015; Becker, 2010/2011; Csepelyi, 2012; Norton, 2013). Generation 1 learners’ unique characteristics as adults with previous learning and life experiences distinguish them from other immigrant learners who progress through the American education system before entering college.

Almost paradoxically, however, these learners disappear from the literature and research as they advance towards their educational goals. By the time they enter higher education, almost no trace of Generation 1 learners exists in descriptions of college students or in the statistics on retention or graduation (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2009). Moreover, when Generation 1 learners are discussed in the literature on community colleges, they are frequently represented through deficit language. In 2011, for example, the Community College Consortium for Immigrant Education identified the key characteristics of the immigrant students they intend to serve and empower,
Many are older nontraditional students who attend college part-time while juggling jobs and families. They often come from low-income backgrounds, experience turbulence in their lives, and have a difficult time marshaling the financial resources to pay college fees and tuition. Immigrant students also face unique challenges and needs as they learn a new language, navigate unfamiliar community college systems and community services, and acclimate to a totally new culture—all at the same time. (Casner-Lotto, 2011, p. 2)

The consortium is a network of community colleges spearheading research and best practices for serving immigrant students. This description was presented in a position paper highlighting success factors and promising practices for working with “immigrant students,” who were referred to as “late-entry” (i.e., newly enrolled in the American educational system) or “less-skilled nontraditional” immigrant students (Casner-Lotto, p. 224). Such added descriptors distinguish the students from the American-educated or second-generation immigrant students with whom they are commonly grouped in national and institutional data (Teranishi, Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, 2011). When they are discussed separately from foreign-born, U.S.-educated Generation 1.5 students (Rumbaut & Ima, 1988) in immigrant education literature, a variety of labels have been applied to adult, English language learner, first-generation immigrant students. In addition to the Consortium definition above, the group has been referred to as “foreign high schooled immigrant students” (Conway, 2010), “Adult Basic Education English learners” (Csepelyi, 2012), “adult ESL students” (ibid), and “mature English Language Learner (ELL) Student[s]” (Almon, 2015). The lack of common terminology for this student group suggests their peripheral place within both the literature and institutions of higher learning.

Although adult immigrant students are of central interest to community college-based adult ESL programs, transitioning from adult ESL to credit-level college
coursework is a new and relatively small area of scholarship within ESL research (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004), and as noted above, this subgroup has received limited attention in the literature on immigrant or English language learner students in higher education (de Kleine & Lawton, 2015; Kanno & Harklau, 2012). The absence of a strong research tradition in this area is troubling given the convergence of such learners’ experiences (i.e., as adults immigrating to a new country, acculturating to American education through adult ESL rather than the K-12 system, and investing in language learning and higher education) distinguishes them from other immigrant emergent multilinguals. Many such learners enter American higher education through community colleges, which attract the largest number of immigrant students, particularly Generation 1 learners (Teranishi, Suarez-Orozco, & Suarez-Orozco, 2011), through their open-access missions (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

Recognizing that labels highlight specific group attributes that contribute to positive or pejorative group representations, I have chosen the term “Generation 1 learners” to distinguish non-U.S. K-12 educated, adult immigrant, emergent multilinguals as a subset of immigrant students distinct from the more commonly researched U.S. K-12 educated Generation 1.5 students (Rumbaut & Ima, 1988) and to emphasize that Generation 1 learners are adult learners who are influenced by their multiple social roles (Knowles, 1970) along with their unique educational experiences outside of the American K-12 system.

This dissertation defines Generation 1 learners as immigrants who arrived in the U.S. at the age of 22 or older (Rumbaut, 2004)⁴ and as adult learners (Knowles, 1970)

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⁴ Although the literature recognizes adult immigrants as those who enter the U.S. at this age, 21 years is the maximum age for high school eligibility in the state of Nebraska (Nebraska Department of Education,
who first experience American education in adult ESL (i.e., outside of American K-12) and who plan to earn a college degree. The dissertation further limits exploration of the Generation 1 learner experience to those learners accessing higher education through community college. Adult learners are understood to be learners motivated by and drawing from previous educational, vocational and personal experiences, whose social roles and perceptions of self differentiate them from child learners (Knowles, 1968; Merriam & Brockett, 2007; Merriam & Bierema, 2014; Mezirow, 1981/1997). This chapter draws broadly from research on immigrant students, community college programs for adult English as a Second Language and developmental education, and theories of adult learning, and language and identity to examine the factors affecting Generation 1 learners as adults motivated to seek education within community college.

**Immigration and Immigrant Education**

People’s reasons for leaving their home country vary, and their immigration experiences richly inform their perceptions of their new countries (Catalano, 2016). This section begins with a brief overview of immigration and immigrant demographics in Nebraska, the state in which the data collection occurred, and proceeds to review the literature on immigrant students to present the Generation 1 learner immigration experience and to consider the Generation 1 learner experience vis-à-vis commonly acknowledged features of the immigrant student experience.

Over half of the 42.4 million immigrants currently living in the United States are between the ages of 18 and 44 (Grieco, et al., 2012), and 125,000 immigrants of all ages reside in Nebraska, comprising 6.7% of the state’s total population (Migration Policy 2014), so this study’s sample will include individuals arriving in the U.S. after 22 years of age and who enter the educational system as adult learners (at least 25 years of age; Knowles, 1970).
much of this growth has been rapid; Nebraska was one of the Top Ten Growth states for increasing immigrant population during the latter half of the 1990s (Urban Institute, 2002). As many as 44,000 (35.1%) of Nebraska’s current immigrants entered the U.S. between 2000 and 2009, and another 23,205 (18.5%) arrived after 2010 (Migration Policy Institute). These figures illustrate not only the growth in the state’s immigrant population but also that a large number of immigrants’ first experiences of living in America occur in Nebraska. Morton, Nebraska, the fictiously named data collection site for this dissertation, is home to a nearly 6% foreign-born population (City Data, 2016). Pseudonyms for individuals and the city in which data collection occurred were used to protect participant anonymity.

According to the Migration Policy Institute (2016), the majority of the state’s immigrant population shares characteristics of Generation 1 learners: they are adults (83.4% are between the ages of 18 and 64), employed (71.5% are part of the civilian labor force), and nearly 40,000 possess less than high school diploma or GED (Migration Policy Institute, 2016); in addition, many possess limited English proficiency (59% speak English “less than ‘very well’”). Immigrants with limited English skills or education can find work in the state’s major blue-collar industries of beef manufacturing and processing, railroads, and agriculture, which have drawn and continue to attract many immigrants to Nebraska (Bodvarsson, & Van den Berg, 2003; Davis, 2001; Kinbacher, 2006). These economic opportunities combined with the city’s size and educational institutions facilitated Morton’s designation as an official refugee relocation site in the 1980 Refugee Act and U.S. Department of State sanctioned “Refugee Friendly city” in

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3 The term “immigrant” is used interchangeably with “foreign born” by the U.S. government to refer to persons who do not have U.S. citizenship at birth (Zong & Batalova, 2016).
the 1990s. Over 5,500 refugees from more than 40 countries have been resettled in the city (Mitrofanova, n.d.).

Refugees are a special class of immigrants based on their ability to “demonstat[e] that they were persecuted or fear persecution due to race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group” (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2016). Three designated refugee resettlement agencies resettled the majority of incoming refugees operating in Nebraska (Refugee Empowerment Center, n.d.) when Morton was recognized as a Targeted Refugee Resettlement site by the Federal Office of Refugee Resettlement in 2000 (New Americans Task Force, n.d.). In 2012, Morton received nearly one third of the nation’s incoming refugees from Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Malaysia, Somalia, Sudan, and Thailand (US Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2016).

Whether or not migrants are refugees, they must negotiate their place within a new culture and country, find employment, establish new social connections, and often learn a new language (Catalano, 2016). These major tasks can shape individuals’ self-perceptions, particularly for those whose migrations were not voluntary. The city of Morton was named one of the “Top 10 most Welcoming Cities in America” by the Welcoming America organization (Pascale, 2013) based on its efforts to engage newcomers and the receiving community (Welcoming America, 2012). The combination of federal and local support for refugee and immigrant resettlement has shaped Morton’s development of several ethnic and cultural enclaves, which support new arrivals. As immigrants adjust to their new lives, they can take up roles in established social networks that can assist them with finding housing, employment, and education, and as they settle into their new lives, they can assist other new arrivals in turn. Social networks can
provide information about educational access, a priority for many immigrants (Catalano, 2016). In particular, immigrants look to an American college education for improved quality of life through job readiness, language instruction, and their perceptions of the resulting social and cultural benefits (Grubb, Badway, & Bell, 2003; McMahon, 2009).

**Immigrant Students in K-12**

American educators have long recognized immigrant education to be an important function of American public schools (Dewey, 1985), and a large body of research on K-12 immigrant students documents how the school is an important site of socialization and cultural reproduction. Most frequently, researchers have examined the K-12 experience of Generation 1.5 students, a term originally used to describe foreign-born, U.S. educated youth who immigrated to the United States from Southeast Asia after the Vietnam War (Rumbaut & Ima, 1988) but which is now commonly applied to immigrant youth who complete their K-12 schooling in the U.S. In addition to documenting their linguistic development, researchers have examined the processes by which recently arrived Generation 1.5 students are assigned and take up identities that position them within the American K-12 system and within social, cultural, and racial categories in the context of the American K-12 system (Olsen, 1997). Students’ experiences with this positioning, which occurs within the school, distinguish Generation 1.5 students from Generation 1 learners whose identities in the U.S. are first negotiated in non-academic environments.

In their K-12 schooling experience, Generation 1.5 students create their understandings of what it means to be “American” and their identities through interactions across social borders (Olsen, 1997; Sarroub, 2005). The process of fitting in for newly arrived Generation 1.5 students is a complex negotiation of language,
presentation of academic and linguistic ability, culture and race, as well as each student’s
desire to become a member of the school community and maintain his or her sense of self
Grosik, 2012; Olsen, 1997; Sarroub, 2005). Finding one’s place is an exercise in
choosing to which norms one will conform, but the choices are limited. Olsen argues that
this mirrors the situation immigrants face in finding their space within American society.

Perhaps even more important than the racialization and acculturation processes
occurring within the schools, K-12 immigrant students are introduced to the expected
ways of enacting the role of student in an American classroom. For example, immigrant
students are taught the cultural obsession with individuality and how it is enacted through
language and material practices in the classroom (Toohey, 1998). Bourdieu and Passeron
(1990) describe how knowledge about language use and how to act in various social
environments becomes part of the learner’s habitus, which Bourdieu (1990) describes as
“the feel for the game…as society written into the body” (p. 63). Through their K-12
experiences, Generation 1.5 students receive social and cultural messages that are
embodied within their habitus and inform their choices, ways of being, and identity
performances (Grenfell & James, 1998). For example, high school classes have been
found to act as instructional niches, which introduce assumptions about student
performance expectations and unique linguistic and academic environments for learning
language and subject content (Harklau, 1999). In particular, students learn how to
engage with others in school settings to maximize their symbolic capital.

Teachers play an essential role in this socialization. Students learn to accept their
teachers’ pedagogical authority (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) and how to signal their
acceptance of such through preferred ways of being in the classroom environment, such as raising a hand and waiting to be called on before speaking. With the help of their teachers, high school ESL students develop a variety of “academic survival strategies” (Harklau, 1999, p. 47) to advance in their coursework and present themselves as competent students. High school teachers can act as cultural brokers advising students on how to navigate the school system and important out-of-school interactions (Sarroub, 2007). Through “negotiated process[es] in which outside and societal factors influence and are influenced by the daily interactions between students, teachers and counselors,” students co-construct their individual identities perceptions of their abilities, including language mastery (Harklau, 1994, p. 219).

At the same time, the discourse practices of different K-12 tracks (i.e., ESL versus honors classes, etc.) further socialize students and provide them with unequal access to the language and practices of schooling so that certain students who have had more exposure to academic language and skills in high school are better prepared for participating in the college classroom and are seen as inherently better suited to more academically rigorous tasks. By the time these Generation 1.5 students begin higher education, their K-12 experiences have prepared them to enact the role of a student, applying symbolic capital which they have acquired but other non-U.S. K-12 educated immigrant students have not.

Harklau (2000) notes that students’ reliance on immigrant narratives of overcoming can be differentially perceived by their high school teachers and community college instructors. In high school, Generation 1.5 students were praised for their personal narratives of immigrant overcoming, and they transformed this cultural capital
into positive representations of the students’ perseverance. When the students attempted to apply this same cultural capital in their community college ESL classes, they were unsuccessful: Harklau posits that their college instructors took the immigrant narratives to be representative of the students’ questionable academic and linguistic abilities. Harklau (2000) further notes that community college ESL classes are structured around the assumption that students are newly arrived in the U.S. and therefore cultural novices; ESL classes, thus, can focus on acculturation rather than academic skills development. Harklau illustrates how teachers’ perceptions of Generation 1.5 students as cultural insiders and Generation 1 learners as cultural novices differently prepare them for college success.

**Immigrant Students in Higher Education**

Immigrant and language minority students make up a growing portion of college students. According to the 2004 Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study, 11% of first time college students were language minority students (Nunez & Sparks, 2012). In general, immigrant students are over-represented at community colleges but under-represented in four-year institutions (Teranishi, Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2011). Several studies examine immigrant and language minority students’ transition and persistence experiences in higher education.

Generation 1.5 students have been found to use the community college system for its intended purpose of completing college preparatory work before progressing on to transfer coursework (Patthey, Thomas-Spiegel, & Dillion, 2009). Data from the Intersegmental Project to Assure Student Success (IPASS) study of nine California community colleges and two universities between 1990 and 2000 showed that Generation
1.5 students who were no longer enrolled in ESL were more likely to make progress in their academic writing and college-level courses than native English-speaking peers and that current ESL students were more likely to pass their first class than peers in developmental courses. Even though Generation 1.5 students, particularly those in beginning ESL, struggled in college-level coursework, they had higher rates of persistence (defined in the study as courses reattempted after an initial failing grade) and were somewhat more likely to make progress based on their starting point than the population average. Patthey, et al. emphasize the importance of understanding the diverse educational goals and life situations of all community college students, in particular students who “often describe themselves through their other responsibilities first and as a student last” (p. 135). This language reflects an awareness of social roles such as discussed in adult learning theory and the challenges facing many Generation 1 learners.

Qualitative studies support the quantitative findings discussed above. Students who transition in college from ESL to mainstream courses face issues similar to those transitioning out of ESL within K-12 in addition to difficulties with college coursework, lack of confidence about their English language proficiency, limited awareness about the college-going process, and financial constraints (Kanno & Grosik, 2012; Sharpiro, 2012; Teranishi, Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2011). Students were found to make complex decisions about their participation and identities within the imagined communities of the classroom and institution (Fuentes, 2012; Canagarajah, 2008). The majority of this literature focuses on Generation 1.5 students, particularly in composition (see for example, Bunch, 2008; Bunch & Panayotova, 2008; Harklau & Losey, 1999;
Comparisons between Generation 1.5 students and Generation 1 learners emphasized their distinct linguistic and academic needs and expectations based on differential access to symbolic capital accrued in the American K-12 system (Harklau & Losey, 1999; Roberge, Siegel, & Harklau, 2009). For Generation 1 learners, identity negotiation was further complicated by their various social roles, such as parents and workers, in addition to their introduction to American education through adult ESL rather than the K-12 system (Almon, 2015). Overall, the research suggests that immigrant students often balance multiple responsibilities, largely resulting from their simultaneous roles as students, workers, and caregivers. As a result, many of these students begin in the community college.

Community Colleges: Educational Access

By definition, a Generation 1 learner need not be a community college student. Educational opportunities exist for Generation 1 learners in a variety of places; theoretically, an adult immigrant could enter and complete adult ESL through a community-based volunteer program and apply to a four-year college. In reality, however, because community colleges often provide adult ESL classes, job training, and general education classes for affordable prices at a range of times and places, community colleges are a contextual reality of many Generation 1 learners’ transition. This section summarizes the literature on community college-run adult ESL and developmental education, two common points of educational access for Generation 1 learners.

American community colleges have long been heralded as open-doors, open-access institutions extending the civic mission of education begun in the K-12 public
system. The rhetoric of this historic legacy continues in the present day with former President Obama’s proposal for free community college (Hudson, 2015) and descriptions of American education as a “K-16 pipeline” (Bidwell, 2015). In support of the “American College Promise,” then Secretary of Education Duncan tweeted, “Just as free K-12 education is an educational and civil right, #FreeCommunityCollege should be as well” (Nasiripour & Kingkade, 2015). Community colleges thus serve a vital place in ensuring educational and civil rights. The mission of community colleges has been summarized as promoting community outreach, social equality (i.e., maximizing educational access for all students), structural efficiency (i.e., reducing duplication of educational services provided in K-12 or other higher education institutions), and economic returns for individuals and society (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Dowd, 2007). Community colleges are considered to be “critical gateways” for educating America’s immigrant and refugee populations (Casner-Lotto, 2011), and the Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy emphasizes community colleges as leading advocates for adult ESL students and providers of access to educational resources that may not otherwise be available (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004). Not surprisingly, immigrant-background students comprised approximately one quarter of the 6.5 million degree-seeking students enrolled in community college during the 2003-2004 academic year (Teranishi, Suarez-Orozco, & Suarez-Orozco, 2011). In particular, first generation immigrant students are more likely than Generation 1.5 or second-generation immigrant students to begin in a community college (Gray & Vernez, 1996; Hagy & Staniec, 2002).

Adult ESL classes of varying levels are part of many community colleges’ preparatory course offerings. Often times, these are evening classes at offsite locations.
for ease of access to working students. Basic ESL classes for “survival English” are
frequently offered at low/no student cost (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004, p. 14). Because of
state funding mechanisms, adult ESL is classified as remedial at many institutions
(Ignash, 1995) although this is not the case at the federal level. Remedial classes are an
important component of developmental education, which supports students needing
additional skills development to prepare for credit-level coursework, and at different
points in their educational journey, adult Emergent multilinguals may enroll in both a
college’s adult ESL and developmental education.

**Adult ESL**

During the 2012 academic year, 1.69 million students were enrolled nationally in
state-administered Adult Basic Education (i.e., non-volunteer or community-run)
programs; of those, 40% attended English as a Second Language classes (NCES, 2014).
In Nebraska (the state in which data collection occurred), 6,505 students were enrolled in
ABE during this time, and 45% of those students were registered in ESL classes (NCES,
2014). Although this study examines Generation 1 learners’ experiences in
developmental education, such learners begin their American education in adult ESL, and
a basic familiarity with these community college programs facilitates understanding of
how Generation 1 learners have been acculturated to American education.

**Adult ESL Student Experience.** Adult ESL is an important but often highly
frustrating experience for students. Many adult immigrants believe ESL classes are a
means to English fluency and long-term social and economic advancement (Grubb,
Badway, & Bell, 2003; Thorstensson Davila, 2008). However, students can become lost
in what has been referred to as the “ESL log jam” of waitlists as long as three years and
lengthy course sequences (Tucker, 2006). Once admitted to a program, adult immigrants may require years of language instruction. Adult ESL classes are offered for a variety of purposes, but basic skills, family literacy, and vocational training are most common because of federal funding priorities (U.S Department of Education, 2016). Common best practices in these classes emphasize speaking and listening to communicate immediate needs, embedded grammar instruction, and integrated language skills, and instructors often focus on learners’ accomplishments, relationships, personal histories, responsibilities and hopes (Center for Adult English Language Acquisition, 2007; Schwarzer, 2009). Through the adult ESL whole language approach, students learn to value their personal experiences as resources in their language acquisition. Students who transitioned from adult ESL into credit-level classes preferred the more personal nature of their ESL class interactions and class discussions, which allow them to develop relationships with other students and instructors (Csepelyi; 2012). Students praise ESL teachers for providing information about transition and encouragement (Becker, 2012; Csepelyi). However, ultimately, students often feel the conversational nature of ESL class leaves them unprepared for the academic language and rigor of credit classes and that there is a disconnect between students’ goals and perceptions about the ESL class sequence (Harklau, 2000).

While frustrating, the adult ESL sequence is often lengthy out of necessity. An adult learner who has native language literacy but no prior English instruction may require 500-1,000 hours of quality English instruction to reach a basic level of satisfying needs, surviving on the job and participating in limited English language interactions (Mainstream English Language Teaching Project, 1985), yet such a learner is still
considered functionally illiterate (Tucker, 2006). Notably, this calculation assumes that learners are appropriately placed in ESL classes and have access to adequate resources, yet adult ESL programs can struggle with issues related to level, complexity, appropriateness, intensity, duration and scheduling for adult ESL programs (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004). Furthermore, students presumably need much more than 1,000 hours to reach the proficiency necessary to enroll in college.

Unfortunately, advanced classes are not always available as a result of funding cuts (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004; Tucker, 2006). Even in programs that offer advanced ESL classes, students can face a lengthy and expensive sequence of ten or more levels before being considered college-ready, and while community colleges offer greater course variety and affordability, students in adult ESL are often not privileged with the same levels of campus support as their college-attending peers. Demands for space and accessibility frequently result in the off-site placement of adult ESL classes. While some students have viewed the physical liminality of their classes as representative of their metaphorical movement to college (Baynham & Simpson, 2010), many students find their off-campus classes’ limited access to resources marginalizing (Cspelyi, 2012; Sharpiro, 2012). ESL students may also lack equivalent access to full-time professors. Although community colleges employ a greater number of instructors with training in TESOL as compared to community-based or volunteer organizations (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004), community colleges ESL faculty is largely adjunct (Crandall, 1994).

Given the reality of lengthy wait periods and ESL course sequences in addition to students’ other responsibilities, low persistence is a disappointing but understandable reality. Beginning with Belcher’s (1988) earliest examination of students beginning
college in ESL, researchers have consistently found that students with lower placement levels have lower completion rates (Almon, 2010; Curry, 2010; Patthey-Chavez, Dillon, & Thomas-Spiegel, 2005). Indeed, some estimate that as few as 1.8% of Adult Education students, including Adult ESL students, transition to credit-level courses (Duke & Ganzglass, 2007, as cited in Humpherys & Acker-Hocevar, 2012). Researchers drawing from a variety of methods and theoretical frameworks have identified several factors affecting adult ESL student persistence, including academic and career goals (Baynham & Simpson, 2010; Becker, 2010), competing role expectations (Almon, 2010/2012; Csepelyi, 2012; Norton, 1997/2000/2001), financial constraints (Almon, 2012), and knowledge of the school system (Almon, 2015).

Even students who successfully complete the gauntlet of long waitlists and ESL course series may still not demonstrate the language proficiency required for college credit-level classes. As open-admissions institutions, most community colleges rely on placement exams to determine the level of coursework a student is prepared to complete. Students whose scores suggest that they are not yet ready for credit courses are often referred to developmental education usually as remedial classes. Adult ESL is sometimes referred to as remedial, and its coursework has some overlapping purposes with developmental education, but the two differ in terms of teacher qualifications and perceived student needs (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004). A later section provides an overview of developmental education regarding the community college mission of educational access for immigrant students.

In summary, students who wish to complete the adult ESL sequence must persist through lengthy waitlists and course sequences and high tuition. The available courses,
such as family literacy or vocational training, may not align with their personal reasons for learning English. Within the ESL classroom, instruction often prioritizes listening and speaking within a whole language context emphasizing individuals’ experiences.

Several political and institutional factors shape this reality for adult ESL students.

**Political and Institutional Structures.** An overt political and institutional emphasis on speedy job-readiness and the resulting commodification of education and potential labor profoundly impact the types and availability of adult ESL classes and the skills they teach. At the state, national and international level, neoliberal policies, by which I refer to the growing emphasis on job training and economic incentives for individuals to pursue a post-secondary degree, play an increasingly influential role in adult ESL. State education policies reflect national political agendas as the Division of Adult Education and Literacy (DAEL) oversees program offices for Adult Basic Education and English Language Acquisition (ELA). DAEL and ELA programs, along with Adult Secondary Education, focus on “basic skills need[ed] to be productive workers, family members, and citizens” (US Department of Education, 2016a). These programs coordinate with the office for Community Colleges through shared oversight by the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. In spite of the explicit mention of family and civic roles, DAEL’s mission, “to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access” indicates that ABE and ELA function primarily to prepare workers for the global economy (US Department of Education, 2016).

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6 The U.S. Department of Education (2015) now refers to ESL as English Language Acquisition (ELA); however, many institutions still use “ESL” to refer to their programs and to assign course names/numbers.
This official language positions educational excellence and equal access as two means to an economic end. DAEL’s position within the Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education emphasizes job-readiness. The 2003 reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, of which Adult Education is a part, similarly emphasizes human capital (Cuban, 2009). Indeed, the 2009 Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) Grant program funds community colleges delivering education and career training programs two years or less in length to prepare participants for “employment in high-wage, high-skill occupations” (U.S. Department of Labor, 2014). The community college in which this study’s data collection occurred was part of a consortium that received TAACCCT funding in 2012. The college used its grant to establish the Bridging Lab (B-Lab), which provides advising and basic skills tutoring for students interested in (re)taking the placement exam; four of the study’s participants received services from the lab. The TAACCCT grant program and other federal efforts focus on the economic returns of education influencing the ways in which community colleges support students. Federally funded programs prioritize students’ employability, viewing language acquisition primarily as a means to this end.

Similar to the U.S., the international trend has moved away from basic language instruction in favor of vocational training. Burns (2003) notes this shift has accompanied a focus on accountability “in the form of competency and outcomes-based training” (p. 262). Recognizing the connection between adult literacy and GDP, many countries have taken this accountability approach to adult immigrant education (Coulombe, et al., 2004). Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Italy, Austria and Sweden all have established, nationally supported adult basic skills programs boasting of core curricula,
financial incentives for class attendance, collaboration with businesses, and training
based on current labor market demands (Andersson & Osman, 2008; Burns, 2003;
Fleming, 2008; Pardos-Prado, 2011). An international leader in adult education,
Australia placed all adult immigrant English language programming under the purview of
vocational education and training management, similar to the American Office of Career,
Technical and Adult Education (Burns, 2003). Even countries, such as Greece, which
rapidly shifted from a “country of emigration to a country of immigration”
(Mattheoudakis, 2005, p. 322) have established vocational training language education
programs. Sweden now validates immigrants’ foreign education and skills within the
Swedish educational system to more quickly integrate them into the labor force
(Andersson & Osman, 2008). Internationally, and within the U.S., the discourse
surrounding adult immigrant education forefronts immigrants’ potential economic
contributions to their new country and emphasizes a neoliberal view of education as a
commodity for market exchange that, if provided to immigrant adults, would ensure
better returns on the investment of their labor. This focus on job-readiness, manifested in
funding for vocational ESL classes, supports specific language training for speedy
employability but may underprepare students for success in baccalaureate programs or
other types of education not meeting the prescribed direct path to employment.

As a result of these policy agendas, American ABE has been referred to as a
borderlands between government-funded educational programs and marginalized
people’s transactions of linguistic, cultural, and educational capital (Cuban, 2009). This
marginalization extends from adult ESL’s off-site locations and disconnected adjunct
workforces to the students served (Baynham & Simpson, 2010; Blumenthal, 2002; Curry,
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Ignash, 1995). Sharpiro (2012) argues that the ghettoization of community college-based ESL classes in less desirable learning spaces positions adult ESL students as “illegal aliens” who must pay unreasonably high costs, in time and money, to participate in the academic community. In contrast, students enrolled in credit-level courses are seen as “institutional citizens” with rights and benefits largely unavailable to non-credit level ESL students. Rather than being viewed by students as convenient, adult ESL courses can reify student impressions of the classes as illegitimate (Sharpiro, 2012).

While national and international economic and political forces structure the reality of community college adult ESL, individual students take up and resist the ways in which they are positioned in these programs, transforming their symbolic capital in the adult ESL classroom and the community college for their own purposes. Adult ESL classes have been examined as an important space for adult immigrants’ identity formation (Angelil-Carter, 1997, de Costa, 2010; Peirce Norton, 1995; Miller, 2000; Norton, 2013) and the role of multiple discourses and imagined communities in shaping students’ identities (McKay & Wong, 1996; Norton, 2000/2001/2013).

Theoretical connections between identity and language. Scholars in diverse fields have examined the connection between identity and language. Second Language Acquisition has moved from focus on communicative competence (Canale, 1983; Celce-Murcia, Dornyei & Thurrell, 1995; Hymes, 1972; Swain; 1985) to embrace social theories of identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and language use/reception (Bourdieu, 1977; Gee, 1996; Giroux, 1990; Peirce Norton, 1995; McKay & Wong, 1996; Miller, 1999) and language use as agency (Becker, 2010; Block, 2009; Curry, 2010; de Costa, 2010; Fernandez-Kelly, 2008; Fuentes, 2012; Harklau & McClanahan, 2012; Kanno & Norton,
In her analysis of indigenous identities in North America, Lippi-Green (1997) describes language as “the most salient way we have of establishing and advertising our social identities” (p. 5). Theories of language and identity share four basic assumptions: (1) language as the most noticeable form of identity projection, (2) identity as situated within discourses for self-presentation and group membership, (3) identity as contextual and discursively constructed, and (4) identity projections as accepted to varying degrees by other acknowledged group members.

Language is one important way by which groups distinguish between their members and other groups. Boundaries between languages (and varieties) are socially constructed by speakers who themselves occupy specific social positions, almost exclusively, those with the most power are able to determine boundaries supporting their own language varieties (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Gal & Irvine, 1995). Gal and Irvine further note the limiting tendencies of researchers of language and identity to incorrectly assume a one-to-one correlation between languages and cultures.

Identity is presented through ongoing interactions mediated by language use and strategies, multiple discourses, and a two-way process between the subject and discourse and between speaker and hearer (Hall, 1996; Gee, 1996; Giddens, 1991; McKay & Wong, 1996; Peirce Norton, 1995; Miller, 1999; Rampton, 1995). These notions of identity emphasize the place of language and discourse within identity (re)presentation and that identities are “multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions” (Hall, 1996, p. 4). Referring to identity
as a “trajectory” within institutional settings (p. 14), Giddens (1991) connects identity to individual agency, noting how individuals “make use of diversity in order to create a distinctive self-identity which positively incorporates elements from different settings into an integrated narrative” (p. 190). These conceptions of identity highlight individuals’ agency in enacting identities through multiple discourses by establishing the individual’s membership in various imagined communities.

Immigrant student identity negotiation has received increasing attention as researchers examine the ways in which immigrant students make conscious choices regarding their identities in school and other social spaces (Bucholtz, 2004; Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova; Vandeyar, 2008/2012). This work emphasizes the nature of immigrant student identity as changing and negotiable, variably inclusive of the immigrant’s own and the dominant culture, and intricately connected to language choices. Immigrant students’ identity choices are shared by their unique experiences sometimes involving stress and trauma as well as coping; their worldviews and personal choices; and their access to resources which are social/relational, economic and political (Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Vandeyar, 2012). Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco describe the effect of the social mirror: when the reflected image is positive, the individual perceives him or herself in a generally optimistic way. Vandeyar (2012) describes black South African immigrant students’ agency in choosing identities which emphasized their own unique identity but also the ways in which these identities connected the students to others and therefore encouraged them to seek social justice for others with limited social power. While limited to discussions of K-12 immigrant
students, this research suggests the important ways language and identity intersect in immigrant students’ educational spheres.

**Discourses.** Discourses are historically mediated ways of knowing or ordering and the social practices which accompany that knowing; discourses can both produce new knowledge and constrain its production because they are constituted through power relations (Fairclough; 1992; Foucault, 1973/1981). Discourses encapsulate “presuppositions, thematic choices, values, etc. that delimit what can be said about something, by whom, when, where and how, and that are underwritten by some form of institutional authority” (McKay & Wong, 1996, p. 579). For the individual, discourses can be viewed as “identity kit[s]…complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act, talk, and often write, so as to take on a particular social role that others will recognize” (Gee, 1996, p. 127). Thus, individuals operate within a variety of discourses as they participate in shaping and sanctioning the discourses’ “ways of being in the world” (ibid). The notion of discourse thus describes the interaction between language and ways of knowing and the power/ideologies which constitute that relationship (Fairclough, 1992).

**Symbolic capital.** Symbolic power has been described as “recognized power” actually stemming from the social universe but appearing to be based in qualities of the individual (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 72-73). Symbolic capital is the accumulated prestige or recognition that allows an individual to exercise symbolic power and that can be transformed into capital in other fields (i.e., social spaces). Educational institutions act as purveyors of symbolic capital in which students’ beliefs about the school’s ability to produce and dispense knowledge legitimize the institution’s position of authority and
thus their ability to dispense knowledge (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Among other functions, educational institutions reify the value assigned to certain ways of using language and language forms. This linguistic capital, ways of producing language of varied recognized value, is a form of symbolic capital which is made differentially accessible to individuals through schooling. Knowledge about how to use language becomes part of an individual’s habitus, which in turn informs learners’ ways of being and performing identities (Grenfell & James, 1998). Immigrants entering the educational system of their new country do so to learn a language and how to use it for social and economic advancement. The linguistic capital they acquire becomes a resource with which they choose how to engage the world, and within the educational institution, they learn the value assigned to different aspects of their identity which afford them access to symbolic capital.

**Communities of Practice.** Originally describing the apprentice relationship which forms between a community old-timer and a newcomer as the newcomer learns how to engage in community practices, the theory of communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) has been widely applied to second language acquisition research (Baik & Greig, 2009; Norton, 2011; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007; Toohey, 1998; Young & Miller, 2004). Researchers apply the theory to describe the complex social structures and practices which define the possibilities for participation or what Lave and Wenger refer to as “legitimate peripheral participation” (p. 98). Through their interactions, individuals’ identities are legitimized to varying degrees by other acknowledged group members. Legitimization is determined by the individual’s enactment of “word-deed-value combinations” (Gee, 1996, p. 127), or what Bourdieu (1990) describes as the ability to
apply symbolic capital. An individual’s identity projection acceptance is also dependent upon his or her degree of audibility.

This two-way process, whereby what we do and say engages directly with how others hear us and what they do back, is intrinsic to the process of enacting identity, and critical for conceptualizing the social and linguistic adjustment of linguistic minority students. (Miller, 2003, p. 45).

As Miller explains, a learner’s acceptance into the imagined community is largely a function of the reception of his or her language use, and thus identity projection. Peirce Norton (1995) similarly applies the concept of imagined communities to language learning contexts to examine “non-participation” as a means of exercising learner agency in language contexts. Kelleen Toohey (1998) applies the theory to illuminate how social practices in the classroom contribute to emergent multilingual students’ ability to engage as legitimate peripheral participants with others in the classroom environment.

This dissertation work draws from the notion of learners engaging in educational spaces which are communities of practice with specific social structures and practices. Specifically, Generation 1 learners subject themselves to these structuring relationships and their related discourses in order to gain the symbolic capital necessary for enacting their desired social roles, such as Olan’s desire to be certified as an ultrasound technician or Labiba and Qadira’s plans to become pharmacists. I also draw from Lave and Wenger’s understanding of what Foucault (1973) would describe as the ordering of acceptable practices for legitimate peripheral participation. However, as Toohey (1998) notes, conceptualizing language learning as a process of moving from peripheral to central participation oversimplifies the complex social interactions and practices in which participants have unequal access to participation rights. Generation 1 learners were not apprentices within the college spaces in which they engaged. Furthermore, I argue that
old-timer status, or full legitimate participation, is not limited to college faculty and staff, but rather that certain students’ previous experiences and social roles allowed them to claim roles as central, legitimate participants able to establish and enforce social practices and expectations for the ways of enacting a student role. Finally, drawing from Bourdieu’s (1991) distinction between legitimate and “‘illegitimate’ linguistic products” (p. 71), I employ the term “delegitimization” to describe how learners’ efforts to enact their student identity could be challenged or rejected by other, more central and powerful, community members. In order to emphasize that delegitimization is a process which is performed, I attach the prefix “de” rather than using Bourdieu’s “illegitimate,” which implies that the linguistic product is, by its very nature, not legitimate rather than recognizing that linguistic products, or participation, are (mis)recognized and declared to be such by actors who exercise their agency to reject the learners’ agency and symbolic capital in order to assert the value of their own symbolic capital and power to (mis)recognize others.

**Imagined communities.** The notion of an imagined community was first presented by Anderson (1991) to describe similarities between individuals of a nation-state; the work has since been widely applied to second language acquisition research and theory to conceptualize how language learners’ position vis-à-vis other speakers of a target language in a variety of language use environments (Peirce Norton, 1995; McKay & Wong, 1996). Anderson’s theory is based in the notion of a shared language and thus identity, and he describes the values of nation-state as being determined by those members of the imagined community with the most power. Norton (2001/2013)
examines membership in an imagined community based on how individuals perceive themselves vis-à-vis others belonging to various groups with shared identities.

Investment. Drawing from the notion of language as a form of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991), learners’ ability to engage in language communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), and their perceptions of self as members of various imagined communities which differentially motivate their desired levels of participation (Anderson, 1991), Peirce Norton’s (1995) theory of investment illuminates the interactional process of language and identity projection for language learners. According to the theory, learners invest in various identities, e.g., as students, professionals, or parents, by developing and applying capital to achieve social or economic advancement. In the adult ESL classroom, investment is enacted through acceptance of the proposed value of the target language as necessary to access to the symbolic and material resources to participate in various imagined communities. In applying various forms of symbolic capital, learners exercise their agency to enact their desired identities.

Sites of contestation. Extending Peirce Norton’s work, McKay and Wong (1996) examine how language production is an agentive social phenomenon “reconstituted and transformed in discursive practice[s]” (Miller, 2014, p. 4). The authors describe how learners’ identities become sites of contestation as they negotiate the meaning of their identity and its resulting participation rights with other community members. Based on the previously discussed notion of discourse as constituted in power, McKay and Wong view learners’ needs, desires and negotiations as “the very fabric of students’ lives” and the motivation behind their investment in language learning (p. 603).

As subjects with agency and a need to exercise it, the learners, while positioned in power relations and subject to the influence of discourses, also resist positioning,
attempt repositioning, and deploy discourses and counter discourses. In general, they constantly conduct delicate social negotiations to fashion viable identities. (ibid)

McKay and Wong encourage further examinations of the ways in which learners constantly (re)position themselves in response to discourses and counterdiscourses (p. 603) and thus perform their membership in various imagined communities.

*A theory of learning and context.* Since the publication of Peirce Norton (1995) and McKay and Wong (1996), theories of investment within complex imagined communities of practice have framed the sociocultural examination of language learning as internally motivated by the learner and simultaneously mediated by the learning environment and its structuring discourses. Pavlenko and Norton (2007) describe *imagination* as a way for learners “to appropriate meanings and create new identities” (p. 670). Wenger’s (1998) *situated learning theory* and Markus and Nurius’ (1986) *possible selves* connect individuals’ possible selves to membership in imagined communities that influence their decisions and behaviors. Wenger (1998) notes that through imagination, “we can locate ourselves in the world and history, and include in our identities other meanings, other possibilities, other perspectives” (p. 178, as cited in Pavlenko & Norton). Imagination is largely social; in his work on the imagined communities of nation-states, Anderson (1991) notes that those with power frequently “do the imagining for the rest of their fellow citizens, offering them certain identity options and leaving other options ‘unimaginable’” (Pavlenko & Norton, ibid).

In this dissertation, I combine Peirce Norton’s (1995) theory of investment and Knowles’ (1968) theory of andragogy, which has previously been critiqued for ignoring contextual factors in the adult learning experience (Lee, 2003; Sandlin, 2005). I assume
that individuals enact their desired social roles through their participation in various imagined communities and that Generation 1 learners participate in multiple imagined communities simultaneously as they enact their varied social roles. For example, as a South Sudanese Nuer woman, Rebecca belonged to the imagined community of the South Sudanese diaspora, and her language choices and goals for transitioning reflected her sense of group membership; at the same time, as a college student, she belonged to the imagined community of a community college which for the purpose of this dissertation while be referred to as City Community College, and which operated in English and had a vision of higher education reflective of national neoliberal policies about workforce training which incidentally aligned with Rebecca’s purposes for attending the college.

Developmental Education

In spite of the aforementioned theoretical contributions, there remains a disconnect between theories of students’ agency and language use, on the one hand, and the policies structuring the institutional environment in which that language use occurs, on the other. Immigrants entering the American educational system through adult ESL with the hopes of transitioning out of ESL in higher education may not receive adequate preparation for enacting their imagined future identities. As a result, Generation 1 learners requiring additional academic preparation may find themselves in developmental education.

In its entirety, developmental education is a comprehensive four-pillared system of student support including intake/placement, advising, tutoring and coursework (NADE, n.d.). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2006), 85%
of incoming freshmen immigrant students test into remedial level courses serving students one to two levels below college level (compared to 55% of native-born students). Developmental education extends the community college mission of educational access (NADE, n.d.) and exists at every community college in America, serving more than 2,000,000 students annually (Saxon, Sullivan, Boylan, & Forrest, 2005). Bailey (2014) encourages its recognition “as the first step in a clear and structured pathway that leads students into and through programs of study and towards their goals of degree completion or successful transfer” (n.p.). A large body of research has explored the efficacy of this holistic learner-centered approach, including studies on intake/assessment (Calcagno, 2007; Gabriner, et al., 2007), remedial coursework (Boylan, 2002; Goldrick-Rab, 2007; Levin & Calcagno, 2007; Zeidenberg, Jenkins, & Calcagno, 2007), tutoring (Boylan, 2002; Gabriner, et al., 2007), and support services (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005; Bloom & Sommo, 2005; Boylan, 2009); however, this research rarely considers the effects of language or previous non-U.S. K-12 education.

The remedial courses offered as developmental education have been compared to adult basic education, and developmental education’s basis in adult learning theory is similar to ABE’s goal of educational access; however, developmental education differs in its curricular focus of preparing and supporting students in college-level coursework rather than providing basic skills instruction (Boylan, 2004; Crandall & Sheppard, 2004). Boylan notes that there is high interest within community colleges for collaboration between ABE and developmental education; furthermore, collaboration and communication within developmental education departments and between developmental education and other departments has been shown to create a network of educator and
student support (Boylan, 2002; Gabiner, et al., 2007; Schwartz & Jenkins, 2007).

Additional research is needed to document how collaboration benefits students beginning in adult ESL and continuing to developmental education.

While no research currently addresses the Generation 1 learner experience of transitioning into developmental education, three dissertations examine language minority transitioning to developmental education (Almon, 2012; Hodara, 2012; Herrera, 2014). Almon and Hodara used primarily quantitative designs, supplementing their findings with qualitative data.

Through an inferential statistical analysis of student transcripts, Almon (2012) examined GPA, persistence and demographic information of Emergent multilinguals enrolled in credit-level courses, including developmental courses, at East Penn Community College. Across the sample, Almon (2012) found that students who had enrolled in ESL had higher cumulative GPAs as a result of the higher grades issued in ESL classes but significantly lower graduation rates than non-multilingual learners. Furthermore, nontraditional ESL students (i.e., those who had not begun courses immediately after completing high school) were at the highest risk of dropping out.

Students’ persistence was related to a variety of conflicting outside factors, such as employment and familial responsibilities, and varying levels of knowledge about the community college system (Almon, 2015/2012).

Almon described enrolling in developmental classes as the consequence of college placement exam “failure” (p. 468); there appeared to be no discussion of developmental education as a way to further students’ language development after ESL. During the study, Almon worked as an East Penn college advisor, so her use of the term
“failure” to describe student scores on the placement test suggests her limited understanding of the purpose of the exam and the beginning-level courses in which students could be placed as well as institution-wide deficit thinking. Unfortunately, representations of developmental coursework as a consequence of failure are common in much of the widely-cited research and reporting on developmental education (see Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2009; Complete College America, 2012).

Hodara (2012) utilized what she referred to as a fuzzy regression discontinuity design (p. 22) to examine the relationship between referral to developmental education (writing and reading courses), English as a Second Language (ESL) and enrollment/completion of college composition and graduation rates for (a) foreign-born, foreign-educated (first generation) students (Generation 1 learners); (b) foreign-born, U.S. educated (Generation 1.5) students; and (c) U.S. born, U.S. educated (second generation) students in the City University of New York’s seven community colleges from Fall 2001 until Summer 2010. Course sequence length was “the most impactful feature of ESL” (Hodara, p. 148) although advanced ESL and developmental writing taught similar course content as preparation for the same exit exam. For students “who just failed the placement exam” enrollment in ESL had a negative impact by lengthening the pathway to an associate’s degree as compared to non-ESL enrolled language minority students (Hodara).

Overall, language minority students attempted more and passed more developmental credits than students whose first language was English. For language minority students, assignment to developmental reading in addition to developmental writing or ESL correlated with decreased probability of dropping out, and students who
completed both developmental reading and ESL or developmental writing were 4% more likely to pass college composition. These findings suggest remedial coursework’s positive effect when targeting a wide range of key skill areas; however, the research did not identify which features of the coursework promoted success.

Findings from Hodara (2012) and Almon (2012) present contradictory pictures of developmental education. As it is not my intent to make claims about statistical significance or sample size, I postulate that one difference in the studies’ persistence rates might be partially attributed to contrasting institutional views on developmental education and corresponding student awareness of support services. Although Hodara herself refers to developmental coursework as the consequence of “failing” the placement exam, she describes CUNY developmental faculty’s commitment to addressing English language learner issues. CUNY pioneered an innovative developmental education system which conceptualizes developmental coursework as additional opportunities for language development and academic support (Scrivener & Weiss, 2013). In contrast, and in line with much of the highly cited but inflammatory rhetoric surrounding developmental education, Almon refers to enrollment in developmental coursework as a known consequence of placement exam “failure” without acknowledging potential benefits of participation in developmental education (p. 468).

In her case study, Herrera’s (2014) units of analysis were two community colleges with majority immigrant-origin student populations that participated in the Research on Immigrants in Community Colleges (RICC) study, a two-year mixed-methods study with surveys, interviews, structured classroom observations, and classroom and campus ethnographies to examine relational engagement, social capital, and academic
engagement. Like the previously discussed dissertations, participants were not necessarily Generation 1 learners; however, Herrera’s inclusion of faculty and administrators in addition to immigrant students provides a multi-faceted view of the complexities of developmental courses and their relationship to “opportunities” or “impediments for success” (Herrera, p. ix). Herrera (2014) found that students most appreciated remedial courses as a space for skills and confidence building and developing supportive relationships with faculty. However, overall developmental policies and practices were perceived as “frustrating, sometimes discouraging, and often the results of their [students’] own inadequacies” (Herrera, p. 76). Students lacked information regarding admissions and the placement exam and worried about the financial consequences of taking developmental classes.

By examining only enrollment in developmental courses, Herrera’s (2014) dissertation on the impact of developmental coursework on immigrant-origin students shares Almon (2012) and Hodara’s (2012) limited understanding of developmental education, which also includes intake, placement, and student support. Additionally, although Herrera (2014) does not claim to focus on Generation 1.5 students, her results suggest that this group makes up the majority of her student sample and the UPU student body. Tellingly, no participants mentioned language as a factor affecting student success. In spite of her implicit focus on Generation 1.5 and limited conceptualization of developmental education, Herrera’s dissertation provides a strong example of how a case study can explore the immigrant-origin student experience in developmental education.

The limited research on immigrant students in developmental education mirrors current pervasive but narrow researcher understandings of developmental education as
remedial coursework and placement into such (e.g., Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2009; Scott-Clayton & Belfield, 2015) and political debates over the terms and types of developmental education states should offer (Complete College America, 2012; MDRC, 2013). Because developmental education also includes advising and tutoring, an exploration of the Generation 1 learner experience in developmental education must account for all aspects of this comprehensive, learner-centered approach. The available research on language minority students in developmental education is largely focused on Generation 1.5 students. Quantitative research has examined how immediacy of immigration affects student performance in ESL and developmental classes (Hodara, 2012), but a qualitative approach has not yet been applied to understand the Generation 1 learner experience transitioning in developmental education.

**Adult Learning Theory**

Central to adult education and developmental education learning is the term “adult learner,” which requires some unpacking. Adult learners have been defined as students 23 years of age and older (Chavez, 2006; O’Donnell & Tobbell, 2007) although many adult learning theorists are less prescriptive. This study follows Merriam and Brockett’s (2007) definition of adult learners as “those whose age, social roles, or self-perception, define them as adults” (p. 8); thus, any learner who identifies her or himself as an adult based on the roles she or he plays, such as employee, parent, or student, should be considered an adult.
Consideration of roles helps distinguish between adult and child learners. Merriam and Bierema (2014) identify three key differences. First, adults “add the role of student onto their other often full-time roles as care-taker, worker, and citizen” (p. 12). An adult learner is seldom only a student with no other responsibilities. Second, the ability to draw from life experiences stemming from adults’ multiple roles is a key characteristic of adult learners. Lindeman (1961) argues that learner experience is the resource with the highest value in adult education. “Adults have more experiences, adults have different kinds of experiences, and adult experiences are organized differently” (Kidd, 1973, p. 46). Knowles’ andragogy (1980), discussed in further detail below, includes life experiences as essential to defining an adult. Finally, adults are at a different developmental stage than children in terms of cognition, morality, and faith (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Theories of adult learning examine how adult learners manage diverse roles and how their varied responsibilities influence their learning in ways unique from the learning of children.

Most learning theories are dominated by European and American perceptions of learning. Merriam and Kim (2008) summarize differences between what they refer to as Western and non-Western knowledge systems, a dichotomy which they acknowledge is itself highly Westernized. They note that the Western conceptualization of learning is individual and for individual benefit, often couched in the language of vocationalism (Boshier, 2005). Several scholars have made comparisons between Chinese and American (and Australian) learning theories (Hui, 2005; Li, 2003; Pratt, 1990; Pratt & Wong, 1999). Although a thorough analysis of diverse learning theories is beyond the scope of this dissertation, I summarize some additional learning theories below.
Communalism and the belief that individuals learn for the purpose of contributing to the community and sharing knowledge has been cited in many learning theories outside of the U.S. and Europe (Hui, 2005; Kamis & Muhammad, 2007; Pratt, 1990; Reagan, 2005). In particular, Chinese learning theories have been described in terms of their roots in social harmony and political utilitarianism and moral education (Hui, 2005; Pratt & Wong, 1990). Hui notes how students are likely to draw upon their embedded cultural schema in foreign learning contexts and thus that educators must work to understand students’ embedded cultural schema to bridge educational gaps and reduce intercultural miscommunication. Within the U.S., traditional adult learning theories have been challenged for the theories’ inability to consider non-normative representations of students. Flowers (2003), for example, describes the emancipatory role of education in afrocentric conceptions of learning. Similarly, feminist pedagogies challenge gendered assumptions about learning (Tisdell, 1998). The work of such critical scholars challenges the notion of a uniform or unifying Western or American notion of learning; however, this is not to say that the American field of adult education has not been driven by a unifying theory of adult learning.

**Andragogy.** Among Western adult learning theories, Knowles’ andragogy is the most widely known and is considered by many to be “the philosophical and practical dogma for many adult educators, particularly in the United States” (Johansen & McLean, 2006, p. 325). Andragogy is a humanistic model of adult learning that centralizes the role of the individual and her/his internal motivation and self-direction to learn for self-fulfillment, problem solving and ability to enact life roles (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Originally proposed by Knowles in 1968, the model was expanded to six key tenants.
The learner’s self-concept. With maturity, learners transition from a dependent personality to a self-directed personality. Adult learners have a deep psychological need to be self-directing (Knowles, 1970). Situations that do not allow this create tension with the learner’s self-concept and can result in “resentment and resistance” if others impose their wills on the learner (Knowles, 1984, p. 9). However, because learners have been conditioned to assume a dependent role in educational settings, they need a gradual increase in self-direction.

Previous experiences are a “rich resource” for learning. Experiences provide the impetus for learning and shaping learners’ identities, and adults draw upon them in their learning. Adults possess “an expanding reservoir of experience [that is] an increasingly rich resource for learning, and at the same time provides…a broadening base to which to relate new learning” (Knowles, 1970, p. 45). This assumption closely aligns with Peirce Norton’s (1995) theory of investment as adult language learners base assumptions about their participation rights on their pre-migration social capital.

Readiness to learn. Tasks associated with adults’ evolving social roles create a need for learning. Personal development—not just readiness for work—motivates adult learning (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). This assumption conflicts with adult education programs currently targeting employability. Readiness to learn emphasizes preparation for future roles (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Adult learners are motivated by their current situations and, more importantly, their desired future selves. This assumption is supported by the theory of investment (Peirce Norton, 1995).

Problem-centered orientation. Although readiness to learn prepares adults to become their desired future selves, most adults resume their education to deal with an
immediate concern arising from their social roles (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Adult learning is often coupled with a desire for immediate application of the new knowledge, which solidifies the learning through immediate use.

**Internal motivation.** Adult learners choose to learn and orient their learning choices towards self-actualization. Knowles and associates (1984) added this to the original assumptions to further distinguish adult learners from children, whose learning is determined by their teachers’ assessment of what children need to learn.

**Adults need to know the reason for learning.** Adults want to know how to apply their learning to their immediate situation. Understanding the connection between the immediate topic and the longer term learning objective is a key adult motivational force (Knowles & Associates, 1984).

Although andragogy has been used to define adult learners, Knowles (1970) viewed his work as an analysis of educator assumptions with strong practical applications. He explained, “I am not talking about a clear-cut differentiation between children and adults as learners. Rather I am differentiating between the *assumptions* about learners that have traditionally been made by those who practice pedagogy in contrast to the assumptions made in andragogy” (Knowles, 1980, p. 43; italics added). Knowles’ summary of educator assumptions about adult learners has greatly shaped adult education’s understanding of motivation and life roles. Knowles’ assumptions are supported by theories of language learners’ investment and multiple roles (Peirce Norton, 1995; Kanno & Norton, 2003); however, andragogy is not without critique.

Andragogy has been rightly criticized for its implicit assumptions of an individual learner who is largely “insulated from the world, fully in control of his or her
own learning” (Merriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 58). Pratt (1993) argues that andragogy assumes the learner “has risen above the web of social structures,” and the theory “does not acknowledge the vast influence of these structures on the formation of the person’s identity and ways of interpreting the world” (p. 18). Identities, motivations for learning, and learning styles emerge from one’s culture and society, but these factors are under-addressed by the theory.

Educational contexts are always value-laden and politicized, and learners have unique characteristics, including race, class, gender, and culture, all of which influence their learning (Sandlin, 2005). Lee (2003) critiques Knowles’ reliance upon foreign-born participants who were educated, middle-class, White males. This population was similar to Knowles’ own socioeconomic position and as such, “Knowles overgeneralized the characteristics of this population… and silenced those [with] less privilege, whose values and experiences were often ignored in educational settings” (Lee, p. 15). Lee’s critique is particularly salient for assessing the theory’s ability to explain the experiences of Generation 1 learners who are highly motivated to fulfill their multiple roles in a new culture but whose previous experiences may not provide them with the necessary or expected symbolic capital for their new learning environments.

In particular, andragogy does not fully explain culturally diverse adult learners. Hvitfeldt (1986) found that newly arrived Hmong immigrants’ preindustrial and preliterate cultural contexts affected their American classroom interactions. Adult immigrant learning experiences are “significantly shaped by their countries of origin,” and that andragogy “does not account for powerful influence of dynamic contexts in which the learners interact. Especially when it comes to the experiences of immigrant
adult learners” (Lee, 2003, p. 13). Decontextualized understandings of learning ignore complexities of the learning environment’s social structure and instructor authority and their effect on motivation. Given andragogy’s influence on the teaching of diverse students in adult and developmental education, research on learners’ transition experiences, particularly the experience of marginalized students like Generation 1 learners, must consider how educational experiences are influenced by andragogy’s application and narrow understandings of decontextualized learner agency. Additional research can also inform an expansion of andragogy to be more inclusive of how adult immigrant students attempt to exercise their agency within the structure of the community college by applying knowledge gained from their previous experiences to fulfill their desired social roles.

**Research on Generation 1 Learners in Community Colleges**

As discussed above, Generation 1 learners’ unique experiences as adult learners in Adult ESL rather than the U.S. K-12 system and their enactment of social roles beyond those of students uniquely impact their transition to higher education.

**Figure 1: Generation 1 Learner Criteria**
The interaction of the defining criteria of Generation 1 learners are represented in Figure 1 as a series of overlapping circles representing: Immigrants, Non-U.S. K-12 Educated, Emergent Multilinguals, and Adult Learners.

Figure 2 magnifies the overlapping areas to illustrate the interaction of defining criteria.

**Figure 2: Interaction of Defining Criteria**

A limited body of literature has examined the Generation 1 learner experience in higher education. Research includes Generation 1 learners in comparisons of different immigrant generations’ success or persistence rates (Almon, 2010/2012; Conway, 2010; Hodara 2012). Conway (2010) found that at one urban community college, 85.7% of “foreign high schooled immigrant students” required more remedial coursework than non-immigrant background, Generation 1.5 or second generation immigrant students. Approximately one third of these Generation 1 learners had earned a General Education Diploma before enrollment, and by the end of six semesters, they averaged 38.06 credits.
(6 to 15 more than the other sample groups) and had the highest average GPA of the sample groups; Conway did not state the statistical significance of her findings.

Research specific to transitioning Generation 1 learners links learners’ ability to access symbolic capital and their participation and persistence in community college (Almon, 2015; Becker, 2010/2011; Cspeyli, 2012). In addition, learners’ need to balance their multiple social roles has been found to have a negative impact on their persistence (Almon, 2015). Almon described how Adriana, a “mature English language learner student” faced many obstacles including a full-time job, constrained financial resources, familial responsibilities, and a lack of knowledge about the community college system. Adriana eventually dropped out, forgoing, at least temporarily, her plans to “get a better job as a medical assistant” (Almon, p. 465), the consequence of what Almon felt to be Adriana’s limited ability to access the necessary cultural capital to remain in school.

Although Generation 1.5 students have also been shown to struggle accessing symbolic capital to transition (Kanno & Grosik, 2012; Sharpiro, 2012), the literature often frames this in analyses of social capital and relational engagement (Kanno & Harklau, 2012) rather than cultural capital gained from K-12 or adult ESL.

Importantly, successful transition requires not only access to cultural capital but the learner’s ability to transform that capital into forms recognized as legitimate within the college. Successful transitioners possess cultural capital, including advanced educational backgrounds and well-established careers, which they apply to enhancing their social mobility, enrolling in credit courses, and “reclaim[ing] a more centralized role” in the U.S (Becker, 2011, p. 16). In contrast, learners whose immigration and educational decisions result from previous marginalization in their countries of origin can
struggle to transform their limited cultural capital and thus can experience continued marginalized within the college and therefore not transition (Almon, 2015; Becker).

Bridge programs can provide cultural capital for Generation 1 learners (Becker, 2010/2011; Csepelyi, 2012) and may allow them to transition without developmental education (Becker). While learners often perceive ESL instructors as more caring, learners appreciate the content and structure of (non-ESL) college classes as academically rigorous (Csepelyi). One learner noted, “The college offers skill classes. I need more reading, writing, listening, so I go to college. Also, the college prepares for a degree, and through that degree, for life” (as quoted in Csepelyi, 2012, p. 79). In contrast, learners are often critical of what they perceive as a lack of academic language support in ESL, “We learned street-English not college-English, and that English did not help in college” (as quoted in Csepelyi, p. 77). Csepelyi concluded that care (Noddings, 1992) in transitioning must introduce learners to the American educational system and provide access to academic, cultural and linguistic capital.

Although the literature documents challenges in the American K-12 system’s preparation of Generation 1.5 students for higher education, Generation 1 learners do not benefit from the same experiences. As a result, they often lack cultural capital acquired through previous American educational experiences, and they draw on previous experiences which may be less valued in higher education. The above studies highlight different aspects of the intersecting circles that make up the Generation 1 learner transition experience, but none examines the Generation 1 learner experience in transitioning to development education, a space that epitomizes the community college goal of educational access.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to understand how Generation 1 learners experience transition within a community college from an adult ESL program into developmental education, particularly developmental English classes. Generation 1 learners are defined as adult immigrants (arrived in the U.S. at the age of 22 or older) and adult learners (Knowles, 1970), who first experience American education in adult ESL classes.

No known research has examined the transition experience of adult ESL students who exit ESL and transition into college through developmental education or how their multiple social roles and previous experiences guide their participation in developmental education and their persistence in the community college. Instead, existing research on Generation 1 learners examines their marginalizing and frustration in adult ESL (Almon, 2015; Baynam & Simpson, 2010; Casner-Lotto, 2011; Tucker, 2008) and agency in language learning (Angelil Carter, 1997; Peirce Norton, 1995), but it does not examine the experience of students attempting transition. Research on transitioning Generation 1
learners examines their move into transfer credit-level classes (Almon, 2010/2012; Becker, 2010; Csepelyi, 2012; O’Donnell & Tobbell, 2007); however, these studies do not consider learners whose test scores place them into developmental education. At the same time, research on language learners in developmental education either ignores Generation 1 learners (Fernandez Kelly, 2008; Harklau, 2000) or fails to distinguish between them and Generation 1.5 students (Bunch & Kibler, 2015; California College Systems Office, 2008; Crisp & Nora, 2010; Curry, 2008; Herrera, 2012; Hodara, 2012); such research examines the uniqueness of the Generation 1 learner experience as adult learners.

This dissertation addresses the gaps in the research surrounding Generation 1 learners’ transition to college which is uniquely motivated and constrained by their multiple social roles and previous experiences. The phenomenon of transition is conceptualized in this study as the learners’ enrollment in and persistence through developmental education’s four components: remedial English coursework, placement testing, advising, and tutoring. This study was guided by the following research questions:

The central phenomenon of transitioning was explored through the questions:

How do Generation 1 learners describe their experience transitioning from adult ESL into developmental English, including developmental support through testing, advising, and tutoring? What factors affect their decisions regarding persistence? Subquestions included:

- What factors affect their decisions regarding enrollment in adult ESL versus developmental English classes?
• What connections do they make between their prior educational experiences and transitioning?
• How do they make sense of their multiple roles (i.e., student, family member, employee, and/or community member)?

In asking these questions, my unit of analysis was the individual Generation 1 learner and her or his reported experience during the first quarter of developmental English (i.e., ENGL0960 and co-occurring use of the aforementioned developmental supports).

Transitioning research has been mainly qualitative to produce in-depth, rich understanding of experiences from the participants’ perspectives. This dissertation follows that trend by employing a multiple case study design. Many researchers have operationalized case study (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Hancock & Algozzine, 2011; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). As an adult education and qualitative methods scholar, Sharan Merriam’s (1998) approach was a natural fit for this research. I also incorporated several procedures from Yin (2009/2014) to increase my study’s reliability.

**Theoretical Framework**

Chapter 2 discussed theoretical frameworks previously applied to adult learners and adult Emergent multilinguals. Developmental education creates within the community college a comprehensive system of support for students to engage with the institution; analyzing this system therefore requires an equally complex theoretical lens. In this study, I combine and build upon the theories of andragogy (Knowles, 1968/1970/1984), which has previously been critiqued for ignoring contextual factors in the adult learning experience (Lee, 2003; Sandlin, 2005), and investment (Norton Peirce, 1995; McKay & Wong, 1996). As discussed in Chapter 2, the theory of investment itself
combines practice theory (Bourdieu, 1977/1991; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990), the notions of legitimate peripheral participation and non-participation from communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), and imagined communities (Anderson, 1991) to conceptualize language use choices as resulting from learners’ varied participation rights and access in different language spaces.

This dissertation work draws from the notion of learners engaging in educational spaces which are communities of practice with specific social structures and practices. Generation 1 learners subject themselves to these structuring relationships and their related discourses in order to gain the symbolic capital necessary for enacting their desired social roles, such as a particular career goal. Similar to Norton (2001/2013), I draw from Lave and Wenger’s notion of communities of practice, in particular the understanding of what Foucault (1973) would describe as the ordering of acceptable practices for legitimate peripheral participation. However, as Toohey (1998) notes, conceptualizing language learning as a process of moving from peripheral to central participation oversimplifies the complex social interactions and practices in which participants have unequal access to participation rights. Furthermore, the theory of communities of practice cannot fully represent the Generation 1 learner experience transitioning from adult ESL to developmental education because Generation 1 learners are not apprentices within the college spaces in which they engage.

Drawing from Anderson (1991) via Peirce Norton (1995), I assume that individuals enact their desired social roles through their participation in various imagined communities and that Generation 1 learners participate in multiple imagined communities
simultaneously as they enact their varied social roles, for example as parents, students, employees and members of their ethnic or cultural communities.

Furthermore, I examine the Generation 1 learner experience for the sites of contestation (McKay & Wong, 1996) which can emerge between learners’ identity projections and language use on the one hand, and the structuring discourses regarding immigration, foreign K-12 educational experiences, and adult and English language learning on the other.

The intersection of these theories is represented in Figure 3. The structure of the community college, represented by the rounded rectangle, includes developmental education supports and actors exercising pedagogic authority as representatives of the structure. In addition to the imagined community of various classrooms, other imagined communities exist within and extend beyond the college, for example Morton’s growing Yezidi community (a large concentration of the Kurdish-speaking, ethnic and religious minority group persecuted in northern Iraq). These imagined communities are depicted as thought bubbles in the figure. Generation 1 learners exist to varying degrees within the community college and several imagined communities. Their language choices and investment become sites of contestation (McKay & Wong, 1996) between the learners and other community members. The conflict and negotiation which can emerge over learners’ identity and language use are depicted in the jagged edges of the dark shape surrounding Generation 1 learners.

Generation 1 learners possess multiple social roles, such as student or former army interpreter; these roles and Generation 1 learners’ experiences influence their desire to participate in the imagined communities operating within the community college.
While Generation 1 learners occupy a peripheral place within the community college, they exercise their agency to invest in their desired social roles by participating within the institution. The figure depicts the sites of contestation which can emerge between the learners’ projected identities and the institutional structure whose pedagogic authority they may accept, reject or negotiate.

**Figure 3: Generation 1 Learners’ Participation in the Community College**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional Structure</th>
<th>(community college, developmental education)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language Choices/Investment</td>
<td>(sites of contestation between learner’s projected identity and the institution)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation 1 Learners</td>
<td>(multiple social roles; peripheral place in the institution and its imagined communities; participation influenced by experiences)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagined Communities</td>
<td>(participation provides experiences/capital affecting identity investment in other communities; exist within and outside of the community college)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-School Imagined Communities</td>
<td>(participation provides experiences/capital affecting identity investment in other communities)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The theoretical lens described above informs my exploration of Generation 1 learners’ transition by necessitating a methodology sensitive to (1) the ways in which language and power reconstitute each other in educational exchanges and how individuals exercise their agency in these relations, (2) the reciprocal relationship between learners and their learning and social contexts, and (3) the role of identity in influencing actions and choices.
Research Design

Based on the aforementioned needs of the study’s theoretical lens, I selected case study for the research design. Case study investigates “a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident,” (Yin, 2009, p. 18). As such, it is well suited for studying the phenomenon of transitioning and its interrelated context of a specific community college system. Miles and Huberman (1994) define a case as “a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context” and graphically represent a case study as a heart (the focus of the study) enclosed within a circle defining the case’s edge, what is not studied. For Merriam (1998), delimiting the case is the most important aspect of case study. The boundaries of this case were established based on the definition of a Generation 1 learner (defined below in the Sampling Plan and Recruitment section) and the aspects of developmental education offered to students at CCC; these developmental services included: testing/placement, advising, tutoring and developmental coursework (limited in this study to an examination of the first developmental English class, ENGL0960).

The case study’s end product is a rich, “thick” description of phenomenon including the context and variables interacting to create that context. As such, case studies heuristically illuminate understanding of the background of a situation, what happened and why. The resulting knowledge is concrete and contextualized and can be used to develop social education policies (Denzin, 2011; Duff, 2008; Fontana & Frey, 2005; Merriam, 2009). In addition, analytical generalizations about the research phenomenon resulting from the case study provide essential comparison to previously
developed theories (Yin, 2009), such as the applicability of the theory of andragogy to Generation 1 learners.

The multiple case study design offers a holistic understanding of the research phenomenon through multiple perspectives (Patton, 2002). Individual cases are first analyzed and then compared to other cases for overarching similarities or contrasts. After summarizing individual cases, case study write ups organize the data through life experiences within a contextual framework moving beyond the individual’s experience to identify broader themes (Spradley, 1979; Neuman, 2006). Analytic conclusions are stronger when they arise independently from multiple cases. In studying Generation 1 learner transitions, a multiple case study facilitates greater understanding of the influence of learners’ differing social roles and perceptions of ESL and developmental education.

**Study Context**

The study was conducted at City Community College (CCC) which offers three tracks for Generation 1 learners to enter credit-level courses. The first section below describes the structural context of the study at CCC and its three paths to college completion. The second section introduces the college faculty and staff who provided developmental support to the learners in this study. While the name City Community College is fictitious, all course names and position titles are real.

**Structural Context**

CCC’s three campuses and multiple satellites are spread throughout eastern Nebraska. The college’s largest campus, located in Morton, houses the majority of its Arts and Sciences division and ESL classes. Although “Main Campus” has been referred to as “suburban” (Peterson’s, n.d.), the campus’ sole sprawling building is positioned...
between open fields and developing commercial/residential zones. Its location along with the absence of clear signage delineating the campus boundaries create a physically liminal space suggestive of the metaphorical inbetweenness of many students attending CCC to transition into a career, or better career, while working and caring for family. Main Campus, and CCC, are a part of their lives and the physical community, but where job and familial responsibilities end and college begins is no more clearly demarcated than the property lines between CCC and the community blood bank or the rolling fields of hay harvested and baled each September.

When data collection began in the Fall quarter of 2014; 9,392 students had enrolled at CCC’s three campuses (Tableau Public, 2016). Of these students; 7,642 (81.4%) identified as white; 5,021 (53.5%) were female; and 6,447 (68.6%) were 24 years of age or younger (ibid). The college does not track first language for degree-seeking students or report demographic data by campus; however, Main Campus, which enrolled 7,182 students during this time, is widely acknowledged to be the most diverse because of its location in Morton and the ESL program’s presence.

Demographic information collected during the pre-test questionnaire of the Compass test (CCC’s placement exam) is another measure of diversity. During the 2014 calendar year, 378 students who took the Compass at Main Campus self-identified as speaking a first language other than English (Suh, 2015). The Compass determines placement for students in developmental or credit-level courses, one of the three pathways to college completion at CCC.

For adult immigrant students who did not graduate from an American high school and who are identified as non-English proficient based on first language and ESL
Compass test measures, the first pathway at CCC begins with “Adult ESL”: beginning-level ESL classes funded through the Nebraska Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (Nebraska Adult Education State Plan, n.d.). Table 1 includes the ESL classes offered at CCC and descriptions of the students for whom the courses are intended as listed in the 2017 Winter Continuing Education Schedule (SCC, 2017). Students completing levels A-D can register for “Tuition ESL courses” levels 2-10 to improve their English fluency, but these classes are not intended to prepare students for transition.

**Table 1: CCC-Offered ESL Courses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Type</th>
<th>Course Name and Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic ESL (Free)</td>
<td><strong>Basic Literacy</strong> for students who cannot speak/understand English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>ESL Level A</strong> for students who can understand basic greetings, simple phrases, commands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>ESL Level B</strong> for students who can understand common words, simple phrases and familiar vocabulary in sentences with some repetition. Students study English skills necessary for “full participation in the community”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>ESL Level C</strong> for students who can understand simple learned phrases and complete question/answer with phrases. Students study English skills necessary for “full participation in the community”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>ESL Level D</strong> for students who can understand learned phrases, short new phrases with repetition or rewording. Students study English skills necessary for “full participation in the community”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Beginning and High Beginning Reading</strong> for students with strong oral skills who need reading skills for ESL Level 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition ESL (Students Charged Tuition)</td>
<td>ESL, Level 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ESL, Level 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ESL, Level 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ESL, Level 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ESL, Level 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ESL, Level 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ESL, Level 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ESL, Level 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ESL, Level 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL for Academic Success</td>
<td>ESL for Academic Success I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ESL for Academic Success II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ESL for Academic Success III</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(Students Changed Tuition)

1 No student descriptors available; course schedule lists only prerequisite of successful completion of previous level or ESL Placement Test but does not provide necessary test scores.

(Figure 4 illustrates CCC’s pathways for college completion.) According to CCC’s Director of ESL, students view the ESL for Academic Success courses designed for transition to be extremely difficult, so many take Tuition classes believing them to be easier (Kash-Brown, personal communication, August 17, 2015). The course schedule booklets describing the skills expected of students in Basic ESL classes did not list Tuition-level or ESL for Academic Success classes’ purpose or curricular focus.

**Figure 4: CCC Pathways to College Completion**

The second option, successful completion of “ESL for Academic Success” (Academic ESL), is CCC’s intended transition path. Academic ESL was conceptualized as a three-class series; however, because of low enrollment, the third class has never been
offered. Students are referred to the college placement test after completing Academic ESL II (Kash-Brown, personal communication, August 17, 2015). Academic ESL accelerates the skills development of “Tuition” courses (see Table 2).

In addition to ESL, CCC offers an independent study course designed to provide a single point of access for students requiring English and/or math skills development (SCC, n.d.). According to Bridging Lab (B-Lab) advisors, students scoring into or below developmental coursework on the Compass, CCC’s entrance exam, are encouraged to sign up for the B-Lab which offers tutoring, advising, access to an online study program and a waiver to retake the Compass upon completion of ten hours of study (Rada, personal communication, January 27, 2014). Students are only eligible for one ten-week period of access to the online study platform; however, they can continue to meet with B-Lab advisors or tutors indefinitely. CCC does not prevent current ESL students from taking the non-ESL Compass test, so students can take the Compass and be directed to study in the B-Lab without completing ESL (ibid).

Table 2: Class Levels Based on ESL Compass Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ESL Compass Scores</th>
<th>Tuition Level</th>
<th>Academic Success Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading 38-46, Grammar 42-48</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading 47-55, Grammar 49-55</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading 56-64, Grammar 56-62</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading 65-72, Grammar 63-73, Listening 60-66</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Academic Success Level I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading 73-79, Grammar 74-83, Listening 67-73</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Academic Success Level II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading 80-86, Grammar 84-88, Listening 74-81</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Academic Success Level III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading 87-91, Grammar 89-93, Listening 82-86</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Academic Success Level III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading 92-99, Grammar 94-99, Listening 87-91</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Academic Success Level III</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students are typically placed according to their lowest scoring test; however, there is some flexibility determined on an individual basis by a meeting with the ESL director (Kash-Brown, August 17, 2015).
At the time of data collection, CCC’s developmental English sequence served students scoring 16-69 on the Compass Writing test. Unlike ESL, students in developmental English can apply to degree programs and therefore receive financial aid (Kash-Brown, personal communication, August 17, 2015).

Academic advisors encourage students to complete developmental coursework before beginning other classes (Richards, personal communication, January 26, 2012); developmental English is often the first college class for Generation 1 Learners. Table 3 summarizes the pathways.

**Table 3: Pathway Score Range, Credit, Cost, and Support**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pathway</th>
<th>Compass Score Range</th>
<th>Type of Credit</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Advising, Tutoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic ESL</td>
<td>N/A (students take alternative placement exam)</td>
<td>Non-credit</td>
<td>One time $20/yr registration*</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition ESL</td>
<td></td>
<td>Institutional</td>
<td>$155/quarter (Not eligible for financial aid)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic ESL</td>
<td>ESL Compass Reading 65-Compass Reading 50</td>
<td>Institutional</td>
<td>$155/quarter (Not eligible for financial aid)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ESL Compass Grammar 63-Compass 15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Education</td>
<td>Compass Grammar 16-69</td>
<td>Institutional</td>
<td>$268.88/quarter (Eligible for financial aid)</td>
<td>Full time and faculty advisors, tutors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitions Lab</td>
<td>No Minimum-Compass Grammar 69</td>
<td>Non-credit</td>
<td>$20/10wks of access to online program (10 weeks of online access, but students can receive in-person tutoring and advising indefinitely) (Not eligible for financial aid; some need-based assistance available)</td>
<td>Transitions Lab advisors; math, English tutors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Developmental Faculty and Staff

CCC offered a robust developmental education program that included support through the placement testing staff, advisors, tutors and developmental faculty. Although I did not collect data from learners’ placement testing experiences, I conducted interviews and observed learners interacting with developmental educators in the other areas. Below I briefly introduce each of the educators who directly contributed to the context of the learners’ transition experience by working with participants.

Laura and Rachel were advisors in the B-Lab where four of the learners studied before retaking the Compass test. Laura had been hired when the lab was first created, and Rachel joined the lab after working as a grant coordinator for another CCC program. As a result, both advisors were highly knowledgeable about CCC, transition options and the resources available to transitioning students. They were well liked by the learners who used the lab, some of whom studied in the lab daily in order to receive the advisors’ constant support.

Lucas was an English instructor with several years of experience teaching developmental English as well as composition at CCC. Lucas had taught high school English for several years before joining CCC. In addition to his teaching load, Lucas served as an intensive advisor. It was in this advising capacity that he worked with two of the learners in this study. Intensive advisors were available for tutoring, weekly check-ins, class scheduling and degree planning. When the intensive advising project began, advisors met with students in the advisor’s cube, but the practice was later moved to the B-Lab to more closely integrate the developmental services. Intensive advisors’ functions remained the same after moving to the B-Lab.
Emily (the researcher) worked in the B-Lab as a B-Lab advisor and English tutor for two quarters before the first learners transitioned to developmental education. I thus met three of the learners while I worked in the Lab, and after conducting intake interviews for my research, I briefly tutored Labiba and Rebecca in reading. I describe my teaching experiences and training in a later section.

George volunteered in the B-Lab as a math tutor. He had retired from his teaching position at another community college and came to the lab multiple times per week to tutor interested students in small-group study sessions. He was well liked and encouraged students to participate in the study sessions and persist in their larger academic goals.

Anne was an English instructor with over a decade of experience teaching developmental English. She was well-respected within the department for her consideration of diverse students’ learning needs and approachable manner. She frequently communicated with learners’ intensive advisors regarding learners’ progress or concerns she had in the classroom. Anne provided detailed instructions to students about assignments; she took daily notes on the class lectures and discussions and posted them online for students’ reference. Anne had some coursework in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages.

Rob was an English instructor with several years of experience teaching developmental English as well as composition and other transfer credit-level courses at CCC. Rob had a laid-back teaching style and frequently incorporated media arts and other non-traditional materials to engage students in his assignments. Rob had a degree
in creative writing but no coursework in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages.

David, Jack, and Grace were tutors in the CCC Writing Center. In their time at the Writing Center, they worked with several of the learners repeatedly (sometimes daily). In addition, all taught or had previously taught composition for CCC or the local university. They each had several years of experience and training as writing tutors and instructors although none of them had taken coursework in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, and they expressed varying levels of comfort in working with Emergent multilinguals based on their adherence to traditional writing center pedagogy which emphasizes non-directive focus on higher order concerns and questioning to elicit student knowledge (Brooks, 1991; North, 1984) but which has been found to be problematic when working with Emergent multilinguals (Blau, Hall, Davis & Gravitz, 2001; Ritter, 2000). The tutors’ and instructors’ limited training in and variable comfort with working with multilingual speakers is representative of two-year college faculty (Toth & Sullivan, 2016).

In our role as developmental educators, we contributed to the context of the learners’ transition experiences through our presentation of information about transitioning, the college and the ways of participating in its various spaces.

**Procedures**

**Sampling Plan and Recruitment**

The sampling plan for participant recruitment included sample characteristics, inclusion criteria and exclusion criteria. Because this research examined how Generation 1 learners conceptualize and manage multiple roles, such as “employee” and “student”
potential social roles were determined based on a review of the literature, including Almon, 2015; Ishitani, 2006; Moschetti & Hudley, 2015; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002), my list of sample characteristics included: adult immigrant; non-U.S. K-12 educated, adult learner (Knowles, 1970); beginning credit-level courses in developmental English. Sampling criteria ensure meaningful data collection in a case study (Patton, 2002). The main criteria for inclusion were that the participant possess the sample characteristics (i.e., being a Generation 1 learner, attempting transition from adult ESL to developmental education during data collection), have experience in CCC’s adult ESL or B-Lab, and be willing and able to participate in data collection through interviews, observations and providing samples of coursework. I also sought sample variety based on learners’ non-school-related social roles, such as being caregivers in the home or employees outside of the home. Finally, I established the exclusion criteria of learners who were international students, or who otherwise did not meet the sampling characteristics, or whose English abilities did not allow them to participate in interviews. With these criteria, I employed judgmental sampling (Neuman, 2006) to select cases that would maximize my access to information regarding Generation 1 learners.

Importantly, although I sought to maximize the variety of my sample, all of the learners who participated in this dissertation fit the legal definition of refugees, established as individuals of “special humanitarian concern to the United States” and demonstrating “that they were persecuted or fear persecution due to race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group” (USCIS, 2016). While I conducted interviews with five learners whose country of origin did not classify
them as refugees, none of these learners transitioned during my nine quarters of data collection.

Following CCC’s pathways to college completion, I recruited from three different areas of the college to maximize my sample. Additionally, I felt it was important to conduct introductory interviews with potential participants because of the intense nature of the data collection. I conducted 19 interviews (see Appendix A) and ultimately selected six cases for the multiple case study. I discuss my recruitment processes in the following paragraphs.

Under the supervision of Dr. Hunter Boylan at the Kellogg Institute for Developmental Education, I completed a practicum examining how adult Emergent multilinguals accessed the college’s basic skills/test prep center, referred to as the Bridging Lab (B-Lab). The study (Suh, 2015) reported the number of adult ESL students entering the B-Lab and persisting through the first quarter of developmental English as well as documented findings from in-depth interviews with B-Lab participants. In this precursor to my dissertation research, I contacted students who self-identified as “Non-Native English Speaker” on the B-Lab intake via telephone to request an in-person interview regarding their experience with the B-Lab. (Informed consent letters for learners and college personnel are included in Appendix B.) At the end of these interviews, I asked participants if they would be willing to participate in a longer study about their experience entering credit-level courses (Appendix C includes interview questions). Four students met the sample criteria and agreed to participate in the longer study, but only three were ultimately included because when one student prepared to
register, she learned that her Iranian high school transcripts could not be accepted at CCC. She enrolled in the college’s GED program but did not become a participant.

In addition to the B-Lab, I also visited Academic ESL levels I and II and Tuition levels 8 and 9 (level 10 is offered during alternating quarters and was not in session when I recruited from ESL). From these classes, two students agreed to participate. I conducted their interviews partway through the term, so the students did not yet know if they would pass ESL or whether they would attempt to the non-ESL Compass. I arranged to connect with them during the following quarter at which time Belle had not transitioned and I temporarily lost touch with Al Share.

Finally, at the beginning of the Winter and Spring 2016 quarters, I made class visits to ENGL0960 Introduction to College Reading and Writing, the beginning level developmental English classes to ask for participants. Qadira and Olan agreed to participate and met the criteria during the Winter quarter. In a final attempt to recruit another male participant (at this point, I had collected data on four female participants and one male), I visited the ENGL0960 class of an instructor who had graciously allowed me to observe participants in her previous classes. There I was surprised to reunite with Al Share. He expressed his continued interest in the study and became the final case.

I had hoped to select participants based on their pathway to college, and I had planned to include two cases each from the B-Lab, Academic Success ESL and Tuition ESL. However, through my recruitment efforts, I discovered the impracticality of my plan since it assumed that participants would successfully complete at least one level of ESL every quarter and immediately enroll in the next course in their educational sequence. As the literature suggests, lengthy course sequences are related to dropping
out and stopping out (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2009), and for Generation 1 learners in particular, with their multiple non-school-related responsibilities, transition can be a lengthy and delayed process (Almon, 2012). As a result, my recruitment and data collection occurred across a span of nine quarters although this dissertation reports only on the transition experience as the first quarter of developmental English for all participants with the exception of Mariam, whom I observed for two consecutive quarters to gather additional insight into the developmental education experience which included two levels of developmental English at CCC.

**Participants**

Because developmental faculty and staff were introduced above, this section introduces the learner participants. The six learners who participated in the study shared the experience of entering developmental English after enrolling in CCC’s adult ESL and/or B-Lab; however, they enacted social roles and accessed previous learning experiences in unique ways that influenced their transition experience.

**Table 4: Participant Backgrounds**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Social Roles</th>
<th>Previous CCC Educational Experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Al Share</td>
<td>Male (Northern) Sudanese</td>
<td>Author, Student</td>
<td>Adult ESL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qadira</td>
<td>Female Sudanese</td>
<td>Future Pharmacist, Mother, Student,</td>
<td>Adult ESL B-Lab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wife</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labiba</td>
<td>Female Afghan</td>
<td>Future Pharmacist, Mother, Refugee,</td>
<td>Adult ESL B-Lab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariam</td>
<td>Female Iraqi</td>
<td>Mother, Student, Wife</td>
<td>Adult ESL B-Lab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>Female Nuer (South Sudanese)</td>
<td>Employee, Mother, Refugee, Student,</td>
<td>Adult ESL B-Lab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wife</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 summarizes participants’ backgrounds. Ethnicity information reflects the learners’ statements to me about their ethnic background. I added information in parentheses to emphasize points of importance based on the learners’ multiple social roles. Among the three Sudanese learners in this study, only Qadria did not speak of her ethnicity or nationality in relation to her social roles while Al Share viewed his work as a political resister to the Islamic influence in Sudan as central to his role. Rebecca similarly described her role as an educated woman and nurse within the South Sudanese diaspora and her return to the newly established country. The table’s “Self-Described Social Roles” column reports the social roles learners described enacting during a typical school day and roles they identified as important to transitioning. Participants’ similarities and differences provided a rich understanding of how Generation 1 learners experience transition and the community college system.

Reiterative Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection occurred through interviews, observations and document analysis of student work and class handouts. Through a reiterative process of data collection and analysis (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011; Merriam, 1998), I began analysis while still collecting data and then continued analysis to substantiate and revise my tentative findings. The following description of my collection and analysis procedures mirrors the data collection and analysis process so that I explain the collection types and initial analysis of data then conclude by explaining the single and cross-case analysis which occurred after data collection.
In-depth interviews. Yin (2014) notes that case study interviews “resemble guided conversations rather than structured queries” since questions follow a fluid stream rather than a rigid line (p. 110). I conducted an initial “prolonged case study interview” with each potential participant to learn about their insights and the aspects of transitioning they found to be meaningful (Yin, 2014, p. 110). The initial interview consisted of open-ended questions prompting participant descriptions of their previous educational experiences, current social roles and reasons for transitioning. Follow up probing questions elicited additional information (Creswell, 2013). A complete list of intake questions can be found in Appendix C.

When possible, I conducted follow-up interviews immediately after observations to ask clarifying questions and allow participants to explain things that occurred during the observation. Because of the follow-up interviews, the number of interviews with each participant varied; thus, I interviewed Mariam more times than Olan because I collected data on her for two consecutive quarters in which she attended office hours and advising while Olan did not participate in either of these student supports (see Table 5 for a complete list of data collection activities). Similarly, I conducted five interviews with Anne (one for each learner enrolled in her class) but only one interview with both Nick and Rob since they each only had one participant in their classes. The purpose of shorter interviews is often to corroborate findings the researcher has already established (Yin, 2014). For example, after I observed Qadira ask her instructor for assistance and apply the instructor’s feedback in class, I interviewed her in order to have her explain the feedback that she received and how she applied it to her essay. With the exception of Labiba, I conducted semi-structured, recorded exit interviews with participants at the end
of their first quarter in developmental English. Because Labiba experienced what her instructor, tutors and advisors believed to be an episode of PTSD partway through her first quarter, I did not conduct an exit interview when she completed her first developmental English class in the fall of 2014. However, with her encouragement, I did re-interview her a year and a half later.

Similar to the follow-up interviews, in exit interviews I asked participants to reflect upon their experiences and discuss their growth, their upcoming educational plans, as well as whether and how they felt their previous educational experiences had prepared them for transitioning. I also conducted an interview with the participant’s instructor near the end of the term and with two tutors and one intensive advisor.

Table 5: Data Collection Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Number of Interviews</th>
<th>Time (In Minutes)</th>
<th>Number of Observations (Tasks)</th>
<th>Time (In Minutes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Al Share</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>2 (ENGL0960, studying)</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labiba</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>3 (ENGL0960 x3)</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariam</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>7 (ENGL0960 x2, studying, writing center x2, office hours, advising)</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>3 (ENGL0960 x3)</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olan</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>4 (ENGL0960 x2, studying, writing center)</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qadira</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>5 (ENGL0960 x2, Student Success x1, studying x2)</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne (Instructor)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>(observed learners in her ENGL0960 class)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David (Writing Tutor,</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>(observed learners in the writing center)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjunct Instructor)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>Total Observations</td>
<td>Total Hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George (B-Lab Tutor)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>(observed learners in the B-Lab)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack (Writing Tutor)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>(observed learners in the writing center)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura (B-Lab Advisor)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>(observed learners in the B-Lab)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucas (Intensive Advisor, Instructor)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>(observed learners in the B-Lab)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick (Student Success Instructor)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>(observed learners in his Student Success class)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel (B-Lab Advisor)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>(observed learners in the B-Lab)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rob (Instructor)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>(observed learner in his ENGL0960 class)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td><strong>1040</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td><strong>1260</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grand Totals: 40 Interviews, 24 Observations (38 hours 20 minutes)

These additional interviews triangulated participants’ perceptions about their level of comprehension, participation in class, use of developmental resources and other aspects of transitioning. After interviews, I wrote summary commentaries (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011) about salient themes or remaining questions to guide future data collection and analysis.

In order to immerse myself in the data, particularly since it sometimes took me several months to complete transcription, I reread my commentaries after I completed transcripts. During the rereading, I added in-process memos (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011) to document the progression of my understanding of the case and make connections to the study’s theoretical propositions. My in-process memoing was facilitated by my immersion in the data through rereading of transcripts while listening to the recordings to assess the accuracy of my transcription.

**Observations.** I observed each learner at least twice in the developmental English classroom (see Table 5). In addition, I asked to observe as participants studied
on campus, visited instructor’s office hours or the writing center, or had an advising appointment. During her first quarter in developmental English, Mariam reported using the writing center but never invited me to observe her there. As her comfort with me grew, she agreed to let me continue observing and interviewing her the following quarter, during which time she invited me to the writing center twice, her instructor’s office hours and while she made an advising appointment.

At CCC, classes meet 80 or 115 minutes while writing center and advising appointments typically are scheduled for 30 minutes. Because I taught during some of the classes and because two of the students invited me to watch for their end-of-term presentations, I did not always observe the entire class. During two different quarters, two participants were enrolled in the same section, so I was able to observe two participants in a single class observation (such instances are listed as separate observations by learner with the time divided between the leaners). Over the course of three quarters, five participants were enrolled in the same instructor’s class. On the first day that I observed each quarter, the instructor introduced me as another developmental English faculty member who was “here to observe.” Through this introduction and my own desire to view the classes as a cultural outsider, I was what Creswell (2013) refers to as an “observer as participant” (p. 167) a class outsider, on a rare occasion assisting students with printing or computer issues but primarily recording data without direct involvement with the class.

In observations outside of the classroom, I sat next to the participant. Occasionally, in non-classroom settings, like the library or in the participant’s home, I would record impromptu interviews with the participant if we began a conversation in
which the participant described a new aspect to the transition experience. For example, when Mariam prepared an essay in the library, she began describing a detailed system for essay writing which she had not shared with me previously. In addition to taking jottings about how she used the system, I recorded her explanation of it.

I first recorded my data as jottings which I typed into field notes with thick description (Geertz, 1973). While preparing field notes, I wrote asides, commentaries, and in-process memos (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011) to document questions, connections between what I had observed and the study’s theoretical influences, and develop my understanding of relationships between events and interactions.

Peshkin (1988) recommends identifying one’s subjectivity by noting one’s feelings during the research process as a fieldwork procedure. In his Riverview, CA work, these notes resulted in a “subjectivity audit” (p. 18) which he examined for actual and imagined impact on his research. I incorporated Peshkin’s audit method into my own system of memoing so that I attempted to record my sensations while conducting the research as an instructor in the program I studied, and I also noted places where I felt my subjectivity was engaged during rereadings of interview and observation transcripts and analytic memos, such as when I reflected over my complicity in the lack of explicit explanation Qadira received about the sociocultural elements determining college plagiarism policies.

Documents. I also collected documents from observations (i.e., assignments and copies of student papers), CCC materials available to students (i.e., transfer guides, course catalogs, tutoring promotional materials, etc.) and faculty/staff for assisting students (i.e., ESL and developmental course schematics, quarterly T-Lab newsletters,
SCC self-study report. These documents triangulated participants’ statements about how they incorporated instructor or tutor feedback into their writing, their description of available campus resources and other findings from interviews and observations.

**Respect and reciprocity for human subjects.** Before beginning data collection, I worked with UNL’s IRB and CCC’s Institutional Researcher to ensure respect for my participants. Like in previous research I conducted for CCC, I initially offered participants tutoring; however, because I was most frequently contacted for assistance with enrollment or information about degree programs or transferring, I ultimately offered participants informal advising and tutoring. Although both were available to learners through student fees, participants expressed appreciation for someone who had insider knowledge, a listening ear and with whom they had a previously established relationship. After data collection, Rebecca and Mariam occasionally texted me for registration advice.

In addition, because of my dual roles as researcher and CCC employee, I carefully monitored learners for signs of adverse effects of participating in the research. I envisioned potential negative consequences such as discomfort from being observed in classes or tutoring and advising sessions, and I planned to forego observations if learners or instructors displayed signs of discomfort. Although none of the research questions asked directly about learners’ migration experiences, I was mindful that past trauma might be triggered by the research or transitioning. However, I was initially surprised when Labiba’s instructor told me that Labiba was displaying signs of PTSD in class. When I contacted Labiba after an observation to schedule an interview, she claimed to have no recollection of the research but agreed to meet. At our meeting, she described a
series of racial incidents at the college, accused CCC of being full of “bad men,” and
tearfully threatened to quit attending CCC. She repeatedly told me that she just wanted
CCC employees to leave her alone. It was unclear whether she understood then that I
also was employed at the college; I promised I would not ask to interview her again but
asked her permission to return to her class in order to observe Rebecca to which she
agreed. As I debated removing her from the study or proceeding to analyze the large
amount of data I had already collected, Labiba chose not to quit school and even
knowingly registered for a section of a writing workshop that I taught and the second
developmental integrated reading/writing class with her instructor from her first quarter.
Over a year later, we ran into each other when Labiba visited my office suite looking for
her composition instructor. At that time, she was again outgoing and expressive, and she
offered to share her papers from all of her classes and participate in another interview. I
discuss this in greater detail in Ch. 4.

Single and Cross Case Analysis

As discussed above, case study analysis begins during data collection. The final
presentation of multiple case study includes single case and cross-case analysis.

Single Case Analysis

Based upon a case study protocol modified from Yin (2009), I first created a case
study notes database (Yin, 2009) in MaxQDA to analyze (1) interview transcripts, (2)
memos from interviews, observations and document analysis, and (3) digital copies of
documents. I then immersed myself in the data of one participant at a time to create a
narrative addressing the case study’s Level 1 questions, asked of participants directly,
such as “Why do you want to leave ESL?” (see Appendices C and D). I analyzed each
participant’s individual experience by first lean coding (Creswell, 2013), then focused coding through constant comparison (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011; Merriam, 1998) of themes between interview transcripts, observation notes and documents for the participant. Through this process, I addressed the case study’s Level 2 questions addressing themes within the case. At the same time, individual case analysis through the narrative write-ups triangulated evidence from the data and tentative interpretations presented in the memos.

By examining participants individually, I increased my understanding of their unique transition experiences before analyzing across cases. Merriam (1998) notes that a thorough understanding of individual cases is essential to accurate cross-case analysis.

**Cross-Case Analysis**

After I completed the single case analyses, I combined the interview transcripts and verbatim speech samples from observation notes into a single MaxQDA file and analyzed participants’ verbatim speech using Spradley’s (1979) processes for taxonomic analysis to understand how learners conceptualized and experienced being a student. I identified common themes (domains), and the semantic relationships between cover and included terms, as well as relationships between these domains related to aspects of being a student. Understanding semantic relationships uncovered the subtleties of meaning connected to various folk terms within the culture-sharing group (Spradley, 1979) of Generation 1 learners; this understanding facilitated my understanding of how learners attempted to become legitimate participants in the imagined community of students at CCC.
Second, in order to better understand the context of learners’ transition, I conducted a thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2014) of developmental education faculty and staff descriptions of their expectations for being a college student. I then lean focused coded by examining the data for emergent themes related to college expectations for student characteristics and participation.

Next, I conducted a thematic analysis of memos of cases in Chapters 4 and 5 beginning with lean codes derived from the theoretical framework then focus coding to identify nuances within the Generation 1 learner transition experience. Following Merriam (1998/2009), this coding relied on constant comparison between the research findings and the study’s theoretical assumptions, which were further developed through memoing. Because in-process (event-specific) and analytic memos (creating unified arguments from codes and data) facilitated hypotheses about emerging themes, the memos were important data for “reexamining everything that has been written down, while self-consciously seeking to identify themes, patterns, and variations within this record” (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, p. 174). By revisiting my memos during this phase, I addressed the Level 3 questions facilitating cross-case comparison, such as “Are there similarities between the personal characteristics or resources to which learners attribute their success?” For example, from Al Share’s and Qadira’s discussions of their experiences with British English, the focused code *Language Expert* emerged from the larger theme of *Resistance*. Similarly, within lean coded segments related to *Participation, Illegitimate Technology Use* emerged based on Rebecca’s computer use and Mariam’s cellphone use. In this dissertation, I italicize codes; codes which contain
verbatim speech also are noted with quotation marks and the source, such as “pull yourself” (Rebecca, August 22, 2014).

I later compared findings from the domain and taxonomic analysis with codes in the cases for triangulation and hypothesis testing during the cross-case analysis (Yin, 2009). For example by comparing learners’ perceptions of ways of participating in ENGL0960 with instructors’ assessment of the legitimacy of those participation forms.

In order to validate the theory-driven findings, I triangulated emerging themes with the “ground up” findings of the domain and taxonomic analysis of participant’s speech. Individual case analysis further triangulated evidence from the data and tentative interpretations regarding cross-case comparison. Constant comparison also allowed me to test rival interpretations, such as my hypothesis “Computer literacy is a component of legitimate participation” which was modified after the cross-case analysis to “Knowing when and how to use the computer is a component of legitimate participation.”

Attending to all of the evidence and rival interpretations are two requirements of high quality analysis (Yin, 2014). Yin notes that high quality analysis is dependent on the application of the researcher’s own prior, expert knowledge. As the primary data collection and analysis instrument, the researcher must demonstrate awareness of current thinking and discourse on the topic while recording and examining his or her own assumptions with the same level of intensity as the other collected data.

**Researcher Assumptions and Positionality**

Through the researcher’s write up, case study research deploys multiple perspectives in a single representation of the phenomenon. Although I incorporated frequent samples of student language to illustrate both their stories and their linguistic
challenges, it is the researcher’s placement of the participants’ experiences as units of analysis within a sociocultural framework and the subsequent analysis of such which leads to understanding of the central phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). In describing the experience of being a Jewish researcher studying a fundamentalist Christian school, Alan Peshkin (1988) argues that subjectivity can be virtuous, “for it is the basis of researchers’ making a distinctive contribution, one that results from the unique configuration of their personal qualities joined to the data they have collected” (p. 18). Just as adult learners draw upon their social roles and experiences in their learning, so too do my own roles and experiences act as refraction points channeling the angles of my data analysis. For Peshkin, subjectivity must be identified and then interrogated for how it intensifies the researcher’s awareness of certain aspects of the research while distorting or ignoring others. Below I identify the origins of the subjective I’s (Peshkin, 1988), I carried into the present study. In Chapter 6, I explore how these assumptions influenced my understanding of the Generation 1 learner transition experience.

At the University of Minnesota, I worked as an undergraduate teaching assistant in Commanding English, an ESL bridge program within General College. Although I was unaware of it, General College was an important hub of developmental education and developmental education scholarship, and as the site of my first teaching experience, it shaped my views of higher education instruction. In Commanding English, I worked with Generation 1.5 students who dreamed of becoming nanotechnologists and U.N. ambassadors but who struggled to create a place for themselves within a research institution which did not always value their unique experiences or English varieties. After General College was closed, I earned a Master’s degree in English as a Second
Language working as a university writing tutor and volunteering at the Minnesota Literacy Council (MLC).

It was at the MLC that I was first introduced to Generation 1 learners. Although enrolled in basic literacy classes and often working in and out of the home, many had college aspirations of their own, similar to my Commanding English students. However, unlike Commanding English students, my MLC students had not attended an American high school; their American education experiences began at the MLC.

I eventually moved to Nebraska and took a position directing a family literacy program and teaching its adult classes. In family literacy, I again noticed that while parents and children alike hoped to attend college, they had vastly different access to cultural capital and correspondingly to higher education. When I left family literacy to join the developmental reading and writing department, I had not taken an English class since I was a high school junior enrolled in a dual credit literature course. I joined faculty who held advanced degrees in literature, rhetoric and fine arts. Although I felt out of my league in terms of subject matter training, I believed the position would allow me to observe and assist adult ESL students who had “made it” and better prepare me to teach adult ESL students aspiring to join their college-bound peers. To this aim, I volunteered to complete part of my teaching load as a B-Lab tutor and advisor for two quarters before beginning the preliminary data collection for my dissertation.

I undertook this dissertation study, and my PhD program, motivated by a continued desire to increase institutional support for learners transitioning from adult ESL to credit-level courses and guided by several assumptions. I first assumed that my experiences as a developmental English and ESL instructor as well as B-Lab tutor
influenced my analysis and thus the findings of this study. At the same time, I assumed that my teaching experiences as a developmental educator and professional training in TESOL would prevent me from taking the position as a cultural novice (Wolcott, 1999) in spite of the fact that I have never been formally trained as a college reading or writing instructor. My experiences have shaped my view of the transition process as complex, occurring in and out of the classroom environment and generalizable but uniquely impacted by individual experience and expectations, on the part of learners and instructors.

Limitations

Perhaps the most obvious limitation of a monolingual study of multilingual learners is the fact that participants must reflect on their English language learning experiences in English rather than (an)other language(s) of their choosing. Although the learners in this study demonstrated advanced proficiency through their metalinguistic discussion of their language learning, their use of idioms and other markers of proficiency, the study was undoubtedly limited by its dependence upon English.

In addition, this dissertation is a study of Generation 1 learners, a term which I establish as inclusive of but not limited to refugees, but because of the sampling method, inclusion criteria, and chance, all of the learners in this dissertation fit the legal definition of a refugee. As stated above, although I conducted intake interviews with two non-refugee Generation 1 learners, they did not transition during the nine quarters of data collection. The dissertation thus offers a picture of transition which over-represents the
importance of the refugee identity for Generation 1 learners although, as discussed in Ch. 5, this was not an identity which all of the learners in this study were eager to enact.

An additional limitation to this dissertation involved my access to the field of developmental education at CCC which was predicated upon my continued full-time employment at the college. CCC has supported several faculty members conducting their dissertation research at the institution; my research is the fourth study to come out of the CCC English/Developmental English departments. However, there are acknowledged dangers of “researching in one’s own backyard” related to the researcher’s position vis-à-vis the institution (Creswell, 2013). Knowledge resulting from such research has been called “dangerous,” “political” and “risky” for a researcher planning to remain employed at the research site (ibid, p. 151). The fact that the previous three dissertation writers are still employed at CCC (and that two have been promoted, for reasons unrelated to their research) left me less concerned about job security but still highly conscious of my dual roles as researcher and instructor.

During data collection, I endeavored to maintain a careful distinction between these roles. While observing in colleagues’ classes, I emphasized to them the learner as my unit of analysis and attempted to respect their time and authority by requesting a single interview at the end of the term although my colleagues often approached me to share updates about students, which is a common practice between many instructors in the department.

I found negotiating the power dynamics of my dual role most challenging in the writing center, a space which is housed on campus but is historically and intentionally separated from departments of writing instruction (Healy, 1993). Because writing tutors
are part-time employees, sometimes simultaneously adjuncting, their position within the college is less respected than tenured faculty. From the perspective of the writing tutors, I was not only a researcher but, perhaps more discomfitting, a full-time instructor entering their space to observe. During my first observation, this power dynamic became painfully clear to me when after producing my IRB approval from UNL and CCC, I tried to reassure a nervous tutor by explaining that I was developmental faculty. Over a year after the observation when I began working in the center as a writing tutor, the tutor confided in me that because of past negative experiences with faculty, many of the tutors felt extremely reluctant to work with students in front of instructors. Although I did not observe anything to suggest that the relationship between tutors and instructors influenced learners’ perceptions about seeking assistance from tutors, I considered this information when analyzing my data from writing center observations.

I was also aware that my affiliation with CCC could easily project an unequal relationship between myself and learners; to offset this potential danger, I emphasized separation between my job and research and offered reciprocity. Perhaps surprisingly, Rebecca and Labiba intentionally registered for my class in the quarter following my study of their transition.

Finally, I drew from the experience of previous researchers whose examinations of Generation 1 learners occurred in the researcher’s place of employment. Becker (2010) relied heavily on member checking with learners and instructors. Norton Peirce (1995), for example, conducted research with participants when they were no longer enrolled in her class and intentionally eased her way out of the research-based relationship she had established with participants. Qualitative research cannot eliminate
the researcher’s voice or experiences in the data analysis, particularly when the data collection occurs where the researcher also teaches, and such researchers must diligently attend to issues of reliability and validity. The following section discusses my procedures to maximize the rigor of this multiple case study.

**Rigor**

Rigor refers to the quality of the research conducted and is essential to qualitative studies (Morrow, 2005). Reliability, the family of validity measures, and demonstrations of saturation contribute to a study’s rigor.

Reliability refers to the repeatability of a study’s research procedures. Case study reliability is maintained through a chain of evidence clearly connecting claims within the case to evidence collected following the study protocol and accessible in the database (Yin, 2009). With a clearly operationalized and documented protocol, a study’s data collection procedures are replicable.

Triangulation is the main strategy for enhancing validity in case study research (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002; Stake, 1995; Yin; 2014). This study relied upon data triangulation through observation then interview and document analysis to increase confidence in interpretations through the convergence of multiple measures of the phenomenon (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). Narratives of individual learners were composed based upon comparisons between interview data, observation notes and documents to tentative interpretations established from the study’s initial propositions; I then used these individual cases for cross-case comparison. In comparing findings through theoretical proposition-driven coding (Yin, 2014) and the “ground up” data analysis (Yin, 2014) from constant comparison and domain analysis of participants’
verbatim speech, I also employed methodological triangulation. Other forms of triangulation included thick, rich description (Geertz, 1973) of the observations to provide details and quotes to support the case, transparent discussion of researcher bias from previous experiences (Creswell, 2013) documented through memos and included in the final write up, and member checking of the themes with a participant (Creswell, 2013). These methods of triangulation increased the study’s validity.

In addition to triangulation, I relied upon other validation measures to increase the study’s rigor. Following Yin (2009), I defined the phenomenon within specific contexts based on the study’s objectives and operationalized measures by following previous research in similar contexts to increase construct validity. I employed replication logic to strengthen internal validity through comparative cases that established causal relationships and external validity by identifying other cases meeting the theoretical criteria (Yin, 2009). To decrease researcher bias, I conducted member checking (Creswell, 2013) of the cross-case analysis with three learner participants and had frequent conversations with David, a former developmental English instructor and writing tutor who worked with many Generation 1 learners, including some of the participants. Because of his experience with Generation 1 learners at CCC, David’s advice provided invaluable peer examination (Merriam, 1998) of the data analysis as well as member checking. Discussing my findings with him also served as an important reminder that research should not remain an insular experience (Stake, 1995). Finally, I addressed the research’s shortcomings to further avoid bias.

Saturation refers to the researcher’s demonstration of enough rich data to support category development so that no new information adds to understanding of the category
(Creswell, 2013) and or answering the research questions (Bowen, 2008). Bowen notes, “Saturation is reached when the researcher gathers data to the point of diminishing returns, when nothing new is being added” (p. 140). In this study, saturation occurred in the data collection when during an interview, Anne referred to a former participant to explain the progress of the learner I was currently observing. Saturation also occurred within the data analysis when during member checking, participants reported that the research findings did not leave anything out of their transition experience.

This chapter summarized the methods of data collection and analysis employed to conduct this multiple case study. The study was framed by theories of andragogy (Knowles, 1968/1970) and investment (Peirce Norton 1995). Researcher attention to triangulation of data and methods increased the study’s rigor.
CHAPTER 4: INDIVIDUAL LEARNER CASES

This chapter presents the cases of six Generation 1 learners’ transition experience from adult ESL into developmental education at a community college. Each case is presented in a standard format beginning with a vignette or quote from the learner to introduce his or her experience. The case then presents the learner’s previous educational experiences abroad and in adult ESL, followed by a discussion of the learner’s multiple social roles and decision to leave ESL. The case then presents the learner’s experience in each of the areas of developmental education (i.e., placement testing, advising, tutoring and developmental English classes) and summarizes unique aspects of the case. Each case concludes with a discussion of the case’s connections to the broader experience of transitioning.

Learners’ transition experiences were largely impacted by the degree to which their projected student identity was accepted by other members of the college. While
legitimization was not absolute (i.e., a learner’s participation could be considered legitimate in one environment or interaction but be deemed inappropriate, and thus delegitimate, in another), learners’ transition experiences were shaped by others’ overall response to their participation. Thus, the chapter is divided into three sections based on the degree to which the learner’s projected student identity was legitimized by others at the college. Chapter 5 explores the causes and consequences of legitimization of learners’ participation in the cross case analysis.

The current chapter opens with cases of Rebecca and Al Share, two learners who were least interested in challenging others’ assumptions about the learners’ student identity within the context of their multiple social roles. Rebecca and Al Share were considered by their instructor and others to have legitimized, peripheral participation in the imagined community of their ENGL0960 classroom, meaning that while others perceived their struggles, the learners were accepted as progressing towards their academic and personal goals. The first case presents Rebecca, a South Sudanese single mother of five who entered the B-Lab intending to receive an education that would help her people in Sudan. Rebecca’s case introduces how Generation 1 learners may view themselves in light of their multiple social roles and the differences they see between themselves and other immigrant students. The second case introduces Al Share. Having previously completed coursework for a Master’s degree in Egypt, Al Share felt adult ESL could not assist him in translating his political writings into English; he decided to take the Compass test in order to find an English class that would help him achieve this goal. Al Share’s case examines the consequences of a mismatch between the Generation 1
learner’s transition goals and the goals of his developmental English class or the larger neoliberal goals of his community college.

The chapter next presents the cases of Labiba and Qadira, who were least successful at accessing their agency to challenge others’ delegitimization of their participation in CCC; their identities became sites of contestation (McKay & Wong, 1996) as the learners attempted to enact alternative identities with greater participation rights in order to assert their rights and ability to interact with others in the college. Qadira was a Sudanese mother of two in her late twenties who was driven by her goal of becoming a pharmacist. Qadira’s case examines how instructor assumptions about a student’s limited language proficiency can result in failure to address important cultural expectations with grave consequences for the student. The chapter’s fourth case presents the experiences of Labiba; as the daughter of a politically powerful Afghan family, Labiba viewed her lengthy English language learning journey from community-sponsored ESL to CCC as her attempt to defeat the “bad men” who had forced her exile and prevented her from attending school as a young child nearly forty years previously. Labiba’s case illustrates the consequences of college personnels’ responses to a Generation 1 learner’s enactment of her refugee identity while avoiding explicit discussion of American academic cultural norms.

The final section presents the cases of Olan and Mariam. Unlike Labiba and Qadira who also used their agency in efforts to challenge others’ positioning, Olan and Mariam were able to apply their symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991) to control their identity narratives; others within the college legitimized their participation and therefore accepted their student identity. Olan was a Yezidi interpreter from Iraq whose ability to
apply information from connections with Morton’s Yezidi community and his own language and computer skills facilitated his instructor’s perception of Olan as a legitimate member of the ENGL0960 community. Mariam was an Iraqi mother in her late twenties who was highly motivated to begin college and whose understanding of the Iraqi higher educational system informed her transition decisions. While Mariam’s ENGL0960 instructor was oblivious to her sophisticated study habits and deemed her linguistically unprepared for his class, her subsequent ENGL0980 instructor referenced Mariam’s studying as proof of her preparation for college and her emerging language abilities. As the final case presented in this study, Mariam’s case includes her experience in both quarters of the two-class developmental English sequence.

The first two learners described below demonstrated a limited response to external positioning in transitioning.

Rebecca, “Pull Yourself to Do It”

“The Older You Got, The Younger You Feel”

Rebecca stood behind the lecturer station; her thin, long braids were woven into a larger braid anchored close to the left portion of her scalp, a tight coil mirroring the erectness of her posture. Although she had spent hours on her Prezi (a presentation application) and read her book several times, Rebecca was nervous.

The assignment for that day’s ENGL0960 class was to present a book of the student’s choosing including the author and the main points of the book and describing why the student chose it. Rebecca began with the rationale for her choice; the book, she explained, talked about the difficulty of coming to a new country and not being understood. Rebecca’s slide contained the quote, “The older you are, the younger you get when you move to the United States.” Hank, another student, laughed when he read the slide, but he seemed to convey solidarity and agreement rather than judgment.

Rebecca read the quote from the screen, pausing occasionally to look up and make eye contact with her audience. She described the pain of not being understood. With a small smile on her face, Rebecca navigated to the next slide, continuing to talk to her classmates, “So I love that part, I really read it all the time” she said of the quote, explaining that it was about a woman feeling younger
as her children got older. Rebecca then described her own coming to the US, feeling like she was getting younger as her kids, who were in school learning about American culture, got older. Rebecca then described the author and the book’s characters (*Seedfolks* presents the story of a community garden through the eyes of multiple characters, several of whom are immigrants).

During the question and answer period, the instructor, Anne, asked, “What was your favorite story so far?”

“The older you got the younger you feel part,” Rebecca’s response was delivered in the same quiet voice she had used for her entire presentation, but this statement contained a sense of conviction and confidence absent from the presentation itself. Hank then piped up, sitting a little taller in his seat as he said that as a veteran, he felt the plight of other immigrants and appreciated their efforts, “All the trials and tribulations going through your guys and your families, going to all your families, I’ve seen what war does to all of you all, cause it’s not easy to go into foreign country and learn the language—I’ve had to learn Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, trying to learn what to say, it hurts when you’re trying to say something to save someone’s life, to say, ‘I want a taxi to go to some place.’ I couldn’t image trying to go to a foreign country and learn academic language at the same time. My heart goes out to all of you all.” Anne thanked him for sharing; Rebecca remained at the front, quietly listening, neither denying nor adding anything to his comment. The class applauded her presentation as Rebecca returned to her seat. (Observation Notes, November 12, 2014).

This visit was my first to an ENGL0960 class in which I was not the instructor and my first observation for the dissertation research. ENGL0960 was the first of CCC’s two developmental English classes. The classes followed an Integrated Reading and Writing model based off of the program at Chabot College (Hern, 2013; Raufman & Hern, 2016) in which the class read a non-fiction book and produced a series of essays in response to topics from the book. In addition, this quarter, the instructor, Anne, asked students to read an additional book that they presented to the class while I observed. Rebecca’s experiences transitioning in the class, which I first described in Chapter 1, are illustrative of how some Generation 1 learners integrated their student identity with another identity motivating their transition and how others within the college responded to learners’ efforts to enact their multiple identities. For Rebecca, transitioning was essential to accomplishing the academic and career goals inspired by her experiences as a
refugee and her efforts to support her extended family in Africa and her children in the U.S. However, as the observation above and the introduction in Chapter 1 indicated, Rebecca’s transition highlighted the distance she felt between her children, on the one hand, whose American K-12 experiences provided important information about American culture and schooling, and herself, on the other, an older immigrant beginning college; based on the differences Rebecca perceived, “The older you got, the younger you feel.”

The observation above also illustrates the ways in which others within the college respond to Generation 1 learners’ identity projections. Also similar to the observation in Chapter 1, Hank’s response to Rebecca emphasized her foreignness as an immigrant learning “academic language.” His empathy for her language struggles occurred through a comparison to his own language struggles “trying to say something to save someone’s life” in his service overseas as a soldier. The observation occurred the day after Veteran’s Day, which had been celebrated at CCC with special recognition of current and past members of the armed forces. (The ways that Hank’s own other identity as a veteran shaped his response to learners’ student identity projections and thus the legitimization of their participation in the classroom are discussed in Labiba’s case). Rebecca’s case introduces the Generation 1 learner transition experience as a complex interaction between learners’ efforts to present their student identity, others’ response to that identity projection, and the learners’ own awareness of their experience as unique from other immigrant students.

**Rebecca’s Previous Education: The Journey of “A Quiet, Lost Lady”**

**Ethiopian refugee camp education.** As she explained in her final presentation,
Rebecca’s identity as a refugee was central to her multiple social roles and her transition experience. Halfway through her first quarter as a college student, I asked Rebecca to describe herself. After half-jokingly referring to herself as “the non-English-speaking lady,” Rebecca said her English instructor would say, “She's a quiet[5 second pause]… lost lady” (November 24, 2014). Rebecca told me she thought she was “born lost” but viewed her situation with hope: “I'm working. I'm looking for it. To find my sight. Yes, I am forward looking forward to it. When I'm graduated and then I will say, ‘Yeah, I’m off from lost, and they found me’” (November 24, 2014). Rebecca’s initial reference to her language abilities suggested her awareness of how her English mediated her educational experiences, but her reference to being “lost” carried even more significance. Like the Lost Boys, Rebecca had fled Sudan for the safety of an Ethiopian refugee camp as a young child after her father’s murder during the second Sudanese civil war. Rebecca’s choice to relocate to another camp after her marriage in order to attend high school and her inability to continue studying after giving birth as a 7th grader illustrated Rebecca’s efforts to overcome the challenges facing a Sudanese girl pursuing an education. Because of her education and her knowledge of Amharic, Rebecca eventually became a camp teacher. She used her meager salary to support herself, her family and her husband’s family; her continued support after emigrating necessitated consistent overtime to provide for extensive family connections in Africa.

**American adult ESL.** Much of the research on adult immigrant students emphasizes their multiple and competing responsibilities related to school, work, and home (Almon, 2015; Becker, 2010; Cspelyi, 2012; Terenishi, Suarez-Orozco, & Suarez-Orozco, 2011). Although her re-enrollment in ESL was partially motivated by her efforts
to cope with the trauma she experienced in returning to Sudan, Rebecca first enrolled in ESL to learn the necessary English for fulfilling the duties associated with her responsibilities as a mother, employee and newly arrived immigrant. Rebecca recalled, “I don't start [studying] because I’m going to get a degree” (August 22, 2014); instead, Rebecca was fiercely determined to independently complete housing and job applications, doctor appointments, and her children’s paperwork. Rebecca’s initially very practical language and academic goals distinguished her from several of the Generation 1 learners in this dissertation who began learning English to prepare for a career. Like many adult ESL students (Casner-Lotto, 2011; Crandall & Sheppard, 2004), Rebecca found it challenging to attend school and care for her family: “I studied in the closet so that my kids wouldn’t rip the pages. I had no help” (December 12, 2014).

In addition, the ESL classes frustrated her. “Nobody go anywhere, just do the same thing over and over again. That way is kill your motivation,” and she considered quitting, “It’s like, ‘Oh well, I’m not going anywhere, I guess, so better not waste my time to learn,’” (November 24, 2014), but she persisted, even after taking a break from classes when she returned to South Sudan. After she re-enrolled in ESL, a presenter told her Tuition level 8 class that the students could begin college. Rebecca made inquiries but was disappointed to learn that she was ineligible because she had not completed high school in Africa. Although this setback discouraged her, Rebecca began studying for the GED.

Rebecca’s Multiple Social Roles: Single Mother, Financial Provider, Night Shift Medication Aide, South Sudanese Woman, Student

Rebecca’s husband did not financially support or care for their children, nor did he
contribute to the monthly remittances Rebecca sent to his family. While she acknowledged her husband’s approval of her decision to attend college, Rebecca questioned his actual support. He had a frequent tendency to leave home for extended periods whenever she began a new term and, even when in town, he was uninvolved with their children.

I will feel bad to say it, but I will say it because this is kind of interview thing, and I just don't want the young Sudanese girl to go through what I been through, what we go through. So Sudanese man, they don't help. They don't. They expect to you have a lot of kids; they expect you to clean the house all the time; they expect you to cook all the time and plus told you to go to school, but I didn't see any support in that. (August 22, 2014)

Rebecca viewed her husband’s lack of involvement and its effects on her transition experience as a consequence of Sudanese culture; she believed it was her responsibility to educate other Sudanese girls so that their experiences would be different.

Rebecca’s financial obligations and family care left her little time to complete her studies. Rebecca worked the nightshift as a medication aide, returning home in the mornings with just enough time to shower and change before dropping four of her children off at their schools and making the 45-minute commute across Morton to attend ENGL0960. Most days she stayed on campus, visiting the writing center and studying for a couple of hours in solitude before picking up her children, briefly napping and returning to work. Rebecca’s experience as a Generation 1 learner sleeping an average of two hours per day and struggling to balance caring for her family and her education mirrors descriptions of other non-traditional students (Hand & Miller Payne, 2008) and adult immigrant students (Almon, 2012/2015; Casner-Lotto, 2011; Norton, 2000/2013; Sharpiro, 2012). Like these learners, Rebecca’s multiple social roles both motivated and constrained her educational experience in adult ESL and college.
Rebecca’s Transition: “Well, I Can Do This, Pull Yourself to Do It”

**Leaving ESL.** Rebecca had never expected to go to college personally, but studying for the GED heightened her awareness of the extra challenges she faced in transitioning compared to Sudanese youth who attended American high school.

The kid from South Sudan with us, they came when they was 11 years old or younger than that, and they started skipping school and doing bad thing, and then I always was told them, I say, ‘You know, what when you get to my age, you feel bad for yourself because this time is you need education…. But the kids from here, they was grown here now, in five years or in ten years later, he not gonna accept that he was, well, he was in the place to go to school, but you just don't want do it. So I feel bad, but I don't feel bad to myself. (August 22, 2014)

Rebecca viewed education as an opportunity rather than a right, contrasting herself as a Generation 1 learner from Generation 1.5 students, whom she felt did not recognize the educational opportunities they had in the U.S. “We [adult ESL students] feel shame on ourselves,” she explained, “[to] learn something really simple and you know how old you are,“ but she remained motivated to “pull yourself to do it” (ibid). Rebecca’s awareness of her advanced age as a Generation 1 learner further separated her from Generation 1.5 students, and like her belief that she must protect and educate “the young Sudanese girls” about the consequences of traditional gender roles on academics, Rebecca felt responsible for teaching Sudanese Generation 1.5 students the value of their American education.

**The Bridging Lab.** It took Rebecca three years to earn her GED, and once she had, she scheduled a Compass test to begin college. It had been 11 years since she first enrolled in ESL. The computer-based test was confusing to Rebecca who randomly clicked keys and read passages, not realizing she had begun the test, until she was told that she had completed it. Based on Rebecca’s results, a testing center representative walked her to the Bridging Lab (B-Lab), a skills brush up lab where students met with
advisors and studied online or with tutors before retaking the Compass test. The B-Lab’s study program was a 10-week QuickStart course with access to Pearson’s MySkillsLab, containing math and English modules for students to complete before retesting. Like the computer-based Compass, the online study program was unfamiliar to Rebecca, but she learned how to log in with assistance from B-Lab advisors and then study during quiet periods on the night shift. Rebecca also met with math and reading tutors, including me, and B-Lab advisors helped her register for classes. When we met as a part of my Kellogg research, Rebecca had already retested into developmental reading and writing.

That term part of my teaching assignment was working in the B-Lab, and I had offered tutoring as a form of reciprocity for the students I interviewed. Rebecca had already retested into developmental reading and writing. She and Labiba, whose case is also included in this chapter, were interested in working on their reading. I provided them each with a photocopy of a two-page story about cultural food practices from an intermediate level ESL reading text that I judged to be similar to an ESL Tuition level 6 or 7 reading assignment. In our two 60-minute sessions, I introduced reading strategies including looking at the title to guess the topic, searching for the main idea and supporting details. Both women said that this was the first time they had been taught these skills, but because of their great struggle with the vocabulary, we frequently put aside this skills practice in order to use context clues and word parts to infer word meanings. Stopping to discuss new or our own cultural experiences with food further slowed our progress, which was not a problem in our relaxed tutoring situation, but I wondered about Rebecca’s emergent vocabulary and whether she would be prepared for ENGL0960. I recommended that she and Labiba purchase *The Mind at Work*, the
ENGL0960 reading book, so that they could begin reading it before the term began, but I left for maternity leave before either woman bought the book. In addition to meeting with me, Rebecca and Labiba had also been given a copy *Seedfolks*, a series of short stories about individuals sharing an innercity garden by Paul Fleischman, which they read with another English instructor who was also working in the B-Lab.

Rebecca also planned to ask advisors for assistance choosing a major. Rebecca was interested in both political science, which she felt could help her understand the conflict in Sudan, and nursing, which she believed would be a more practical skill set to take to Africa and would relate to her current job as a medication aide. Rebecca wanted a degree that would make her marketable, “since I have family to support for, I need something I can go to work quick” (November 24, 2014). Unlike her oldest daughter, a Generation 1.5 student about to graduate from high school and whom Rebecca was preparing to send to an out-of-state, liberal arts university; as a Generation 1 learner in need of a better job to support her family, Rebecca sought for herself the practical applicability of the community college. Rebecca’s reasons for transitioning at CCC thus aligned with the career readiness focus of the B-Lab’s TAACCCT grant funding and the prevailing community college neoliberal emphasis on job training and work readiness.

**Rebecca’s Developmental Education: “And Then I Hope Tomorrow I Be Better”**

Developmental education encompasses four distinct aspects: Placement, Advising, Tutoring and Developmental Coursework. Rebecca’s experience with placement and advising in the B-Lab were discussed above. The following section presents Rebecca’s experiences in developmental coursework and tutoring as she worked towards understanding English as an academic subject and language. When she started
feeling overwhelmed, Rebecca reminded herself, “I choose to do this, I have to do this, and then I hope tomorrow I be better” (November 24, 2014). Rebecca’s quiet determination and self-dependence provided mixed results in her developmental education experience.

**ENGL0960.** Rebecca began her college career in the first of CCC’s two-class developmental English sequence. Rebecca’s section of ENGL0960, Introduction to College Reading and Writing, was taught by Anne, who had some coursework in Teaching English as a Second Language methods and was well-regarded within the department for her patience and easy manner. In addition to class activities such writing, group work, discussions, and computer-based grammar modules, the class paired a non-fiction reading book with a writing reference manual. Following a typical integrated reading and writing model (Hern, 2012/2013), students were expected to read approximately one chapter per week from the reading book, write polished essays related to the readings, and demonstrate critical thinking through writing, oral presentations and a portfolio. Because of ENGL0960’s focus on written responses to extended reading assignments and Anne’s own background as a writing teacher, her instruction privileged writing over reading; students received little in the way of reading assistance, yet they were expected to comprehend and respond to the readings. The course expectations proved especially challenging for Rebecca as a Generation 1 learner whose previous reading and cultural experiences left her less prepared than many of her American-educated peers for class requirements.

Although Rebecca had completed ESL reading and her Compass reading score placed her into developmental English, she struggled with reading which Anne felt was
“more complex” and “focus[ed] on the big picture” than readings in traditional developmental reading classes (November 12, 2014). Anne noted how Rebecca’s vocabulary limited her comprehension of even the short passages she was asked to read aloud. Anne concluded, “I’m not sure she has enough English background to really read 20 pages and understand the 20 pages and talk about them the same way that the native speakers might be able to do” (ibid). Anne’s comment illustrates how Rebecca struggled with multiple literacy practices that built upon each other in the class, such as dealing with vocabulary, reading for comprehension and writing in a polished paper responding or analyzing a text. The majority of Rebecca’s course grade was based on written work, which Anne also expressed concern over, “If I look at a handwritten piece of paper, it doesn’t look much like a paper. But then the essay she hands in to me looks like the way an essay is supposed to look, so I’m not sure where that’s coming from” (November 12, 2014).

The Writing Center. Unbeknownst to Anne, although Rebecca struggled to produce college-level writing in class, she received substantial out-of-class support from daily visits to the writing center. Rebecca described her process there, “I go there say, ‘Hey, I need help to study,’ and they show me how to study, then the next day I come back to review it” (November 24, 2012). In between class days, and after each writing center visit, Rebecca reviewed what she had learned, continued working independently and then returned to the center the following day.

Largely holding degrees in composition and rhetoric, Rebecca’s writing tutors were untrained in working with emergent multilinguals. As CCC’s population shifted to include more Generation 1 learners, tutors struggled to find resources and approaches for
working with these students, many of whom, like Rebecca, visited the writing center with impressive, and perhaps unanticipated, frequency. Unaware of the tutors’ limited training, Rebecca believed their assistance was equivalent to learning in class, so she was frustrated when she received C’s on two of the assignments she had taken to the writing center. “It seems like some of them, they don’t understand it, or they just don't have time,” she commented, “I didn't get anybody, somebody know knows better than I do” (November 24, 2014). Rebecca’s disappointment stemmed from her belief that the tutors had failed to help her develop beyond what she perceived to be her current and independent level of understanding; however, she valued the center overall as a place to receive additional support in developing her written English and understanding of the expectations of American college classes.

“She’s Not Really Doing What She’s Supposed to Be Doing” (Anne)

Although she visited the writing center daily, Rebecca preferred to work independently in class. She frequently sat with her back turned to the class at the row of computers lining the far wall. “Given the chance,” her instructor, Anne, concluded, “she will be working alone” (November 12, 2014). Anne noted how this preference for individual study affected Rebecca’s participation in peer review, during which time Rebecca would write feedback on her partner’s worksheet but not discuss her comments as directed. Anne concluded, “Usually she tries to hide as much as possible. If I’m paying attention, she’s not really doing what she’s supposed to be doing” (November 12, 2014). Anne did not view Rebecca’s decision to work independently at a computer as a legitimate form of participation for large portions of the class; however, I never witnessed Anne explicitly address Rebecca’s participation during my observations.
I observed Rebecca’s participation and enactment of class literacy practices during an in-class assigned punctuation marks scavenger hunt. The assignment had been distributed throughout the department as part of a packet of materials for teaching integrated reading and writing and was widely used. Although the exercise utilized the reading book, it taught punctuation rules; like the majority of ENGL0960 assignments, it did not focus on decoding or reading comprehension.

Rebecca did not appear to be making progress on her handout; instead, she flipped through the chapter, pausing to read portions, her long index finger slowly guiding across a line of text. Occasionally, the pages contained a single highlighted word, but Rebecca had no highlighter out, and she had not annotated the text, so the marks’ significance were unclear. As others skimmed pages for semicolons and quotation marks, Rebecca read silently, seemingly oblivious to the class work around her, sometimes pausing to carefully copy down phrases into her notebook. When Anne called on Rebecca for an answer on the back of the handout, Rebecca, who had only finished half of the front side, was directed to the problem by her classmate, Hank, before responding, “No, I didn’t get there.” Anne made no response but called on another student. Rebecca turned her attention to her textbook, The Everyday Writer, then looked up at the screen to remind herself of the current question and back to her unfinished worksheet. (Observation Notes, November 14, 2014)

Rebecca later explained her choice not to complete the assignment, “She [Anne] showed me, we talk about it, I went to the writing center about it, too. I still a little bit and then [a tutor] help me last time and I understand it now” (November 24, 2014). Rebecca did not understand that the assignment required in-class participation as well as recognition of punctuation marks. Rebecca felt that she understood the punctuation rules and could better use her time reading; however, her choice was at odds with the lesson.

CCC instructors commonly expect that students will know how to participate by the time they reach college, having either learned appropriate forms of participation in their K-12 or adult education experiences. As a college instructor, Anne did not feel that she needed to explain that students should complete a worksheet when it was given to
them, or that other behaviors, even ones related to studying, would be considered off-task and therefore unfavorably regarded. Thus, although Anne provided explicit step-by-step directions about how to complete assignments, she provided little to no direction on what students should do in class—even when she perceived their behavior to be inappropriate. In fact, because both parties were adults, Anne might have felt uncomfortable admonishing students for not staying on task.

Ironically, Rebecca’s in-class behaviors which were perceived by Anne as hiding or not participating were motivated by Rebecca’s own beliefs about college participation expectations. As a Generation 1 learner who had earned her GED through independent study, Rebecca had limited experience with American classroom participation norms. Rebecca was hesitant to ask too many questions, what she feared would be interpreted as “bugging” her instructor. Comparing herself to her classmate, Labiba, whom she felt asked too many questions, Rebecca explained, “I just don't want to ask her for something not even in my place yet” (November 24, 2014). Rebecca thought it was preferable to search for the answers independently. Frequently, she turned to Exercise Central, the class’ computer-based grammar program, believing the “training assignments” would help her become a better writer. Several factors may have influenced her preference for this independent study. The program fit Rebecca’s preferred routine, “If they tell me how to start it, I will do fine to go to follow it at home” (November 24, 2014), and Rebecca’s similar reliance upon independent study had successfully resulted in her earning a GED and completing the B-Lab. Furthermore, the program’s status as a weekly homework assignment may have further encouraged Rebecca’s belief that completing modules during class time was an acceptable way to demonstrate her involvement in class.
Ultimately, Rebecca was unaware that using the computer to type papers or complete modules often was not a legitimate form of participation in her current class. In addition, because Anne did not require students to complete the program’s reading or writing modules, Rebecca’s computer work did not directly assist her vocabulary development or reading comprehension—the two areas which most concerned Anne. However, Anne did not share with me how she addressed Rebecca’s participation, and neither did I observe her redirecting Rebecca during the two classes I observed.

Rebecca’s in-class participation was also impacted by her negative assessment of her spoken English. Self-described as “shy even in my language, too” (August 22, 2014), Rebecca attributed her limited engagement with peers in class to anxiety. Rebecca’s first presentation was supposed to be a report about a book she read during ENGL0960. Rebecca chose the book *Seedfolks*, which she had begun reading in the B-Lab with an English tutor. Rebecca confided in me about the presentation, “I was so nervous. Especially standing up in front of people with their language. It is not easy to do a presentation in their language while you broken their language in front of them it’s embarrassing” (November 24, 2014). Anne was aware of Rebecca’s hesitancy to speak English in class; however, Anne did not consider working on the computer during group work in class to be an acceptable alternative. Ultimately, Rebecca’s status as an English language learner complicated her legitimacy as a college student; Anne questioned Rebecca’s understanding of the text and her participation choices but directly addressed neither. Working independently, Rebecca missed opportunities to interact with her peers, practice speaking and listening to academic English and to master the content of group work. Based on Rebecca’s limited interactions with peers and her struggles with reading,
Anne thought perhaps Rebecca would be better off returning to adult ESL to increase her confidence and receive more structured language support. Interestingly, Anne did not include learning about the expected participation norms for American college classes as an anticipated benefit of returning to adult ESL.

**Individual Case Summary**

Rebecca’s case illustrates how Generation 1 learners distinguish themselves from other immigrant students. Highly aware of her advanced age while learning “simple” things, Rebecca contrasted herself with other Sudanese (Generation 1.5) students whose younger age upon entry into the American educational system and greater knowledge of American culture provided them with opportunities Rebecca felt she herself lacked. Rebecca exemplified several of andragogy’s assumptions about adult learners as distinct from children based on the importance she placed on her personal experiences and multiple social roles (Knowles). In fact, meeting the complex and competing demands of her multiple social roles, which both motivated and constrained her transition, was an important aspect of Rebecca’s transition experience. Because of the importance she assigned her multiple non-student social roles, Rebecca was less interested than some other Generation 1 learners in exercising her agency to challenge others’ perceptions of how these roles impacted her transition experience. At the same time, Rebecca’s previous experiences richly influenced her transition and academic preparation through her notable persistence, her multilingualism (as a learner of Arabic, Amharic, and finally English) and her ability to direct her own learning. Unfortunately, although her persistence was greatly admired, I never observed Rebecca’ instructor or tutors encourage Rebecca to utilize her multilingualism or self-direction (Knowles, 1970) to learn content.
Rebecca’s case complicates developmental educators’ participation expectations and identifies academic challenges within the integrated reading and writing model. Anne’s assumption that Rebecca knew but was choosing to ignore the conventions for participating in an American college classroom foreclosed the opportunity to introduce Rebecca and her classmates to expectations for being a good student. In addition, throughout the department, the ENGL0960 class assessed students based on their written response to a text that first required students’ comprehension of the text and the ability to think critically about it, but little instruction was devoted to reading comprehension. Rebecca’s understanding of the text appeared limited, and when she was required to respond in class, Rebecca’s writing did not “look much like papers” (Anne, November 12, 2012). Anne was also concerned about Rebecca’s preparation for the next class in the developmental English sequence since some of the previous English language learning students Anne had taught and believed to be prepared for the next class were later deemed “indecipherable” (ibid) by their next instructors.

Finally, as discussed above in terms of persistence, Rebecca’s case illustrates the hard work and determination of a Generation 1 learner in transitioning. After extensive support from writing tutors, Rebecca turned in polished papers that Anne felt were at an appropriate level for the class, and Rebecca viewed her experience with hope, as she stated in our first interview, “Well, I can do this—pull yourself to do it” (August 22, 2014).

Al Share, “I Am Working as a Leader”

“It [Class] Is Not Hard, But to Use the Computer Is Hard”

Al Share directed this comment at me while he read the requirements for his portfolio assignment, a powerpoint presentation summarizing his learning for
the quarter. It was the eighth week of class, and Al Share was restarting his powerpoint because he needed help with the computer. I concurred with his assessment after watching him first nearly provide his e-mail address and password to a phishing site while attempting to access the class’ Moodle page then temporarily freeze the computer with his frenzied and aimless clicking as he opened multiple documents simultaneously. After Al Share finally retrieved his powerpoint (the object of his previous increasingly frustrated efforts), I helped change the title and format of his slides. Without referencing notes or the text, he typed: “Fragment means the sentence is not complete like missing verb”. I showed Al Share how to navigate between slides in the preview pane, but he was annoyed to discover that he had at least four slides about run-ons. Al Share also was confused by the words “Type text here” that appeared when he created a new slide. “Okay, let me try to type here,” he responded to the text box. Al Share paused as the formatting suddenly changed while he typed. “Why it’s doing that? Sometimes computer go crazy,” Al Share laughed, his earlier mood seeming to have lifted.

As we left, I was reminded of the last time I had watched Al Share use powerpoint. He had shown me a presentation he had made the previous term in ESL of several slides containing long paragraphs in microscopic font about the negative consequences of Islam’s replacement of ethnic Sudanese cultural practices. Although I had no idea how much time Al Share had spent on his ESL presentation, the sheer amount of language he had produced contrasted markedly with the single phrases and brief definitions it had taken him nearly an hour to type today. I wondered whether he planned as lengthy a powerpoint for this project and, if so, how long it would take him to complete it. (Observation Notes, May 27, 2016)

This study session was representative of Al Share’s struggles to use the computer throughout his transition experience. Unlike the other learners in this study, Al Share’s transition was motivated by his desire to improve his English to translate his political writings from Arabic. Unlike his previous powerpoint about Sudan, Al Share’s ENGL0960 presentation was unrelated to this goal; however, Al Share completed each assignment with earnest effort, “I insist to take English seriously, to master that language, to write. I am going to write something in English even to my children—to our children in Sudan. I want to tell him this and against, against the Islam” (December 8, 2015). Al Share’s social roles (Knowles, 1970) as a political dissenter and writer were shaped by his previous educational experiences and were central to his identity and transition
experience as a Generation 1 learner. Al Share used his status as a published author as symbolic capital in his developmental English classroom where his instructor valued his previous writing experiences as relevant to the types of writing required in her class. Unfortunately, as the above observation notes illustrate, Al Share struggled with using the computer to demonstrate his language proficiency and, more importantly, to meet his personal goals for attending class.

Al Share’s Previous Education: “I Study British English in Egypt and Even in Sudan”

Sudan. Born in the mid 1940s and raised by his paternal grandmother in a family of poor Muslim farmers near the Nuba mountains of Sudan, Al Share left his village to begin school: “When I about fifteen, I escape to city. To Khartoum. And I work, and I go to every evening class until I go to university” (December 8, 2015). Al Share was proud of the fact that his hard work allowed him to receive scholarships to attend high school. In addition to these classes, Al Share also participated in English activities at a regional British government office. As a result of these experiences, Al Share felt that he had a basic understanding of “British” English by the time he migrated to Egypt in search of additional educational opportunities.

Egypt. A large number of Sudanese migrated to Egypt in the 1980s as a result of the Second Sudanese Civil War and the 1976 Wadi El Nil Treaty (Badran, 1995). Driven by academic pursuits rather than a desire to flee conflict, Al Share benefited from the treaty which allowed Sudanese citizens to migrate to Egypt without a visa and guaranteed basic rights to education, medical care, employment, and property ownership (Grabska, 2006; Moulin, 2007). Al Share spent several years in Egypt, working as a manager in
between studying for his bachelor’s and Master’s degrees. Al Share attended what he described as an Islamic university. While Al Share was pleased with his continued study of “British” English, overall, he was critical of the Egyptian educational system, which he viewed as corrupt and “narrow, not information enough to help you” (April 17, 2016). Al Share’s Master’s program was in Mass Media studies, but because his research was harshly critical of Muslim colonizers in Sudan, his thesis was rejected, and he never graduated. Instead, beginning in 1990, he used his research to write the first of his ten books and “more than one thousand article” speaking out against Islam and sharing Sudanese history (December 8, 2015). Al Share continued his writing in Arabic as an ESL student after migrating to the U.S.; he was a prolific writer “in Africa, and I spread in English. And internet—in internet everywhere. Many people they wrote, they ask me to” (ibid).

Al Share’s previous educational experiences were important to his experience as a Generation 1 learner in transition for two reasons. First, these experiences created the scholarly foundation for his most important social roles, that of political dissenter and published author. Second, they were the qualifications by which he self-identified as “British English” expert. Years later, as he transitioned from adult ESL to developmental English in an American community college, Al Share’s investment in these roles shaped the ways he attempted to participate in the college as well as how others viewed him within the system—particularly since the exigencies of his social role as a political dissenter did not align with the college’s expectations about Al Share’s motivation for transitioning and his academic goals.
American Adult ESL. Al Share had studied briefly in an intensive English program in Nashville before moving to Morton. When he enrolled in ESL classes at CCC, he believed that he struggled most with pronunciation and grammar. He recalled being frustrated by the CCC teacher’s response to grammatical errors in his writing, “I know British English, but they say is wrong!” (May 27, 2016). Like the other Generation 1 learners in this study, Al Share described his ESL classes as focused on grammar. However, unlike many learners who were disappointed by what they viewed as their lack of preparation for college in ESL, Al Share was pleased with this approach. Perhaps surprisingly, Al Share’s purpose in attending ESL was to ultimately possess enough English to translate his books, and he felt that focusing on grammar would allow him to accomplish this goal. Al Share was uninterested in using his ESL classes as spaces to produce new political writings in English. The advancement of his advocacy in his ESL classes was thus limited to telling each of his instructors about his multiple published works in Arabic and his translation plans.

In light of these plans, Al Share’s lack of interest in studying vocabulary in ESL was also surprising. He rationalized, “You can know the different meaning, something like that in the dictionary, but the system, the grammar is very important, you have to know how to know to communicate” (May 27, 2016). Al Share’s personal belief that grammatical knowledge was most important for communication and comprehension appeared to be at odds with his long-term English goals and contradicted much of what is known about pragmatics and communication (Ariel, 2008; Kasper & Rose, 2002), but it would later become central to his decision to transition as well as his difficulty persisting in ENGL0960.
Al Share’s Multiple Social Roles: “My Responsibility to Help My People”

In stark contrast to the typical portrayal of Generation 1 learners balancing multiple responsibilities, such as in the previous case, Al Share had few demands on his time. In fact, Al Share described the fewest social roles of all of the learners in this study, noting that in addition to his role of student, he was first and foremost a political leader/writer, and an occasional father figure to his children. However, he was separated from his ex-wife and grown children,

We don’t stay together because that woman came from same world, but when we come here, they change their mind…. I have my vision. My vision. My responsibility to help my people, but she didn’t care. She doesn’t care about that. It doesn’t affect me. No. “You forget,” she asks, “You forget about my problems back home.” I say no, “If you left, if you leave, it’s okay. You go is okay.” Because I am working as a leader. Many people depend on me. Yes, because they ask me to help. I cannot listen for my wife. Yes, because she ask me help, I cannot.

Al Share appeared to have limited contact with his daughter, but did not mention interacting with his other family members. When forced to choose between helping his people and his wife, Al Share chose his people rather than feeling obligated to support his nuclear family. Al Share planned to enact his role as a political dissenter by translating his books into English for “our children.” When I asked Al Share who his children were, he replied, “My people in Sudan. It is not the whole Sudan. My state called Kadugali. We are the—the native people in Sudan, and the government they don’t like help us. And they insist to rule us by Islam system” (December 8, 2015). Al Share spoke repeatedly about his responsibilities to the Sudanese people as his metaphorical family and viewed transitioning as a way to meet his responsibilities.

Al Share also believed that transitioning fulfilled his duty to take advantage of educational opportunities unavailable to Sudanese still in Africa. Al Share described his
obligation to be a “pushing” person: “My people they wanna come here. And they just stay in line, but they can’t help, even they cannot help their children. You’ve come here by the special [visa]. You don’t lose the chance you get you come here. You have to help yourself and the others” (April 29, 2016). Awareness of other Sudanese refugees was part of Al Share’s enactment of the political dissenter role and his motivation for transitioning. Specifically, Al Share enacted his political dissenter role through studying, which prepared him to continue his work as a political writer. His classes were symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991), which Al Share could apply to legitimate his position as an educated leader of his people, particularly writing in English, the official language of the newly formed South Sudan (Goldsmith, 2011). Al Share’s case thus exemplifies the importance of social roles in the Generation 1 learners’ transitions but illustrates that such social roles are not limited to meeting basic family needs or employment as suggested in the literature (Almon, 2015; Norton, 2013) and or emphasized in community colleges.

**Al Share’s Transition: “I have enough, enough information about English that I could do well”**

**Leaving ESL.** Al Share’s case illustrates the importance of institutional literacy on Generation 1 learners’ transition decisions. Although ESL for Academic Success is intended to transition college-bound students from ESL to credit-level (i.e., non-developmental) college courses, CCC’s tuition level and academic ESL classes cover duplicate skill sets; however, when we first met, Al Share was unaware of this. At that time, Al Share intended to complete every ESL class offered by CCC. The levels, and their completion, seemed to represent English mastery for Al Share, and he was content with his slow but forward progress. Like many adult ESL students at CCC, Al knew the
physical location of testing center and the Assistant Director of ESL who acted as an institutional gatekeeper by scheduling ESL Compass tests. However, Al Share did not know that he was free to request the non-ESL Compass test at any time. In fact, Al Share did not know that his ESL Compass test was different from the Compass test to enter college—or that he needed to take any test at all. Al Share simply assumed he would be eligible for college upon completion of every CCC ESL class. It was not until I introduced my research to Al Share, stating that I was interested in learning about the factors influencing adult ESL students to take the Compass that Al Share began asking questions about the structure of CCC’s ESL program. This information changed Al Share’s perception of his English skills vis-à-vis college requirements; Al Share felt he had completed enough ESL.

CCC established multiple ESL tracks to meet students’ various needs. Once Al Share understood that he did not need to complete every class, he determined himself as ready to begin college and independently took the necessary steps to do so. When we met again after Al Share had placed into ENGL0960, he described his belief that he had “mastered English,” explaining, “I want to start college. Because now I feel that I have enough, enough information about English that I could do well” (April 17, 2016). Al Share’s case is similar to research on the facilitative role of social capital in immigrant student transitioning (Becker, 2010; Csepelyi, 2012). Like others in this study, Al Share’s language goals and the steps he took to achieve them demonstrate how Generation 1 learners make independent decisions regarding which courses to attempt and for purposes not always intended or anticipated by the CCC system.
Financial aid. In addition to his belief that he knew enough English grammar to leave ESL, Al Share was also motivated to transition for financial reasons. One former CCC English instructor noted a prevailing belief within the department that Generation 1 learners transitioned into developmental courses for financial reasons (David, personal communication, October 6, 2016); however, Al Share was the only learner in this study to describe a financial incentive for transitioning. Al Share had received scholarships in Africa and financial aid to attend an intensive English program in Nashville, so he believed that he would receive financial aid to defer the costs of his classes once he left ESL. Because of his limited social security income, he anticipated using the funds to pay for his schooling and supplement his living expenses. Instead, he was surprised to discover that he was ineligible for assistance because he had defaulted on payments for loans he received in Nashville. In the end, his beliefs about financial aid acted both to facilitate his transition as a Generation 1 learner, by encouraging him to exit ESL, and constrained his persistence during the first quarter, by not funding his studies as assumed.

Al Share’s Developmental Education: “Writing in English: That is My Hope”

Perhaps because of his extensive educational experiences abroad or because he was less interested in graduating than learning English, Al Share chose to only utilize ENGL0960 among the various CCC developmental education services provided. Even when it was time to register for his next quarter, Al Share preferred to wait until the end of the term and seek Anne’s input rather than schedule an appointment with an advisor. Al Share was the only learner in this study to choose not to seek support outside of ENGL0960.
Technology expectations and struggles. The observation notes which began Al Share’s case were taken as he prepared his final presentation. The presentation was to include examples of Al Share’s growth as a reader and writer and needed to be delivered using Powerpoint. Al Share believed the computer represented his greatest struggle in the class; Anne agreed, fearing that his emergent computer literacy skills would negatively affect his ability to complete future classes successfully: “He’s not going to be able to go into 985 [the next class] and spend half an hour looking for his file, so he’s going to have to become more independent” (June 7, 2016). Although I never sought confirmation, I suspected that Al Share’s challenges with technology also impeded his ability to share his writings in Arabic. When Al Share brought his computer to school for assistance finding a saved draft of his paper, he opened many Word documents that he explained contained his Arabic language political writings. The fact that Al Share could not distinguish between these documents and his ENGL0960 class paper based on their titles (many of which appeared to be his name followed by a number) suggested that he lacked digital literacies in Arabic which could have mediated his technology struggles. While I watched and assisted Al Share with his Powerpoint that day, it became clear how his lack of computer literacy prevented him from presenting his other literacies, particularly his metalinguistic knowledge, his skill as a writer, and his knowledge of social and political activism, and thus that his digital literacy struggles prevented him from achieving his political goals.

As an ESL student, Al Share had taken a basic computer literacy course for emergent multilinguals; the skills he developed there allowed him to type his political writing in Microsoft Word and online. However, the developmental English class
required that Al Share also quickly learn how to use Moodle, the online course platform accessed through CCC’s online portal system, in addition to Powerpoint, Outlook for e-mailing, and other applications. Although Anne spent some time explaining each of the programs to the class, she did not distinguish between students based upon what she knew of their previous learning experiences and thus assumed that all of the students had a basic familiarity with the technology.

The computer skills required in ENGL0960 reflect a growing emphasis on digital literacy, the ability to use information and communication technology and the internet (Martin, 2005). CCC offers basic computer courses, such as the one Al Share enrolled in as an ESL student. Digital literacy is not mentioned as a prerequisite or otherwise in the department-wide shared ENGL0960 syllabus, yet the inclusion of “a reliable internet connection” as a “Specific Course Requirement” reflects the college’s assumption that students do not require explicit instruction in computer use. However, as the observation notes indicated, Al Share’s previous computer experience was insufficient preparation for the course’s required level of digital literacy. Al Share could not open and save his work without assistance, but he was graded on his ability to demonstrate his reading and writing skills through digital media.

Without explicit instruction on how to use applications and the online portal, Al Share was unable to complete assignments independently. Not only was digital literacy necessary for Al Share’s current assignments, it was an important form of symbolic capital which Al Share could have applied to his future classes. The Hub and Moodle are required in every credit-level class offered by the college. Students use the Hub for class registration and accessing college information. Lack of knowledge about these resources
prevented Al Share’s full participation in his 960 community and the college at large. Al Share’s case thus illustrates the need for developmental education courses to support digital literacy skills as well as content knowledge development. Although Al Share struggled to use the computer, he frequently demonstrated his ability to perform other class-related activities such as take notes, read directions carefully, and complete practice assignments and drafts leading to larger projects. Introductory activities, such as step-by-step handouts or cloze type activities on using the technology, would capitalize on learners’ existing academic literacy to scaffold digital literacy development.

**Applying symbolic capital.** Because of his writing, Al Share had been persecuted in Egypt and Sudan, but he continued to write, and by the time he entered the U.S. as a refugee, he had written ten books and many more articles. Although he never described himself as a refugee to me or Anne, Al Share frequently discussed his political writing to present himself as an experienced author in his classes. Anne accepted Al Share’s expertise, and described his narrative writing as “pretty good,” attributing his skills to his previous experience as “a writer in his own country” (June 7, 2016). In this way, Al Share accessed the symbolic capital from his writing experience to gain status in his developmental English classroom. Unfortunately, Al Share’s narrative writing abilities were the one area of the few areas in which his efforts to present himself as an expert were accepted by his instructor; Anne largely assessed the other areas in which Al Share attempted to claim expertise as lacking. For example, Anne noted that Al Share could only produce non-narrative essays with substantial individual assistance, a fact which did not align with Al Share’s identity as a leader through his political writing. Anne expressed her concerns for Al Share’s future success in college because while she
thought he could pass the next developmental English class, “he might get frozen at that point” (June 7, 2016). Thus, in addition to his faltering progress towards his ultimate English goals, Al Share also struggled to succeed in ENGL0960 where his limited symbolic capital as a published author could not overcome his challenges to meet the class’ technological and reading requirements.

Conflicting perceptions of ability. Although Al Share readily admitted to his computer struggles, he presented himself as an English expert. Al Share clearly distinguished between the British English of his studies in Africa and the American English of his ESL classroom: “We use British English when we come here, I found it difficult in the pronunciation, anytime the grammar, when I write, I know British English, but they say is wrong. Yeah, I know is right, but they say is wrong!” (May 27, 2016). The distinction Al Share made between the two Englishes allowed him to claim the position of an English expert even in adult ESL, courses he viewed as necessary for learning American English. In spite of Al Share’s perceptions of his English mastery, his transition experience and persistence were challenged by reading assignments in *Methland: The Death and Life of an American Small Town.*

Anne, who had extensive teaching experience in developmental English and the integrated reading/writing model (Hern, 2012), had chosen *Methland* the term she taught Al Share because she thought it would engage students. However, Al Share’s experience with the text illustrated how students’ encounters with a text are mediated by their differential access to cultural context. Unlike Rebecca, whose reading book examined different forms of work, an experience to which she could relate, *Methland* discussed an illegal drug epidemic in small town America, a topic and locale with which Al Share had
little to no experience. Al Share found that understanding the vocabulary and text required content and cultural knowledge he lacked.

He even said in his presentation, like he was constantly trying to look up information but had a hard time finding information, because even something as simple as trying to look up meth, you know, he couldn’t find a definition because it was an abbreviation (Anne, June 7, 2016).

Al Share described his confusion over the author’s language, which he described as “The country language. I don’t know. It’s very hard, not day time English. And that you going to check it in the dictionary and something like that, you think, and you going to read the passage again and again until you get it” (May 27, 2016). In spite of his limited exposure to the vocabulary, Al Share had a sophisticated process for understanding vocabulary that included finding context clues, looking up words in a bilingual English-Arabic dictionary, and finally testing potential definitions by searching for English synonyms. Al Share explained, “[New words] take me a long time to check it. This book, then in Arabic, then in English, synonym and something like that. That costs time. You need time” (May 27, 2016). Al Share completed this process multiple times per page, estimating that reading took him almost ten hours per chapter, an amount which he was expected to read at least once a week. Because of the amount of time Al Share devoted to decoding, he was often unable to focus on actually comprehending the text.

Al Share’s struggles with reading are illustrative of an essential point in the Generation 1 transition experience. Harklau (2000) explains how differential access to American cultural knowledge and American schooling contexts separate Generation 1.5 students and the students typically enrolled in community college ESL classes (i.e., Generation 1 learners). Whereas adult ESL often explicitly accommodates for assumed gaps in immigrant students’ cultural knowledge, no such accommodations were available
to support Al Share, or other Generation 1 learners, with the readings. Because the institution does not acknowledge Generation 1 learners as a distinct group within ESL students or the larger population of developmental students, there exist at CCC no systematic awareness of Generation 1 learners’ unique needs or efforts to teach to them. Textbook selection, for example, does not consider the needs of Generation 1 learners. In contrast to Al Share’s Generation 1.5 classmate, whose cultural knowledge allowed him to enthusiastically access the content of the text, Anne noted of Al Share’s experience, “If it had been a different book, I think he would have been okay, because he would have understood it. But this was so much context” (Anne, June 7, 2016). Rather than engaging Al Share, the assigned text limited his participation because he was unable to contribute to class discussion or assignments about the text beyond demonstrating a surface-level understanding of the readings. Al Share identified himself as an expert of English, but, without required context knowledge and an extensive vocabulary, he was unable to demonstrate his mastery.

Stalled Plans

While Al Share was attending ESL, his friends in Michigan had offered to help Al Share publish his books in the U.S. The following spring, they sent him an airplane ticket to visit; ironically, he felt compelled to decline their offer, saying that he was currently too busy with school. Because of his English class’ heavy workload, Al Share had also, at least temporarily, stopped writing new political works. Al Share did not hear from his friends again during the time in which I collected data, but their lack of response did not bother him. “When I read [others’ translations of my work], but I don’t satisfy with the way they translate it. Because I know some English” (April 17, 2016). When I
last interviewed him, Al Share noted that he did not yet possess the American English he
felt he needed to translate his books, but he was content to wait for another publishing
offer better suited to his schedule or a time when he could independently complete his
translation work.

**Individual Case Summary**

Al Share’s case illustrates the potential consequences of a misalignment between
Generation 1 learners’ transition goals and the ENGL0960 integrated reading and writing
model’s intended results. In ENGL0960, Al Share gained practice in writing in a non-
narrative mode, further expanded his English vocabulary, developed his computer skills,
and learned about American culture within the context of methamphetamine use in a
small American town. All of these could be viewed as positive outcomes of Al Share’s
transition, yet this practice did not ensure the mastery required to persist in college while
pursuing his actual goals. Because these goals were not predicated upon Al Share’s
ability to earn another degree, he was uninterested in applying his agency to challenge
others when their assumptions about his student identity conflicted with his participation
efforts in the college.

In fact, enrollment and participation in ENGL0960 prevented Al Share from
achieving his personal aims in transitioning. Anne, who was aware of Al Share’s
political agenda and translation plans, expressed doubt about how well ENGL0960
fulfilled this purpose: “I don't know if he—it was everything he would want, but I don’t
know if he would have gotten that elsewhere” (June 7, 2016). Anne also referred to
prevailing beliefs within the department about the purpose of education, “I think a lot of
people think of college classes as training for a job” (ibid). Her comment mirrors larger
neoliberal trends in thinking about education at the federal and international level as discussed in Chapter 2. Anne had some freedom to modify her course to meet student interests, but she may have felt uncertainty about how to accomplish this in a way which would simultaneously meet CCC’s objectives for an integrated reading and writing class and could be carried out within the college’s fast-paced quarter system. While Anne felt that Al Share benefited from the class, it was clear that the class was not designed to meet his language or personal goals and that there was limited interest in changing the class for individual students. Like Rebecca, Al Share received no recognition for his multilingualism or support in transferring his knowledge of language learning to the integrated reading and writing classroom. Ultimately, Al Share’s case illustrates how Generation 1 learners, as adult learners transitioning to meet personalized goals, can falter within a highly structured ENGL0960 format and college policies influenced by larger national and political forces attending first and foremost to job-readiness rather than linguistic development or personal learning goals.

Unlike the previous two cases in which the learners made few attempts to challenge others’ positioning of them, in the following two cases, I present Labiba and Qadira, who attempted to challenge others’ external positioning of them in their transition but who were largely unsuccessful at doing so.

**Labiba: “War Not Take the Small Thing From My Head”**

**“They Don’t Let My Dream Come True”**

Labiba was in her mid-50s when we met in the B-Lab. Everything about her small person, from her brightly-colored clothing to her frequent and wide gestures, radiated energy. She had deep creases around her eyes and mouth, but it was unclear
whether they were from laughing or worrying, two states between which Labiba could rapidly fluctuate. At our first meeting, I asked Labiba about her previous educational experiences. After describing her (then) current B-Lab study sessions and her continued meetings with a Morton Literacy Council tutor, Labiba suddenly shifted topics,

> I love it. School, America for this one. Like, each time after I was six grade, almost 11 or 12 my country, war started. My family was very famous people; my great grandfather was a leader; king came visit him. Like they broke my school. They killed my family. They don’t let me my dream come true. After I went to like Iran, Pakistan, I came to here, like something my heart was bothering me…said, “Wow, you know what, war take everything, but war not take the small thing from my head.” I said, “I have to use this one for my school.” (August 8, 2014).

As the daughter of a powerful Afghani family with ties to the Shah, Labiba was forced to flee the country with her mother after Mujahedeen brutally murdered her cousin outside of her grandfather’s home. This was the first of many traumatic events which made it difficult for Labiba to realize her dream of an education. In transitioning, Labiba brought not only the lessons she had learned but also much unresolved trauma from her previous experiences in the nearly two decades she spent as a refugee. As Labiba entered college, she clung to her identity as a refugee through stories of overcoming past persecution, and others responded in admiration, but while Labiba’s past trauma became a form of symbolic capital, it limited her ability to fully participate as a legitimate member of her ENGL0960 class and community college.

**Labiba’s Previous Education: “[Mujahedeen] Broke My School, They Kill My Family”**

> Educational experiences abroad. Through her mother’s determination and resourcefulness, Labiba attended private schools in Iran and Pakistan in spite of the discrimination she faced as an Afghani girl interested in attending school in a foreign
country. Labiba completed college for clothing design and sewing despite repeated moves to rejoin family and escape civil unrest, and as an adult, Labiba also briefly studied English with her eldest son when he was a young child in Pakistan before she quit because of his embarrassment over attending class with his mother. However, she continued to feel that her educational opportunities had been cut short by her initial childhood flight from Afghanistan.

**American adult ESL.** By the time she immigrated to the U.S. in the late 1990s, Labiba was a widow and a mother of six. Over the next several years, Labiba made several stalled attempts to learn English through the Morton Literacy Council, but each time she quit because of her responsibilities caring for her children. It was not until her youngest child began high school that Labiba decided to enroll in ESL at CCC, having previously learned about the college when her eldest son graduated high school. With a tutor’s help, Labiba learned to write the alphabet, progressing to the beginning level class and eventually Tuition level 8. Perhaps based on her limited previous English learning experiences, which gave Labiba little by which to compare the CCC sequence, Labiba was the only learner in this study who did not critique the pace or curriculum of her ESL classes. During her last quarters in ESL, Labiba also took two computer technology classes and began the ESL medication aide class, which she did not finish “because a lot of my reading and writing for my level 8” (August 8, 2014). Labiba’s inability to manage both classes simultaneously foreshadowed her future difficulties in transitioning.

**Labiba’s Multiple Social Roles: Mother, Grandmother, Student, Refugee.**

Because of injuries sustained during a car accident, Labiba did not work outside of the home although she had a small in-home tailoring and beaded scarf-making
business, which she gave up in order to focus on studying. As a result, when Labiba transitioned from adult ESL to developmental classes, her only non-school responsibilities were attending physical therapy and caring for her grown children.

Labiba had six grown children and four grandchildren when she transitioned. Labiba described her children as her motivation for immigrating to the U.S., and several of her stories from her past involved her heroic efforts to protect them from bad people in Afghanistan, Pakistan and even the U.S. Labiba frequently discussed her continued care of her large family, including the constant drama of supplying her 20-something sons’ transportation and cellphones and preparing an elaborate celebration for her daughter’s 21st birthday. Based on her frequent stories, many CCC employees, myself included, assumed that Labiba lived with her children. It was not until after I had completed data collection that a B-Lab advisor mentioned in passing to me that Labiba had a strained relationship with her children. Labiba’s daughter had refused to share her address with Labiba; the advisor intimated that Labiba’s questionable mental health had caused her children to distance themselves from her. Regardless of the actual state of their relationship, Labiba’s perception of herself as a devoted and fiercely protective mother, like her investment in her identity as a refugee, influenced her transition experience as others in the college referenced Labiba’s commitment to her family as proof of her ability to commit to her education.

Labiba also appeared to spend a significant amount of her time socializing with anyone willing to talk. She joked that she ignored her children’s embarrassment over her eagerness to meet people, “Talk is free. I wanna make friends…I’m not shy with my accent, my English is not perfect” (August 8, 2014). In addition to simply enjoying
people, Labiba viewed herself as something of a mother figure to others in the community. In fact, her reputation for bringing immigrants to the B-Lab as potential students was what drew me to first interview her. Labiba described the friends she brought to the lab, other Generation 1 learners, “They come like me, with kids, work hard. And now they want to study to become some good person for future. Like good person, that means independent, they don’t have to work hard for cleaning, for fast food stuff” (ibid). Several of Labiba’s friends could be classified as potential Generation 1 learners, and Labiba enjoyed talking to them about the B-Lab.

With native English speakers, however, Labiba’s favorite topic of conversation appeared to be herself, and the obstacles she had overcome as a refugee featured prominently in her storytelling, like our first interview. Labiba proudly described her frequent interviews as an unofficial spokesperson for several of Morton’s non-profit organizations specializing in support for newcomers and at local events in which she was asked to share her experiences as a refugee escaping the Taliban. Thus, Labiba’s identity as a “refugee” became a social role which she invested in and enacted in ways unique from others sharing her immigration status. Labiba frequently told me about the various interviews and talks she gave around Morton based on her experiences as a refugee and English language learner. I witnessed her tell the same story about waiting outside the U.N. to multiple audiences. It was a story she had also shared with me during our first interview. In narrating the story, Labiba voiced several different characters, each of whom she gave distinct voices and body movements. Her use of multiple characters and telling of the tale with great vocal and physical animation, including acting out parts such as putting a tarp over her and her children’s heads to stay dry in the rain, suggested that
she had told the story several times and thus that the narrative had the importance to her
self-identity. In my memo after the interview, I questioned whether in telling the story
Labiba was expecting a certain response from me and whether I had provided her with it.
As I collected data for Labiba’s case, I found that she shared variations of this story and
her war experiences repeatedly as she transitioned into college.

Labiba’s Transition: “Despite Everything That She’s Been Through, She is Such a
Happy Person Wanting to Learn” (Laura, B-Lab Advisor)

Leaving ESL. Unlike the other learners in this study (with the exception of Al
Share), Labiba was not motivated to transition out of dissatisfaction with ESL. In fact,
Labiba looked forward to her long road of studying, “Is okay for take eight or ten or
seven more years to finish pharmacy school,” she told me at our first meeting (August 8,
2014). After completing level 8, Labiba took the Compass test apparently unaware of
the college’s ESL for Academic Success sequence. She was placed into pre-foundations
reading and writing, but rather than direct her to the ESL office, a testing center
representative walked Labiba to the Bridging Lab (B-Lab).

The Bridging Lab. The B-Lab was essential to Labiba’s transition; in addition to
helping her raise her Compass English scores, the B-Lab was a welcoming space on
campus where Labiba was encouraged to access symbolic capital through the
(re)presentation of her refugee identity and how to be a student outside of ESL. Labiba,
who described herself as “so lonely” in ESL (April 6, 2016), quickly formed close
relationships with the B-Lab advisors and math tutor, and she sometimes studied in the
lab from open until close, eventually logging more than 100 hours in the online study
program. Under the watchful but encouraging eyes of the B-Lab advisors, Labiba’s
dedicated work ethic was held up as a gold standard, particularly in light of her traumatic past, which she freely shared. Laura, a B-Lab advisor, described Labiba as “here everyday at the computer doing you know doing the work, yet despite everything that she’s been through, she is such a happy person wanting to learn” (September 3, 2014). George, the math tutor similarly described her as “a joy to be around because she’s always happy; she’s got a great attitude. And to know what her background is, coming from Afghanistan, she was twelve when the Soviets invaded. It’s remarkable that she could be so good-natured” (August 20, 2014). I was introduced to Labiba by the advisors as a model student to interview for my Kellogg practicum based on Labiba’s perseverance in overcoming great personal and linguistic odds and her habit of bringing other immigrant students to sign up with the lab. By explicitly contrasting Labiba’s experiences as a refugee and her positive attitude, B-Lab staff affirmed Labiba’s refugee identity, and in this way, Labiba’s trauma became symbolic capital as Labiba’s stories of her perseverance were held as proof of her ability to persist academically.

As discussed in Rebecca’s case, I worked with Labiba twice in the B-Lab. Labiba said that she had never before learned the reading strategies I taught them, but the majority of our time was spent on the vocabulary of the short reading, which I assessed to be similar to ESL level 6 or 7. We frequently stopped to discuss new words or our cultural experiences with food. At the time, I thought nothing of the informal style of our tutoring sessions and did not consider that I should discuss the difference between tutoring and class or the importance of the reading ahead. I knew that Labiba read with another English instructor also working in the B-Lab, but I did not know whether they discussed her upcoming class.
I was the only member of the B-Lab staff with training in teaching emergent multilinguals, but my colleagues in the lab displayed a greater level of patience, evidenced by their extended wait-time, frequent recasts and stated willingness to work with emergent language skills than any of the other developmental educators (including other faculty and tutors) that I observed at CCC. For example, George encouraged Labiba to approach the board at any time during their math tutoring sessions, “We go to the blackboard and figure it out what she’s asking right there” (August 20, 2014). George referred to the board as their “interface to the questions” (ibid), referring to the fact that through numbers and drawings, they could answer questions Labiba lacked the English vocabulary to ask. Labiba noted the positive response her direct approach solicited from George, “I just walk by the blackboard, say ‘[George], what is this?’ He love it” (August 8, 2012). What she and George did not realize was that while effective in their informal tutoring environment, this way of participating would not be viewed as similarly legitimate in other circumstances. In the B-Lab Labiba thus learned not only math and reading but how to have her questions answered; unfortunately, these informal study sessions did not teach Labiba culturally appropriate forms of participating in non-tutoring college environments.

Labiba’s Developmental Education: “She Really Doesn’t Know What It Means to Be in an American Classroom” (Anne)

ENGL0960. From the beginning, Labiba struggled to understand directions and expectations in her first college class, ENGL0960. Under the guidance of B-Lab advisors, Labiba had been enrolled with Rebecca in one of Anne’s sections. Although both women, and many of their classmates, were new to college, Anne noted Labiba’s
difficulties in particular: Labiba frequently walked to the board in the middle of lectures to ask unrelated questions in spite of Anne and her classmates’ repeated attempts to discourage the behavior. In our interview, Anne concluded, “I don’t think she really has a good sense of how to be in a class,” and she repeated her assessment a minute later, “She really doesn’t know what it means to be in an American classroom” (November 12, 2014). Anne’s added description of the classroom as an American classroom tellingly suggests how Labiba’s foreignness was emphasized in the class, perhaps in an attempt to explain what her American teacher and classmates perceived as deviant behavior.

Classroom norms were not the only American cultural capital to which Labiba lacked access. Having never been employed in the U.S., Labiba struggled with context in the ENGL0960 reading book, *The Mind at Work*, which also contained vocabulary above Labiba’s language ability. Additionally, Labiba’s ESL classes and B-Lab studying had not prepared her for the amount and types of reading and writing she was expected to complete, and her efforts to seek assistance were inappropriate. The only tactic which Labiba employed that appeared to receive a positive response in ENGL0960 was her presentation of her identity as a refugee; however, Labiba was unaware of how this identity hindered her full participation by directing attention away from how to be a college student.

Labiba’s initial excitement at the beginning of the term combined with her limited understanding of what was happening in class manifested as five or six daily interruptions of lecture and activities to ask unrelated and poorly timed questions. “She thinks if she has a question she can come up and ask, even if they’re having a class discussion” (Anne, November 12, 2014). Anne concluded, “I don’t think she sees other
people. I don’t think she really has a good sense of how to be in a class really” (ibid). In fact, Labiba’s actions appeared to be a direct result from her learning how to be a college student in the B-Lab. Anne was unaware that the B-Lab math tutor had encouraged Labiba to approach the board at any time she was confused during tutoring sessions, and Labiba’s interruptive habits distressed Anne and the rest of the class.

Anne noted Labiba’s great difficulties with understanding and completing assignments, and she felt that some of Labiba’s challenges resulted from her emerging English language skills, such as her limited English vocabulary and reading skills that I, too, had noticed in our B-Lab tutoring. However, Anne found Labiba’s unwillingness to work independently to be a more pressing problem.

She’ll be given an assignment, and she won’t read it, so she’ll ask, ‘So what do I do?’ ‘Well, did you read it?’ ‘No.’ ‘Well read it and then ask me what you’re confused about. She won’t read the assignment so she wants everything to be explained to her. I suppose that that is partly ESL, but I think it’s more than that. (November 12, 2014)

Labiba’s heavy reliance upon her instructor did not align with the college’s expectations that Labiba be a self-directed learner. As discussed in Chapter 2, self-direction in choosing what and how to study is considered to be a key characteristic of adult learners (Knowles, 1976), and facilitating self-direction is an essential goal of adult and developmental education. Anne recognized the disconnect between Labiba’s behavior and her academic goals, but she was hesitant to address the issue multiple times since she felt her corrective feedback had limited impact on Labiba’s in-class behavior. After talking to Labiba during the second week of the class, Anne had brought up Labiba’s inappropriate classroom behavior to Labiba’s intensive advisor, who met with her weekly. Anne believed that the advisor was discussing classroom norms with Labiba and
noted that she was seeing some improvement by the time of our interview in the sixth
week of classes. Anne personally, however, had not directly talked to Labiba about how
to be in an American college classroom since then. Anne explained, “She feels bad. She
wants to cry, and then I don’t know” (November 12, 2014). Not knowing was something
Anne shared with Labiba and the rest of the individuals with whom Labiba interacted.
No one knew how to encourage Labiba while discouraging behaviors interfering with her
and others’ learning.

Weeks after Anne’s initial conversation with Labiba about how to participate in
class, and after Labiba’s continued constant interruptions, her classmate Hank confronted
her. Although Labiba did not mention their conversation or the general tensions leading
up to the exchange, she later told several people, myself included, that Hank called her an
“Afghani bitch,” an event which Anne confirmed. Labiba also told me that Hank
approached her repeatedly afterwards, including once in the parking lot when he
threatened her life; however, there were no witnesses to corroborate her perception of this
event. Hank was a recently returned Afghanistan and Iraq war veteran struggling with
his own adjustment issues in the class. There were no witnesses to corroborate Labiba’s
perception of their exchange in the parking lot, but, regardless of Hank’s intent or actual
words, these intense events were understandably stress-inducing for Labiba. Anne
recognized the negative affect of trauma on her students, “You’ve got all of these people
together who are on edge anyway, and it’s pretty hard for them to be thinking about
writing” (November 12, 2014). Anne felt unprepared for addressing issues outside of the
writing, including, to a large extent Labiba’s behaviors precipitating the exchange.
Without support to understand the inappropriateness of her own in-class behavior, Labiba
felt threatened by Hank, and his outburst further entrenched her identity as a persecuted refugee, further unsettling her already fragile emotional state.

My first observation of this occurred two weeks after the incident between Hank and Labiba.

I began my visit by sharing information about an upcoming study aboard trip, and as I took my seat in the back of the room, Labiba followed me, asking me questions about the trip even though Anne had told the class to prepare for the first scheduled student presentation. Kyle, a thin young man in cowboy boots, worn jeans and a hunting jacket called out matter-of-factly to me, “She’s just going to follow you around until you answer her questions.” Labiba clearly heard him but made no response and continued to try to engage me as I took my seat. At the end of the first presentation, when Anne called for “Any questions,” Labiba walked to the front of the room to ask how to project her presentation although it was not yet her turn. Anne deflected her questions, promising to help during Labiba’s presentation.

After Anne directed Labiba’s login from the back of the room, Labiba began her presentation. Without providing the author or title, Labiba introduced her book “about WWII about the man named Hitler,” which described choosing the book because of her own life in Pakistan during the war. No longer referring to the information on her slides, she explained that her experience with war “is exactly the same [as that of the Jews],” “even you lose your friend, your family, your everything. The pain was exactly the same.” For half an hour Labiba compared her experiences to the story’s Jewish family who was sent to a concentration camp, briefly describing events in the book before returning to personal stories about fleeing from her deceased husband’s family and the Taliban and being a refugee. During the question and answer period, no one asked about the book, but showing genuine interest, Hank asked Labiba which refugee camp she had lived in. As Labiba returned to her seat, she asked Kyle how her presentation was. “It was good,” he said, his tone and expression earnest.

When Anne got up to help Rebecca set up her presentation, Labiba called out loudly, “Look, she go for her, and she don’t go for me. How heart broke.” No one responded. (Observation Notes, November 12, 2014)

Although presentations were supposed to introduce books students chose to read for practice with reading skills, Labiba instead used the presentation to share her refugee experiences. Her classmates responded positively to her stories, suggesting Labiba’s success in continuing to (re)presenting her chosen identity and the symbolic capital she acquired through it; however, Labiba’s comment before Rebecca’s presentation also
suggested Labiba’s continued belief that her classmates and instructor viewed her as an unwelcomed outsider.

Labiba’s seemingly contradictory relationships with her classmates are best understood in terms of how her re-presentation of her experiences of persecution resulted in what Goffman (1967) might have identified as her “alienative misinvolvement” (p. 119) in classroom interactions. Labiba’s unwelcome and unexpected interruption of her classmate’s presentation was one such example. In such instances, an interactant’s improper involvement with someone or something outside of the interaction results in a break in the interaction ritual and others often feel compelled respond to “restore the ceremonial order” (ibid, p. 114). Both Hank and Kyle were critical of Labiba’s in-class participation style and attempted to restore the classroom order, but they were also genuinely interested in her and others’ experiences as refugees. In fact, as discussed in Rebecca’s case, Hank commended Rebecca on her improved accent at the end of her presentation. Hank’s praise, like his earlier altercation with Labiba, illustrated how the identities of refugee and student, or language learner, became conflated for Hank and others in the class. This inability to disconnect the two identities makes persisting difficult for Generation 1 learners like Labiba who, as Anne described, lack awareness of how to “be in an American classroom.” As a result, attempts to offer Generation 1 learners feedback and restore ceremonial order after instances of alienative misinvolvement can falter when framed within discussions of the learner’s non-student identity projections.

The Writing Center. Labiba was a frequent user of the writing center, sometimes visiting multiple times per day. She once told me, “If no tutoring session, I
will not be here [in college]” (April 8, 2016). Like her English class and the B-Lab, the
writing center was also a space in which Labiba accessed her refugee identity as symbolic
capital while struggling to understand the expectations of what being a student meant
there.

Similar to the engaged and supportive responses she received from B-Lab staff and
her classmates regarding her refugee experience, a typical writing session included
affirming the strength and virtue of Labiba’s refugee identity.

It was always very easy [in a writing tutoring session] to get her to talk about her
life in Afghanistan, and all she had gone through there and all of the kinds of
tribulations that she had experienced usually fed nicely into what she was being
asked to do [in English class]…. And I spent a lot of time kind of validating her
experience and that she was brave to be writing these things, that it was good, and
therapeutic for her, and I don’t know if that was really true, but it—there was a lot
of encouragement, a lot of praise. (Jack, Writing Tutor, September 16, 2016)

In the writing center, retelling stories of overcoming adversity not only metaphorically
represented Labiba’s ability to overcome academic obstacles; the stories themselves
could be translated into academic capital (Bourdieu, 1991) as they became material for
her assignments. However, Labiba’s efforts to seek assistance in the writing center met
with challenges similar to those she faced in learning “to be in an American classroom.”

Like her developmental English class, Labiba’s enactment of her refugee identity
created a complex power dynamic in the writing center which limited her understanding
of the expectations for participating in writing center interactions. As Jack explained, it
was common for the tutors to encourage Labiba to write from her personal experiences
surviving war, but at the same time, he noted that in sharing her experiences and her
current struggles, Labiba could be perceived as “pretty manipulative. She uses pity a lot.
She complained about certain instructors to me a lot not being nice to her, not answering
her questions, or not all of her questions,” and perhaps not surprisingly, some tutors believed she had “burned a lot of bridges” with college employees in and out of the writing center who had attempted to set boundaries with Labiba (September 29, 2016). Another tutor noted the “painful process of trial and error” by which Labiba had worked with each writing tutor, searching for individuals “she felt would give her more help” (David, October 10, 2016). Once she found such tutors, Labiba sought out them out frequently—sometimes four or five times a day as much to validate her experiences as a refugee and in transitioning as to work on specific assignments.

Even when she worked on assignments, Labiba met with mixed results in her efforts to access support in ways satisfactory to herself and the tutors. David recalled their mutual frustration over reading: Labiba’s stemming from the feeling that she was not getting the help she needed with comprehending a text while he struggled to find ways to provide that reading help. Jack described Labiba’s frequent visits as resulting from being the type of student who was both “a miracle seeker who would come in basically having done nothing, not even reading the assignment sheet, and expect it all to happen” and “someone who has a lot of kind of abstract enthusiasm for the idea of school, and the idea of school work but has immense difficulty actually focusing on a concrete task” (September 29, 2016). These expectations did not align with the center’s traditional pedagogy (Harris, 1992; North, 1984) emphasizing learner-directed growth through writer (rather than text) development. While Labiba wanted step-by-step support in writing her papers and reading the book, the tutors worked from the assumption that they should guide her development of a writing process extending beyond the essay immediately in front of them (North, 1984). Their conflicting aims were a source of
tension between Labiba and some of the tutors who adhered to this philosophy more strongly than others.

At the same time, Jack recounted tutor discussions about Labiba’s struggle to retain and apply information from previous tutoring sessions. He shared one tutor’s description of Labiba as suffering “a Men in Black memory wipe, no retention, no anything” after each session (September 29, 2016). The tutors concluded that Labiba had PTSD, although at the time CCC lacked qualified mental health experts to make such a diagnosis, and that “when she is stressed, she can’t learn, and she is stressed all of the time.” Struggling with the acknowledgment that their training did not prepare them to meet Labiba’s needs, the tutors seemed to find some relief in being able to diagnose Labiba’s mental health and find it culpable in what they perceived as Labiba’s extremely slow development as a reader and writer of English. While being unofficially assigned the label of PTSD without her knowledge was itself harmful to Labiba’s ability to choose her own identity, the label also allowed others to avoid conversations with Labiba about the expectations for being a student in an American community college similar to Anne’s hesitancy to discuss Labiba’s in-class behavior for fear she would get “sad.” Instead, tutors continued to affirm Labiba’s strength in overcoming adversity while avoiding confrontations resulting from their inability or unwillingness to provide each of Labiba’s assignments with the type and amount of in-depth, step-by-step assistance she expected, which was admittedly much more than the tutors should have felt compelled to provide.

Ultimately, the center created a policy limiting the number of writing consultations per day to one 30-minute appointment. One tutor privately confided that he believed the limited visits policy was a direct result of the tutors’ experiences with Labibia and a
couple of other Generation 1 learners. These learners’ lack of clarity about the purpose of the writing center led college staffs’ perceptions of misuse and abuse of the resource and resulted in policies dictating student use of the writing center. While protecting writing tutors from uncomfortable conversations about how to use the writing center, such a policy did not address the underlying issue that students, particularly Generation 1 learners, new to the community college and the American education system, do not necessarily know how to participate in legitimate ways within specific college spaces.

Tired of “Bad Men”

After I observed her November 12th class, Labiba shared with me her feelings of persecution, which had grown to the point that she was convinced the school was full of “bad men” like those who had killed her family. She reported telling many people at the school that she was being harassed by Hank, but no one did anything. She felt the school was “racist” (November 12, 2014) because her friend was treated rudely by classmates when she wore a hijab. At the same time, Labiba felt persecuted by B-lab advisors whom she used to visit daily but who now asked too many questions. Repeatedly, she told me that she wanted to be left alone, a request I felt compelled to honor. Although we had completed three interviews together within as many months, Labiba asked why I wanted to talk to her; she had no recollection of my dissertation research. I told her I would not need another interview but asked if I could come back to class because I was also observing her classmate, Rebecca. She agreed.

Labiba’s transition experience as a Generation 1 learner was characterized by the complex interaction of her enactment of her refugee identity, her inability to successfully project the identity of a college student, and others’ responses to both identities. Labiba
heard mixed messages in others’ assessment of her progress and ability to persist. Negative feedback in class became attributable to others’ racism and lack of cultural awareness. Negative feedback in the writing center was overshadowed by a continued celebration of Labiba’s immigration journey. Consequently, the refugee identity Labiba claimed was initially supported by those around her as a way to celebrate her perseverance, which college faculty and staff felt would be transferable to an academic context. However, such support had the unintended consequence of sanctioning their avoidance of uncomfortable discussions about community college expectations for students and how Labiba was not meeting them. Failure to instigate conversations about American academic culture further alienated Labiba who contemplated dropping out of school to avoid further persecution at the hands of “bad men,” including many of her college classmates and others working in the college.

Labiba’s struggles in transitioning had adverse consequences for her emotional and psychological wellbeing that played out against a backdrop of institutional ignorance regarding issues of student mental health. A large body of research documents the growing and increasingly severe mental health needs of college students (Kitzrow, 2003) as well as the stressors many immigrants and refugees face (Pumariega, Rothe, & Pumariega, 2005). Some community colleges offer onsite mental health counseling services, and the need for such services has received increasing attention (Dykes Anderson, 2013). However, while Labiba was enrolled in ENGL0960, CCC did not offer any mental health support services.\(^8\) Instead, the Student Retention Specialist, a single

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\(^8\) After data collection was complete, the college began a partnership with two local Master’s in counseling programs in which Master’s students complete their practicum at
individual whose full-time job essentially entailed intensive advising for the college at large, could go so far as to provide a list of community resources for students struggling with mental health issues but not endorse those resources nor require a student to follow up with an outside provider unless the student was believed to be a danger to him or herself, which faculty and staff did not appear to believe Labiba was.

The Student Retention Specialist was available to all students; some community colleges offering counseling specifically for recently arrived immigrants focus on acculturation and language acquisition support rather than mental health (Brilliant, 2010; Do, 1996). These counselors (much like CCC’s intensive advisors) are unprepared for providing mental health support for transitioning learners coping with trauma. Furthermore, as Williams, et al. (2007) report, increased exposure to minority status (such as, for example, Labiba’s positioning as a refugee vis-à-vis Hank’s identity as a veteran) is associated with higher risks for psychiatric disorders among some immigrants. Their findings and the research cited by Pumariega, Rothe, and Pumariega (2005) suggest that Generation 1 learners may be at higher risk for mental health disorders than other first generation college students. A thorough examination of the mental health counseling services available to CCC students is beyond the scope of the current study; however, Labiba’s case illustrates how transitioning can trigger learners’ past trauma—particularly when learners feel the re-presentation of that trauma is symbolic capital, which they can apply to their participation as college students. Labiba’s failed attempts to exercise her agency to control her identity narrative exacerbated the conflict she

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CCC by counseling current CCC students referred by the Director of Student Services. The program’s preliminary results are discussed in the Implications for practice.
experienced in transitioning. As others continued to control the meaning of the identities Labiba presented in the college, Labiba was unable to apply the capital from those identities to her enactment of her desire student identity.

**Individual Case Summary**

Labiba’s case illustrates a startling absence of support for Generation 1 learners who often enter the community college without symbolic capital amassed during previous experiences in the American educational system. Although Labiba possessed great linguistic awareness from her experience learning six different languages, her instructors and tutors failed to help Labiba apply this experience to transitioning; instead, focus remained on celebrating Labiba’s persistence as a refugee and how these experiences could be applied to her academic endeavors. However, this focus on Labiba’s past experiences failed to prepare Labiba for the academic expectations of the college. As her occasional reading tutor and a member of the developmental English faculty, I hold myself complicit in this charge. With limited knowledge about the expected ways of being a college student, Generation 1 learners like Labiba may not understand the implications of forefronting their non-student identities or emphasizing their other social roles.

**Qadira, “Not My Own Words From My Own Mind”**

**“Just I Keep to Study, Study, Study”**

Qadira was in her late 20s and a stay-at-home wife and mother with plans to become a pharmacist. In addition to her hijab, which was a long, thin scarf attached with an undecorated straight pin above her left ear, Qadira also often wore an intense stare of concentration. I interviewed Qadira’s ENGL0960 instructor, Anne, just before she
graded Qadira’s final exam. Qadira’s perception of herself as a highly-gifted student was a recurring theme in Anne’s description of Qadira’s academic performance.

I think she came in [to college] with very high expectations, and she even wrote about being a top student, and I think she was accepted into a school of pharmacy [in Sudan], so she sees herself as a good student who knows what she’s doing, but my sense early on was that she didn’t really understand what she was reading. (Anne, March 9, 2016)

Qadira proudly described “jumping” (quickly advancing) between levels and classes in Sudan and the U.S. (January 29, 2016). As Anne noted, Qadira viewed herself as a highly capable student, and she systematically employed her available symbolic capital to advance academically and achieve her goal of becoming a pharmacist.

Anne’s description of Qadira, however, suggested the contradiction between Qadira’s high motivation and analytical approach to learning on the one hand but her limited understanding of English and American higher education on the other. Unlike many Generation 1.5 students who lack academic vocabulary (Kanno & Grosik, 2012), Qadira could discuss complex syntax and grammar problems as well as provide detailed instructions for reading, but she struggled to write a simple grammatical sentence, often could not understand the words she read, and did not understand the reasoning behind important college rules. Qadira’s metalinguistic awareness and her ability to apply academic language to explain her studies masked her deep struggles with basic English comprehension, and her transition was shaped by her desperate measures to live up to her own high expectations.

Qadira’s Previous Education: “I Decided to Leave Sudan Because I Wanted to Learn More”

**Sudan, Egypt.** Qadira was born in Nyala, Sudan in the late 1980s to a family
who highly valued education. Her father was a teacher who encouraged Qadira and her sister’s serious approach to school and the competition between them for top marks and his approval. Qadira was a young woman and recent high school graduate when she left Sudan. Unlike the majority of Sudanese fleeing prolonged civil war, Qadira described her decision to leave as a result of her desire for an advanced education. Qadira travelled to Salloum, Egypt’s largest refugee camp. In fact, Sudanese students have better educational opportunities as refugees in Egypt since camp schools are often funded and run by Western NGOs (Chrostowsky & Long, 2013). Qadira’s explanation of her move as an educational opportunity was similar to how Al Share described his time in Egypt nearly forty years previously. Qadira’s perception of Egypt as formative in her educational identity, rather than refugee experience, distinguishes her from some of the other Generation 1 learners in this dissertation who viewed their refugee experiences as formative in their education. While both Qadira and Al Share migrated to Egypt for education, Al Share’s activities there would later necessitate his flight and become foundational to his identity as a political activist whereas Qadira continued to view Egypt as an educational opportunity.

**American Adult Education.** Shortly after settling in Morton, Qadira and her husband enrolled in adult ESL. They attended classes in a local shelter near their home until Qadira’s husband earned enough money to purchase the family a car. With this transportation, Qadira was able to enroll in a level four class at CCC’s main campus, but she was dissatisfied with her slow progress towards earning a degree and decided to take the Compass test after level 5.
Qadira’s Multiple Social Roles: Student, Mother, Wife, Sister, Daughter

In addition to her studies, Qadira cared for her immediate family consisting of her husband, her four-year-old son, and her baby who was less than a year. The family lived modestly but comfortably off of her husband’s earnings at a meat processing plant in a neighboring town. Qadira planned to “get a master and PhD and get a better job and make a lot of money and business” (January 29, 2016), and her husband was similarly invested in her career plans. Breaking with traditional Sudanese gender roles, he watched their two young children while Qadira attended class. In order to balance her schooling and her family’s needs, Qadira studied after her husband left for the nightshift and their children slept. This routine provided three or four hours each evening, which Qadira devoted to her studies. Qadira reported that other than caring for her family, she had nothing else to do besides studying.

Qadira told me little about her extended family; however, she frequently wrote in ENGL0960 about a sister with whom she was close but competed for her father’s approval. The sister had become a doctor in Sudan, which seemed to contribute to Qadira’s motivation to become a pharmacist. Qadira did not mention other family or any obligations to support them, as many of the other learners in this study experienced.

Qadira’s Transition: “Why Spend Your Time There [in ESL]?”

Leaving ESL. Qadira was adamant that ESL would not prepare her for her professional goals. Believing that ESL only taught grammar, a skill that she already possessed and could further develop independently, “I just ask myself, why I spend my time just that [ESL] class, and already I know it” (January 29, 2016). Qadira acknowledged that her English was still progressing, but her biggest obstacle: “I can’t
change my tongue…to change pronunciation of British [English],” was not something she felt ESL addressed (ibid). Qadira’s references to ESL as too easy and irrelevant to meeting her goals echo findings from my Kellogg practicum (Suh, 2016) and the literature on ELL college students (Harklau, 2000) and students in adult ESL (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004; Tucker, 2006).

**Compass Test/B-Lab.** Qadira enrolled in the B-Lab after failing to place into college on her first Compass test attempt. At her request, Qadira initially worked on pronunciation through reading with Lucas, a full-time English instructor who also provided intensive advising in the lab. Intensive advising is a specific form of developmental education advising in which the student and advisor actively problem solve together to address students’ academic and affective struggles (Earl, 1988; Fowler & Boylan, 2000); Qadira and Lucas did not work together in this fashion. Instead, their time together “started very basic” and contained “very little discussion of what we were reading and what we thought about what we were reading” (Lucas, April 6, 2016), and they soon transitioned to studying for the Compass English test.

According to Lucas, Qadira was “acutely interested” in raising her Compass score (April 16, 2016). Lucas was surprised and impressed by Qadira’s ability to talk about syntax and grammar and how she could apply previously learned concepts in the “sophisticated copyediting” practice questions she brought him (ibid). Lucas thought they were attempting “much more advanced work” than was helpful, but Qadira believed that if she could master complex and nuanced problems, she would also be able to correctly answer easier ones. Lucas had mixed feelings about Qadira’s focus on the Compass, rather than basic language skills. He noted that she often could not understand
the meaning of the sentences she dissected in her quest to master English grammar. In spite of Lucas’ fears, Qadira’s studying paid off; she successfully retested into developmental English.

**Finances.** Affording her tuition was another factor in Qadira’s transition. Rather than transitioning in order to receive financial aid, as some instructors may suspect, Qadira took her aid with a great sense of responsibility to succeed, “[If] you are not serious study or something like and why they [financial aid] waste the money for you because you don’t need to study, just they think that” (March 9, 2016). At the end of her first quarter, Qadira’s belief that she was in danger of losing her financial aid, and therefore jeopardizing her career plans, sent her into a panic.

**Qadira’s Developmental Education: “It’s Not Very Different Than When I Studied Before”**

Qadira was unique among the participants in her extensive use of the college’s developmental education services. In addition to enrolling in a Student Success class, Qadira developed a year-long relationship beginning before her transition with Lucas, an English instructor who worked as an intensive advisor tutoring students in reading and writing and providing advising assistance to students from the B-Lab. Lucas and Qadira worked together multiple hours per week for several quarters, resulting in what Lucas considered “a pretty supportive relationship” (April 6, 2016). Lucas was willing to raise even sensitive issues “in the effort to support her” (ibid); despite this and other developing relationships, caring college faculty and staff struggled to reach Qadira.

**Student Success Class.** B-Lab advisors often encouraged students to register for Student Success. Qadira’s Student Success instructor, Nick, described the class as
structured support for students to “get a boost” in their study, testing, time, and planning skills (March 11, 2016). Nick was a new adjunct instructor who taught Interpersonal Relations in addition to student success. Nick had no previous experience teaching emergent multilinguals; he admired Qadira’s work ethic and stress management as evidenced by her ability to balance children, school and adapting to life in a new country. While he expressed concerns about her ability to complete the hard science courses for her intended pharmacology degree, he admired her strength as an immigrant student. Nick also felt that test taking was one of Qadira’s greatest strengths based on her strategic question-answering system. Nick believed that Qadira’s limited English skills were her “only weakness” academically.

Nick felt that while Qadira understood discussion topics, she lacked the necessary contextual knowledge to fully comprehend discussions. I witnessed several of her misunderstandings while observing class. Qadira quickly and frequently volunteered comments, but her contributions were often slightly off-topic or suggested that she did not understand when the conversation took a turn. Nick’s frequent redirection or requests for clarification did not faze her; in fact, she was the most participatory member of her class—and of the six learners in this dissertation. “She probably just doesn’t understand English enough [to follow the discussion],” Nick commented,

I talk fast, and American instructors talk fast, and I think that that’s part of the problem. Most of the classes that she’s probably taking that center around English—English as a Second Language, it’s probably structured in a way that she won’t get lost, whereas when she jumps into a full-on class, it’s not structured that way. (March 11, 2016)

Nick also questioned her adjustment to the American college system, “We just do things differently. Like the idea of APA or MLA is probably completely foreign” (ibid). Nick
surmised that Qadira would benefit from a composition class but concluded, “I don’t even know if she would be ready for it” (ibid). Nick believed Qadira’s language was insufficient for his introductory-level psychology class, which he thought was less academically rigorous than many other CCC classes.

Nick also saw evidence that Qadira’s limited English proficiency prevented her from understanding and completing work in his class. “Nine times out of ten” Qadira asked him to re-explain assignments (March 11, 2016); he was uncertain whether she was unable or unwilling to read directions but both possibilities troubled him. In describing an early response assignment to her learning styles inventory, Qadira submitted a lengthy document with a copied inventory that she had neither cited nor made any attempt to integrate into her writing even in terms of font size or type. Noting that the paper was “possibly pulled from a website” and nothing like the assignment directions, Nick described the paper as “another instance of where she possibly just didn’t understand context” (ibid). His assumption that Qadira’s submission was an unintentional misunderstanding of context, rather than intentional plagiarism made him uncertain in his response. Although the paper had been due in the third week of class, Nick held on to the assignment, not discussing it with Qadira for the entire term. While Nick indicated that the work was plagiarized, he did not use this term with me, nor did he suggest that he would report Qadira to the college. As an adjunct, Nick may have been unaware of CCC’s system for reporting and tracking academic dishonesty.

As a mainstream instructor, Nick believed that by the time Qadira, or any English language learning student, entered his classroom, she should be prepared for what he considered to be the fast-paced speech and class structure of non-ESL classes. Nick felt
that Qadira was unprepared, assessing Qadira’s language skills as less than what a college student needed, but he lacked the training to address these difficulties. Ultimately, identifying Qadira as an ESL student, and an academically struggling but hard-working one at that, Nick’s positioning of Qadira prevented him from meeting her academic needs. Rather than explain American citation conventions and their importance for a student beginning a long academic career, Nick assumed that Qadira’s paper resulted from not understanding the language of the assignment. As a result, he failed to have a necessary conversation with Qadira, which he was well suited to instigate as her Student Success instructor. Instead, Nick held on to the paper, later grading it with a group of assignments in such a manner that Qadira would not have been able to identify the specific assignment as problematic.

When Qadira enrolled in his class, Nick was an adjunct in his first year of teaching with a nearly completed Master’s degree in psychology. Qadira was the first English language learner he had taught, and his education and previous teaching experiences had not prepared him for working with emergent multilinguals. Nick’s limited preparation and experience are common among community college instructors (Reynolds, 2005; Toth & Sullivan, 2016), and his belief in the separation between language instruction and subject matter instruction is similarly representative of content-area teachers (Kasper, 1999). However, it is questionable whether he would have taken the same approach with a student whose first language was English. Qadira’s experience in his class illustrates the error instructors can make when they fail to provide explicit instruction about academic expectations for their students because they assume that
students’ participation choices result from gaps in linguistic rather than academic cultural knowledge.

**Intensive advising.** Unlike some Generation 1 learners with established social networks supporting their transition, Qadira felt she could not ask friends for help with school because they were too busy. Since her husband was still in ESL, Qadira made many decisions about her schooling independently although she had access to additional on-campus support through Lucas, with whom she continued working after transitioning. As an intensive advisor, Lucas also offered assistance with registration, degree planning and test-taking or other study skills, but Qadira sought only tutoring.

In the year that Lucas worked with Qadira, he, like Nick, praised her affective skills, specifically her persistence in working towards her career goal; however, Lucas witnessed her growing impatience with what she viewed as her slow progress. Lucas compared Qadira to another Generation 1 learner he tutored who similarly fixated on studying complex Compass practice problems as a way to master grammar, and English in general. Lucas knew that the advanced material and concepts Qadira studied had not helped her develop necessary skills for ENGL0960, “To this day, I think it’s hard for her to put together a grammatically solid sentence” (April 6, 2016). He similarly assessed her receptive skills: “It’s still challenging for her to carry on a fast-moving, fluent conversation on variety of topics that are switching,” and most troubling for him was her reading comprehension, which he assessed as “the weakest of them all” (April 6, 2016). Qadira could not understand enough to make inferences about the passages. Lucas described reading as “a necessary but not sufficient skill. You gotta have it. Now, you need other things, too, but you have to have it” (ibid), and he questioned Qadira’s ability
to complete homework requiring her to read multiple chapters of her book and then write a summary or response, as was frequently assigned in ENGL0960.

**ENGL0960.** Although she had hoped to bypass the developmental sequence through intensive studying in the B-Lab, Qadira was still excited by her enrollment in ENGL0960, which she felt marked her entry to college.

"I try to learn any something I don’t know.” Qadira proudly recalled the high marks she had earned as a student in Sudan, and she sought continued recognition of her superior academic abilities in ENGL0960. When the rewrite of her first paper came back with only a slightly higher C, Qadira was disappointed but remained hopeful for Essay 2, “She [Anne] said to me it will be better than the first one. So, ah, I’m so happy when she told me about that. Maybe, maybe I will get A+ or A” (February 6, 2016). Like the other Generation 1 learners in this study who viewed themselves as language experts, Qadira also saw herself as an expert student; she was committed to mastering the class’ reading, computer and writing processes—and earning grades indicative of that mastery.

Qadira was highly self-motivated; she knew she was responsible for the things that other students had learned in high school. “Like [Anne], she’s a doctor, right? And she will not give you the grammar or something to fix it” (February 6, 2016). This challenge motivated her, “I try to learn any something I don’t know. I didn’t learn about it in the past or I will, I will get that in the future or in the next level” (ibid). Qadira took on learning the computer with determination since ENGL0960 required her to check her grades, post journal assignments, and submit essays and check originality reports for percentage matches to other published materials. Although she could explain the operations and their importance, Qadira sometimes struggled with their execution.
Qadira employed a reading strategy that was indicative of her advanced understanding of the reading process and was much more complex than the limited reading instruction Anne provided in class. From “just prereading really quick for the introduction” and “add[ing] a lot of my own words” (February 19, 2016), Qadira’s process was similar to Francis Robinson’s (1946) classic SQ3R reading comprehension method, which includes Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review. Qadira completed the process by rereading her notes to see if they made sense before typing and editing them in a Word document. Having learned this detailed and highly time-consuming process through the B-Lab’s online program, Qadira excitedly applied it to each chapter in *Methland*. “So I figure out for that,” Qadira recalled proudly, “but I still have problem with that to make my own word, so that is that is kind of harder to me. It’s not easy” (February 19, 2016). Qadira noted somewhat sheepishly, “You have to prepare your mind to make your own word [laughter], right? Sometimes it doesn’t work [laughter]” (February 19, 2016). Although she had internalized and consistently employed this detailed process, Qadira struggled greatly with readings because she did not understand much of the vocabulary and context of what she read, making her process difficult.

Qadira also demonstrated a similar level of awareness of the importance of the writing process taught in ENGL0960. Students read and annotated then summarized book chapters in journal assignments and later developed them into essays: “All of them, they are connect together, so if you don’t do the first one, maybe the second one it will be wrong” (February 19, 2016). Even when Qadira questioned the usefulness of something, “Just I put that question in my mind, and I ask…if it’s not necessary, why she [Anne] request that from us. I think it is very necessary to her” (ibid). Qadira completed
assignments because she thought they were “very necessary” to Anne (ibid). Based on her dedicated process and the positive feedback she received on her journals, Qadira believed she was a strong writer, “When I wrote the journal, four or three journal, I get an A” (February 6, 2016). Anne, however, disagreed.

“She often thinks that she has everything down when she doesn’t” (Anne).

Although Anne was impressed by Qadira’s persistence, attention to the class notes, and ability to apply concepts to future learning, she noted that Qadira struggled in ENGL0960 more than many of her other students, including other Generation 1 learners. Anne attributed Qadira’s difficulties to two distinct causes: Qadira’s inflated sense of her English knowledge and academic abilities which hampered her further development, and Qadira’s lack of vocabulary comprehension and cultural context knowledge which made participation and assignments difficult.

Grade negotiations. Based on her previous education, Qadira viewed herself as highly competent in English and schooling in general. At times, Qadira’s investment in her student identity led her to be confrontational. Qadira frequently argued with Anne over grades. Anne described Qadira as “stubborn,” “determined,” and “just fairly certain that she is right,” explaining Qadira’s struggles as “mostly with language, and also with not understanding that she does struggle with language, so she often thinks that she has everything down when she doesn’t” (March 9, 2016). On several occasions, Anne had to be more direct than she was comfortable in order to convince Qadira that her work required revision. Anne’s concern that she would hurt Qadira’s feelings and Qadira’s habit of defending her writing before ultimately deferring suggested a cultural mismatch of which Anne was unaware. Anne recognized that despite Qadira’s protests, “She does
seem to listen. I think she really wants to do well. I think she just doesn’t really understand how to do that on her own. And even with all of the help, she doesn’t always understand” (March 9, 2016). This lack of understanding troubled Anne who questioned Qadira’s ability to persist in college.

*Emerging English skills.* Similar to her performance with Nick and Lucas, Qadira struggled in ENGL0960 because she could not fully comprehend what she read in *Methland* or heard in lectures and thus, she struggled to demonstrate in writing what she did comprehend. During one observation, Qadira showed me a journal entry, which was supposed to summarize a chapter by explaining a town problem resulting from the meth epidemic. Based on the author’s short description of staying in a hotel next to a groom who beat his bride while high on meth, Qadira wrote an extended paragraph about Sudanese wedding customs and a paragraph linking drugs and homosexuality. Qadira had failed to understand the main idea of the chapter, but she could explain how to write a summary, emphasizing, “The summarize is not include the suggestion or opinion or like that. Just that is the, that is the talk of the-the talking of the author” (February 6, 2016): in writing her journal, Qadira had not followed her own advice.

Qadira acknowledged the journal was not a summary, “If I wanted to make summarize, I can do that. I can’t add my opinion or suggestion” (ibid). Qadira refused to admit that she had not completed the assignment as directed; furthermore, she referenced the fact that Anne had given her full credit as proof of her superior work. Qadira seemed unaware that Anne graded journals based on whether they met the word requirement and displayed effort. In this conversation and others, Qadira’s ability to explain course concepts had the problematic outcome of presenting her as more knowledgeable about
class expectations and more proficient in English than she actually was. Although this was the opposite of Nick’s impression of Qadira, the outcome was the same in that it was difficult to accurately assess Qadira’s understanding.

“Use your own words.” On February 19th, I observed in Qadira’s class.

Qadira submitted her narrative essay to Turnitin, an online program, which checks student papers against other known writing. The originality report showed that her paper did not contain any passage matches. Qadira was reading when Anne approached about the journal Qadira had submitted. It contained large portions of uncited verbatim text, but Qadira denied copying from Methland. Using her book as a guide, Anne underlined the uncited quotes in Qadira’s four-page journal. Only the first sentence of each paragraph contained Qadira’s words. Anne explained that while summarizing, Qadira should not copy directly from the book, repeatedly distinguishing between “your own words” and “his [the author’s] words.” As she wrote an example summary and citation, Anne reassured Qadira that she did not think Qadira had intentionally done something wrong.

Until this point Qadira had remained silently attentive, “Yeah, but I did my own, I did it in summary and conclusion.” She repeatedly protested that she had included her own words as Anne continued underlining. “It’s really, really important to change the words, so that you’re not looking at the book itself, you’re looking at what you wrote, so you can tell a friend, not what the book says but your own words.” Because the assignment was a summary and response, Anne explained how to respond to the author rather than simply paraphrase him. Qadira told Anne she would revise the paper, saying, “I just wanted to check,” even though Anne had brought over Qadira’s submitted journal which had been due at the beginning of class.

In Anne’s ENGL0960, students were taught a writing process which began with a journal response to Methland that they revised and workshopped, eventually turning it into a polished essay. Thus, Anne may have viewed the copied journal as a problematic first draft of an essay while Qadira viewed journals as distinct from essays, the latter of which requiring her to “use your words.” When we talked after class, Qadira explained the purpose of submitting papers through Turnitin to “make sure if anyone just copy from a line or she doesn’t use your own words… just she [Anne] needs to make sure it’s not make plagiarism or something like that” (February 19, 2016). Qadira found this step
personally relevant because it allowed her to view the originality report’s percent match and any potential matches highlighted in the text of her paper. The consequence of “plagiarism,” Qadira explained, was that Anne would “take a little bit of points from that, or she will give you F” (ibid), but Qadira could not explain why plagiarism was inherently bad, and although I am a developmental educator who has also taught Student Success, I did not think to explain it to her. Before submitting her essay in class, Qadira had checked the originality report. It had no matches: exactly opposite of her journal.

The observation was striking for several reasons. First, Qadira clearly understood that copying another person’s words was unacceptable, at least in certain circumstances, if not all academic writing. Qadira’s exchange with Anne occurred in the midst of writing an entire essay in her own words, confirming its originality, and even referring to “plagiarism” as she explained what she was doing. Clearly, she understood how to avoid plagiarism, even if she did not understand why doing so was important. Neither woman made a connection between the issue of academic integrity in Qadira’s journal and the Turnitin originality report, which Qadira had just viewed. Instead, Anne identified the verbatim text, re-explained how to summarize/respond, and attended to Qadira’s potentially hurt feelings. What was missing from the exchange, like in Nick’s class, was an explanation of why copying another person’s writing was inappropriate according to American academic conventions; Qadira’s lack of transfer from the context of the essay to the journal required Anne’s explicit articulation of the purpose (not just the process) of that learning. While Anne assumed Qadira understood plagiarism as a serious offense and struggled with how to avoid doing it, Qadira lacked the necessary cultural context, understanding only that Anne was making her redo something which Qadira felt was
already well-written. Qadira’s first inclination was to defend her work and to redo it if necessary. For Qadira, plagiarism was problematic because “she [Anne] will give me F, or she will take a lot of points” (February 19, 2016). In spite of acknowledging these consequences, one month later while taking her final ENGL0960 exam, Qadira copied nearly an entire article verbatim and without citation.

**ENGL0960 Final Exam: “Everything Has Changed”**

The final exam was a department-wide written response to a reading of the instructor’s choosing. Because the assessment was high-stakes (20% of the course grade), Anne allowed students to annotate the reading in advance and consult their annotated articles during the exam. Anne had chosen an article debating whether states should allow family members to force addicts into rehabilitation. The directions were explicit: “Write a summary of 8-10 sentences, give three reasons for your point of view, end with a conclusion that makes connections, see rubric.”

Anne graded the finals just after I interviewed her and brought me Qadira’s right before Qadira and I had planned to meet Qadira. Qadira’s introduction began strong with the article’s title, author and what appeared to be a slightly off-topic summary of the article, but the rest of the paragraph suggested Qadira neither fully understood the assignment prompt nor the reading. She had written,

A doctor helps al lot of patient such as husband and wife with chronic pain to avoid or deal with the addiction to prescription drugs, and ‘drug enforcement administration (DEA).’ All struggling with the severe life threatening disease of addiction (chronic pain can be unbearable, addiction to painkillers, and DEA).

Qadira had copied the essay’s remaining seven paragraphs verbatim from an article posted on addiction.com. In fact, she had even copied the phrases “I am a medicine [medical] doctor” and “I think my serve [service] as an advisor for Biodelivery science.”
Like many of Qadira’s contributions throughout the quarter, the copied article was only tangentially related to the reading. Its technical descriptions of various medicines may have appealed to Qadira’s interest in pharmacology, but they did not address the prompt.

Anne was shocked and angered by Qadira’s blatant plagiarism and posted Qadira’s exam as an F in Moodle, the college’s online platform. Qadira immediately sent a message asking to retake the test, but Anne did not respond. With an F on the final, Qadira would fail the course. The essay’s small portion of original writing indicated that Qadira could not comprehend or respond to the reading and seemed to warrant this outcome. Furthermore, Qadira would not fail the course if her other assignments had earned grades suggesting mastery. Even though Anne was not convinced that Qadira was prepared for ENGL0985, she was uncomfortable failing Qadira and believed the department chair would support allowing Qadira retaking the final.

Although Qadira had planned to work with Lucas in the B-Lab and instructed me to meet her there, I found her instead across the library, eyes red and puffy from crying. She immediately told me about the exam, maintaining that she did not understand why she had received an F and showing me her annotated article. In the article, she had numbered each paragraph and starred several with numbered “P”s and “Ex”s identifying main points and examples. Qadira also underlined and listed English synonyms for several words. Clearly, she had devoted a considerable amount of time to the article. However, at the top of the page, she had copied a paragraph beginning with the phrase, “I am a family medicine doctor.” This paragraph and several other sentences inserted at the end of the assigned article’s paragraphs 3, 8 and 10 came from the addiction.com article and were unrelated to the surrounding text in the assigned article. I asked her about these
sentences; she replied, “Yeah, I just, ah just I prepare for whole article and take some notes everything there. And ah, ah, I made my own words and annotation my article” (March 9, 2016). Qadira would not admit to copying from another source. Instead, she maintained her claim that she had only annotated and read the text.

Although Qadira was highly distraught by her grade, she did not question Anne’s judgment: “She’s right. Because she’s doctor, and when she just looked that [points to her paper] if she sees that, just she know what’s that here, so that is yeah. That is right. She’s right” (March 9, 2016). Qadira seemed to have backed away from her previous occasional argumentative approach to grades. Qadira was hopeful that she could get a second chance to write the exam, but she no longer expected an A+, “Do you think if I get a C or C+ maybe I will pass the class? I’m not talking about A+ or A or B+ or B. Just pass.” I remarked that this was different from the Qadira I knew, “Yeah, because everything has changed,” she responded. Qadira also feared the loss of her financial aid, and the thought sent her into fresh tears. The F had shaken Qadira’s self-image of a good student and endangered her career plans.

Lucas found Qadira’s actions “shocking” since he believed Qadira understood citation conventions. The final “didn’t add up,” he said, “It looked like it exhibited an unawareness of any effort to give credit to somebody else for their work” (April 6, 2016). Lucas did not label the exam an intentional act of plagiarism, but he planned to make the exam “Topic A” for his next discussion with Qadira. Unfortunately, the opportunity never arose. Although Qadira promised to stop by the lab, Qadira never again visited Lucas.

Qadira and I met one last time over the break. On the advice of the department
chair, Anne had allowed Qadira to retake the final exam without any notes. Anne expected Qadira would be pacified by the opportunity to retake but ultimately still fail this second attempt. Instead, Qadira wrote a passable exam and earned a course grade of C, the minimum grade necessary to move on to the next course in the developmental English sequence. As Qadira caught me up on her final exam, she told me about Anne’s explanation that Qadira had committed plagiarism, which was unacceptable. Qadira admitted to taking “a little bit [from the other article] but most is my words from my mind” to “help” her paper (March 30, 2016). She was vague when I asked what that meant. Even after the quarter’s completion, Qadira did not seem to understand that the article she copied did not help her paper, and while she understood plagiarism as “not my own words from my mind,” she claimed to not understand why she should not do it. Qadira’s vagueness suggested that she understood then, if not previously, why plagiarism was wrong but that she had chosen to copy the article regardless.

Despite her final exam and her despondency at our previous meeting, Qadira presented herself as academically competent throughout our final interview. She was excited to begin her next English class, and she spoke somewhat disparagingly about her husband’s “ABC level” ESL classes in contrast. At one point, she even implied that Anne was unfairly biased against her since only Qadira had had to retake the final exam and for partial credit. Qadira told me that if her grade had not been lowered on the final, she would have received an A or A+ in the class. We parted that day with the intention of continuing my observations of her, but Qadira texted me the day before classes began to say that she would not have time to help me since she was beginning math and chemistry and needed to study.
Qadira’s B-Lab tutor and Student Success and ENGL0960 instructors had based their responses to her multiple plagiarized assignments upon their assessment of Qadira’s emerging English proficiency (i.e., lack of understanding of the language of the assignment or the process for completing it), and, as a result, they tailored their approach to explaining assignments rather than larger American academic cultural expectations. Their efforts to honor Qadira’s progress and encourage further development without explaining the underlying cultural beliefs motivating American academic integrity standards resulted in Qadira’s apparent understanding of plagiarism as bad but not necessarily why that was the case. I believe Qadira had knowingly chosen to plagiarize her final, understanding that doing so violated “the rules,” but she did not understand the reasoning behind those rules, and no one—myself included—attempted an explanation.

Ironically, explanation may have been just what Qadira’s analytical mind needed to be convinced not to copy others’ words. Without it, Qadira had been momentarily shaken by her ENGL0960 final but ultimately left the class confident—perhaps overly so—in her language skills and her abilities as a college student. Her instructors’ approach, intended to encourage Qadira and honor her English progress, ultimately failed to engage her extraordinary ability to think analytically about the processes involved in completing the work of a college student or the purposes of those processes. At the same time, Qadira’s interest in complex grammatical issues and her ability to discuss the processes she learned directed her instructors’ focus away from her continued struggles with more basic reading and writing skills. Qadira’s language struggles were so great that both her ENGL0960 instructor and tutor questioned her preparation for subsequent English classes. Although Qadira endeavored to present herself as competent, within the
conflict between this representation and other’s perceptions of Qadira as an ESL student, Qadira was unsuccessful at exercising her agency for the purpose of controlling her identity presentation. I later learned from colleagues that Qadira successfully completed ENGL0985 the following quarter but, receiving failing grades on her papers, she dropped out of English Composition.

Individual Case Summary

Qadira’s transition experience as a Generation 1 learner was shaped on the one hand by her ability to discuss academic processes and her perception of self as a highly motivated, competent student, and on the other hand by her persistent struggles with the English language. CCC staff and instructors struggled in their response to Qadira, uncertain as to how much English she actually understood and how much her challenges resulted from personal decisions. In their uncertainty, they repeatedly failed to explain American academic integrity standards while they held her partially accountable to them.

Qadira’s case illustrates the complexities of balancing English language and American academic expectations in instruction for Generation 1 learners. Research has similarly documented how Generation 1.5 students struggle to transition to university when they lack cultural capital and knowledge of the expectations of their academic institution (Fuentes, 2012). On the surface, Qadira’s contradictory performance was suggestive of her wealth of knowledge about academic English. This knowledge separated her from Generation 1.5 students whose academic English is often less developed than their conversational skills (Harklau, 2000). As a sophisticated thinker, Qadira was able to apply several reading and writing processes in her ENGL0960 studies. Her critical thinking skills and her knowledge of English grammar may be less common
among Generation 1.5 students who receive less explicit grammatical instruction in their K-12 classroom experiences. Generation 1 learners, like Qadira, who devote themselves to studying the complexities of English grammar can thus present as more highly knowledge about English and academic conventions than they actually are. At the same time, however, Generation 1.5 students may be more likely to enter higher education with a greater command of English and an awareness of intellectual property rights motivating strict academic integrity policies at the college level. Furthermore, based on their ability to access American cultural knowledge, Generation 1.5 students may be better prepared to participate in the class discussions which confused Qadira. As a Generation 1 learner who prided herself on both her previous educational experiences and her ability to apply the resulting knowledge to new learning, Qadira independently made choices about what and how to study, but she also lacked important “context” (Nick, March 11, 2016) for understanding not only what she read and heard but also the importance of what she was being asked to do.

The following two cases present the learners who were most successful at controlling their identity narrative in transitioning.

Olan, “I Have Many Friends; They Are in School, Too”

“My Friend, They Came Here [to CCC]”

My friend, you know, when I came here, they told me don’t go to the ESL levels, just you want the Youtube and study, and you go to the Compass test. I said no. Because many of my friend, they came here, and when they came here, they read something grammar and they refresh the memory and they come to the Compass test, and most of them they pass…. But their problem for writing, most of them for writing is really hard. And the reading. Reading is not really hard. I pass for reading, I don't need anymore reading. But for writing, oh! It kind of like really, really grammar. Either I didn’t study grammar like grammar back in Iraq in high school. We see the grammar, but not like this grammar. (January 29, 2016)
Olan was short with dark hair and eyes, a persistent smile, and an upbeat demeanor. Olan’s instructor told me that the most difficult essay for Olan to write in ENGL0960 had been the problem-solution essay because he could not think of any problems at the hotel where he worked. With his strong sense of self-determination and positive attitude, Olan rarely complained about problems I would later learn he faced as a Yezidi and an English language learner. Olan tirelessly worked to improve life for himself and his family, in the U.S. and abroad. As Olan described during our first interview, his friends in the Yezidi community were his most important source of information regarding American higher education. Like Olan, they had served as American armed forces interpreters in Iraq before relocating through the Special Immigrant Visa program and beginning college in Morton. Olan’s experiences in Iraq and the social capital provided within his friend group shaped his efforts to enact his various social roles and facilitated his successful transition at CCC.

**Olan’s Previous Education: “When They Teach Me, When Explain, I Know Everything”**

**Iraq.** Olan was eager to attend an American college. “I got late for the college, that way,” he referred to being a Yezidi in Iraq (January 29, 2016). Yezidis have received some international attention after the August 2014 massacre of Yezidis and other non-Muslims by members of the Islamic State (Chulov, 2014). However, the plight of the estimated 50,000 Yezidis trapped on Mount Sinjar was just one instance of the persecution Yezidis have faced in Iraq since as early as the 16th century (Asher-Schapiro, 2014). Because of Saddam Hussein’s ban on instruction in Kurdish, illiteracy in his first
language was one of the many forms of discrimination Olan faced as a poor Yezidi without political connections in Iraq.

Maybe you heard about Yezidi people, I’m one of them. So at that time [high school graduation], I tried to transfer to Kurdistan university or college, but I don’t have a like a power. So in that area, it depends on power, if you have a good power, somebody help you in government, you can go whatever you want, but if you’re poor, no. (January 29, 2016)

As a high school student, Olan remembered the ease with which he studied “British English” and Arabic in Iraq, and he spoke with hope about the opportunities presented in his life in the U.S. Olan believed that anyone had the opportunity to attend American colleges, which were full of “easy things, like, here, you know, I see, if anyone for the Compass test pass the college test, they help him and they encourage him” (January 29 2016). Olan felt CCC personnel’s welcoming and helpful demeanor “make me easy to come here. Actually, my dream come to the American college, and study, finish one of the health program” (ibid). Upon graduating from high school, Olan had wanted to become a radiology technician. A decade later at CCC, Olan felt he could reach this goal, and within Morton’s Yezidi community, he found other men sharing his optimistic view of the American educational system and motivation to achieve within it.

**Adult ESL.** As Olan described, his friends encouraged him to skip ESL and independently study for the Compass test. Olan initially heeded their advice, but after placing into the pre-foundations level for reading and writing, Olan registered for ESL to “refresh [his] grammar” in levels four and five (January 29, 2016). His decision was motivated in part by a CCC advisor and hearing about friends’ struggles with English class. Olan blamed their Iraqi education since he had never read more than a couple of paragraphs or written more than a short response in high school.
ESL level four was too easy for Olan, and he was frustrated by the writing instruction: “They don’t really focus on the essay. Whatever you’re writing, they say it’s right” (January 29, 2016). Olan attributed this lack of corrective feedback to the instructors’ teaching style, “They told us, ‘We don’t wanna cut more grades, we just wanna encourage the people.’” He appreciated the positivity but hoped for “more focus on the writing, so they told the students, ‘This wrong, this wrong, you don’t have to be—it’s not supposed to be here.’ I hope that they try that, student may feel more encouraged” (ibid). Olan’s criticism that the program was not academically rigorous enough echoes similar frustrations documented in this study and the literature (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004).

**Olan’s Multiple Social Roles: Former Army Interpreter, Student, Father, Husband, Son, Employee**

**Family role: “If come to school, I will confident to help my family’s future.”**

Olan appeared to balance the roles of family member, employee, and student with great success. During his first quarter, on the advice of friends, Olan took only one class, working alternate days. In this way, he was able to share childcare responsibilities with his wife who took ESL three nights a week. When his wife was not at class, Olan studied after work, taking frequent breaks to play with his two young sons. Olan believed that completing his education would allow him to better provide for his immediate family.

Olan felt substantially less successful at meeting the needs of his extended family who had been evacuated from the Sinjar region and lived in tents in a Kurdistan refugee camp. Less than a year after he immigrated to Morton, Olan had suffered a near mental breakdown when ISIS attacked Sinjar and he was helpless as he spoke with his brother on
the phone while their family fled to the mountains. Recognizing that he could not focus on studying, Olan delayed his academic plans. However, Olan’s status as the youngest of his mother’s nine children seemed to mitigate the family’s and Olan’s own expectations of providing for them. Olan’s eldest brother supported their mother in Kurdistan; Olan personally could not afford to send them money. Olan acknowledged that finishing his degree would help him earn a much larger salary, but he viewed sponsoring his family’s visa applications as his role in contributing to their wellbeing.

Rather than attempting to rush through his schooling to get a better job to financially support his mother and siblings, Olan explained, “The only thing I’m focusing on their immigration” (January 29, 2016). In fact, in our conversations, I often sensed that Olan was unlike other Generation 1 learners who viewed their academic efforts as central to supporting their family. It seemed instead that Olan viewed his responsibilities to his family in Kurdistan as disconnected from his academic efforts. They would come to the U.S., slowly, as their paperwork was approved, and since he was not supporting them financially, this process was removed from his studies. Other than the very real effect of trauma on his ability to concentrate in school, Olan felt his status as a refugee and the plight of his family were distinct from his role as a student.

This separation did not imply that Olan’s refugee experiences did not shape his student identity; clearly, Olan’s strong connections to his family and previous experiences impacted his ability to participate in college. However, unlike Labiba, Olan was highly successful at using his agency to shape the place of his refugee experiences in defining his identity narrative, and unlike Rebecca and Al Share, Olan did not view college participation as a means to achieving goals related to a refugee identity.
Although others attempted imposed their perception of how Olan’s refugee experiences impacted his participation in college, Olan applied his agency to resist that external positioning and reaffirm his student identity.

**Student role.** Olan had received good grades in Iraq and rarely studied even though the instruction occurred in Arabic and his first language was Kurdish. “Back in my country, whenever teacher explain to me, sometime I do homework but not really a lot, not really well. When they teach me, when explain, I know everything” (February 22, 2016). Olan drew upon his previous academic experiences and his self-identity as a good student in his ENGL0960 class. As he transitioned, there was no doubt in his mind about whether he belonged in college or would eventually graduate. “A student is very, very important point in my life. Like if I didn’t come to school, it make me feel like always lost” (February 22, 2016). Because Olan believed that completing his degree would ensure the comfort of his wife and sons, Olan’s studying became a way for him to fulfill his role as husband and father. As described above, Olan was able to balance his multiple responsibilities, with support from his wife and siblings. Importantly, while most of the Generation 1 learners in this study viewed themselves as strong students or English experts, Olan was most successful in his enactment of his role as a college student largely as a resulting from his ability to transform his previous experiences into symbolic capital he could apply to the legitimacy of this role in the ENGL0960 classroom.

**Olan’s Transition: “I Said This Way Will Be Easy, But When I Come Here, I See A Lot Different”**

Olan quickly grew dissatisfied with adult ESL. In addition to feeling that it
lacked challenge, he felt that he had already taken too long to go to college because of his circumstances in Iraq. Olan found ESL Tuition level 5 slightly more challenging, but his instructor was unreceptive to Olan’s requests for information about college, presumably because the class was not intended to provide college preparation. Eventually, the teacher told him to get a GED book from the library. After studying the book independently for a few weeks, Olan retook the Compass, passing out of developmental reading but placing into ENGL0960 because of his writing. Olan attributed his improved reading scores to the test book, but he was adamant that it could not teach him how to write an essay.

**Olan’s Developmental Education: “If I’m American, It Will Not Be Any Issue with That”**

**ENGL0960.** Olan was the only Generation 1 learner in this study whose Compass scores did not identify him as needing developmental reading instruction, but Olan felt challenged by the reading in ENGL0960 nonetheless. “Sometimes read two chapter in one class. That’s confusing. Maybe for American people, it’s not confusing because their first language, but for us, it’s a little bit hard” (February 22, 2016).

**Olan’s perceived reading challenges.** Olan believed his difficulties resulted from needing to translate English vocabulary and were the primary difference dividing ENGL0960 students. Olan noted that his classmate Qadira also struggled with English vocabulary, but he did not feel the only other non-“American” (i.e., Caucasian, English L1) student similarly struggled. The young man in question was a Vietnamese Generation 1.5 student, whom Olan believed understood the vocabulary.
Although Olan compared himself to Qadira in terms of his English vocabulary and reading comprehension abilities, Olan had extensive previous experience inferring meaning through context clues based on his time working with the U.S. Army. In fact, he similarly described his process for understanding new vocabulary in his book and interpreting, “When I get a couple of words in the question, so I know what he means” (January 29, 2016). In class, Olan also looked up unfamiliar words in an Arabic-English dictionary and practiced their pronunciation as well as applying their meaning. Olan described the process as challenging when he did not know the new word in Arabic since he could not look up words directly in Kurdish. If Anne was aware of the multiple layers of translation required for Olan to understand the text, she did not mention it to him or me. As with the other learners in this study, Olan’s multilingualism was largely unacknowledged by faculty and staff; no efforts were made to connect his previous language learning experiences to the context of the community college.

Other Generation 1 learners in this study described similar efforts to develop their English language skills through translation and vocabulary development. However, Olan’s superior inference skills, in addition to his larger English vocabulary, allowed him better understanding of his reading text than Qadira although neither had personal experience with illegal drug use in small-town America, the subject of their reading book, *Methland*. Olan noted that his study time ranged from 30 minutes to three hours per day on the two days a week he spent on homework; this was substantially less than the other learners, such as Al Share, who guessed that he spent over ten hours reading a single chapter. Part of this time differential may have resulted from Olan’s success at
determining the meaning of words through context, reducing the number of words he felt he needed to translate.

*Essay writing.* Even his friends’ warnings and his efforts to study writing did not prepare Olan for the expectations of college essay writing. “When I came, I’m surprised for the essay. They really focus for the essay” (February 22, 2016). Despite the difficulties he described facing, Olan was largely successful in his written work for ENGL0960, and Olan’s writing process indicated his natural writing ability: “I thinking lot like thirty [minutes or an] hour, and then I will write, I will read something, and [submit the paper,] then whatever is wrong, she [the instructor] will let me know” (January 29, 2016). Multiple drafts, visiting the writing center or proactively seeking Anne’s input were noticeably absent from Olan’s writing process, yet his four essays received B’s and C+’s.

*Participation.* Olan appeared comfortable participating during my observations, raising his hand or speaking with Anne individually for clarification. Olan distinguished between “general” and “individual” questions, language he had picked up from Anne’s discussion of classroom expectations. “If not general question I stay until the class finish and then ask her. If general question, ask her in the class” (February 22, 2016). During one observation, Olan was confused about which chapters to review in order to begin writing his essay.

Anne told the class, “Today’s focus is the first part of class I want you to focus on your response essay. I want you to do it step by step. The first thing is I want you to decide which chapter you want to do for the essay. Read it, annotate it, take notes. Take today and really study it. Monday I’ll ask you to share with us.”

Olan raised his hand, “Just chapter 13 and 14 for essay?” “Yes.” “Or chapter 8 through 10?” Olan further clarified.
In response to his question, Anne elaborated, “Get a feel for what each one is about...if you’re not clear about it, I can lead you in a certain direction, if you have a particular idea that you are interested in but don’t know what chapter it is in, I can help you with that.” She also promised to check in with each student to make sure they were “on the right track.” (Observation Notes, February 19, 2016).

Anne’s instructions on beginning the assignment had not identified the chapters. Olan’s question thus allowed her to clarify and expand for the class’ benefit. Olan’s participation was considered legitimate by the instructor because it did not disrupt his classmates, and it further contributed to class learning. Understanding of how and willingness to participate distinguished Olan from the other Generation 1 learners in this study whose participation was often viewed as delegitimate based on how and when they asked questions (i.e., Labiba) and used class time and resources (i.e., Rebecca); others were limited to peripheral participation because of language struggles (i.e., Al Share) and limited English comprehension (i.e., Qadira).

**Computer Literacy.** Olan’s familiarity with computers also supported his success in ENGL0960. Olan quickly learned how to navigate the college portal and online class platform, noting, “Whenever she [Anne] post it [an assignment], I can do it” (February 22, 2016). The previous class, I watched as he easily navigated through an online essay submission form, attaching his assignment, titling it, and then re-entering the submission site to make sure that his document attached correctly. Later that same class, when Olan finished reading a chapter of *Methland*, he searched for an online chapter summary. After reading it, Olan typed a description of a character whose “honor” for his parents prevented him from being with the woman he loved. Olan’s character summary was brief, but his use of “honor” was telling based on its inclusion in the online chapter summary, illustrating how his computer skills strengthened his ability to demonstrate his
understanding of the text (February 19, 2016). Olan’s use of a phrase from an online summary was also notable in the context of Qadira’s issues with source citation.

The computer was central to Olan’s study routine. When I observed him in his home, he began by pulling up the class Moodle page to access the schedule, course handouts, and copies of the notes Anne had posted from the class discussion. Even though Olan had been attending class for less than six weeks, he had already completed the two required online modules. In fact, as I had witnessed, Olan often looked up youtube videos or searched for material to supplement his understanding of the course. Olan explained, “[When typing,] if I made a wrong spell, they will come red line on it and then I click on it, choose the correct spell” (February 22, 2016). This was the only outside-of-class support he consulted before submitting papers. At times Olan’s computer use strained his physical health; after several hours of studying with his laptop, Olan reported needing to read from his books to relax his eyes. Olan’s awareness not only of online resources but also the amount of time he could use them productively suggested his comfort with the technological requirements of his class and his adaptability in using them. This knowledge distinguished him from other Generation 1 learners in this study.

Instructor’s Perception. Although Olan felt language disadvantaged him in comparison to his classmates, Anne described Olan as “hard-working,” “attentive,” “determined,” and “positive” and able to complete his work independently (March 9, 2016). In addition to his consistent effort and attendance, Anne noted, “He has a particular [career] goal in mind, and he’s he was a translator in Iraq, so his verbal communication is actually pretty good, so I think he’s well set up to do well” (March 9,
When I asked Anne about Olan’s greatest challenges as a student, she described occasional issues with “accent problems” in his writing, but his greatest challenge was not specific to language learning. “Just like anybody has a hard time, coming up with a topic [or] styles of writing,” Anne reflected. Additionally, Anne felt Olan could comprehend the readings, “I think he actually understands readings, from what I can tell, and he seems to understand generally what to do” (March 9, 2016). Understanding the readings and “what to do” established Olan as a legitimate classroom participant. Previous studies have illustrated how instructor perceptions of student ability can greatly affect student success and students’ identity creation (Harklau, 2000). Olan’s status as a student who “actually understands the readings” distinguished him from the other Generation 1 learners in this dissertation.

**The Writing Center.** Like many of the Generation 1 learners in this study, Olan’s developmental education included the visits to the Writing Center. However, Olan did not seek out the service until nearly the end of his first quarter.

Before his final portfolio was due, I asked Olan whether he got outside assistance on his essays. Olan explained that his work schedule prevented him from meeting with the intensive advisor or writing tutor, showing me the course Moodle page as proof. Below where Anne had listed the intensive advisor and his contact information, she had included the location of the writing center but no hours. Olan thus assumed that the writing center shared Lucas’ availability. When I explained that this was not the case, Olan decided to go to the writing center to revise papers for his portfolio.

I accompanied Olan on his first visit to the Writing Center.

Olan had an essay about his mother which had earned a C+ overall but failing marks in “Organization” and “Style/Usage/Mechanics.” Based on writing center
Olan had a clearly identifiable reason for addressing his essay’s grammatical and style issues. Unlike Organization, which was worth only 10% of the paper grade, Style/Usage/Mechanics was 20%, and Olan had received a 12/20 in this category. Olan’s lack of awareness of the writing center’s focus on higher order concerns and the tutor’s lack of awareness of the point distribution motivating Olan’s questions resulted in a frustrating end to Olan’s first tutoring session, but Olan returned to the writing center for assistance with two additional papers in the last week of the term, suggesting he found the service valuable.

“I Ask My Friend Whenever Have a Question”

As discussed above, the social capital Olan accessed as a former army interpreter in Morton was essential to his American educational experience. Because of past persecution, Yezidis began coming to Morton in the 1980s. The community continues to grow, most recently through immigrating interpreters and their families; at the same time, more established members have completed their education in the U.S., have good paying jobs and have established resources, such as non-profit organizations, to support the growing Yezidi diaspora in Morton and overseas. Immigrant networks have been found to support newcomers as they arrive in the host country and benefit those who stay in the home country (Waldinger, 1997). The network’s ability to provide support to immigrants
varies based on access to social capital based on social, political and economic conditions within the host country (Bankston, 2014). In the context of the Yezidi diaspora in Morton, Olan’s friends were members of an established network which could ease newcomers’ arrival with information about schooling, housing and employment as well as provide support for Yezidis overseas. Founding members of both Yezidis International and Yazda (two international organizations with strong ties to the Morton Yezidi community) work in various capacities for Morton Public Schools (Yazda, n.d., Yezidis International, n.d.). Their understanding of the local educational system and commitment to international aid work have helped unify the Morton Yezidi community and provide important capital for newly arrived Yezidis.

As Bankston (2014) notes, Olan could access social and cultural capital unavailable to the other Generation 1 learners in this study because of the Morton Yezidis’ relatively strong ties to the American federal government (many newly arrived Yezidis came under the Special Immigrant Visa program for former Army interpreters; evidence of their political capital could be seen in the quick U.S. response to the plight of Yezidis trapped on Mount Sinjar). Olan’s membership in this community supported not only his role as a Yezidi with family abroad but also his student identity. A similarly well-established South Sudanese community exists in Omaha, Nebraska, but even Rebecca, who considered herself to be closely connected to other South Sudanese, felt disconnected from the community because of the physical distance between herself and the community. In contrast, Olan’s family had several friends within walking distance whom he could call upon with questions about CCC or other aspects of his new life and
whom his wife and children frequently socialized, reinforcing their social roles as young Yezidi parents within the community.

Olan benefited from the collective experience and advice of Yezidi men who had already entered, and in some cases graduated from, the American higher educational system, specifically educational institutions located in Morton. These friends were Olan’s first and most trusted academic advisors; Olan explained, “I ask my friend whenever have a question if they already done with the class, and I ask them what’s going on, what’s going to be, and they told me you have to do this, this, and then they give me like advices” (February 22, 2016). Although he was aware that the college provided academic advising, Olan chose to consult friends. Friends also told Olan about the ACT program, which provided assistance to low income students with dependent children. Run through a local non-profit center, the grant program provided financial and advisement support, as well as a laptop, internet service, gas vouchers, and family care items. Olan registered for the program midway through his first quarter.

In contrast to his willingness to ask friends, Olan was hesitant to seek assistance from school personnel. His reluctance stemmed from his parents’ emphasis on self-dependence and his experiences as a Yezidi in Iraq. Years of being dismissed when he sought assistance or applied for jobs in Iraq had taught Olan to depend first on himself and second on other Yezidis. Olan’s ability to depend upon this ethnic enclave was another factor that distinguished him from other Generation 1 learners in this dissertation. Even those who felt strongly connected to an ethnic community in the U.S. or abroad did not apply these connections as a form of symbolic capital with Olan’s level of success.

**Identities Enacted and Downplayed**
Although every participant in this study could be considered a refugee, learners varied in how they reconciled this legal designation with their sense of identity and the social roles they enacted. Olan in particular intentionally separated his educational efforts from his refugee status. Anne viewed Olan’s army experience as an important factor in his oral and listening skills, and Olan described ENGL0960 reading assignments in a manner similar to his description of translating for the army, yet Olan denied a connection between his current language abilities and his experiences as a translator. I asked him about practicing English as an interpreter.

Olan: The practice was not really you know, they always, the security situation was very, very dangerous, even sometimes we cannot go from our rooms to speak to the soldiers more practice. At the mission, we just talking to each other, it was really hard. You know some place, we could not go, stay like five seconds in the same place, we have to move around for the sniper. Emily: So you didn’t really get much practice? Olan: Not really much practice. You know for six years, if I always do like the practice talking, will be more even me I couldn’t like ah, when I come to United States, I go right away to the Compass test, and then pass all the levels for English. (January 29, 2016)

Instead of believing his army service was an opportunity to practice English, Olan felt that his English language abilities resulted from his study of English as a middle and high school student in Iraq and his continued efforts in the U.S. Olan once told me that when asked about his age, he responded, “Two years. Because when I came here, I know what’s going on in the life” (January 19, 2016). Olan’s belief that his life started again upon his arrival to the U.S. was suggestive of the distinction he made between his current life, including his academic efforts, and his previous experiences. Although his experiences as a refugee undoubtedly influenced his educational experiences, Olan (unlike Labiba, Al Share, and Rebecca) was unwilling to invoke his status as a refugee or to access its accompanying symbolic capital for transitioning.
Olan planned to use his education to become a radiology technician. He intended to use these qualifications upon his return to Iraq with Exxon oil company after receiving American citizenship, “To be translator and advisor for healthy issue. We call in the safety, we told the workers, ‘Don’t do this, and do that,’ is called safety. They make a lot of money. And the break is good” (January 29, 2016). This plan was unrelated to Olan’s plans to sponsor his family whom he described as hard working and desirous of immigrating to the U.S. to take advantage of opportunities denied to them in Iraq. While he hoped to one day return to Iraq, that return would be as an American citizen there to make “money a lot of money” and then return to the U.S. to live with his extended family. His plans were opposite of Al Share and Rebecca, who planned their return out of a desire to reconnect with and use their new skills to improve their homeland. Olan firmly rejected the notion that his previous experiences as an interpreter assisted his learning at CCC. In fact, although Olan maintained close ties to his family in Kurdistan and established strong ties with other former army interpreters, Olan did not believe that his status as a refugee afforded him symbolic capital in his ENGL0960 classroom. “Refugee” was an identity Olan was uninterested in claiming, and his ability to meet academic expectations provided Olan with a central role in the classroom as a college student, a role with greater agency and participation rights.

**Individual Case Summary**

Olan’s advanced computer, writing and reading comprehension skills contributed to his presentation of self as a college student in class, and his network of Yezidi friends offered him support in accessing resources and navigating the college environment. Olan’s case thus illustrates a successful transition based on the ability to access academic
and capital which allowed him to be received as a legitimate member of ENGL0960.

This case demonstrates the reception of a Generation 1 learner who is able to exercise his agency to influence how others receive his multiple social roles so that he is viewed as a student first rather than a (struggling) language learner and therefore outsider.

Mariam, “We Don’t Know the Rule for College”

“We Just Lose Our Time and Do Nothing”

I first met Mariam while interviewing Generation 1 learners in the Bridging Lab. Mariam had just completed 10 weeks of study with the lab after choosing not to re-enroll in ESL. I was struck by the quiet intensity she conveyed through her large dark eyes and the earnest tone of her voice.

Emily: So have you started the [college] application process?
Mariam: No, not yet. Ah, my friend she has been here six year, and she’s still like me—just go here and there and ask someone, and some friend told her go to Computer Information Technology, some told her Dental Assisting. I don’t know if we made a mistake or the ESL doesn’t make a plan for us. So we when we just lose our time and do nothing.

Emily: How does that make you feel?
Mariam: Oh my God. I feel, I feel no future because I love to study. I want to complete my study, and I want job. So this make me sad. (August 20, 2014)

Born and educated in Bosra, Iraq, Mariam completed high school there before immigrating to the U.S. to marry her husband. Mariam was thus a love migrant (Catalano, 2016) although her family later relocated to Belgium as refugees. In Iraq, Mariam’s father was well-educated and served an army engineer, and her mother’s younger sister majored in education at a co-ed university. Through her family’s educational experiences, Mariam was familiar with higher education. Like the previous
case, Mariam’s case illustrates how a Generation 1 learner can apply previously acquired symbolic capital within the community college.

**Mariam’s Previous Education: “I Love to Study”**

**Iraq.** As the oldest of her parents’ three children, Mariam was often placed in charge of her siblings while her parents traveled outside of Iraq seeking cancer medication and treatment for Mariam’s mother. Tasked with cooking and caring for a sister and brother only a few years younger than herself, studying—particularly writing—became a refuge for Mariam, who would shut herself in her room for hours of silent study. Mariam recalled how she had relished the solitude, believing that absolute silence was necessary for concentration. Mariam’s writing skills were praised, and Mariam had hoped to go to college to become a teacher like her aunt. Ultimately, marriage and migration stalled her plans, and while she expressed no regrets, Mariam keenly felt the passage of time during the four years since her arrival in the U.S., believing that by the time she left ESL in her late 20’s, she should have already begun her career.

**ESL.** Mariam began in CCC’s basic ESL classes and progressed through Tuition level 8. Mariam enjoyed the supportive relationships she developed with her instructors, who encouraged her to contact them with additional writing in English or questions about the college. CCC Tuition-level courses are not intended to be college preparation since college-bound students are expected to take ESL for Academic Success. Unaware of the differences between the ESL tracks but wanting to graduate from college, Mariam was disappointed when her Tuition-level ESL classes did not provide her with the language or knowledge she felt was necessary for transitioning.
Mariam’s multiple social roles: Mother, wife, daughter, student. In many ways, Mariam’s social roles were similar to those of Qadira. Married and in their late 20s, their primary outside-of-school responsibilities involved childcare and housework. Although she spoke with her parents and siblings daily via skype, Mariam did not support them financially. Thus, unlike the other learners, Mariam’s non-student roles resulted largely from her reasons for immigrating. Because of his health, Mariam’s husband worked only part time in an Iraqi grocery store; he watched their young daughter, Asma, while Mariam was in class. Mariam described being a student as central to her identity, “I can’t live without studying; I just study for all my life” (February 13, 2015). In addition to her own motivation to begin a career, Mariam repeatedly referenced her desire to be an example to Asma as a primary reason to persist in her studies. Mariam’s daytime studying occurred in between caring for Asma and her housework. After her transition, Mariam would occasionally stay on campus for short periods of study or to visit the writing center, but she completed the majority of her homework while Asma napped or slept in the evening. After Asma’s birth, Mariam’s time went first to Asma’s care; in stark contrast to her preferred study methods as a high school student, Mariam learned to study around meeting Asma’s and her husband’s needs.

Mariam’s Transition: “I Finished My Study in My Country, and I Am Start Again From the Beginning”

Based on her frustration with the ESL sequence, the time she felt she was losing, and her belief that she could learn the same things in college, Mariam decided not to re-enroll in ESL. However, as a Generation 1 learner, Mariam lacked important access to information about the community college. In April of 2014, before taking the Compass,
Mariam met with the Early Childhood Education department chair who advised her to improve her English before applying to the program. Not wanting to return to ESL, Mariam researched other careers and was discouraged to learn that she did not meet many programs’ prerequisites. Furthermore, unlike in Iraq where she understood how to apply for college and who to ask for help, Mariam perceived herself to be disadvantaged in the U.S. by her lack of connections.

Instead of feeling that her understanding of Iraqi universities was transferable to an American context, knowing what she did not know increased Mariam’s anxiety. In Iraq, Mariam’s test scores would have determined her eligibility for different schools and thus available career options, and she was dismayed to learn that this was not the case in the U.S. As a result, even progressing through the ESL sequence, Mariam felt she was losing time because she was not learning how to get from adult ESL into a career. Recognizing her lack of knowledge about American higher education, she sought appointments with random CCC personnel, hoping that someone would explain what she needed to do. As a Generation 1 learner, Mariam’s frustration was distinct from Generation 1.5 students whose transition to higher education may be facilitated by high school counselors or others knowledgeable about the American educational system. Based on her experiences, Mariam requested that the ESL program offer classes teaching newcomer students the rules of American college, in particular by information about applying for admission and financial aid.

**The B-Lab.** Eventually through one of her many on-campus appointments, Mariam learned she needed to take the Compass test. When her scores placed Mariam into pre-Foundations (i.e., Adult Education) courses, a testing center representative took
her to the Bridging Lab (B-Lab). Adult Education enrolls students for a calendar year, but B-Lab advisors encouraged Mariam to register for the B-Lab’s 10 weeks of study since she was officially ineligible to study for the GED based on her Iraqi high school diploma. Mariam chose to register with the B-Lab and studied online, but she also registered for Adult Education, believing it was an additional potential resource while she waited for financial aid. Ultimately, this additional resource went unutilized; Mariam’s financial aid application was processed quickly, and she registered for classes the following quarter. Mariam’s ability to seek assistance and willingness to make independent decisions about her education were important to her transition experience, and they exemplified Generation 1 learners’ internal motivation and strong need to be self-directing like other adult learners (Knowles, 1970).

Mariam’s Developmental Education: “I Thought He Will Say to Me, ‘Why You Are Here?’”

ENGL0960. Although she had felt ignorant about the college system, once Mariam transitioned, she sought parallels to her previous education: “I studied in my country, and I am studying here. So it is the same way” (November 25, 2014). “I know how I study, how--how to like take some notes and to keep going with the classes, or yeah, it is not something strange to me to be classes,” Mariam explained midway through ENGL0960 (ibid). Whereas Mariam felt that her knowledge of Iraqi higher education did not prepare her for the American educational system, she felt her role as a student was identical. Unfortunately, Mariam struggled to demonstrate her ability to fulfill this role to her ENGL0960 instructor.
Mariam’s instructor, Rick, taught both developmental and composition levels, and his firsthand knowledge of the high academic expectations of composition may have influenced his teaching style and expectations for developmental students. Rick’s relaxed instructional style provided extensive freedom for students in terms of essay topics and time management but made the class especially challenging for Mariam as a student new to American education. Whereas most instructors provided a print calendar and scheduled multiple classes to write and revise papers, Mariam reported that she never received an ENGL0960 schedule and that written assignments were orally introduced at the beginning of a class and due at the end or the beginning of the next class. Rick noted Mariam’s struggles with class language and expectations, evidenced in part by Mariam’s frequent reliance upon her phone as a bilingual dictionary: “There's a lag between being able to read something over and being able to respond that maybe isn't there for a native speaker” (December 9, 2014). Rick viewed the frequency with which he needed to rephrase his questions for Mariam and her efforts to make herself understood as problematic results of “that language barrier” (ibid). Rick also believed Mariam was too reluctant to ask for assistance.

While Mariam’s reticence by itself was not cause for alarm, Rick feared the combination of her linguistic and academic challenges were more than could be addressed in ENGL0960. He questioned the effort she put into class, noting that reading something, even multiple times, without comprehending it, “doesn't mean that you've really done the assignment” (December 9, 2014). He concluded, “Having certain issues with the language and so forth would probably necessitate a great deal more time than your average student would need would need to be spending on the studies. I'm not sure
I'm seeing that happening” (ibid). Like most developmental English instructors, Rick had no formal training in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. His standard practices for Emergent multilinguals were pointing out recurring grammatical errors in their writing and providing them with a lengthy passage to copy verbatim. The copybook exercise, he explained, “helps to sort of rewire their understanding of how English works and where a word-ending would be necessary where it is and those kinds of things” (ibid). Tellingly, neither of these supports addressed Mariam’s challenges with reading, speaking or participation: areas as concerning to Rick as grammatical ability. A week before the quarter end, Mariam was failing the class. She had scored a 64% on the practice multiple choice grammar exam, and her written essay was a “very difficult read,” culminating in an exam which “isn’t passable” (Rick, December 9, 2014). Based on Mariam’s struggles, which Rick attributed to her inability to “parlay in standard American English,” he recommended that Mariam return to ESL, “maybe preparing a bit more for jumping both feet into a class that that I think expects a bit more ability in standard American English then perhaps she's ready to handle” (ibid).

Although Rick lacked evidence of her commitment to studying, Mariam had actually developed sophisticated study practices, like many of the Generation 1 learners in this study. Mariam had a sophisticated reading strategy, but while reading, she only occasionally wrote notes, usually the Arabic translation next to an unknown word in her book, aided by the same bilingual phone app she used in class. After reading, Mariam took notes, rereading and highlighting what she felt to be applicable to her writing. Mariam’s notes were multicolored, detailed outlines for writing that she consulted while writing papers. The majority of the time, however, her notes were tucked into her
backpack or opened to a clean page for additional notes; as such, they remained out of Rick’s sight. When time allowed, Mariam had a similarly structured approach for essays, which included outlining, visiting the writing center for “organization,” revising, revisiting the writing center for “grammar” and writing the paper’s conclusion (March 5, 2015). Because they were not documented in the final papers she submitted, Rick was unaware of Mariam’s reading and writing processes or the effort she put into studying English in general. Mariam regularly read the newspaper, watched American movies without subtitles, and searched for online grammar tutorials as a part of the extra work she believed was necessary for Emergent multilinguals.

In spite of her efforts, Mariam spent much of the quarter agonizing over ENGL0960. The newness of college, loose assignment guidelines, and her comparatively slow reading and writing pace left Mariam feeling unprepared and isolated. She explained, “He [Rick] feel like every student know what is he talk about, and what he ask us to do, it is vey clear for us. So this was hard” (February 13, 2015). Like her experience choosing a degree program, Mariam’s awareness of everything she did not know was a source of great stress, and it was intensified by her sense of responsibility for her learning. Mariam remembered initially being afraid to ask questions, “I thought he [Rick] will say to me, ‘Why you are here if you don't know smarthinking [an online tutoring program]?’…this is all confuse for student like me” (ibid). Rather than expect the instructor to accommodate her, Mariam blamed herself, “Maybe this is just for me, because I’m second language and I’m new in this country, so this is like big for me. Maybe for other student, no” (ibid). As the only Generation 1 learner in her class, Mariam believed she alone did not understand.
Intensive advising and the writing center. Recognizing her responsibility for her own learning, Mariam sought assistance from multiple sources. Mariam soon realized that many of her classmates also required clarification on assignments, and she began speaking up in class. Mariam’s classmate demonstrated logging in to Moodle, and Mariam was assigned to work with Lucas as her intensive advisor. Slightly modified from the B-Lab drop-in service that Qadira would utilize as a ENGL0960 student several quarters in the future, when Mariam was a student, intensive advising included weekly half-hour meetings for content support similar to tutoring and to answer traditional advising questions. Lucas encouraged Mariam to come as she felt necessary, but while Mariam understood Lucas’ open door policy, she did not understand the scope of Lucas’ support. In fact, Lucas embodied the office Mariam had wished for during transition. Rather than meeting with Lucas weekly, however, Mariam only contacted him for assistance with papers. Aware of Mariam and Lucas’ erratic meetings, Rick concluded Mariam was not proactive enough in seeking assistance.

Unbeknownst to Rick and Lucas, Mariam regularly visited the writing center. Her first visit had occurred within the first week when she was assigned a Smarthinking submission. Not knowing the purpose of Smarthinking, an online writing support program staffed by the writing tutors or how to complete the assignment, Mariam had gone to the writing center. Mariam somewhat jokingly referred to the visit as a turning point in what had until then been an overwhelming ENGL0960 experience, “Then the mercy come. The writing center come, I ask them, so they teach me this is. We do the Smarthinking and everything. [They said,] ‘You can come to us if you need help’” (February 13, 2015). And that is exactly what Mariam did, visiting for explicit and
timely feedback on each paper. Mariam’s description of the writing center as a place of 
academic and moral support echoed that of other Generation 1 learners in this study.

**ENGL0960 Portfolio Presentation: “Now I Can Make Thousand Hundred Words”**

ENGL0960 culminated in a portfolio and powerpoint presentation worth a 
combined 20% of the course grade. Unlike her other ENGL0960 assignments, students 
knew about the portfolio all quarter, and Mariam had ample time to prepare. On 
December 17th Mariam presented. Wearing jeans and a hoodie with “CCC City 
Community College” screen-printed across the chest in large letters, she appeared to be a 
successful college student celebrating the end of her first quarter, far removed from her 
initial transition fears. When she reached a slide titled “What I learned from this class,” 
Mariam described her shock over the class’ first assignment: a 700-word essay. “I asked 
my friend, ‘Is this normal?’ and she said yes. Now I can make thousand hundred words” 
(December 17, 2014). In the essay accompanying her powerpoint, Mariam typed a final 
paragraph reading,

> I made a challenge to myself when I decided to start taking college classes. I had to improve myself. I had to try it. The time is going so fast. I had to make my dreams become real. In the future I want to say, I did a lot in my life. I was not just sitting in my home and asking myself why I did not try. I did not want to feel regret. Right now I feel good with myself and this is the most important thing to me. As I said in the beginning of my essay, I was so confounded in this class. I thought I could not do it and I will drop it, but I had confidence in myself to do what I can, to do my best.... I made a challenge to myself to take Engl 0960; and i new the journey did not over Engl 0960 is just the start.

The essay displayed Mariam’s progressing understanding of commas. The word 
“confounded” in the fifth sentence suggested Mariam’s continued reliance upon her 
bilingual dictionary. Overall, however, the essay was well written; it attended to higher
order concerns like a topic sentence supported by well-organized details and a conclusion, as well as lower order concerns like consistent verb tense, spelling, and subject-verb agreement. In spite of Rick’s earlier fears that Marian was not ready for ENGL0960, her portfolio and presentation suggested otherwise.

When final grades were posted, Mariam was pleased to discover that she had earned a C+. Given the dramatic grade change that allowed her to persist in spite of her instructor’s fears about her language skills and my own desire to better understand the transition experience, I asked Mariam if I could continue data collection the following quarter. Mariam agreed.

**ENGL0980: “I Can Get the Idea from Her Mouth”**

Unlike the integrated reading and writing format of ENGL0960, ENGL0980 was solely a writing class. Based on instructor differences, Marian’s ENGL0980 was also more structured. In addition to providing written copies of the course calendar and specific, detailed assignments, the instructor, Cindy, gave at least two weeks for each essay. Under such conditions, Mariam found her essay writing system to be more effective; furthermore, unlike in ENGL0960, her studying was recognized by her instructor as legitimate symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991).

Knowledge of the expectations for college students was important to Marian’s ability to succeed in college; as Bourdieu (1991) might note, it was inscribed in her *habitus* through her exposure to Iraqi higher education. As a result of her close relationship with her aunt, who had taken a young Mariam with her to campus and whom Mariam had observed studying in their home, Mariam understood the importance listening to the teacher. Mariam explained, “When the teacher talk, I listen to her.
Maybe because I am second language, I need to focus more on the teacher, so I can get idea from her mouth, or get the word from her mouth” (March 5, 2015). Mariam felt that this strategy was particularly necessary for Emergent multilinguals, and it provided Mariam with access to a specialized English vocabulary. Mariam applied this linguistic capital in conversations with her instructor and writing tutors to increase the specificity of her questions and direct their feedback on her writing. In addition to “taking the words” and ideas from her instructor’s mouth, Mariam also paid close attention to the language and information on returned essays. Each graded essay contained a rubric with student-centered phrases like, “My writing has 1-2 major errors,” which Cindy would highlight to explain the paper’s grade in each category. Mariam carefully examined the rubrics’ criteria and explanations while writing subsequent assignments.

Midway through the term, I spent the morning with Mariam, observing how she applied the specialized terminology of her English class in a tutoring session,

She had previously worked with her tutor, Jack, and they fell into their practice in which Mariam read a paragraph and Jack identified spelling, punctuation and grammatical issues. Today, however, Mariam interrupted the routine, “This is analyze?” she asked referring to the assigned rhetorical mode. After consulting the essay guidelines on Mariam’s phone, Jack replied, “Right now it’s more narrative.” Jack asked if Mariam’s instructor had seen the paper, and Mariam showed him a handwritten copy of her essay on which Cindy had written that Mariam needed a thesis statement. Jack thus directed Mariam to the end of the first paragraph where she wrote a sentence about going to college (Mariam’s chosen process). The two returned to proof-reading, but when they finished, Mariam again asked Jack, “This is still analyze essay?”

When Jack suggested that Mariam review the assignment directions, Mariam replied, “Do you think this is more narrative?” using Jack’s phrase to describe the paper. “Maybe I will discuss with her,” Mariam said as she began gathering her papers and supplies.

“Yeah, your instructor is always the best resource,” Jack answered. (Observation Notes, February 19, 2015).
During this exchange, Mariam directed the focus of the session on several points, soliciting Jack’s feedback about whether her paper followed the assigned rhetorical mode. After receiving Jack’s feedback, Mariam decided to ask her instructor.

Although Mariam had math class, she met with Cindy because otherwise she would “dream my essay” and not be able to get it out of her head.

After asking Mariam what the writing tutor had said, Cindy directed Mariam to again rewrite the thesis statement, “Scratch that. Go ahead and write that.” Cindy wrote a new thesis statement on her own legal pad. Unlike the meeting with Jack, Mariam made few comments as Cindy wrote on her own legal pad, creating a new thesis statement and outline. Although Mariam was largely silent, she quickly answered Cindy’s questions, watching intently as Cindy filled in the outline, then asking for the paper when she left. As I prepared to leave also, Cindy told me that Mariam was “one of the smart ones.” Cindy was impressed by Mariam, “I’m so glad she came here after she didn’t get what she needed from the Writing Center. They told her to come see her instructor and she did. Not many would.” Cindy also described the work she had seen Mariam putting into the class, which Cindy had seen firsthand through Mariam’s recently graded grammar workbook and “Journal” (a series of in-class notes and exercises including essay drafts). Cindy concluded, “She does all that, and she just became a citizen. I told her that not many of us would be able to pass that test. She is one of my top students.” (Observation Notes, February 19, 2015).

Unlike her ENGL0960 instructor, Cindy witnessed the effort Mariam put into ENGL0980 and viewed it as important symbolic capital as well as evidence of her dedication as a student.

By the end of ENGL0980, Mariam had further developed her writing skills and processes, and she had continued to seek assistance from her instructor and the writing tutors. However, similar to her experience in ENGL0960, when she was required to write and submit her work in-class, Mariam struggled to produce college-level work within the required time frame. Mariam’s in-class final essay was five paragraphs, which she hand-wrote in less than an hour from a prompt she had not previously seen. Mariam chose to write about writing. The first paragraph read,
My Favorite thing is writing. I Love writing for several reasons. When I write, I can put all the thing in side my mind I can Put it on the Paper. Writing Could take the sad feeling that inside me. When I write I can be good Person and some times bad person. for those reason I can say writing is my Favorite thing, I can injoy with writing. (March 17, 2014)

Mariam’s essay illustrated her continued strengths in organization and idea development as well as her struggles with spelling and grammar. The essay included examples of how writing was a “relief” for Mariam who used it to avoid missing her family, to “pretend to be a rich person aiding the pour” or to “live an advinceter.” Mariam concluded the essay describing how writing had allowed her to “live in a new country and start a new life” (March 17, 2014). The essay contained many of the errors which had indicated to Rick that Mariam should return to ESL. On the essay rubric, although Cindy highlighted “Significant number of errors detract from an understanding of the essay,” the descriptor accompanying a failing mark for Style/Usage and Mechanics, she also highlighted “Critical thinking is demonstrated” justifying an A in Development/Content. Underneath the rubric, Cindy wrote words of encouragement, “Well organized but hard to read. Keep working hard, Mariam, it will pay off. And, keep writing!”

Ways of Studying as Legitimate Forms of Participation

Several factors contributed to the vast difference between Rick’s end of ENGL0960 assessment of Mariam as a struggling ESL student whose work “isn’t passable” and Cindy’s recognition of Mariam as “one of my top students.” In addition to be assessed on different curricular foci (i.e., integrated reading and writing in ENGL0960 and solely writing in ENGL0980), Mariam had developed as a writer and student though her time in the two classes. However, the most important factors in how Mariam was perceived by her instructors resulted from differences in their perceptions of Mariam’s
identity as an English language learner and, correspondingly, her enactment of the college student role. Rick viewed Mariam’s “language barrier,” the “lag” of translation, and Mariam’s accent as problematic for ENGL0960’s “complicated assignments that sort of assume that you're able to parlay in standard American English” (December 9, 2014). Although he passed her, Rick suggested that Mariam was not thusly able. In contrast, Cindy viewed Mariam’s language learning experiences as proof of her academic abilities, for example, referencing Mariam’s successful completion of the difficult U.S. citizenship exam. Furthermore, the instructors’ differing beliefs about Mariam’s language abilities and studying influenced their assessments of the legitimacy of Mariam’s participation.

Because many of the ENGL0960 assignments were due at the end of the class in which they were assigned, Mariam had limited opportunities to utilize her preferred writing process. Mariam was unable to display her studiousness in forms recognizable to Rick since much of her work was rushed or incomplete. As a result, Rick was unaware of Mariam’s systematic writing and reading approaches, and consequently, he was concerned that Mariam did not understand the additional time she needed to put into assignments, time his assignments did not allow. Contrasting, in ENGL0980, Mariam further developed her writing process, which Cindy viewed as evidence of Mariam’s dedication to writing and being a good student. Unlike the previous quarter during which Mariam’s status as an English language learner was used to justify Mariam’s exclusion from the class’ community and her return to ESL, in ENGL0980, Mariam’s study habits became symbolic capital in her enactment of her student role. Although Cindy’s written feedback suggested Mariam’s as yet peripheral role within the community of learners, Cindy’s encouragement to “Keep working hard” and “Keep writing!” indicated that in
time Mariam would move to a more centralized position. Indeed, Mariam’s case illustrates how Generation 1 learners acquiring academic language and knowledge about available campus resources can exercise their agency to become increasingly successful at projecting their college student identities and having their needs met.

**Individual Case Summary**

Although Mariam was highly conscious of the information necessary for navigating the community college system; as a Generation 1 learner new to American education, she struggled to access it and as a result felt trapped in her inability to transition. Mariam’s case also illustrates the importance of Generation 1 learners’ ability to apply symbolic capital to project their college student identity once they have transitioned. Lacking this ability, Generation 1 learners risk being viewed by their instructors as unprepared for college based on their linguistic and academic knowledge.

Finally, Mariam’s experience in ENGL0960 illustrates how social and academic language can become conflated in the classroom so that Generation 1 learners are viewed first and foremost as English language learners. Such views problematically suggest that learners’ language issues are not addressable in developmental education or the developmental English classroom. An opportunity for real learning was lost in the disconnect between Mariam’s belief that her challenges in ENGL0960 stemmed from her unfamiliarity with the CCC system and her instructor’s assessment that she should return to ESL to learn “standard English.” Although Mariam successfully progressed to ENGL0980, her case raises issues about students’ social and academic language needs in developmental English as well as the developmental English instructor role in teaching language and guiding students’ access to on-campus resources.
Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the individual cases of six Generation 1 learners who transitioned from adult ESL into developmental education at one community college. Despite their differences, these cases emphasize the learners’ shared frustration over ESL, high internal motivation and need for control over their learning as motivating their transition. In transitioning, learners understood what it meant to be a college student, including their enactment of that role and how college differed from adult ESL.

The cases also illustrate how the transition experience is shaped by learners’ application of their symbolic capital to control their identity narratives within conflicts arising between others’ external legitimization of the learners’ participation and learners’ own perceptions of how their specific identities influence their transition. Learners who could not demonstrate their ability to enact the role of college student in ways recognizable to their instructors and others at the college were deemed unprepared for ENGL0960 based on their language skills, yet academic and cultural expectations appeared to be as, or more, important in legitimizing participation even though instructors rarely were explicit about these expectations.

Finally, the cases demonstrate the importance of learners’ additional identities, which they took on and were assigned by others within the institution. In particular, the cases in the second section examined the difficulties that can arise when instructors or others within the institution emphasize identities (such as that of English language learner or refugee) other than the student identity the learners attempt to claim. The third section suggests how some learners are able to forefront their student identities in order to be recognized as legitimate members of the college community.
CHAPTER 5: CROSS CASE ANALYSIS

This dissertation study explored the central phenomenon of transitioning through the research questions: How do Generation 1 learners describe their experience transitioning from adult ESL into developmental English, including developmental support through testing, advising, and tutoring? What factors affect their decisions regarding persistence? The unit of analysis was the individual learner and her experiences.

This chapter presents cross case analysis of the transition experiences of the six learners presented in the previous chapter. The chapter contains four sections beginning with a summary of transition experiences shared across the cases. This cross-case analysis is necessary for addressing the study’s level 3 questions (Yin, 2009) to highlight similarities across the cases regarding transition from adult ESL to developmental education and to distinguish Generation 1 learners as a larger group from Generation 1.5 students based on key traits shared between the study’s six participants and the literature. The second section analyzes learner identity as sites of contestation (McKay & Wong, 1996) resulting from the misalignment of learners’ perceptions of ways to be a student and college expectations. The third section discusses the theme of persistence. The chapter concludes with the study’s limitations.

Generation 1 Learners in Transition

The Participants

The previous chapter presents cases of six Generation 1 learners transitioning into developmental English at City Community College. Table 6 provides a summary of the
learners’ educational experiences abroad and in the U.S. before their entry into
ENGL0960, CCC’s first developmental English class.

Table 6: The Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Approximate Age at Transition</th>
<th>Highest Foreign Educational Degree</th>
<th>Highest Completed ESL Level</th>
<th>Approximate Time Between Entering ESL and ENGL0960</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Al Share</td>
<td>Early 70s</td>
<td>Incomplete Master’s (Egypt)</td>
<td>Tuition level 10</td>
<td>Over a decade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labiba</td>
<td>Mid-50s</td>
<td>Tailoring College) (Pakistan or Iran)</td>
<td>Tuition level 8&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Over a decade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariam</td>
<td>Late 20s</td>
<td>High School (Iraq)</td>
<td>Tuition level 8</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olan</td>
<td>Early 30s</td>
<td>High School (Iraq)</td>
<td>Tuition level 5</td>
<td>3 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qadira</td>
<td>Late 20s</td>
<td>High School (Egyptian Refugee Camp)</td>
<td>Tuition level 5</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>Late 30s</td>
<td>Teacher Training (Ethiopian Refugee Camp)</td>
<td>Tuition level 8&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>1</sup> Highest level ESL class offered at the time of completion.

The CCC Context

Interwoven within learners’ transition experiences are the structural conditions of
the community college system and within it the place of developmental education. For example, the learners were able to choose between CCC’s two-track ESL system of
“Tuition-level” ESL and “ESL for Academic Success” classes. “ESL for Academic Success” was similar to an Intensive English Program in its preparation of students for
composition-level college classes; however, none of the participants chose to enroll in
this track. At the same time, they were highly motivated to transition for career
preparation, something which they felt was largely absent in ESL.

The neoliberal policies discussed in Chapter 2 directing adult education and other
CCC programs aligned with learners’ emphasis on employability. Beneath scrolling
pictures of CCC students training for technical and medical careers, the college’s Programs of Study webpage proudly proclaimed, “Get in, get out and get your hands on a great career!” The learners in this study were highly aware of the college’s emphasis on career readiness; all six learners mentioned job training or preparing for a career as the most important or one of the most important reasons for transitioning; half of the learners planned to earn a technical degree from CCC. Even Al Share who sought to develop his English skills for translating his political writing could be viewed as transitioning for job training. Learners thus viewed transition as an important step in preparing for employment or more skilled employment.

In spite of CCC’s and the learners’ largely career-related motivations, a tension existed between the learners’ focus on career-readiness and what some developmental English instructors viewed as the departmental focus on critical thinking. The ENGL0960 Student Learning Outcomes and General Education Learning Outcomes emphasis on reading techniques and comprehension, written communication and critical thinking marked a clear shift from the overt emphasis on job-training permeating the rest of the college and learners’ own stated purposes for attending college. Contrasting developmental English classes with other programs in the college, Anne explained, “We’re not training him [Al Share] to go somewhere. This isn’t a training exercise. Where I think of a lot of people think of college classes as training for a job” (June 7, 2016). Similarly, David, a former adjunct instructor and writing tutor, spoke passionately about developmental English being about more than teaching students how to write a work e-mail. While they critiqued the notion of education as purely job training, Anne and David’s comments illustrate how developmental educators can impose an equally
powerful value-system on learners in assuming that the ultimate purpose of education is to develop critical reading and writing skills without also acknowledging the unique and complex reasons, including job-readiness, motivating learners’ transition into college. This chapter explores how learners navigated the multiple ideologies framing their educational experience and exercised their agency within the community college system to achieve their goals.

**Leaving Adult ESL**

To understand the Generation 1 learner transition experience, I examined how Generation 1 learners entered developmental education. From an institutional standpoint, enrollment in ENGL0960 (as opposed to Tuition level 10 ESL, for example) indicated a student’s status as degree-seeking and financial aid eligible. For learners, transition had the added importance of being able to self-identity as a college student, the significance of which is discussed in the following section. Learners’ decisions regarding when to leave ESL were informed by their awareness of the CCC system and their perception of ESL’s utility in fulfilling their social roles, including imagined future identities; regardless of their decision about when to leave ESL, the learners could not begin college classes until they achieved minimum cut scores on the Compass placement test.

**Knowing and Navigating the CCC System.** CCC offered a complicated set of options including developmental education and two ESL tracks for Generation 1 learners preparing for transfer-level courses (i.e., general education classes applicable to a bachelor’s degree). Olan was the only learner who understood that he could begin college without attending adult ESL. However, because he initially placed into pre-Foundations (i.e., Adult Education/Adult ESL), he decided to enroll in ESL before
retesting. Olan tested into ESL Tuition level 4, the highest placement among study participants. (The CCC ESL sequences is described in Chapters 2 and 3.) Table 2 from Chapter 2 is reproduced below.

Table 2: Class Levels Based on ESL Compass Scores (Modified from SCC, 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ESL Compass Scores</th>
<th>Tuition Level</th>
<th>Academic Success Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading 65-72, Grammar 63-73, Listening 60-66</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Academic Success Level I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading 73-79, Grammar 74-83, Listening 67-73</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Academic Success Level I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading 80-86, Grammar 84-88, Listening 74-81</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Academic Success Level I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading 87-91, Grammar 89-93, Listening 82-86</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Academic Success Level I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading 92-99, Grammar 94-99, Listening 87-91</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Academic Success Level I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compass Reading 0-50, Compass Grammar 0-15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Academic Success Level III</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 2 illustrates, learners could choose between Tuition level 5 and “ESL for Academic Success” Level I. The tuition level sequence promoted English language development in the four domains of reading, writing, listening and speaking; “ESL for Academic Success” combined this skill instruction with preparation for college courses based on the assumption that students completing “ESL for Academic Success” would successfully place into composition (and thereby bypass developmental English). This assumption did not appear to be widely known; descriptions were not provided for “Tuition-level ESL” or “ESL for Academic Success” in the quarterly schedule books distributed to students. Although the Assistant Director of ESL explained that the Academic Success classes’ reputation as being more difficult than the Tuition level courses makes them less popular, I did not find this to be a deterrent for learners. Instead, not understanding the difference between the tracks, learners simply continued on the

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9 Students are typically placed according to their lowest scoring test; however, there is some flexibility determined on an individual basis by a meeting with the ESL director (Kash-Brown, August 17, 2015).

10 A student who tests out of the ESL Compass is directed to take the Compass Reading and Grammar tests, but according to the SCC Testing Director, the ESL Compass does not correlate to the non-ESL Compass (M. Bayliss, personal communication, May 14, 2014).
sequence in which they were initially placed (“ESL for Academic Success” begins at Tuition level 5 proficiency) even though they intended to transition.

Al Share completed Tuition level 10 and planned to also enroll in ESL for Academic Success until I shared with him that students could take the Compass test and begin college at any time. Both Labiba and Rebecca completed ESL Tuition level 8 before CCC extended the non-Academic ESL track to ten levels or established the college-preparatory (i.e., academically rigorous, integrated skills) track. Although they did not complete the “ESL for Academic Success” sequence, Al Share, Rebecca and Labiba successfully passed classes with equivalent language requirements. Their inability to test into college-level coursework is therefore slightly alarming but suggests the importance of learners’ familiarity with expected academic tasks, such as reading a non-fiction passage and responding to questions about meaning, in preparing to transition. Such a task might have been more common in the “ESL for Academic Success” sequence. Because she did not have proof of her high school completion in Ethiopia, Rebecca also completed her GED through CCC before attempting the Compass. Ultimately, only Olan tested into ESL with scores high enough to place him in “ESL for Academic Success,” and while all could have registered for this track in subsequent terms, none chose to do so: Al Share, Rebecca and Labiba completed the “Tuition-level ESL” sequence while Olan, Qadira and Mariam transitioned before completing ESL.

**Initial Appreciation.** Each of the learners felt ESL supported at least one aspect of their preparation for transition although their appreciation of various program aspects varied. Several of the learners felt ESL provided important social capital for students who were new to the country and American education system. They discussed visits
from the ESL office and their instructors as important resources for information about college, transitioning, and their lives in the U.S., such as completing paperwork or filing taxes. “Full participation in the community” is a stated goal of ESL levels B-D in the CCC course catalogue and is a commonly stated purpose of adult ESL programs (Casner Lotto, 2008; Crandall & Sheppard, 2004). Rebecca was able to reach her initial educational goals through her participation in the ESL program; in addition to progressing to a level where she could communicate with others in speech and writing, Rebecca had received certification for her Medication Aide position through a CCC-offered ESL course. As her imagined identity for the future evolved, Rebecca’s goals outpaced the ESL program. Al Share was the only participant who felt that his attendance in adult ESL helped him enact his imagined future identity; Al Share appreciated ESL’s grammar focus which he believed would help him translate his books into English.

Mounting Dissatisfaction. Despite acknowledging benefits of enrollment in ESL, learners expressed their dissatisfaction that ESL, citing that it was overly lengthy, not academically rigorous, and highly focused on grammar. Their complaints are consistent with the literature (Tucker, 2006), particularly regarding the ESL sequence length. Learners frequently expressed the belief that they could independently study the grammar which they believed to be the programmatic focus—and do so in less time. Mariam, Olan, Rebecca and Qadira displayed a strong impatience with the speed at which material was covered in the ESL class. Their preoccupation with time was an important way in which some of the learners distinguished themselves from other ESL (i.e., Generation 1.5) students. For example, while she did not blame herself for her lengthy journey to college, Rebecca compared herself to Generation 1.5 Sudanese
refugees (such as her eldest daughter) who had completed American high school. Olan also was frustrated by the time it had taken him to get to college, but he blamed this on being a powerless Yezidi in Iraq. Labiba similarly saw her transition as a celebration of overcoming “bad men” who had prevented her younger self from receiving an education. For Olan and others, beginning college (and thus leaving ESL), was long overdue.

Al Share and Qadira’s dissatisfaction with ESL appeared to be related not only to their desire to enact an imagined future identity but also the responsibilities of their immediate social roles. Both learners explicitly referenced the importance of financial aid in transitioning; however, it was not the only or most important factor. Unlike what David described as the perception of some faculty that learners transitioned to receive financial aid, this research suggested that even learners who were aware of financial aid and faced monetary constraints to their continued participation in adult ESL did not make transition decisions based on financial considerations.

While the ESL tracks and developmental English sequence might be multiple paths for college preparation from an institutional standpoint, learners clearly perceived ENGL0960 to be important for achieving their goals in ways which they felt adult ESL was not. Learners’ transition decisions appeared to be a function of their knowledge about the CCC system and their beliefs about whether their continued participation in ESL facilitated their enactment of their multiple identities, current and imagined.

**Placement Testing: The Compass and the B-Lab**
After their Compass tests\textsuperscript{11}, a testing center representative brought Labiba, Rebecca, Mariam, and Qadira to the Bridging Lab (B-Lab), their first point of contact with developmental education at CCC. Helping students improve their test scores was the primary focus of the lab, and learners’ experience studying grammar in preparation for retesting may have influenced their belief in the importance of grammar for college English classes. At the same time, learners acquired information about the ways to be a college student through their study experiences in the lab. At times, their participation decisions, which had become a part of their habitus through participation in the B-Lab, conflicted with college expectations about in-class participation. Although they also did not test into developmental courses on their first Compass attempt, Olan and Al Share studied independently before successfully retesting.

\textbf{Generation 1 Learners Versus Generation 1.5 Students}

This dissertation research supported my original understanding of Generation 1 learners as adult immigrants (arrived in the U.S. at the age of 22 or older) and adult learners (Knowles, 1970), whose first experiences with American education in adult ESL and other life experiences differentiate their transition experience from those of Generation 1.5 students as represented in the literature. The Generation 1 learners in this study were highly motivated and drew from their previous experiences as they transitioned, such as Al Share’s decision to transition to translate his books and his frequent references to those writing experiences which informed his participation in ENGL0960. Learners added the identity of “student” to their multiple existing social

\textsuperscript{11} Since ACT discontinued the test at the end of 2016 (Fain, 2015), CCC has switched to the Accuplacer, demonstrating the college’s continued reliance upon a single placement measure.
roles, such as Rebecca who was a single mother and full-time worker in addition to being a student. These findings are supported by Knowles’ (1970) theory of andragogy which distinguishes adult learners based on their multiple social roles, previous experiences and distinct learning needs. Like other ESL students in the literature, Olan, Mariam, and Qadira’s determination to leave ESL also aligns with previous research on this student population (Almon, 2010; Becker, 2010). Similar to Becker’s (2010) research on adult ESL students, all of the learners’ transition experiences were greatly influenced by individual learners’ access to and ability to access several forms of symbolic capital. However, as explored in detail below, the learners’ transition experience was largely related to their ability to have their student identity legitimatized by others within the imagined community. As a result, Olan and Mariam experienced success while Labiba nearly dropped out of college and Qadira nearly failed ENGL0960.

Several aspects summarized above and explored in detail in Chapter 4 differentiated the study participants from descriptions of Generation 1.5 students. The most important distinction, however, between Generation 1 learners and Generation 1.5 students appeared to be their differential access to academic and cultural capital, and the resulting effects on their abilities to enact their desired identities. The learners in this study drew from a range of previous educational experiences and knowledge about higher education abroad, like Al Share’s Master’s degree or Mariam’s familiarity with Iraqi universities. Such experiences provided learners with academic capital, such as metacognitive skills and language learning experiences, which they attempted to access in their enactment of their student identities and which motivated their ways of being a student. Research documents how Generation 1.5 students can lack such academic
capital but have access to cultural capital resulting from their sometimes extended experience in American K-12 (Fuentes, 2012; Harklau & Losey, 1999; Kanno & Grosik, 2012; McClanahan, 2012; Olsen, 1997).

Additionally, the study’s learners viewed education as a way to fulfill the responsibilities associated with their multiple roles (Knowles, 1970), which included being parents, workers, political leaders, financial providers, and immigrants/refugees. Learners like Rebecca and Olan were drawn to the community college’s promise of job-training, and they made choices about transitioning and participation as college students based on their career goals. While social roles have been found to increase investment-enhancement, and thus language proficiency, in adults (Peirce Norton, 1995; Norton, 2001), they have been shown to elicit the opposite effect in youth, who may be more driven by identity-enhancement within the immediate school context (McKay & Wong, 1996). In other words, while Generation 1 learners envision their language learning to be connected to their identities outside of the school context, Generation 1.5 learners may see their English language acquisition as most related to their identity within the school.

Finally, the learners in this study also displayed a keen awareness of their age, which they believed separated them from their traditionally-aged classmates and lent a sense of urgency to their transition. Rebecca, for example, believed she had a responsibility to teach young Sudanese girls the value of an education and to resist Sudanese gender norms which might prevent their full participation in school. Although more than ten years Rebecca’s juniors, Mariam and Olan similarly felt a sense of urgency to complete their education because of their ages. Harklau (2007) identifies age as one of
the two most essential factors in adolescent language acquisition (the second factor being their efforts to position and reposition themselves).

The learners in this study suggest that Generation 1 learners bring to college different forms of symbolic capital than Generation 1.5 students, who have often already experienced important identity negotiations related to race, language, and academic ability in their K-12 experiences (Harklau, 1994/1999; Olsen, 1997; Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). In this study, the Generation 1 learners’ academic capital (i.e., focus on grammatical forms over critical reading and writing skills) was not always privileged in their American community college. As a result, most of the learners struggled to have their identities as students and their participation recognized as legitimate within the community college. Although Olan’s case illustrated an exception as his instructor viewed his participation as legitimate and central within the classroom, Olan personally felt that he lacked the cultural capital he observed a Generation 1.5 classmate exercise and that this limitation prevented his full participation as a student. A problematic consequence of lacking of agency to present their chosen identities, as students or otherwise, is that Generation 1 learners can find their opportunities for future participation and interaction heavily determined by others (i.e., CCC faculty and staff, and the learners’ classmates). The Generation 1 learner transition experience can thus be characterized as an opportunity for learners to imagine their identities, but it is an opportunity limited by the symbolic power of other more central members of their imagined communities. The following section examines learner assumptions about ways to be a college student and the degree to which those assumptions aligned with other community members.
Informing my exploration of the factors affecting Generation 1 learner persistence, in this section, I compare learner assumptions about the ways to be a college student and college faculty’s expectations about the same. This deviation from the previous chapter’s focus on individual learners is necessary in the cross-case analysis to understand how what may have been perceived as individual learner struggles in the cases may be attributed to a broader set of institutional assumptions about student participation. In order to examine the contextual factors of transition, the cross-case analysis thus examines instructor assumptions which shaped the responses to learners presented in the cases. The section draws upon the results of a taxonomic analysis (Spradley, 1979) of verbatim learner speech to address the structural question, “What are all of the different ways to do being a college student?” Comparison of the taxonomic analysis and a summary of the participation expectations of college instructors and tutors as more central community members highlights misaligned expectations and points of convergence between learners and college staff expectations. Results of the analysis can assist instructors and college staff who are cultural novices in the Generation 1 learner transition experience but seek ways to support and retain transitioning learners. The full results of the taxonomic analysis can be found in Appendix E. The section first presents a chart of the taxonomic analysis results before comparing learner and CCC faculty/staff perceptions about what it means to be a student and discussing the consequences of misaligned expectations.

**Learner Perceptions about the Ways to Be a Student**
Overall, learners identified five ways to be a student, including: *studying, talking American English, following the instructor, trying hard,* and *getting help.* Each of these activities could be further broken down into more specific activities that students do. For example, *studying* included the subcategories of *reading, writing,* and *practicing something new.* In this section, I discuss the findings from the taxonomic analysis of the categories of *Studying* and *Following the Instructor* because of their direct relationship to college (i.e., instructor) expectations regarding participation in ENGL0960. Figure 5 provides a graphic representation of *studying* which learners described as including *reading, writing,* and *practicing something new.*

**Figure 5: Ways to do Studying**

Each of these categories was a cover term (Spradley, 1979) for additional included terms (i.e., more specific ways of doing the cover term). The figure provides a sampling of the included terms, or verbatim speech, learners used to describe *summarizing/summarizing something the other person’s idea,* which was a way to do
As suggested by the figure, learners identified several aspects to reading, writing, and practicing something new as important parts of studying; however, in describing ways these practices, learners included several activities of which their instructors were unaware or did not seem to value. For example, in doing find the right word, Mariam frequently used a bilingual dictionary app, which was perceived as problematic at times in class. At the same time, learners often spent a great deal more time studying than their instructors realized, such as Al Share who spent over ten hours to read a single chapter because of new vocabulary. Some learners had highly developed reading strategies which they did not have the opportunity to demonstrate in class. Because of the integrated nature of the ENGL0960 reading and writing curriculum, learners rarely were required to read something without writing a response, and as a result, I only once observed an instructor reference reading as legitimatizing a college student identity.

Most of the learners also had systematic writing approaches which included multiple drafts and sometimes daily visits to the writing center. Learners emphasized attending to grammatical issues as a major aspect of writing. While additional grammar exercises may have been necessary for continued linguistic development, the time and effort learners invested in these activities were unknown to their instructors, and learners’ awareness of complex grammatical structures was rarely valued in ENGL0960. Finally, learners independently took on practicing something new to improve their English through activities like searching for/watching YouTube videos about grammar or related to class assignments. Learners’ ways to study thus included voluntary and required
activities suggesting their thorough understanding of the out-of-class work required for being a student.

Like studying, learners’ efforts at following the Instructor also illustrated their awareness of college expectations for being a student (see Figure 6) through listening and notetaking from lectures and the book, and also following the instructor’s model. Qadira demonstrated this strategy when she used a short assigned reading as a model to write her narrative essay, and she gained symbolic capital from following the instructor since Anne noticed Qadira’s actions and how those benefited her essay.

**Figure 6: Ways to do Following the Instructor**

Mariam similarly gained symbolic capital from *Getting ideas from the teacher’s mouth* in her Writing Center and office hour visits. When they could demonstrate their ability to follow the instructor, these forms of participation appeared to legitimatize their participation more directly than other ways to be a student. However, learners’ efforts were not always valued, such as Rebecca’s limited class participation in favor of working independently on computer-based assignments. In fact, learners’ efforts to were only
valuable capital if the learners’ instructors identified specific tasks as important and were aware that the learners completed those activities. The following section summarizes faculty and staff expectations for being a student and demonstrates that instructors did not always value the ways learners enacted their student identities.

**Institutional Expectations of how to Be a Student**

As stated above, institutional expectations of ways to be a student were an important contextual factor affecting learners’ transition experiences. Through a thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2014) of observations and interviews with developmental English faculty and staff, four types of expectations for all students emerged: *affective, academic, linguistic* and *cultural*.

**Affective expectations.** Instructors identified several affective qualities which they expected of students or felt facilitated college success: persistence/resilience, willingness to participate in class, curiosity about newness, and “the ability to be up for growth in whatever way it’s coming” (Lucas, personal communication, April 6, 2016). Nick, the Student Success instructor, felt that college students needed to be able to manage their time, life and stress. Faculty and staff were quick to affirm learners’ past persistence as symbolic capital transferable to potential for academic success. Faculty and staff clearly communicated their largely positive assessment of learners’ ability to meet affective expectations, such as through writing tutors’ expressions of admiration for Labiba’s ability to persist or Cindy’s encouragement that Mariam “Keep Writing!”

**Academic proficiency expectations.** Faculty and staff also expected that students possess several academic skills. Lucas, who was a composition level instructor as well as a B-Lab tutor, identified reading as “a necessary but not sufficient skill. You
gotta have it. Now, you need other things, too, but you have to have it” (April 6, 2016). In addition to “com[ing] in with a basic understanding of what they [students] are reading,” Anne explained that students should “still at least be able to figure out what’s happening [in an assignment]” and be able to write a long paragraph (March 9, 2016). Lucas similarly expected “the ability to read and write and take notes and express yourself in a way that’s clear and cogent” (April 6, 2016). Instructors included both higher order concerns like organization and lower order concerns like subject-verb agreement as contributing to clarity and cogency. Nick similarly expected that students have “a notetaking system that works for them” as well as knowledge about how to take tests and write essay questions (March 11, 2016). These expectations focused on the application of language skills in a class. Academic expectations were communicated to learners somewhat less directly than affective expectations. For example, in most classes, course documents outlined assignments but did not always contain detailed steps for how to meet expectations. Thus, while learners were expected to have mastered certain academic skills, the details of “understanding a reading” or “writing clearly” were not always as directly communicated.

**Linguistic expectations.** Although instructors shared affective and academic expectations with students, linguistic expectations were rarely explicitly communicated to the learners—or me during interviews. Nick, for example, had only taught one English language learner (Qadira), and his understanding of English language acquisition centered around receptive language skills, “I talk fast, and American instructors talk fast, and I think that that’s part of the problem [with Qadira’s inability to follow the class]” (ibid). Nick expected that students “be fluent enough in English to follow a class really
well” (March 11, 2016). Anne described similarly vague standards to which some of her previous students were held in the subsequent English class, “The student would go on, and the instructor would say, ‘That person needs to learn to speak English’” (March 9, 2016). Anne’s experience was evidence of one writing tutor’s report of instructor intolerance for English varieties. Such comments highlight how some English skills are delegitimized within the college.

Because ENGL0960 integrates reading and writing, linguistic expectations for the class included reading comprehension and writing abilities which Anne described by way of length (a long paragraph at the beginning of the term) and genre (an academic summary), evidencing Cummins’ (1979/1999) discussion of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) expectations. Importantly, in keeping with instructors’ focus on comprehensibility and clarity of expression over grammaticality, highly specified grammatical knowledge, as was valued by many learners, was noticeably absent from instructor expectations.

In fact, instructors’ linguistic expectations were disconnected from some learners’ ability to discuss complex grammatical concepts. Qadira’s intense interest in grammar and syntax, for example, indicated her persistence and meta-linguistic knowledge, but instructors questioned her language skills based on her difficulty following discussions and directions. Nick’s comment about following a class and understanding its structure exemplified the interaction between instructors’ linguistic and academic expectations. The ability to meet linguistic expectations was linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1977) and extended beyond understanding words to include understanding when and how to use them in culturally appropriate ways.
Noticeably absent from faculty and staff discussions of their linguistic expectations was their recognition of the learners’ metalinguistic knowledge as multilingual students. Not only was language presented almost exclusively as a barrier to overcome, there was no mention of how learners could draw upon their previous language studies to support their continuing English development.

**Cultural expectations.** Instructors’ expectations that learners understand American cultural norms for being a student were largely unstated. Instructors expected, for example, that learners would understand and share the instructor’s cultural values regarding ownership of ideas in plagiarism standards. Faculty and staff also expected that learners would understand how participation varied in different college contexts, such as tutoring sessions, intensive advising meetings, and the classroom. Thus, the differing expectations for Labiba’s behavior in the B-Lab, the classroom and the Writing Center. Indeed, certain ways of being which were accepted in one context were sometimes negatively received in others. Knowledge of the cultural expectations for being a student was perhaps the most important but also the most elusive form of symbolic capital available to learners. Although faculty and staff varied in their explicitness regarding cultural expectations; in general, they were more explicit about the steps in completing assignments than the cultural expectations dictating those steps. Such a disconnect occurred in Anne’s extensive demonstration to Qadira of how to avoid plagiarism but lack of explanation about why this was expected of students.

Although learners and instructors shared several similar beliefs about the ways to be a student, they did not necessarily agree on whether and when learners’ enactment of this identity was legitimately received within the various imagined communities of the
college. This section provided examples of the misalignment between learner efforts and instructor expectations which was a powerful force shaping, and at times endangering, learners’ transition experience. This section illuminated contextual factors constraining learners’ identity presentation in transitioning; the following section examines learners’ choices to exercise their agency within *sites of contestation* (McKay & Wong, 1996), arising through their language use and identity enactment.

**Learners’ Language and Identity, and Institutional Discourses**

Identity enactment was a recurring feature in learners’ transition experience. This section begins with a brief integration of andragogy (Knowles, 1970) with investment theory (McKay & Wong, 1996; Peirce Norton, 1995) as applicable to the role of context in Generation 1 learners’ transition experience. The section continues with a summary of the identities claimed and resisted by learners and the identities imposed upon them. The section concludes by examining the “sites of contestation” (McKay & Wong, 1996, p. 603) which emerged when learners’ projected identities did not align with the identities imposed on them by other members of the imagined communities within CCC.

**Where Knowles Meets Norton**

**Identity investment.** In order to address critiques of andragogy’s lack of attention to context and culture in shaping the adult learner experience (Sandlin, 2005; Lee, 2003), this study drew from several complementary theories which, first, view identity enactment as a form of agency constituted in power relations and, second, view real and imagined identities as motivating participation in imagined communities and communities of practice structured by multiple discourses. Similar to the connection Knowles (1968) draws between learners’ “readiness to learn” as inspired by their desired
future selves and multiple social roles, investment theory examines the ways in which learners’ identities influence their language use and participation choices in imagined communities and the classroom as a community of practice (Norton, 2013; Norton & Toohey, 2011). According to McKay and Wong (1996), language and identity are “sites of contestation” in which learners deploy and respond to discourses and counterdiscourses (p. 603), and as Anderson (1991) noted with the imagined community of a nation-state, those with power imagine the possibilities and limits of group membership.

While learners in this study had a clear understanding of the ways to be a student, the legitimacy assigned to each was determined by community old-timers with power: instructors and other college staff, and to a lesser extent American-born, American K-12 educated classmates. Recognizing her authority as an English instructor, Anne noted the disconnect between many of her students’ goals and class expectations for them, describing institutional expectations for students as “fake. We’re just making it [academic expectations] up” (June 7, 2016). In spite of this, learners largely accepted the pedagogic authority of others within the college which in turn influenced their positioning within the classroom and other college spaces.

**Identities and Expectations at CCC**

Learners’ transition experiences were directly impacted by others’ acceptance of the learners’ student identity. When learners were perceived as complying with expectations, their student identities were accepted and their transition experiences suggested their movement towards central membership in the imagined communities at CCC; however, misalignment between learner and instructor expectations resulted in the
others’ delegitimization of the learners’ participation in the college, and at times threatened the learners’ ability to succeed. This occurred several times in the study, such as when Mariam’s reliance upon her translation app contributed to her ENGL0960 instructor’s belief that she was not meeting linguistic and cultural expectations for participating in class, learning vocabulary and appropriate cellphone use, and that as a result she should return to ESL.

Although I base my analysis of learners’ ability to have their participation, and therefore their student identities, accepted by others within the community on the work of Lave and Wenger (1991), I make several distinct moves away from their theory which require explanation. Under a communities of practice framework, community old-timers (i.e., teachers) are the only legitimate full participants, and learners’ participation is always peripheral as they learn to engage in community practices. Although peripheral, learners’ participation is also assumed to be legitimate. Lave and Wenger also assume that in their participation, learners always attempt the expectations established by old-timers.

Based on the data presented in the previous chapter, however, I argue that Generation 1 learner participation is more complex than this. First, learners choose whether to accept or reject expectations and identity assignments. Second, I expand Lave and Wenger’s notion of legitimate participation and participants through compliance, in which I argue that in addition to a peripheral role, the learner can occupy roles of central participation or an additional option, what I refer to as delegitimized participation. In the data, the latter occurred when community members rejected the learner’s membership into the community of college students by assigning the learner an “other” identity (e.g.,
ESL student). Figure 7 represents the types of participation observed in this study. In the figure, learner efforts could be categorized based on whether or not the learner (1) attempted or rejected college expectations and (2) whether or not the learner complied with the expectations discussed above. As the figure indicates, sites of contestation (represented by the gray jagged-edged shape on the far left) emerged when their participation was delegitimized by others (i.e., not considered to be in compliance with expectations).

**Figure 7: Types of Participation**

I first note that Generation 1 learners do not uniformly attempt expectations. On the x-axis, the figure distinguishes between learner acceptance and rejection of expectations/identity assignments. Additionally, whereas Lave and Wenger (1991) consider all newcomer participation to be peripheral, I argue that learners who were perceived to be complying with community expectations could be perceived to have
legitimate, central participation. This is possible because unlike Lave and Wenger’s model which assumes an apprentice relationship, Generation 1 learners did not enter the community of practice within the classroom for the purpose of becoming teachers themselves. Meeting the expectations for being students thus did not require the same type and level of participation as that of instructors but still could qualify learners’ participation as legitimate and central (i.e., as a participatory student who met course expectations). At the same time, learners whose instructors perceived the learners’ efforts to engage in required expectations for students were also considered to demonstrate compliance and participation which was viewed as legitimate, peripheral. Both forms of legitimate participation were compliance (i.e., others within the community recognized the learner’s attempts as enacting the student identity).

Also distinct from Lave and Wenger (1991), I note that learners could accept instructors’ pedagogic authority but lack the symbolic capital to demonstrate their enactment of a student identity in ways recognizable to other community members. In other words, the learner’s unsuccessful attempts to meet college expectations could be rejected, resulting in others’ delegitimization of the learner’s participation within the imagined community. Delegitimized participation involved the community members’ rejection of the learner’s membership in the community through rejecting their identity as a student, usually by assigning the learner an “other” identity, most commonly that of “ESL (and therefore not college) student,” but also traumatized refugee, or mother.

In a move beyond Lave and Wenger’s notion of legitimate peripheral participation, I include an act of resistance to an “other” identity assignment, in which the learner could present an alternative aspect of their identity as an attempt to gain
greater agency or interaction rights. When learners’ investment in their projected identity did not align with others, as was the case with *delegitimized participation* and *resistance*, the interactions became sites of contestation (McKay & Wong, 1996). Importantly, in exercising their agency within the structure of the institution, learners’ desire to attempt or reject expectations as well as their ability to meet them varied. Expectations were affective (i.e., resilience, willingness to seek assistance), academic (i.e., critical reading and thinking skills, notetaking), linguistic (i.e., cognitive academic language proficiency (Cummins, 1979), ability to comprehend fast-paced and colloquial speech), and cultural (i.e., understanding of American academic conventions regarding citation, and ways of participating in different college settings). As Figure 7 indicates, *resistance* is a function of the learner’s rejection of other-imposed identities as well as expectations; thus, learners could be considered in *compliance* by others but reject the identity position assigned them through their participation role.

The positioning and level of legitimatization assigned to a learner is not fixed. The composition studies scholar Kerschbaum (2014) explains differences in identity enactment as a result of what Bakhtin refers to as individuals’ unfinishedness: “The differences they [individuals] display and what those differences mean are always shifting,” in part because difference is relational (p. 69). Thus, while learners’ student identities might be rejected in one instance, the same learners could fully meet expectations in another moment or attempt to enact a new identity in rejection of the limits placed upon an assigned identity. Below I describe learners’ participation as examples of compliance or delegitimized participation.
Compliance. Learners’ acceptance of the college’s ability to produce and dispense knowledge legitimizes its authority to define knowledge and the possible ways of being within the institution (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Learners often demonstrated their awareness of faculty expectations for being a student, such as when Olan asked a “general question” in response to the instructions but waited for Anne to approach him individually to ask “a specific question” about his paper. Compliance refers to learner participation which attempted to meet college expectations and was recognized as legitimate, central or legitimate, peripheral by others with more powerful roles in the community. These members often assumed that learners were working towards central participation; learners usually shared this assumption.

Legitimate, central participation. When learners met expectations, others accepted their student identity and its rights of legitimate, central participation. Olan was perhaps the most successful at being accepted as a legitimate member of ENGL0960, and his performance there became academic capital legitimatizing his participation in the imagined communities of current students and future workers at CCC.

Mariam’s case is unique because she moved from a position of delegitimatized participation within her ENGL0960 class to a legitimate, central position in ENGL0980. Mariam’s ENGL0960 instructor viewed her bilingualism from a deficit perspective, ultimately rejecting her identity as a college student and assigning her the identity of “ESL student.” Through her time in developmental education, Mariam’s legitimate, peripheral participation in other college spaces, such as the Writing Center, became academic capital which she accessed in her movement towards legitimate, central participation in class. Similarly, Mariam’s complex essay writing process for acquiring
linguistic capital by “get[ting] the word from her [instructor’s] mouth” (March 15, 2015) and processes for detailed notetaking and essay revisions became symbolic capital when observed by her ENGL0980 instructor.

Ironically, instructors’ perceptions of Mariam as an outsider (i.e., “English language learner” and “immigrant”) were first used by her ENGL0960 instructor to deny her student identity and, two and a half months later, used by a different instructor in ENGL0980 to legitimize her participation in the second developmental English class. Specifically citing Mariam’s recent passing of the U.S. citizenship exam, Mariam’s ENGL0980 instructor noted that “not many of us would be able to pass that test” (February 19, 2015). Mariam’s experience illustrates the variability of learners’ success at being accepted as legitimate members of the college community based on their ability to meet expectations and exercise their symbolic capital as well as the ways learners’ multiple identities can influence others’ assessment of legitimate participation in the classroom and larger society.

**Legitimate, peripheral participation.** When learners attempted to comply but did not yet meet expectations, their interactions were considered to be forms of legitimate, peripheral participation (Kanno & Norton, 2003; Norton, 2001), and community members viewed the learners as students moving towards a more centralized role. This type of participation took three forms: “pull yourself” (Rebecca, August 22, 2014), “always questioning” (Rebecca, November 24, 2014), or additional support. Labiba and Qadira were the only learners who attempted compliance through “always questioning” and met with mixed responses when instructors in turn questioned whether they were incapable or unwilling to read directions independently.
Sensing Anne’s growing frustration with Labiba, Rebecca preferred to pull *yourself* and distinguished herself from Labiba, whom Rebecca felt asked “too many different thing” about future assignments: “She’d ask them for that which is I know not supposed to do. But I’m asking for that—not even the whole thing, I’m asking for that question I tried and I couldn’t get it” (November 24, 2014). However, as noted in Chapter 4, Rebecca’s own efforts to pull *yourself*, such as her frequent independent study of computer-based grammar modules during class time, were not always legitimatized.

All of the learners with the exception of Al Share sought *additional support* outside of ENGL0960. While a legitimate form of participation, *additional support* did not provide opportunities for centralized engagement in the ENGL0960 community, so learners remained in a peripheral role. Most commonly, learners visited the Writing Center. Some learners, like Olan, also asked friends and family members for advice about transitioning or worked with the intensive advisor to develop their writing. Although the intensive advising role was envisioned as providing advising as well as tutoring, none of the learners used the relationship in this way.

**Sites of contestation.** From Bourdieu’s (1991) distinction between legitimate and “‘illegitimate’ linguistic products” (p. 71), I employ the term “delegitimized participation” to describe how learners’ efforts to enact their student identity could be challenged or rejected by other, more central and powerful, community members. When others within the community felt learners did not comply with college expectations, they questioned the learner’s ability to be a college student (oftentimes with the implication that the learner should return to ESL); as a result, the learner’s identity became a “site of
contestation” (see Figure 8), and the learner’s participation was delegitimized by others with more power.

**Figure 8: Sites of Contestation**

Such was the case when Labiba was judged as not meeting cultural expectations for questioning and participation in an American classroom and others responded by ignoring her, making indirect statements, and eventually assigning her an “other,” non-college student identity.

As presented in Figures 3 and 8, Generation 1 learners’ identity projections and language choices can become sites of contestation. While *compliance* and others’ rejection of learners’ student identities suggested learners were constrained in their ability to control their identity narrative, at times learners exercised their agency, resisting others’ control and rejecting an imposed identity, choosing to emphasize an identity with
greater power. Labiba attempted this through invoking her refugee identity and its entailments of perseverance through trauma. Similarly, when he was perceived as not meeting linguistic and academic expectations, Al Share’s identity became a site of contestation as he rejected the college-imposed expectations for students by asserting his writing and (British) English expertise and his identity as a political leader in order to access the accompanying symbolic capital.

While there is ample discussion in the literature of adult learners who operate through peripheral participation or become non-participants of their own accord (Almon, 2010/2012; Becker, 2010; Norton Peirce, 1995), little research examines instances when adult learners’ language or participation are delegitimized. This phenomenon has been explored in K-12 settings. For example, drawing from Paley (1992), Toohey (1998) discusses the process of language learning as moving from an “outsider” to an “insider.”

I found several factors that could contribute to what I refer to as delegitimination of a learner’s participation. Frequently, another community member would conclude that the learner “does not know what it means to be in an American classroom” (Anne, November 12, 2014). Because the instructor was the community old-timer with a more centralized role and symbolic capital, the instructor’s expectations shaped what it meant to be a student in the classroom for all community members. Forms of participation were delegitimized based on their disruption to the class (such as Goffman’s (1967) alienative misinvolvement), violation of property expectations (Toohey, 1998), and if the learner’s participation efforts suggested their limited language abilities prevented class participation. The timing and manner of some activities could also cause them to be delegitimized, for example, if they were performed while the class was completing a
different activity or if their frequency suggested another form of delegitimized participation. Regardless of the cause for delegitimization of the ways of being a student, the performative effect of such a decree limited the learner’s access to the community.

Community members’ signaling of delegitimized participation varied but was largely indirect. During my observations, delegitimized participation was most commonly signaled through a more central community member’s ignoring of the participant. For example, Labiba’s classmates’ ignoring of her frequent, interruptive questions suggested that her participation did not merit a response as a college student even though Anne described their growing frustration with her. Similarly, although Anne believed that Rebecca was “not really doing what she is supposed to be doing” when completing assignments on the computer during other class activities (November 12, 2014), I never observed her redirect Rebecca’s participation.

Learners who were perceived as not meeting linguistic, academic or cultural expectations experienced the delegitimization of their participation within the imagined community of college students extending beyond their ENGL0960 class. Signals that a learner’s participation was delegitimized were almost always delivered in a manner minimizing the damage of the face-threatening act to the learner’s positive face (Brown & Levinson, 1978). Unfortunately, by their very indirect nature, such signals were often ineffective at achieving their intended illocutionary force of adjusting learner participation to meet expectations.

Indirect statements were an example of a commonly used but questionably effective form of signaling unmet expectations. For example, when Kyle told me that Labiba would continue following me around until I answered her questions,
misunderstanding or ignoring Kyle’s illocutionary act, Labiba did not stop her questions and followed me to my chair. Research in language acquisition documents language learners’ difficulty in comprehending the illocutionary acts of indirect speech (Champagne, 2001; Ferris, 2003; Holtgraves, 1999).

*Invoking rules* was another indirect, face-saving approach for *delegitimizing participation*. Anne’s response to Qadira’s first plagiarized assignment exemplified how *invoking rules* could point the learner’s attention to an expectation, such as the rule to “use your own words,” without directly accusing the learner of failing to comply. Admonishments about cellphone use were another common example. This response usually provided a detailed explanation of how to follow the rule with little discussion of how complying with the rule was a component of *legitimate, central participation*.

The final signal of a learner’s *delegitimized participation* was assigning a “non-college student” identity to the learner and subsequently responding to it rather than the learner’s projected student identity. “Non-college student” identities placed learners within three distinct discourses which varied in the assigned identities’ non-normative and interactive/agentive potential. Below these assigned identities are explored within the context of their larger structuring discourses, which McKay and Wong (1996) describe as historically-grounded, delimiting the conditions for discussion, based in institutional authority, and responding to other discourses.

**Assigning a “Non-College Student” Identity to Learners**

*Mother.* While only applied as a “non-college student” identity by another community member twice within the data collection, the identity of *mother* invoked the struggles associated with enacting multiple roles. As a community college, CCC
demonstrated an awareness of many students’ parenting roles by offering onsite licensed childcare. Classes, such as Student Success, specifically addressed the challenges of studying while fulfilling other social roles, like that of parent. These and other factors suggested CCC’s overall support for student-parents. However, assignment of this role directed attention away from the learner’s participation in the community as a student. Such was the case during the question-and-answer session after Rebecca’s presentation when Hank asked her what language she spoke with her children. The question was preceded by a statement about Rebecca’s improved language skills that quarter, illustrating how discourses co-occur; in this case, both removed focus from Rebecca’s membership within the community of students, the intended purpose of her presentation. While this incident was discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4, I return briefly to Rebecca’s response here: “I don’t speak with them. I just take them to school in the morning, then I pick them up and I sleep for two hours and go to work and come home. Do it again.”

Her statement is initially striking in terms of its veracity and the possibility that “I don’t speak with them.” When considered within the larger discourse of single motherhood, particularly with five children (four of whom were then teenagers), Rebecca’s comment may be taken as slight hyperbole although she offered it without evidence of humor or sarcasm. However, her response may also have been an attempt to reposition herself within the multiple communities, including that of parents and students, to which she belonged. Although Rebecca did not share with her class, between dropping off and picking up her children, Rebecca spent her day as a student at CCC. Rebecca did not actively seek to re-establish her student identity, perhaps assuming that her
classmates already accepted it. In addition, because their class contained at least three
student-parents, Rebecca may have felt less inclined to resist the identity of parent
knowing the social capital accompanying it there. In short, while removing focus from
her identity projection as a student, this repositioning may not have limited Rebecca’s
ability to exercise agency or her interaction potential in the class. As the cases illustrated,
learners’ identity enactment was fluid and their identities multi-faceted in transitioning.

_An “other” identity._ The second theme among identities imposed by dominant
members of the college community were identities which centered the learners within
discourses of other-ness, often emphasizing a racialized state.

_Model immigrant._ Based in the classic assimilationist paradigm that all
immigrants have the opportunity to become “full” Americans, provided they have the
“appropriate” cultural values (Bashi & McDaniel, 1997), the _model immigrant_ identity
was often invoked by others in an attempt to praise the learner’s assimilation abilities and
suggest a parallel between entry into a new country and new educational experience, such
as Nick’s reference to Qadira’s immigration as proof of stress management. However,
like the _mother_ identity described above, this identity assignment forefronted the _other_,
non-student identity which the learner had not chosen for him or herself even as it was
accompanied by certain levels of symbolic capital. Although the _model immigrant_
identity afforded learners symbolic capital, it denied their agency to choose which aspects
of their identities they wanted to emphasize.

Unlike the _mother_ identity which many other community members also claimed,
the _model immigrant_ identity acted to differentiate the learner from the rest of the
imagined community of students with the implication that the learner was “like us, but
not us,” such as Cindy’s reference to Mariam’s successful citizenship test, “Not many of us would be able to pass that test. She’s one of my top students” (February 19, 2015). As Cindy’s comment illustrates, the model immigrant identity could be accessed as symbolic capital to affirm the legitimacy of the learner’s student identity even as it separated the learner from others in the imagined community.

The “bootstraps model” of immigration presupposes that an ethnic group’s success at incorporating into the majority society is dependent upon its ability to conform to specific cultural norms (Omi & Winant, 1994). This discourse was evident in instructors’ and classmates’ reference to the struggles learners overcame in learning English, or how to live and become part of the new country. Like Cindy’s statement, the intent was respectful even as it emphasized that the learner had previously or was in the process of learning to be like the “us” composing the rest of the class and imagined community. Although three of the learners emphasized their immigrant or refugee identities within the context of the school, I argue that this identification of learners as model immigrants is a site of contestation because these learners did not take on this identity for themselves and because the new identity separated the learners from the imagined community in which they were attempting participation.

In a slight variation of the model immigrant discourse, I found myself guilty of attempting to assign a non-student identity. As discussed in Chapter 4, Olan immigrated to the U.S. after six years as an Army interpreter in which he translated oral and later written messages from Arabic and Kurdish into English. In our first interview, I inquired about Olan’s past English language learning experiences, asking about his ability to practice English while working for the army. His acknowledgement of
“practice[ing] for American accent—not on grammar” (January 29, 2016) and his emphasis that the work was “easy” functioned as a quick denial of my assumption that his army service was a legitimate form of study. Olan not only rejected my positioning of him as a student of English in context; he was also declaring pronunciation practice to be unrelated to his identity as a student. Since he could access more valuable academic capital, such as formal grammar study, Olan was uninterested in claiming his translation experience to legitimate his student identity. Later in the same interview, I returned to Olan’s Army experiences.

Emily: Well, so you studied, it sounds like you studied, or you practiced. You continued to practice speaking English the whole time you worked, all those six years. Did you do any other practice?
Olan: No, you know, the practice was not really you know, they always, the security situation was very, very dangerous, even sometimes we cannot go from our rooms to speak to the soldiers more practice. At the mission, we just talking to each other, it was really hard. You know some place, we could not go, stay like five seconds in the same place, we have to move around for the sniper.
Emily: So you didn’t really get much practice.
Olan: Not really much practice. You know for six years, if I always do like the practice talking, will be more even me I couldn’t like ah, when I come to United States, I go right away to the Compass test, and then pass all the levels for English. (Interview, January 29, 2016)

Again, Olan clearly rejected my positioning of him as a student during his time with the Army, stating that real “practice [even just] talking, will be more” (ibid). In fact, Anne made similar assumptions about how his previous experiences influenced Olan’s success in her class. While Olan may have indirectly benefited from Anne’s perception of him as a *model immigrant*, he was uninterested in the academic capital accompanying such an identity and instead referenced learning Arabic and his other academic successes in Iraq as evidence of his preferred conceptualization of a student identity. In memoing about the interview, I noted my desire to acknowledge Olan’s interpreting experiences as a non-
traditional form of studying and my confusion over Olan’s unwillingness to accept what recognition I was attempting to offer. Only when re-examining the interview with an awareness of Olan’s desired identity did I understand his resistance to my efforts.

**Foreigner.** At CCC, where the adult ESL program offers special classes for the city’s newcomer population, including refugees, there is also an increasingly visible population of veterans. In an effort to support service members, the college created a vet’s lounge, housed in the same wing as the developmental English classes. Its physically prominent location and the college’s advertisement of the space may encourage students to share their military connections more openly. Several incidents between Hank, a veteran and Rebecca and Labiba’s classmate, and Labiba illustrated how the assignment of the foreigner identity could affect learners’ identity presentation and feelings of safety in the classroom.

A non-traditional student, Hank was vocal about his service abroad during at least one of my observations and other class periods, as reported by Anne. I witnessed other students respond positively to his telling of a story about a deployment in an unspecified Middle Eastern region. Hank intimated that he had completed a tour in Afghanistan. His forthrightness about his military experience may have contributed to Labiba’s growing sense of unease in the class; at the same time, as a first-time college student, Hank slowly “[got] accustomed to being in the class and people he calls ‘foreigners’” (Anne, November 12, 2014). As discussed in Chapter 4, Hank’s frustration over Labiba’s frequent delegitimatized participation grew until one class period when he called Labiba an “Afghani bitch.” This verbal assault uttered by a soldier triggered previous trauma for Labiba who referred to Hank as a “bad man” like those who had killed her family when
she was a child in Afghanistan. I will discuss later how Labiba chose to forefront her identity as a *refugee*, but the remainder of this section focuses on Hank’s identity assignment and how that affected Labiba’s efforts to present herself as a student.

While Hank had apparently reacted in frustration to Labiba’s inappropriate participation in the class, the derogatory term Hank called Labiba ignored both her chosen identity as a fellow student and the ways of enacting that role which Hank felt were inappropriate. Instead, this term emphasized Labiba’s status as a *foreigner* within an imagined community of Americans in the class, a community to which everyone in the room but Labiba and Rebecca could claim citizenship. Importantly, Hank, who was also a new member of the imagined community, had been awarded the status of an “old-timer” by Anne and others who took for granted that he possessed the symbolic capital of knowing how to be a college student, particularly one with a great level of legitimacy.

Hank’s efforts to help Labiba and Rebecca stemmed from his perception of them as *foreigners*. Several years older than all of the students except Labiba and Rebecca, Hank’s age and the social capital he accessed as a veteran seemed to encourage his initial belief that he should help. Contrary to his outburst at Labiba, I witnessed Hank’s frequent efforts to show a respectful interest in their experiences as refugees, such as by expressing admiration for their ability to learn a new language and culture (something he claimed to have tried and failed as a soldier overseas). During my observations, I noticed Hank’s tendency to offer feedback and corrections to Rebecca and sometimes Labiba.

Even if his original intent in calling attention to her inappropriate behavior was based in an earnest desire to help, Hank’s repositioning Labiba based on her country of birth, emphasized her *foreign-ness* and ignored her identity as a college student. His
repositioning of both women as *foreigners*, particularly in contrast to his identity as a soldier, framed Labiba and Rebecca’s participation, limiting their agency in the class, contributing to Labiba’s increasing alienation at the college and revisiting of her previous trauma as a refugee. Interactions with other community members, including classmates, can powerfully shape Generation 1 learners’ transitions.

“*ESL Student.*” The adult ESL department had a strong presence on CCC’s main campus which was separated from developmental English in a different physical space and under a different college. These physical and organizational differences, along with ESL’s dependence upon a wholly adjunct instructor population, contributed to a separation between adult ESL and developmental English typical of community colleges (Boylan, 2004; Baynam & Simpson, 2010; Sharpiro, 2012). Thus, assignment of an *ESL student* identity implied a literal, as well as figurative, sense that the learner did not belong “here,” in college. “Going back” to ESL was something that I heard instructors privately express that many English language learner students should do to develop “basic” skills which they and learners believed to be the focus of ESL classes. In contrast, many developmental faculty seemed resistant to teaching these basics, perhaps reflecting the department’s emphasis on critical thinking.

Like *model immigrant* and *foreigner*, the identity of *ESL Student* was commonly assigned to learners by more powerful members of the imagined community at CCC. This identity assignment did not appear to have malicious intent; however, it afforded learners limited access to symbolic capital since it did not entail the perseverance of *model immigrants*. In fact, while *model immigrant* highlighted a form of symbolic capital unavailable to the un-marked, normative student identity, *ESL student* implied
language deficiency. In her work on audibility, Miller (2003) describes how speech acts as a bodily performance of identity and accent encodes the value of “distinction” (Bourdieu, 1991) to enhance a speaker’s prestige or put it at risk, such as Hank’s presumed compliment to Rebecca about her improved English which actually endangered her college student identity. Essentially, a learner who did not sound like other students risked being denied membership into the group of students.

The notion of audibility helps explain how in interviews instructors’ invocation of the ESL student identity was frequently followed by a statement about a learner’s overall inability to perform at the expected level for a college student.

In addition to establishing a contrast between the learner’s current language skills and the expectations, instructors frequently invoked this identity as a way to express their opinion that a learner should go back for “some more the ESL run of things, maybe preparing a bit more for jumping both feet into a class that that I think expects a bit more ability in standard American English then perhaps [he or] she’s ready to handle” (Rob, December 9, 2014). As this statement indicated, not only did the ESL student identity reposition a learner, it foreclosed opportunities for the learner to engage with other members of the imagined community by denying the learners’ the very English skills they claimed to possess as legitimation of their membership in the community.

Qadira’s transition experience illustrated the potentially negative consequences of assigning an ESL student identity to a learner. While her instructors and tutor admired Qadira’s studying skills, they felt she struggled with reading because of her limited
English vocabulary and “context” knowledge about American culture (Nick, March 11, 2016). As a result, they questioned her future persistence and felt she should focus on basic reading comprehension skills. Qadira copied assignments verbatim in ENGL0960 and Student Success, but rather than explain American citation conventions and their importance for a student beginning a long academic career, Nick simply assumed that Qadira’s paper was “another instance of where she possibly just didn’t understand context” (March 11, 2016). Nick recognized how cultural differences in education might affect Qadira’s performance in class, but he felt she was not yet linguistically prepared for a class addressing these expectations. Nick assumed that Qadira first needed language and context development—which he felt unable to provide. While more explanatory than Nick, Anne’s approach of providing Qadira with a detailed model of how to avoid plagiarism similarly presumed Qadira’s need for basic mechanical instructions rather than a more complex and culturally-based discussion about why students must “use your own words.” The instructors’ imagining of Qadira as an ESL student defined the possibilities for her within that identity; the need to discuss plagiarism as violating academic rules was taken out of the realm of possibilities for Qadira’s participation, replaced by what instructors felt were the more timely discussions about language forms or functions. In fact, Qadira’s own interest in this type of discussion further contributed to her distancing from the community of students. These factors limited Qadira’s access to important cultural and linguistic capital and her opportunities to participate in the imagined community of scholars who credit each other’s work.

Mariam’s experience in ENGL0960 and ENGL0980 illustrates how others’ repositioning of learners occurs through multiple, overlapping identity markers and their
corresponding discourses with varying levels of distinction (McKay & Wong, 1996; Miller, 2003). While both of Mariam’s instructors positioned her as an English language learner/immigrant, the symbolic capital they assigned this role varied drastically. Rob’s negative assessment of the “lag” of translation and “language barrier” as well as Mariam’s accent and apparent struggles with “complicated assignments that sort of assume that you’re able to parlay in standard American English” (December 9, 2014) imagined few possibilities for Mariam in her identity as a language learner. In contrast, Cindy viewed Mariam’s successful completion of the difficult U.S. citizenship exam in conjunction with her awareness of Mariam’s complex writing process, resulting in Cindy’s assessment of Mariam as committed to studying. Cindy thus supported Mariam’s enactment of her imagined identity as a successful college student who should “Keep working hard…And, keep writing!”

“Welfare Queen.” A final identity requiring discussion was what David referred to as “the Reagan welfare queen” (October 10, 2016). Although he personally found the accusation morally abhorrent, David described a minority-held belief within the department that certain students “are going to the institution not to learn but to come and take up space and get this government money” as an alternative to finding work (ibid). The welfare queen identity was one which David felt had been applied most frequently to Emergent multilinguals but used to refer to native English speakers as well. Ironically, assignment of this role might have suggested commonalities between the learner and other more central members of the imagined community of college students.

It was common knowledge among college employees and learners alike that adult ESL classes each cost learners $150 and were not eligible for financial aid whereas
developmental classes were financial aid-eligible. Although I did not witness anyone intimate this repositioning of the learners I studied, the belief that some learners transition for financial aid was present within the department during my data collection and, as David suggested, linked to discourse about the ESL student identity.

Above I described the sites of contestation which emerged when learners’ participation was delegitimized and the learner’s membership into the imagined community of students was challenged by assigning the learner an “other” identity. Lave and Wenger (1991) explain, “To become a full member of a community of practice requires access to a wide range of ongoing activity, old-timers, and other members of the community; and to information, resources and opportunities for participation” (p. 100). While likely not maliciously motivated, and sometimes entailing symbolic capital of their own right, alternative identities had the unintended consequence of further limiting the learner’s participation rights and therefore future membership. The participation opportunities that old-timers made available in rejecting learners’ student identities or foregrounding an “other” identity were often limited to the physical practices of being a student without providing learners access to the symbolic capital necessary to successfully complete these acts as central members of the imagined community. Importantly, learners did not passively accept others’ efforts to assign them an identity. Instead, learners exercised their agency to access additional symbolic capital through projecting alternative aspects of their identity.

Resistance
As indicated in Figure 7, when a learner’s participation was delegitimized by other community members who attempted to impose a non-student identity on learners, the learners often responded with resistance. Resistance involved the learner’s efforts to reposition him or herself with an identity that provided greater agency and participation rights than an “other” identity assigned to the learner. Learners also exercised resistance to reject college expectations about ways to be a student by asserting their membership in a different imagined community. Resistance was distinct from non-participation discussed in the literature on adult language learner investment (Almon, 2010; Becker, 2010; Peirce Norton, 1995) because although the learner rejected the imposed student identity, she or he still chose to attend class in an attempt to meet personal goals. (For a classic example of resistance in the literature, see Norton Peirce’s (1995) description of Eva’s repositioning of herself from “illegitimate speaker of English” to “multicultural citizen.”) When an identity constrains an individual’s ability to participate in the imagined community, a new identity position can enhance possibilities for interaction and thus agency (Norton & Toohey, 2011). Learners resisted through alternative identities including Language experts, Studying experts, Writing experts, or Persistence experts (Refugees). However, as discussed below, learners varied in their ability to utilize these identities to establish their legitimacy within the target language community.

(British) English experts. Throughout their transition experience, learners frequently positioned themselves as (British) English experts. Most frequently the learners presented their (British) English expert identity to access symbolic capital from their foreign language experiences with “British English,” defined by learners based on differences from American English in pronunciation and grammar. Qadira, for example,
believed her greatest obstacle with English was her accent, “I can’t change my tongue…to change pronunciation of British [English]” (January 29, 2016). In taking on the identity of English expert, the learners framed language struggles as issues of accent rather than inability. Al Share, for example, vehemently defended his linguistic abilities, recalling, “When I write, I know British English, but they say is wrong. Yeah, I know is right, but they say is wrong!” (May 27, 2016). The distinction Al Share made between the two Englishes allowed him to claim the position of a (British) English expert even in adult ESL, and he later applied this identity to justify leaving adult ESL.

Additionally, the learners’ claims to British English allowed them to maintain that they lacked cultural—not linguistic or academic—capital. For example, Al Share described “The country language” of his reading book, “It’s very hard, not day time English. And that you going to check it in the dictionary and something like that, you think, and you going to read the passage again and again until you get it” (May 27, 2016). His statement illustrated his identity as an English expert distinguishing between “country” and “day time” English and his academic capital as a student who checks a word in the dictionary, thinks about it, and then rereads the passage “until you get it.”

Learners also enacted their English expert identity in their ultimately critical assessment of ESL class as too focused on grammar, not enough preparation in academic writing, or otherwise too easy for them, all of which suggested their awareness of the previously discussed discourse ranking ESL classes below college classes. Baynham and Simpson (2010) note how learners are attuned to pre-existing distinctions placing English language learner (i.e., beginning ESL) classes below literacy (i.e., developmental English) classes. This ranking system becomes self-justifying as English language
Learner classes are physically located at off-site locations with limited access to college resources. Although CCC provides ESL classes at Main campus and its satellite locations, there was clear evidence of the unequal distribution of resources that Baynham and Simpson describe, resulting in Mariam’s confused efforts to apply for college as an ESL student. Learners’ identification as *English experts* was thus not only a statement about their previous language learning experiences but also necessary for accessing the essential resources to become their imagined selves, largely as individuals entering a career field. As these examples illustrate, the *(British) English expert* identity position provided learners with additional agency and participation rights when their legitimacy as American English speakers (and thus as American college students) was questioned; learners accessed the identity to reposition themselves as lacking an American accent or cultural knowledge rather than English language ability and to present themselves as beyond ESL.

*Studying experts.* Learners also enacted their identities as *studying experts*. When invoking this identity, learners displayed their knowledge about college or ways to be a student, most frequently invoking their foreign educational experiences as academic capital. Examples included Al Share’s stories about his Egyptian Master’s degree, Qadira’s essays about her plans to become a pharmacist in Sudan, and Mariam’s comparison of the similarities between studying in Iraq and the U.S.

Qadira and Mariam also accessed their identity as *studying experts* through their metacognitive skills and detailed reading and writing processes. Qadira, who struggled greatly with vocabulary, had highly developed metacognitive skills; like Paris and Jacobs’ (1984) definition of skilled readers, she could “think about the topic, look
forward and backward in the passage, and check their own understanding as they read” (p. 2083) even though she often did not understand several words on the page. Other research has documented how emergent multilinguals, like Qadira, can use strategies to compensate for lack of English proficiency (Carrell, Pharis, & Liberto, 1989).

The combination of two key components of Qadira’s studying expert identity (i.e., her previous academic successes and her strategic studying) inflated both her sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) and her English language abilities. As discussed previously, Qadira’s advanced metacognitive skills contradicted her instructors’ assessment of her limited overall language abilities. Both her Student Success instructor and her intensive advisor felt Qadira lacked the language skills, particularly in the domain of reading, necessary to participate as a legitimate member of the imagined community of students. Qadira, in turn, responded to others’ delegitimization of her participation and their repositioning of her as an ESL student by more aggressively asserting her abilities through her studying expert identity, often by arguing with her instructor. In contrast to Qadira’s frustrated identity projection, Mariam ultimately found success in her presentation of a studying expert identity.

Cindy, Mariam’s ENGL0980 instructor was impressed by the evidence of Mariam’s writing process because Cindy collected essay drafts and Mariam’s “journal.” In contrast, Mariam’s ENGL0960 instructor, who never saw these artifacts because he collected only final essay drafts, instead attended to surface-level errors in Mariam’s writing and felt these errors contributed to the evidence of Mariam’s inability to participate as a college student. As these two learners’ cases illustrate, sophisticated levels of metacognitive awareness regarding the specific steps in what Spradley (1979)
would refer to as “doing being” a college student were only a legitimate form of symbolic capital when instructors valued metacognitive skills, knew that the learners possessed them, and assessed learners as able to comply with other more essential aspects of being a college student.

Olan’s case contained a final illustrative example of the *studying expert*. As previously discussed, both Anne and I viewed Olan’s army service as symbolic capital. Olan, however, refused to claim this capital, viewing it as irrelevant to his studies and rationalizing that had he been able to devote himself to studying completely during his years as an interpreter, his English abilities would have placed him directly into composition. Olan thus dismissed his interpreter experiences and in doing so presented himself as a *studying expert* through his knowledge of what constituted legitimate forms of language practice as well as his knowledge of the college system (i.e., that ESL and developmental English are preparatory for composition). Olan’s case demonstrates how learners independently judged the legitimacy of their available symbolic capital, participation options, and identities. The *studying expert* identity offered a potentially powerful way for learners to reclaim lost agency and participation rights when others challenged their college student identity; however, as the cases above illustrate, the identity only provided increased participation rights when other, more powerful community members valued the distinction the identity provided the learners.

*Writing expert.* Al Share chose to invest strongly in his experiences as a writer to gain a more central role with greater participation rights in the ENGL0960 classroom. Al Share’s *writing expert* identity not only resisted the limitations of an ESL student identity; it allowed Al Share to acknowledge his reading and writing struggles without threatening
the overall legitimatization of his participation. Indeed, Al Share required extensive
technical support, at one time even bringing in his home computer to ask Anne to find a
saved file. Because of the small class size, Anne was able to spend extensive time
teaching Al Share how to use the computer, skills necessary for the class but not directly
graded. Written work, however, was, and in this way, Al Share’s writing expert identity
afforded him symbolic capital of greater worth than what he lacked in computer skills.
Although he was the only learner who could claim a writing expert identity as a form of
resistance, Al Share illustrates how learners’ alternative identities can at times provide
them with participation rights greater than those available to them as students and how as
adults with diverse previous experiences, Generation 1 learners may have greater success
at this than their Generation 1.5 counterparts.

Persistence Expert. At various times throughout the data collection, each of the
learners took on the identity of a persistence expert often in relation to their persistence in
their American college/achieving their desired career goal, such as Qadira’s
determination to bypass developmental English by studying grammar for the Compass
test, Mariam’s detailed essay writing process, and Labiba’s multi-year, multi-institution
plan for becoming a pharmacist. However, Labiba and Al Share also enacted this
identity by accepting others’ encouragement to share their immigration stories or by
invoking their refugee experiences. Writing tutors, for example, recalled how Labiba
often began tutoring sessions by discussing how unhelpful teachers refused to provide her
with the assistance she needed and were thus similar to the bad men who had previously
persecuted her. Al Share frequently described his persecution by the Sudanese and
Egyptian governments as inspiring his professional writing (and thus his desire to
complete college). Importantly, I do not claim that all Generation 1 learners, or even all of the learners in this study, chose to invoke their immigration experiences to present this identity. However, when learners did choose this identity, it mediated their transition experience in powerful ways.

Unlike the learners’ other forms of resistance, this identity was often unrelated to their efforts to be a student, and in fact, learners appeared to invoke this alternative identity when their participation as a student was questioned and they hoped to gain increased participation rights through an alternative non-academic identity. Enactment of the persistence expert identity was what de Certeau (1988) refers to as a tactic: a maneuver of the weak taking advantage of and dependent upon “chance offerings of the moment” (p. 37). Referencing Clausewitz, de Certeau notes, “The weaker the forces at the disposition of the strategist, the more the strategist will be able to use deception” (ibid). Learners’ resistance, particularly in the case of the persistence expert identity often was enacted through narratives, a structure which Kerschbaum (2014) explains as capable of allowing students to attribute meaning to their visible characteristics, “to color in pictures of themselves as specific kinds of students” (p. 111). As tactics, narratives are powerful “vehicles to contest or challenge identity constructions because personal experience is not generally treated as material available for disagreement” (Kerschbaum, p. 111).

Applying the discussion of tactics and narratives to the theory of language learners’ imagined communities of practice, the more peripheral the learner’s participation in the imagined community, the greater the opportunity to resist the structuring assignment of legitimation through the tactic of enacting a new identity with
greater possibilities for agency. *Resistance* through *Studying expert* or *English expert* identities were strategies which continued to operate according to ways of being a student legitimated by those in power; in contrast, a *persistence expert* identity freed the learner claiming it and granted access to the symbolic capital of a variety of *imagined identities*, membership in communities outside the institution, and increased participation rights within the institution.

Labiba most willingly enacted her identity as a *persistence expert* to reposition herself in interactions within CCC’s imagined communities. The importance de Certeau places on timing in the deployment of a *tactic* is particularly appropriate for analyzing Labiba’s interactions with ENGL0960 classmates. In one instance, only a few minutes after her classmate Kyle openly criticized her interruptive questioning as delegitimized participation in ENGL0960, Labiba enacted her refugee identity through an extended personal narrative during her book report presentation. Her presentation, which was supposed to be less than 10 minutes describing her book extended to more than 30 minutes as she deviated from her prepared slides to tell several stories about her experiences as a refugee overcoming several obstacles in her efforts to protect herself and care for her children. Her timely resistance to her classmate’s negative assessment of her understanding of how to be a student exemplified de Certeau’s description of tactics as “procedures that gain validity in relation to the pertinence they lend to time— to the circumstances which the precise instant of an intervention transforms into a favorable situation” (p. 38). As Labiba returned to her seat after her presentation, she turned to Kyle, whose *indirect statement* signaled her *delegitimized participation* earlier that
period, and asked his opinion of her presentation. “It was good,” he responded (Observation Notes, November 12, 2014).

As the above exchange illustrated, CCC old-timers were highly receptive to learners’ enactment of their refugee identity and willingly accepted learners’ membership into the imagined community of Morton’s well-known refugee population. Labiba’s other experiences at CCC, particularly in the B-Lab and later in the Writing Center, had affirmed her refugee identity as possessing valuable social capital which staff frequently invoked as translatable to academic persistence. The nuanced ways in which Mariam, Labiba, Rebecca and the others claimed their identity as a persistent expert to resist the peripheral or otherwise constrained identities assigned to them by more central participants illustrated their ability to exercise their agency and to imagine more powerful social roles for themselves.

Although invoking similar themes as the *model immigrant* identity, the discourse surrounding *refugee* had additional connotations in the city of Morton, as a refugee resettlement city, and for learners since it invoked trauma as a form of symbolic capital not necessarily accessible through the *model immigrant* identity. Among the immigrants settling in Morton, refugees are particularly visible, such as the influx of a growing number of Yezidi families from Iraq (Yezidis International, 2016).

Learners who self-imposed the identity of *refugee* rather than *student*, marked their difference from classmates and instructor in powerful ways which changed the dynamic of their interactions with others. First, unlike other *resistance* identities which were at times challenged by members of the imagined community, the *refugee* identity went uncontested. Learners who invoked this identity did so without negotiation and
experienced effects similar to the *model immigrant* identity but also transformed past trauma into symbolic capital. As discussed in Chapter 4 and above, the trauma accompanying a refugee identity became a transformative force mediating classroom and other interactions; as Anne explained,

> I know she’s got the trauma, too. And I do wonder about that, you know just being in a class with people that you perceive to be dangerous. And then it’s the same for the other side too, so you’ve got all of these people together who are on edge anyway, and it’s pretty hard for them to be thinking about writing. (November 12, 2014)

Thus applied, trauma became a form of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1991) in the classroom, deflecting attention from learning as all the participants attempted to understand and felt compelled to respond to its presence. At the same time, during data collection, CCC lacked on-staff counseling to help learners (or faculty and staff) cope with trauma. Instead, any students identified as requiring professional services were referred to community resources for counseling.

While Labiba was successful at projecting her refugee identity, she was not able to transform its associated capital to legitimate her student identity. Indeed, Labiba’s investment in her student identity waned as she experienced the stress of reliving her trauma through her perception of continued persecution at the hands of “bad men,” and in a cyclical fashion, Labiba simultaneously invested more heavily in her identity as a refugee. Her experience is troubling since this identity was celebrated by CCC employees as evidence of her persistence, an essential affective component to being a student, at the same time that they questioned Labiba’s ability to do the work required of that role. I hypothesize that Labiba was most willing to invoke the alternative identity of *refugee* because she was both most frequently rejected in her participation efforts and she
possessed the least amount of capital, symbolic or otherwise, necessary for invoking
other identities. This section concludes with a comparison of Labiba and Rebecca, who
share many characteristics, to understand their divergent experiences.

Labiba presented her refugee identity to reject the limited interaction rights and
agency she was assigned as a peripheral member of the student community. Rebecca, in
contrast, viewed her academic efforts as a way to enact her future identity as an
empowered refugee within the South Sudanese diaspora. This was an imagined
community in which Rebecca already claimed a legitimate, central role. Similar to Olan
and Al Share, Rebecca valued her student identity, but the academic and cultural capital
she amassed from her participation in the college, even if through a constrained student
role, enhanced her legitimacy in an imagined community of even greater personal
importance. Although Anne considered Labiba to be better prepared for future English
classes, three weeks before the end of the quarter, Labiba told me she planned to drop out
while Rebecca maintained her determination, concluding with optimism, “I’m working.
I’m looking for it. To find my sight. Yes, I am forward looking forward to it. When I
am graduated and then I will say, ‘Yeah, I’m off from lost, and they found me”
(November 24, 2014). Rebecca’s hope for a better future for herself and her people
seemed powerful enough to sustain her even when she felt constrained as a student. She
did not identify who “they” were, and I did not ask although I wondered after all of her
stories about caring for her family in Africa and the U.S. whom Rebecca awaited to care
for and find her.
Persistence

Regarding the final research question on the factors affecting persistence, I argue that Generation 1 learners’ persistence is a function of their social roles and their persistence’s value as symbolic capital for enacting a student identity. Unlike other research on Generation 1 learners (Almon, 2010; Becker, 2010; Csepelyi, 2012; Peirce Norton, 1995), all of the learners in the present study persisted through, and successfully completed the first quarter of developmental English. In fact, although data collection ended after the first term for all of the learners but Mariam, I was informed by participants or their instructors that every learner (with the exception of Al Share, who failed the second developmental English class twice) successfully completed both developmental English classes and eventually composition. Similarly, Qadira and Labiba dropped but successfully completed composition in a following term. Their relative difficulties in ENGL0960 as compared to the other learners in this study suggest that these learners may have struggled to demonstrate the necessary ways of being a student to participate in future classes in a manner that was legitimatized by other community members.

Persistence and Social Roles

Learners’ ability to persist was simultaneously constrained and supported by their multiple social roles. Al Share was the only learner who did not have additional responsibilities competing for his time; importantly, he reported that he had temporarily given up his political writing in order to focus on his course work. Although Al Share was able to make such a sacrifice of his time, the other learners had less flexibility in meeting their other responsibilities. Rebecca, for example, slept an average of two hours
per day while juggling school, family, and work. For the following term, she scheduled her classes so that she would only need to drive to campus two days per week, but rather than feel encouraged by the prospect of more sleep, she was concerned about her ability to ask for help. On the advice of friends, Olan had taken only two classes his first term, but he planned to switch to full time and to change campuses so that he would be closer to his job. He hoped to take a class during his extended lunch break. The learners’ efforts to balance their multiple roles aligns closely with the literature on first generation students (Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004), non-traditional students (Bowl, 2001) and adult immigrant students in particular (Almon, 2015; Teranishi, Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2011). Multiple social roles are a distinguishing characteristic of Generation 1 learners since, unlike their Generation 1.5 student peers who are traditionally-aged college students, many Generation 1 learners have established families to support.

While learners’ outside-of-school responsibilities required them to balance their time and efforts, learners in this study often cited their other social roles as motivation for persisting. For example, Mariam felt strongly about being a role model for her daughter. Rebecca, Olan, and Qadira transitioned in order to enter specific career fields which they felt would allow them to better support their families and enact their imagined future professional identities. In fact, Al Share’s efforts to gain enough English to translate his books was perhaps the most notable example of how the learners felt that persisting in their education was a way to enact their desired imagined identities.
Persistence as Symbolic Capital

As described above, learners’ persistence was a form of symbolic capital which they applied in imagined communities outside of CCC. Learners also attempted to access this capital for their student identity within the college. As described in the cases and cross-case analysis, learners demonstrated incredible persistence in their efforts to be a student, and faculty frequently mentioned persistence as an important affective component for success. However, like the cultural norm of “using your own words,” academic persistence appeared to be expected but was largely unexamined and uncommented upon, and in fact, instructors often expressed ignorance over the amount and type of work learners completed.

When acknowledged, learners’ efforts to persist academically were in some ways considered a minimum requirement for legitimate participation as Rob demonstrated when he noted, “Having read through it [an assignment] twice and still not comprehending it there probably is something missing there, and so you know having certain issues with the language and so forth would probably necessitate a great deal more time than your average student would need” (December 9, 2014). Thus, not only were instructors often unaware of the work that learners put into the assignments, there was little institutional effort to honor that persistence and the specific work or discuss ways to further enhance learners’ skills.

Paradoxically, sometimes when learners were recognized for their persistence in academics, the praise was mixed. At times, instructors expressed concerns over the way and frequency with which some learners used the B-Lab and Writing Center. Their concern highlighted the justified but unanswered question of whether there was such a
thing as too much assistance, and similarly, persistence—if, for example, a learner had more persistence than academic or linguistic skills. As a result, when learners’ academic persistence was noted, the awareness sometimes conveyed a negative assessment of the learner’s ability, as if, in some cases, effort and skill were inversely related. A similar relationship has been previously documented in the literature on Generation 1.5 students in community college ESL (Harklau, 2000). Known for her tendency to visit the Writing Center sometimes multiple times per day, Labiba’s experiences there exemplified this dilemma. My interviews with two of her writing tutors paint divergent pictures of Labiba’s use of the space. While David described Labiba almost heroically, as “work[ing] with every single writing tutor at least once, and then she would find the ones that she felt like would give her more help” (October 10, 2016), Nick offered a more critical perspective, describing Labiba’s persistence as equally motivated by her desire to succeed and her inability to do so independently.

Thus, it largely appeared that learners’ persistence was most valuable as symbolic capital when it was applied to their non-student identity. For example, Labiba’s persistence was often described by herself and others in conjunction with her refugee experiences, such as her claim that “They cannot take the little thing from my head” (August 8, 2014) or the B-Lab advisor’s praise of her “Here everyday in spite of everything” (September 3, 2014). This comment suggests how the acceptance of a learner’s projected identity and legitimatized participation corresponded to others’ positive perception of the learner’s persistence. Such was the case when Cindy praised Mariam for passing the U.S. citizenship test.
Ultimately, learners’ ability to apply their persistence as valuable symbolic capital was more closely related to the legitimatization of their participation rather than their persistence itself. Thus, Labiba was could apply her persistence as symbolic capital in her refugee identity without question, but she struggled to transform it to her student identity—which offered her fewer participation rights. As Bourdieu (1991) notes, the legitimacy of an utterance is a function of the legitimacy of the speaker. Presenting their persistence as symbolic capital required an identity within the imagined community which allowed learners to make such claims. Although every learner demonstrated remarkable persistence in transitioning, their persistence was unequally received within the imagined community of the ENGL0960 classroom and their college.

**Limitations and Future Research Directions**

Although the study’s six cases allowed for thorough analysis and data saturation of the group of learners who participated, the study had several limitations which open the door for future research on the Generation 1 learners’ transition experience and Generation 1 learners beyond transition. Most importantly, in Chapter 2, I put forth the definition of a Generation 1 learner as an adult, immigrant, Emergent multilingual who first accesses American education through adult English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and intends to earn a college degree. The laws and regulations of U.S. immigration are beyond the scope of this dissertation, but it is important to note that while the learners in this study were all immigrants, they also all met the criteria to be legally classified as refugees. In fact, the only learner who did not enter as a petitioner (person completing the application) of a Special Immigrant Visa for Iraqi or Afghan Translators, refugee or beneficiary (dependent of the beneficiary) was Mariam; her
family immigrated to Belgium as refugees shortly after her marriage. Rebecca, Al Share, and Labiba’s cases illustrated the profound impact of their experiences as refugees and the cultural capital a learner can attempt to access as a result of these experiences. All of the learners’ shared experiences qualified them for refugee status, presumably influencing their transition experience although they varied in their desire to claim their refugee identity. Future research must include Generation 1 learners with varied immigration status, including Generation 1 learners who are without documents. These learners experience many of the hardships illuminated in the present study but without the financial aid and other assistance available to the present learners. In addition, the present study’s learners were often encouraged to share their immigration and refugee experiences, which became valuable symbolic capital in their transition; research must examine the identity negotiation processes of Generation 1 learners whose immigration is not favorably viewed by other members of the imagined community.

The timeframe for data collection, established as a single quarter for ease of data collection is a further limitation. The developmental education sequence often extends beyond a single quarter, during which time students can experience failure, or drop out/stop out and return. Despite instructor fears, all of the learners successfully completed their first developmental English course—a completion rate several times higher than reported in the literature (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010). Additionally, learners, like all students, experience times of great difficulty and great success. In spite of his completion of ENG0960, Al Share failed the second developmental English class twice. Although the college allows for a third attempt, Al Share did not enroll again, and he did not respond to my efforts to contact him. After successfully completing the two
courses within the developmental English series, both Labiba and Qadira withdrew from Composition I, the result in each case of being told by their instructor that their English language skills were not at a level appropriate for the class. Both learners reattempted the class either by switching to a different instructor during the same term or retaking the course with a different instructor the following term. Further exploration of the phenomenon of a Generation 1 learner being a developmental or a community college student, for example, would necessarily require a longer data collection period but would document the successes and difficulties learners experienced after ENGL0960 to provide a more thorough understanding of how learners exercise their agency throughout their college experience.
CHAPTER 6: IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Generation 1 Learner Transitions: Identity Enactment and Misaligned Expectations

This dissertation study explored the Generation 1 learner experience of transitioning from adult ESL to developmental English at a community college. Learners exercised their agency in the constant positioning and repositioning of their student identity and the legitimization of their participation in college amidst discourses of language, ethnicity, learners’ multiple roles and motivations, and the expected ways of being a student. The findings outline several contrasts from Lave and Wenger’s (1991) description of legitimate peripheral participation. In this study, learners exercised their agency in choosing to attempt to meet or reject expectations. Learners could also be recognized as engaging in legitimate, central participation through their demonstrated compliance with expectations. When learners lacked the symbolic capital to meet expectations, others delegitimized the learners’ participation and thus their student identity. At times, learners responded to such delegitimization through resistance in which they rejected the expectations of the student (or an “other” identity) by choosing a more powerful identity which established their expertise. In such instances, the learners’ identities became sites of contestation as they actively participated in defining their specific identities within the context of the college.

In the following sections, I detail how the current theoretical and practical disconnects between the fields of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages and Developmental Education fail to understand the nuances of the Generation 1 learner transition experience and thus how the fields struggle to meet learners’ needs. Drawing
from Kerschbaum’s (2014) theory of marking difference, I argue for the need to recognize Generation 1 learners as a unique portion of the developmental student body based on their particular identities and the symbolic capital they access in participation as college students. The chapter concludes with implications for practice through collaboration between adult ESL and developmental education and specific to developmental education’s placement testing, advising, tutoring and classes.

**Liminal Spaces, In Theory and Practice**

**Adult ESL**

A limited body of research explores how adult immigrants transition from adult English as a Second Language to higher education within the community college. In addition to lacking a common name to refer to this unique subset of the community college student body, this literature presents the disconnect between the theory and practice of adult ESL and developmental education programs. This dissertation attempts to address the gap between these fields by exploring how Generation 1 learners experience transition, factors affecting their perseverance, and the ability of the current theory and practical implications in both fields to explain and meet learners’ needs as they transition from one programmatic space to the other within the community college.

**Adult ESL**

The field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages is guided by the complementary theories of investment (Peirce Norton, 1995), communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and imagined communities (Anderson, 1991; Toohey, 1998; McKay & Wong, 1996) which have shaped current understandings of motivation, participation, and context in language learning. Research documents how adult ESL can
provide important linguistic and cultural support for learners attempting transition (Baynham & Simpson, 2010; Becker, 2012; Cspelyi, 2012). These theoretical frameworks are valuable for understanding how learners’ specific identities and their experiences and motivate transition and shape participation decisions in developmental education.

However, I argue in this dissertation, such theories fail to provide a fine-grained explanation of how learners engage with the discourses mediating the structural context of their learning environments. Not all Generation 1 learners’ participation and identity choices are deemed legitimate peripheral participation as they transition within the community college, and the learners’ own responses to other-assigned identities and participation expectations can be powerful agentive acts in which the learners reject structuring discourses and others’ purposes for transitioning in order for the learner to achieve her own goals related to her multiple imagined future identities.

Practical implications stemming from existing theories in adult ESL continue to assume learners’ completion of a linear ESL trajectory leading to credit courses (Almon, 2010/2012; Becker, 2012); this presumed pathway to college may not address academic language or learners’ other reasons for investing in language learning until late in the sequence. In the literature, students’ perceptions that adult ESL does not support their academic or career goals are coupled with long waitlists and lengthy course sequences (Crandall & Sheppard, 2004; Harklau, 2000; Tucker, 2006); as a result, some learners choose to invest in their student and other identities by self-selecting out of ESL when they feel the classes do not address their individual goals. This study similarly found that learners’ transitions were motivated in large part by their beliefs that adult ESL could not
meet their academic or career goals and that learners could self-study the important grammatical content which they believed was one of the most notable functions of ESL.

**Developmental Education**

In contrast to the ESL focus on language learners’ interactions with and investment in participation in the learning community, the field of developmental education has been accused of lacking a unifying theoretical framework (Chung, 2005) although the field originally drew from adult learning theory which differentiates adult learners from child learners based on their experiences and social roles (Kidd, 1973; Lindeman, 1961; Merriam & Bierema, 2014; Merriam & Brockett, 2007). Findings from the current study support critiques of adult learning theory as overemphasizing learner individuality, as a central motivation for learning (Merriam & Kim, 2008). For example, Al Share and Rebecca’s transition goals more closely aligned with the notion of learning for community benefit and knowledge sharing described by Kamis and Muhammad (2007). The study suggests that adult learning theories ignore other central aspects of the Generation 1 learner transition experience related to the learners’ interactions with the learning environment.

As the most well-known theory of adult learning, Knowles’ (1968/1970/1984) andragogy outlines several assumptions about adult learners which align with the theory of investment (Peirce Norton, 1995) to partially explain the Generation 1 learner transition experience. Knowles and associates (1984) posit that learners need to know the reason for what they are being taught and that learning is shaped by the learners’ social roles and previous experiences; all of these assumptions align with the theory of investment (Kanno & Norton, 2003; Peirce Norton, 1995). However, the current research
suggests that the assumption that previous experiences are a rich learning resource oversimplifies the complexities arising from learners’ efforts to invoke those experiences as symbolic capital in their transitioning. In particular, this study illustrates how learners’ previous trauma can become a form of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1991) in interactions and how instructors need to attend to teaching students to mark difference (Kerchbaum, 2014) in response to classmates’ identity presentations. Knowles’ (1970) description of experience as “a broadening base to which to relate new learning” (p. 45) emphasizes how instructors should play an active role in assisting learners’ connection of their experiences to learning, not just celebrating learners’ persistence in previous situations of adversity.

Andragogy and the theory of investment also share an emphasis on learners’ internal motivation and readiness for learning that supports the learners’ abilities to enact their chosen identities within various imagined communities. Similar to Peirce Norton (1995) and McKay and Wong (1996), Knowles (1976) and Knowles and associates (1984) discuss learners as being motivated to learn to prepare for their desired future selves and the immediate needs of their current social roles. This notion of motivation partially accounts for learners’ interest in transitioning to prepare for their desired future careers; however, the theory highlights a point of contention between learners’ and instructors’ beliefs about the purpose of a college education. While learners emphasized employability and English language development as motivating their transition, the developmental educators emphasized critical reading, writing and thinking skills. Developmental educators, and the institution at large, must first consider the degree to
which developmental English classes can and should align with learner goals and second
instigate conversations about institutional expectations for classes as well as learners.

Both andragogy and investment consider how motivation influences participation;
in particular, Knowles and associates’ (1984) assume adult learners are highly self-directed. This research supports that assumption; learners become dissatisfied when they viewed their learning to be disconnected from their educational goals. Knowles and associates explain that tensions can result from the learners’ desire to be autonomous and their conditioning in educational environments to be other-directed. This research found evidence of this tension; however, it was most clear in instances where instructors’ assumptions about learners’ previous learning experiences did not align with the learners, for example, when instructors failed to explicitly introduce expectations for in-class participation, citation conventions, or ways to study for the class. As a result, the gradual release toward self-direction that instructors intended was a sometimes sharp change in cultural, linguistic and academic expectations which were left unexplained even as learners were held accountable to them.

In spite of these multiple points of overlap, investment and andragogy (and in turn the fields of adult ESL and developmental education) differ markedly on their perception of context in language learning. While investment presents the learners’ interactions as intricately tied to motivation, andragogy has been criticized for failing to consider the influences of social structures on a learner’s identity and interactions with the world (Lee, 2003; Sandlin, 2005; Pratt, 1993). Sandlin (2005) argues that educational contexts are always value-laden and politicized and that learning is influenced by the learners’ unique characteristics; Sandlin includes race, class, gender, and culture, but like the field of
developmental education, language is noticeably absent from her discussion. As Lee (2003) explains, andragogy “does not account for the powerful influence of dynamic contexts in which the learners interact. Especially when it comes to the experiences of immigrant adult learners” (p. 13). This study attempted to uncover how the context of developmental education at one community college affects learners.

Theories of adult learning are echoed within many best practices in developmental education, which focuses on academic preparedness (Bannier, 2008; Garavalia, Ray Murdoch, & Gredler, 2004) and non-cognitive skills (Di Tommaso, 2010; Holmlund & Silva, 2009). Developmental education’s roots in adult learning theory, particularly andragogy (Knowles, 1968/1970), often manifest as measures of “grit” in developmental education (Almeida, 2016; Collins, 2010; Reeves Bracco, Austin, Bugler, & Finkelstein, 2015) without fully considering the role of context in students’ developmental experiences or the linguistic and cultural instruction necessary for learners who have not previously experienced the American educational system. Such instructional approaches differ markedly from the emphasis on interaction in adult ESL.

Thus, in spite of some shared tenets in the theories of investment and andragogy, adult ESL and developmental education’s divergent theoretical frameworks result in different curricular foci: linguistic acquisition for varied contexts in adult ESL and individual characteristics like affect and academic readiness in developmental education. As a result, learners not only transition from non-credit to credit classes but also between instruction based on different theoretical understandings of what it means to be a student and thus expectations for how to participate in that role.
Meeting the Needs of Generation 1 Learners

The findings suggest that responding to the needs of Generation 1 learners requires developmental educators and researchers to first recognize learners as a unique group with a wealth of previous experiences and multiple social roles influencing their transition, and second increase our efforts to provide them with the symbolic capital to successfully enact their desired future identities.

Recognizing Generation 1 Learners

In meeting the first charge, this dissertation works towards what Kerschbaum (2014) refers to as “marking difference,” or displaying and responding to words or ways of using words to signal difference between two or more people (p. 113). Kerschbaum explains, “The choices they [students] make in describing themselves have consequences for their identities in the here-and-now of the writing classroom….When students tell narratives about themselves, they bring past selves and imagined future selves to bear on the present moment” (p. 102). Marking difference teaches students to be aware of their difference markers, how they use them “to compose themselves as particular types of people acting in purposeful ways” (Kerschbaum, p. 90), and how to notice and respond to each other’s difference markers. Kerschbaum provides the example of moments of tension between students’ academic and social positions and recommends relationship building activities to attend to social dynamics necessary for learning (Wortham, 2006, as cited in Kerschbaum, 2014). This occurred at several points in the current study, such as when Hank responded to Labiba and Rebecca as refugees, and in doing so marked differences in their social identities but foreclosed their ability to participate as members within the academic community. Classroom activities and dialogue must therefore
extend beyond marking difference in social identity to move towards acknowledging how it impacts interactions in the academic space.

The notion of marking difference is equally applicable to instructor-student interactions as instructors consider what they notice—and what goes unnoticed—about their students and their expectations for how students should participate. In this way, marking difference increases awareness of how various forms of participation offer differential rights and abilities to enact identities, such as this study’s findings that learners’ participation rights were limited as a result of resulting the imposition of an “other” identity. For example, in marking difference, Qadira’s Student Success instructor might have recognized his assumptions about what an “ESL student,” as opposed to a “college student” is capable of understanding and must understand to participate in college. Understanding how those identities lay claim to differential participation rights, Qadira’s instructor could have then introduced Qadira to the concept of plagiarism as an academic convention which privileges specific beliefs about ideas as property, information Qadira needed for participation in her desired roles as a college student and future pharmacist. This example suggests how developmental and adult educators can provide learners with the symbolic capital necessary to achieve their stated goals.

**Responding to Generation 1 Learners**

As the above example illustrates, examining who controls participation and by what means it is legitimized within the institution can move developmental and adult educators towards designing activities and cultivating classroom practices that invite learners’ involvement and more closely align with learners’ unique purposes in coming to the college and the symbolic capital they bring with them. Furthermore, introducing all
students to classroom practices predicated upon contemporary writing pedagogy of engaging with others to better understand one’s positioning in the world, as Kerschbaum (2014) advocates, also serves to prepare students for composition and other classes, a stated goal of many but not all students. Recognizing and understanding the rhetorical cues students use to make meaning of their participation in developmental education, and the community college, facilitates reflexivity between instructors’ assumptions about the ways to be a student and the everyday practices in which instructors engage that contribute to those assumptions. Understanding the expectations of educators as powerful members of the college community allows for the presentation and discussion of these expectations with students, in turn challenging educators to consider these expectations vis-à-vis the resources students bring to class in their efforts to meet or resist them.

This dissertation brings together multiple conversations about the group I have identified as Generation 1 learners. Just as these multiple discourses structure the way we view students, the fields of developmental education, adult education and teaching English to speakers of other languages structure our perceptions of our possible responses to them—our imagined identities as educators. By not acknowledging Generation 1 learners’ existence in our educational theories and scholarship, we do not consider how best to reach this segment of our student population. This dissertation illustrates the as yet unfulfilled potential of developmental education to support learners and contributes to the body of educational research presenting how uninterrogated assumptions about students impact the possibilities for their participation and their identity projections (Harklau, 2000; Hull, Rose, Fraser, & Castellano, 1991). As a developmental educator,
an adult educator, and an English language teacher, I have multiple social roles with a very real-world and immediate responsibility to serve my students. In an effort to meet this obligation, and to begin future conversations, I conclude by offering practical implications stemming from the findings to support Generation 1 learners.

**Practical Implications**

In this section, I present practical implications to improve support for transitioning Generation 1 learners through increased collaboration between adult ESL and developmental education and through the four components of developmental education which include placement, advising, tutoring and coursework. Each subsection begins with recommendations for CCC and concludes with recommendations about increasing support at other institutions.

**Collaboration**

Adult Education, including adult ESL, plays an essential role in supporting Generation 1 learners’ transition. Learners’ comments about the disconnect between their ESL and developmental English classes illustrate the need for inter-departmental collaboration. The research also illuminated some learners’ struggle to access information about college application policies and procedures, including information about when, where, and how to apply. Beginning in adult ESL (and in collaboration with placement and advising resources), colleges should provide clear information explaining the transition process for learners. Mariam suggested the creation of an office for ESL students to answer their questions. Four of the learners transitioned through the B-Lab which has a mission of increasing educational access for potential students and a reputation for providing student support suggesting its suitability for assisting other
Generation 1 learners at CCC. B-Lab advisors could visit “ESL for Academic Success” and upper-level “Tuition-level ESL” courses to discuss the placement process and the similarities and differences between developmental and adult education. Faculty and staff in Adult and Developmental Education departments at all community colleges must recognize learners’ agency in taking the Compass rather than registering for additional ESL classes. In marking this difference to notice how learners’ transition decisions may not align with college expectations, college faculty and staff can better support learners’ informed decision making about when to transition.

At CCC, collaboration is rare because of programmatic differences in student tracking (i.e., unique data programs), curriculum and assessment measures, and department oversight and composition. An additional challenge for collaboration is that CCC’s adult education is provided almost exclusively by adjunct faculty, a position which has been found to be marginalized itself within the institution (Baynham & Simpson, 2010; Blumenthal, 2002). As Blumenthal suggests, adjunct ESL faculty’s frequently off-site teaching locations and lack of paid prep or professional development time afford them few opportunities to interact with colleagues, such as those in the developmental education department, many of whom are full-time, tenure-equivalent. Thus, the perception by some that developmental English is ranked above adult ESL (as evidenced by some instructors’ references to “Going back to ESL”) is further exacerbated by this implied ranking of the programs’ faculty. However, opportunities for collaboration could occur such as through shared professional development time (limited as it may be for adjunct faculty) for activities such as sharing syllabi or course goals.
An easy way to enhance CCC’s current and nearly non-existent inter-departmental collaboration could be through increased faculty communication. Discussions between department faculty could facilitate awareness of program sequences as well as basic information about curriculum and proficiency levels in the various classes offered by each department. Such information could assist ESL faculty in preparing learners for transition and thus better meet many learners’ goals. Learners who feel that ESL classes are connected to their transition plans may be less likely to transition before completing the sequence. Similarly, stronger communication would provide developmental educators with a greater understanding of their students’ ESL learning experiences. Additionally, discussion amongst faculty about the academic, linguistic and cultural expectations for being a college student might also reinforce the importance of making this symbolic capital explicit to learners as faculty are encouraged to mark difference by acknowledging the cultural assumptions underlying their expectations for students. Finally, increased communication could introduce developmental educators to some common cultural differences in educational norms which might already be common knowledge to ESL instructors; intercultural competence has long been recognized as an important component to effective language teaching (Sercu, 2006) and should be similarly cultivated in developmental educators who work with students from a variety of socioeconomic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. From this initial communication, CCC could move towards stronger interdepartmental collaboration, as discussed below.

At all institutions, strong collaboration has been shown to benefit learners. Research suggests the benefits of collaboration between Adult Education/ESL
departments and developmental education departments (Boylan 2004; McKay, McCoy Redshirt, & Hickey, 1998; Bunch & Kibler, 2015). Boylan’s (2004) study of collaboration identified several supportive factors at over 150 community colleges sampled nationally. Relevant factors for collaboration included administrative support; comparable faculty qualifications; integration of adult education students in other college programs; and shared resources, oversight, and institutional language. College commitment to collaboration at the four case study sites indicated the potential for better meeting the needs of students in transition.

Collaboration can also occur through co-requisite courses pairing a beginning level developmental English course and adult ESL. Bunch and Kibler (2015) explore four alternatives to the traditional adult ESL model that provide linguistic support for emergent multilinguals as they transition to transfer-credit college classes. One of the models they describe is the Chabot model of accelerated English (Hern, 2013) upon which CCC’s integrated reading and writing curriculum is based. Regardless of the form it takes, successful collaboration recognizes learners’ academic and career goals as central to transitioning and works to provide learners with the greatest access to on-campus resources for meeting their goals.

The research findings also confirm the importance of collaboration within developmental education supports and between community colleges and mental health resources. CCC’s Bridging Lab created a physical space for learners to receive support in the areas of placement testing and tutoring support, but Labiba’s experience in particular suggests the need for stronger collaboration between community colleges and non-academic counseling. As previously noted, like many community colleges, although
CCC had growing refugee, veteran and other at-risk populations, at the time of data collection, it lacked non-academic counseling for students.12

After I submitted my dissertation to the committee, I returned to CCC as a full-time instructor. Early after my return I met with Rachel, a B-Lab advisor, who told me that six months previously CCC had begun a partnership with two local counseling Master’s programs in which Master’s students complete their practicum experiences on-campus by counseling current CCC students who have been referred by the Director of Student Services. The program has a dedicated space on two of CCC’s three campuses. Since its creation, the program’s four practicum counselors have received 16 referrals. Rachel, who is also one of the practicum counselors, described the number of referrals as extremely low and attributed it to a complete absence of “marketing” and “bureaucracy” referencing the lack of advertising for the program around the college and the layers of college staff a student would need to meet with before being referred to the counselors (personal communication, March 29, 2017). Because there appears to be no information available to students about the service, students can only receive a referral to the Director of Student Services from a faculty or staff member. Based on CCC’s existing reporting system, a student might see as many as three other college employees before being referred to the counselors. Although the data for this study was completed before counseling services were available to students, I argue the need for increased student access to the counseling services, through increased publicity about the services and the ability for students to seek services without a referral.

12 Although various levels of student support and “intrusiveness” in academic counseling are widely reported in the literature, I could find no research on or resources for mental health counseling at the community college level.
Placement Testing

Placement testing was an additional challenge facing learners. Although multiple measures, such as combining test scores with high school GPA, have been shown to increase placement validity (Boylan, 2009; Nobel, Shiel, & Sawyer, 2004); CCC, like 93% of the community colleges surveyed by Gerlaugh, Thompson, Boylan & Davis (2007), made placement decisions based solely upon test scores. As a result, when the learners received test scores below the cut for developmental or transfer-level courses, they focused their studies almost exclusively on raising their test scores rather than improving their overall level of preparation for college. Most frequently, the learners did so through the B-Lab, which provided tutoring for re-testing as a major function of its student support. The lab was demonstrative of its commitment to raising test scores; when I worked there, advisors hung “high score” print-outs on a wall noting students’ Compass score point improvements, and the quarterly electronic newsletter published statistics of the number of students served and the number of pre-foundations and foundations (i.e., adult education or developmental) classes students bypassed through study with the lab. In his experience as an intensive advisor in the B-Lab, Lucas thought the test could provide “a sense of where a student ought to be placed,” but he expressed reservations about learners’ detailed examination of practice questions. Lucas’ experiences and my observations suggested that learners perceived being sent to the B-Lab as a confirmation of their already inflated sense of the importance of grammar and mechanics in transitioning. I asked Lucas about the message this sent about college and English classes; his response was unequivocal, “It’s not the right message. It’s not the right message” (April 6, 2016).
Instead, a better message for Generation 1 learners in particular might emphasize developing the reading comprehension skills that learners practiced with reading tutors or the detailed process Qadira developed through use of the reading modules in the online tutoring program. These skills appeared to be more directly related to developmental (and subsequent) English classes, and they were skills with which many of the learners struggled. Thanks to college support, B-Lab reading and writing tutors were developmental English instructors at the time of data collection. Later, when the Lab combined physical space with the Writing Center, learners could still meet with an intensive advisor in the lab or tutor. A shift from focusing on the product (i.e., test score improvement) to the process (i.e., reading for comprehension) would promote skills for learners’ success in college (not just test taking) and introduce learners to the philosophy of the Writing Center which now shares a physical space with the Lab.

The B-Lab fulfills an essential role on campus for potential students by connecting them to resources like advising and tutoring; refining the focus of that tutoring to support students’ transition beyond their placement test would enhance the Lab’s ability to meet its mission. At the same time, a shift in focus from test preparation to skills development may better align with learners’ purposes for transitioning and their larger academic or career goals. Even Qadira who felt herself to be a British English expert and spent several hours studying complex grammatical constructions did so because she believed they would help her achieve her career goal of becoming a pharmacist. Focusing on degree plans is a current function of the B-Lab whose advisors make inquiries about students’ interests during registration and often follow up with scheduling and registration assistance.
Colleges which currently lack a dedicated space for serving transitioning students could expand their existing placement and advising services to support ESL students interested in transitioning. Regardless of the type of transition assistance provided, placement testing should be based off of multiple measures (Boylan, 2009). When high school GPA is not available, such as the case with Generation 1 learners, additional data points should be collected, such as a writing sample. This could be obtained from ESL coursework or other measures. Testing companies such as College Board, which produces the Accuplacer, have options for essays included in their placement test. Although still a form of the placement test, such a writing sample may provide some additional information about a learner’s preparation for the linguistic expectations of being a college student. Additional research is needed to determine the predictive validity of such measures for placing Generation 1 learners, or other former ESL students, in developmental or transfer-credit level courses.

**Advising**

In spite of the dedicated presence of a support space for transitioning students and intensive advisors’ presence on campus, some of the learners in this study expressed frustration over their lack of information about transitioning and the college. Of the available advisors at CCC, intensive advisors were best prepared to support learners’ transitions. Learners sought intensive advising for supplemental writing tutoring and grammar instruction and did not appear to understand the purpose of intensive advising as a resource in transitioning; as a result, CCC’s intensive advising did not meet its full potential, what Earl (1988) and Krammer (2000) describe as “the student us[ing] the advisor as a resource whereby the student and advisor act in a problem solving role
together” (as cited in Fowler & Boylan, 2000, p. 3). In order to better support learners, intensive and other advising at CCC could be introduced and explained to learners while still enrolled in adult ESL. CCC’s intensive advising and B-Lab advisors are currently offered in an open office hours format through the B-Lab; the Adult Education and Developmental Education programs could jointly introduce learners to existing advising services through the B-Lab before they transition.

In spite of its limited success, the research illustrates intensive advising’s potential as a resource for colleges to support Generation 1 learners. Research documents the facilitative role of a caring advisor in increasing a transition program’s retention (Harrington, 2000; Saari, Storla, & Turtole, 2006); the presence of such an individual at the college seemed to be what Mariam sought when she recommended the creation of an office to answer ESL students’ questions. Access to transition advisors and intensive advisors could provide learners in ESL with information about test scores and transition options to increase learners’ abilities to make well-informed decisions about when and how to transition.

At the same time, transitioning learners in developmental English could also benefit from an increased awareness of the support available through intensive advising. In addition to the supplemental tutoring the learners in this study sought, intensive advisors are an out-of-class resource to discuss institutional expectations about being a college student, such as Labiba’s intensive advisor’s efforts to inform Labiba’s understanding of the expected ways of participating in a college classroom. Such discussions which may appear obvious, and therefore unnecessary, for students educated in an American K-12 setting can take place within advising sessions focused on
“academic competence, personal involvement, and developing or validating life purpose” (Ender and Wilkie, 2000, p. 119). Intensive advising thus may provide a fruitful opportunity for learners to develop symbolic capital which they can use to make informed, personal decisions about whether, when, and how compliance supports their desired identity enactment in the imagined community of the college.

Furthermore, intensive advising offers an opportunity for developmental educators at all institutions to recognize and mark difference in their interactions with Generation 1 learners. As Kerschbaum (2014) explains, marking difference by noting the discrepancies between an instructor’s assumptions or expectations about a student or the acceptable ways to be a student and individual students’ beliefs about the ways to participate as college students is necessary for understanding how certain identity assignments foreclose participation rights. Working collaboratively with learners to define academic competence repositions the learners as agents in their identity construction rather than empty vessels (Freire, 1970) in need of academic or cultural remediation.

Institutions which do not offer intensive advising could still connect learners with available advising services to support the learners’ transition decisions. Previous studies have documented how adult ESL instructors provide advice regarding transition for learners (Razfar & Simon, 2011). As discussed earlier, stronger collaboration between adult ESL and developmental education departments might increase these instructors’ ability to support their learners in an advising role.
**Tutoring**

Similar to the B-Lab, the CCC Writing Center was considered a safe space and important resource by learners; however, the findings indicated that tutoring could be strengthened through training in two areas: awareness of power and authority (Carino, 2003) and reading tutoring.

*Power and authority.* At times learners enacted student identities with more or less power vis-à-vis their tutor, and when their expectations of their own and the tutor’s authority did not align with tutor expectations, the learners’ identity as a student became a site of contestation with the potential for resulting miscommunication. The literature on power in the writing center (for example, Bokser, 2000; Palmeri, 2000) acknowledges that the non-directive approach and primary focus on higher order concerns espoused by most writing centers fails at times to address student concerns, as was the case when I observed Olan in the writing center.

Increased tutor awareness of learner expectations about the tutoring session and increased tutor training about the ways power and authority mediate the session could help tutors respond more effectively to learners by varying the authority the tutor invokes in the session. Carino (2003) argues that tutors must be taught where power and authority lie in a session, and who, when and to what degree that power and authority is claimed (p. 109). In particular, Carino advocates that tutors be more directive when tutoring an inexperienced student; indeed, learners in this study showed the greatest frustration when they recognized their own limited understanding of American academic writing conventions and the tutor’s relative expertise but the tutor failed to accept a position of authority.
Like many writing centers, the CCC Writing Center followed the maxim that tutoring should develop better writers rather than papers (North, 1984), and tutors exercised their authority to direct the session towards this goal. However, tutors’ description of a typical session with Labiba illustrated the fine line between providing a listening ear for student support and neglecting their training—as writing tutors, not counselors. Tutors’ encouragement of Labiba’s enactment of her refugee identity occurred within the context of an unequal power relationship which ultimately sanctioned the connection Labiba made between this identity enactment and her participation as a college student: a connection which threatened the legitimacy of her participation in the Writing Center and other college spaces. Labiba’s case in particular suggests how writing tutors should be mindful of the power they bring to a tutoring relationship and that they exercise great authority regardless of their interests in claiming it. This is particularly the case when working with students whose relative inexperience with the American educational system may not provide them with knowledge necessary for informed compliance or resistance within various college spaces.

At the same time, this study found that learners do not uniformly reject their authority to direct a session; tutors cannot assume that learners come to the session lacking their own power and agendas. As explained in Chapter 4, Olan’s interest in the “lower order concern” of pronoun use resulted from his recognition that edits in that area would have a greater impact on his grade than the organizational changes emphasized by his tutor. Olan’s experience in the Writing Center illustrated the need for tutors to be receptive to learners’ efforts to assert their own power and direct the session. As discussed with advising, responding to learners’ expectations for the tutoring session
requires the tutor to put first aside assumptions about learners and their needs in order to recognize how learners enact a college student identity within the space of a tutoring session, and second being prepared at times to take a more directive role in providing learners with information about American academic writing conventions.

Reading Support. Furthermore, as writing centers adapt to support students enrolling in Integrated Reading and Writing courses, writing tutors can find themselves expected to become reading coaches, as Jack and David described their work with Labiba. Little has been published on tutoring reading in the writing center; however, reading comprehension skills development could be applied in tutoring sessions to guide what Baker and Brown (1984) identify as the necessary abilities for reading comprehension: (1) clarifying the implicit and explicit task demands of a reading, (2) identifying important aspects, (3) focusing on main ideas rather than supporting details, (4) monitoring for comprehension, (5) engaging in self-checks of reading goals, and (6) taking corrective action if comprehension is impaired. With their non-evaluative role in assisting learner development, tutors could be trained to assist learners with the first, fourth and fifth abilities irrespective of the tutor’s personal knowledge about the reading assignment, and tutor training in reading skills like understanding unknown vocabulary words, identifying main ideas, and making inferences would allow tutors to assist learners with other skills. Casanave (1988) discusses potential application of comprehension monitoring (i.e., asking questions to check reading comprehension throughout a piece), reciprocal teaching (Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978) and think-aloud training (Bereiter & Bird, 1985). Modeling and interactive questioning and answers play an essential role in these strategies, suggesting their applicability to the tutoring
relationship. As writing centers evolve in response to integrated reading and writing courses, these models suggest the potential for tutoring to bridge the gap between the modes particularly for emergent multilinguals.

**Developmental English**

Based on the findings, I suggest that developmental English instructors must consider three factors to maximize their courses’ ability to meet the needs of transitioning Generation 1 learners. These factors include: the learners’ goals in taking the course, how the course presents institutional expectations to students, and how instruction explicitly promotes practice opportunities for learners’ participating in the academic community.

*Recognizing learner goals and identities.* Many learners desired a role with full participation in the English classroom; for these learners, reading and writing instruction, as well as information about American academic expectations must be explicitly introduced. Kerschbaum’s (2014) description of first-year writing classes as one of the few locations in which students are required to engage with others not of their choosing and confront perspectives divergent from their own is equally applicable to the developmental English classroom. And in fact, because of the student diversity present within many community colleges, opportunities for marking difference are even greater than in composition courses at four-year institutions.

The national redesign of developmental English through an integrated reading and writing model offers great potential for honoring learners’ previous experiences while also meeting their linguistic, academic and cultural needs. Instructors must recognize that many learners transition specifically for job training and could highlight
commonalities between course expectations and learner goals, such as Qadira’s pursuit of academic excellence in continuing her experience as a top student and preparing her for pharmacy school; instructors can also mark differences between learner goals or identity projections and college expectations, such as Al Share’s interest in developing his translation skills. Developmental English learning outcomes should encourage some assignment flexibility so that learners can direct their learning towards their own goals while demonstrating their ability to meet those of the institution. Assignments should provide space for students to enact their imagined and future identities, such as the biopoem Mariam wrote and then presented in class. However, the products need not be limited to narrative or personal writing. In fact, as a major proponent of the integrated model, Hern (2013) advocates “low-stakes collaborative practice” and “relevant, thinking-oriented curriculum” (n.p). Metacognitive instruction, such as demonstrated by Qadira and Mariam and described in the above implications for reading tutoring could further provide learners with targeted practice in required skill areas while inviting conversations about misaligned expectations within the classroom.

Explicitly introducing expectations. The findings illustrated how learners who lacked explicit information about academic or cultural expectations often struggled to demonstrate their desired level of compliance. Concepts such as the ownership or borrowing of words suggest a specific, complex worldview which learners may not share with the institution (Scollon, 1995). On the issue of plagiarism in particular, Pennycook (1996) advocates for an interrogation of how teachers’ own subjectivities shape their understanding of textual ownership. As Qadira’s case illustrated this exploration should be done in collaboration with learners so that they, too, can place themselves within the
discussion of how to discuss and borrow ideas in ways legitimate within their current context. Curry (2008) describes the need for explicit instruction integrating social capital into the basic writing/ESOL classroom; the present study suggests that other forms of symbolic capital must be explicitly introduced and examined in the classroom as students and instructors alike consider expectations for legitimate participation and instructors provide explicit instruction on how to meet those expectations. Institutional expectations must be clearly explained and learners offered opportunities to practice meeting them.

**Opportunities for practice.** Learners in this study required opportunities for developing linguistic and academic competencies, but instruction often focused on academic skills without attention to language development. In his description of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), Cummins (1999) stresses, “If English language learning students are transitioned into a ‘mainstream’ class in which the teacher knows very little about how to promote academic skills in a second language, then they are unlikely to receive the instructional support they need to catch up academically” (p. 4-5); unlike several examples in this study, Cummins does not put the onus on students to develop CALP independently. Two of Cummins’ recommendations for teachers are particularly relevant to the Integrated Reading and Writing (IRW) model (Hern, 2013) adapted by CCC. Like IRW, Cummins advocates for cognitively challenging instruction which requires “higher-order thinking skills rather than the low-level memorization and application skills that are tapped by typical worksheets or drill-and-practice computer programs” (p. 6). In addition, Cummins encourages the
integration of language instruction with academic content (i.e., from academic disciplines other than English).

There is limited attention to language instruction in the five perspectives that Stahl (2015) identifies as influencing IRW: comprehension as a construction of meaning (Rosenblatt, 1978), reader response process writing, the whole language movement (Goodman, 1986), discourse communities, and disciplinary literacy (Bartholomae & Petrosky, 1986). These theoretical underpinnings appeared to influence the department’s focus on critical reading, writing, and thinking and thus its inadvertent discouragement of “basic” skills; during my limited observation and according to their own admissions, the observed instructors provided little to no explicit language instruction on grammar and punctuation or decoding skills. Efforts to attend to the higher-order thinking in academic content resulted in rushing through (or disregarding) the basics of reading and writing. When addressed at all, grammar and punctuation instruction relied heavily upon two modules in the class’ online program. This program, while interactive, and the copy book exercise favored by Mariam’s ENGL0960 instructor were discouragingly similar to the drill-and-practice programs of which Cummins warns against and indicated a problematic lack of integration of academic content/critical thinking and language skills instruction. During the course of the research I observed that when faced with unmet linguistic and academic expectations, instructors (and writing tutors) reverted to focus on surface-level grammatical errors or lengthy explanations of how to meet academic expectations. Neither one of these tendencies promoted the development of learners’ ability to use language appropriately in academic contexts.
Instructors (and tutors) need support and basic training for working with students who are continuing to develop their linguistic and academic skills. Serving students requires first training in recognizing different varieties of English as legitimate. Increased teacher training on language varieties would allow instructors to recognize other varieties of English so that they value and build upon the language skills learners bring into the classroom. Such training and recognition might also support a shift away from the deficit mindset regarding “language barriers” to focus on building from learners’ previous linguistic experiences, which is supported by andragogy’s (Knowles, 1970) emphasis on past experience as a valuable learning tool.

Additionally, instructors must integrate language instruction within developmental education’s strong current support for academic content knowledge. Instructors must feel comfortable addressing grammar and language, and developmental English instructors must be willing to question the unilateral applicability of the theories guiding our integrated reading and writing instruction. When the field of developmental education acknowledges that theories based on conceptions of students as first-language English speakers do not accurately represent all students, they can recognize the opportunity to mark differences in the spaces between their learners and assumptions about students’ linguistic needs as well as the differing values assigned to those needs.

Importantly, instructor efforts to attend specifically (although not exclusively) to grammatical forms may support learners’ student identity enactment since many of the learners in this study sought acknowledgement of their English expert identities as well as further opportunities to develop their linguistic knowledge. Thus, although it does not do so in its current application, the IRW model could easily attend to the factors
Cummins notes as essential for academic language development in speakers of other languages.

**Supporting Generation 1 Learners’ Transitions as Social Justice in Education**

Ideally, the field of developmental education is committed to the social justice of bridging the achievement gap by supporting marginalized students’ access to the symbolic capital of and within higher education. My research and writing of this study are inextricably linked to my practice as an adult and developmental educator and my belief that we can improve our practice to promote social justice for transitioning Generation 1 learners. However, this study identifies the tensions which emerged at one community college from developmental educators’ struggle to recognize Generation 1 learners as a unique subset of the student body, and the resulting misalignment between learner and college expectations about student participation. By failing to acknowledge Generation 1 learners in our scholarship and teaching, we developmental educators leave these learners to independently navigate the liminal space between adult ESL and developmental English, and ironically, we broaden this space through our assumptions first of the ESL course trajectory and second of who is a student and how they should act accordingly.

Generation 1 learners in transition move not only between adult ESL and developmental education but also forward to imagined future identities empowered by their learning to meet the needs of their multiple social roles. A self-described “lost woman,” Rebecca’s reflection on her own movement forward includes important, but unspecified others, “When I'm graduated and then I will say, ‘Yeah, I’m off from lost, and they found me’” (November 24, 2014).
This dissertation calls on adult and developmental educators to both recognize the process by which Generation 1 learners achieve their goals by becoming “off from lost” and to deliver on our promises of educational access by finding the students who bridge the liminal space between adult ESL and college. Faculty must examine the cultural assumptions motivating their expectations about the legitimate ways to be a student, provide instructional support which is more receptive to learners’ transition goals, and be more explicit about how to meet those goals. The comprehensive developmental education model offers great potential to meet the needs of transitioning learners. By recognizing Generation 1 learners as a distinct group, educators can recognize these learners’ unique goals, strengths, and needs. It is only in doing so that we can live up to our responsibilities to support these learners as they transition into credit-level courses at the community college in order to enact their future academic identities within the institution, the workplace and society. In today’s political climate, it is essential that we recognize not only the ways immigrants enrich our country but the ways that we can promote their participation within the multiple communities of which they claim membership.
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Reagan, xx.


### Appendix A: Interviewees for Case Selection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Nationality/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Rationale for Inclusion/Exclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Al Share</td>
<td>(Northern) Sudanese</td>
<td>CCC adult ESL student Uniqueness: Over the age of 50 when data collection began; he lived alone (divorced from his wife and with grown children) and was also unemployed at the time of data collection; he wanted to transition to improve his English in order to translate his previously published books into English (not to earn a degree or become employed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belle</td>
<td>Nigerian</td>
<td>Had not transitioned by data collection time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esther</td>
<td>Kenyan</td>
<td>Transitioned before data collection began</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HaeJin</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Transitioned before data collection began</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob</td>
<td>Sudanese</td>
<td>Transitioned before data collection began</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaleh</td>
<td>Irani</td>
<td>Not eligible for transition because her high school diploma was not accepted by CCC; referred to GED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kossi</td>
<td>Togolese</td>
<td>Transitioned before data collection began</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labiba</td>
<td>Afghani</td>
<td>Multiple roles: mother, CCC adult ESL and B-Lab student, refugee Uniqueness: over the age of 50 when she transitioned; Third Culture Kid (Catalano, 2016) before becoming a refugee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>Transitioned before data collection began</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariam</td>
<td>Iraqi</td>
<td>Multiple social roles: student, mother; B-Lab student Uniqueness: Love migrant (Catalano, 2016); not employed outside of the home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minette</td>
<td>Congolese</td>
<td>Oral and receptive English skills were not high enough for interviewing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minh</td>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Could not attend CCC; was not planning to take adult ESL classes at CCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olan</td>
<td>Yezidi</td>
<td>Multiple social roles: CCC adult ESL student, father, employee, army interpreter refugee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qadira</td>
<td>(Northern) Sudanese</td>
<td>Multiple roles: mother, CCC adult ESL student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rafael</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>Had not transitioned by data collection time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>Brazilian</td>
<td>Was uncertain of educational plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>Nuer (South Sudanese)</td>
<td>Multiple social roles: CCC adult ESL and B-Lab student mother, employee, refugee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suaad</td>
<td>Iraqi</td>
<td>Did not enroll in classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zainab</td>
<td>Yezidi</td>
<td>Generation 1.5 student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zarah</td>
<td>Iraqi</td>
<td>Had not transitioned by data collection time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Bold-faced font indicates interviewees who became participants.

2 Although many interviewees were refugees, “refugee” was only considered to be one of the interviewee’s roles if s/he referred to the experience as meaningful to their education.
Appendix B: Letters of Informed Consent

Informed Consent for Transitions Lab/Southeast Community College Research

Based upon your registration in the Transitions Lab, or English as a Second Language class, and your self-identification as a non-native speaker of English (NNS), you are invited to participate in an extended study (about one year in length) of NNS students at Southeast Community College. This study is focused on how NNS students use school and community resources as they take classes at the college. The study is a part of the researcher’s requirements for a Ph.D. at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Participation in this study would involve the following:
- In-take and exit interviews (answering questions at the beginning and end of the study). In addition, your responses to the in-take and exit forms that are required for Transitions Lab registration or placement into the ESL program will also be used in the study’s data analysis.
- If you are a Transitions Lab student and decide not to participate or withdraw from the study, you will still complete interviews with the Transitions Lab.
- Approximately six single class period observations (through the course of the study, the researcher will watch how you study and interact with others in the Transitions Lab, in your classes, in your appointments with your advisor, and in the place where you usually study).
- Follow up interviews (answering questions after observations). These interviews will occur on campus after classroom observations or in your place of study following the off-campus observation. Interviews will take approximately 45 minutes each. Follow up interviews will be audio-recorded.
- Photocopied samples of your classwork and other assignments, including notes, essays, tests/quizzes, homework and in-class activities.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your decision to participate or not will NOT affect your status in the Transitions Lab, the ESL program or Southeast Community College, nor will it affect your relationship with the researchers, Southeast Community College, or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. If you participate in observations, you will receive four hours of private English language tutoring provided by the researcher.

There are few risks for participating in this study; however, there is a risk that your privacy might be violated as the researcher observes you during classes or while studying. There is also the risk that your data may not remain confidential. In order to minimize these risks, the researcher will consult you regarding observation times and locations, you have the right to refuse to answer any questions, and all data will be stored on a secured server through Southeast Community College. Your name will also be removed before the data are analyzed.

Sometimes participants have questions or concerns about their rights. In this case, please contact Emily Suh at 402-437-2884 or Dr. Jenelle Reeves at jreeves2@unl.edu. You can also call the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Research Compliance Services Office at 402-472-6965. You can withdraw your consent to participate at any time during the study by contacting the researcher.

Please initial and sign to provide your consent on the following page.

Please write your initials on the line below:

118 Henzlik Hall / P.O. Box 880355 / Lincoln, NE  68588-0355 / (402) 472-2231 / FAX (402) 472-2837
Advisor Consent for Research on ELL Students: Gateway to College

Your advisee, ____________________________, has agreed to participate in a series of observations for research involving Non-Native Speaker access to and success in college. This research involves an observation of an advising session and short follow up interview with the Advisor (for a total of 2-2.5 hours). The observation will be at a date and time mutually agreed upon by you and the student research participant. The follow up interview will be conducted after the observation and will occur in the SCC conference room or private library space. The interview will be audio-recorded. Data collected from the observation and interview will not include your name or identifying information and will be securely stored on the researcher’s Southeast Community College N drive.

There are no risks associated with this study. The research will be used to evaluate the resources Non-Native Speakers of English use on the Southeast Community College campus and their effectiveness in navigating the college system.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and will not affect your relationship with the researcher, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln or Southeast Community College. Should you choose to withdraw your consent, you are free to do so at any time during the study.

If you have questions about this research, you may contact Emily Suh at (402) 437-2884, esuh@southeast.edu or Dr. Jenelle Reeves at jreeves2@unl.edu. You may also contact the Research Compliance Services Office at (402) 472-6965 or irb@unl.edu.

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. By signing below, you agree that you have read and understand the consent document and that you will participate in the research. You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

I agree to be audio-recorded.

__________________________  __________________________
Participant’s Signature              Date

__________________________
Print Name

Researchers:
Emily Suh esuh@southeast.edu
(402) 437-2884
Dr. Jenelle Reeves jreeves2@unl.edu
Tutor/Instructor Consent Document for Transitions Lab: Gateway to College

Your student, __________________________, has agreed to participate in a series of observations for research involving Non-Native Speaker access to and success in college. This research involves a classroom/tutoring session observation and short follow up interview with the instructor or tutor (for a total of .5-2.5 hours). The observation will be at a date and time mutually agreed upon by you and the student research participant. The interview will be arranged for after the observation and will occur in an SCC conference room; the interview and tutoring session may be audio-recorded. In addition, samples of student work containing your feedback may be collected from the student.

There are no risks associated with this study. The research will be used to evaluate the resources Non-Native Speakers of English use on the Southeast Community College campus and their effectiveness in navigating the college system.

Data collected from the classroom observation and interview will not include your name or identifying information and will be securely stored on the researcher’s Southeast Community College N drive.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and will not affect your relationship with the researcher, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln or Southeast Community College. Should you choose to withdraw your consent, you are free to do so at any time during the study.

If you have questions about this research, you may contact Emily Suh at (402) 437-2884, esuh@southeast.edu or Dr. Jenelle Reeves at jreeves2@unl.edu. You may also contact the Research Compliance Services Office at (402) 472-6965 or irb@unl.edu.

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. By signing below, you agree that you have read and understand the consent document and that you will participate in the research. You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

_____ I agree to be audio-recorded.

Participant's Signature ____________________________ Date ____________________________

Print Name ____________________________

Researchers:
Emily Suh esuh@southeast.edu (402) 437-2884
Dr. Jenelle Reeves jreeves2@unl.edu
## Appendix C: Case Study Protocol Questions (Modified from Yin, 2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Guiding Question</th>
<th>Likely Data Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (Questions asked of interviewees, such as during interviews)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Write a list of all of your responsibilities. Describe a time when you were responsible for more than one thing at the same time. How did you decide to leave ESL? Describe your previous educational experiences. Who on campus can you ask for help with college? Describe a time when you asked one of these people for help. List your college experiences this quarter; describe a memorable experience. What does it mean to be a college student? What are the things that college students have to do?</td>
<td>Initial interview: These questions will provide information about the learners’ perceptions of themselves as college students and individuals as well as inform the types of observation during the case study (i.e., if a learner describes using the tutoring center or attending office hours, I will perform an observation of such an interaction and then a follow up interview with the student).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (Questions asked of an individual case during the study)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>How do Generation 1 Learners describe experiencing transition? How does the learner conceptualize transition within life goals? Which developmental education resources (i.e., advising, testing, courses, tutoring) does the learner access? How does the learner access resources, including information? What obstacles does the learner face in transitioning? How do learners manage competing responsibilities of family, employment and education?</td>
<td>Data will include interviews, observations, artifacts from observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do learner perceptions of their transition experience align with their on-campus support (i.e., instructors, tutors, advisors)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong> (Questions facilitating between case comparisons)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there similarities between the personal characteristics or resources to which learners attribute their success?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there similarities between the aspects of transition learners cite as the most challenging?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are learners accessing similar resources on campus?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed case study write ups for individual learners; comparisons between learner and resource assessments through discourse analysis of observation and interview language; domain analysis of aspects of transition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4</strong> (Questions asked of the entire study, looks beyond the protocol’s scope for individual cases but is necessary for understanding the project as a whole)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What unique strengths do Generation 1 Learners bring to their transition experience?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the most challenging aspects of transition for Generation 1 Learners?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are institutions acknowledging and capitalizing on these strengths?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are they responding to these challenges?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data on other community college programs, 2nd comps question</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D: Questions for Developmental Educators

Questions for Developmental Educators

Questions for Instructors
Describe the learner as a student.
What activities does the learner do to show what kind of student they are?
   How does the learner present as college ready, or not?
Describe the learner’s level of language comprehension.
Describe the learner’s level of preparation for class.
Describe the learner’s areas of strength.
Describe the learner’s areas for improvement.
What are the main points of emphasis for the class?
What are the most important skills for a college student?
Describe a memorable experience working with the learner.

Questions for Tutors
Describe the learner as a student.
What activities does the learner do to show what kind of student they are?
   How does the learner present as college ready, or not?
Describe the learner’s level of language comprehension.
Describe the learner’s level of preparation for a session.
Describe the learner’s areas of strength.
Describe the learner’s areas for improvement.
What occurs during a typical session with the learner?
What are the most important skills for a college student?
How frequently do you meet with the learner?
Describe a memorable experience working with the learner.

Questions for Advisors
Describe the learner as a student.
What activities does the learner do to show what kind of student they are?
   How does the learner present as college ready, or not?
Describe the learner’s level of language comprehension.
Describe the learner’s level of preparation for a session.
Describe the learner’s areas of strength.
Describe the learner’s areas for improvement.
What occurs during a typical meeting with the learner?
What are the most important skills for a college student?
How frequently do you meet with the learner?
Describe a memorable experience working with the learner.
Appendix E: Taxonomic Analysis of Learner Perceived Ways to Be a Student

Appendix E presents the results of a taxonomic analysis of learner generated speech from interviews and observations. The table contains five levels organizing the Generation 1 learners’ verbatim speech describing different ways to be a student. The chart can be read from left to right, so that the most specific actions or steps (included terms) explain subsequent more general ways (cover terms) to be a student, and cover terms in turn become included terms in a more general domain analysis. All but the right-most column contain verbatim speech although some verb tenses were changed to enhance readability. Parentheses after a term, such as the cell “Summarizing (something the other person’s idea),” indicate two different expressions with overlapping language by learners; in this example, the row can be read as “Summarizing and Summarizing the other person’s idea are ways to read.”

When learners indicated more than one included term was associated with a single cover term, this information was documented in the table by merged cells. For example, the first two rows can be read together as “Translating it in my mind and Googling some words I didn’t see are ways to find the right word, which is a way to read, which is a way to study, which is a way to be a student.”
Table 7: Taxonomic Analysis of Ways to Be a Student

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translate it in my mind</th>
<th>(is a way to) Find the right word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Google words I didn’t see</td>
<td>Select the important thing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use the electronic dictionary on my phone</td>
<td>Find/Focus about the thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consult a lot of dictionaries</td>
<td>Figure out main idea for the topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See chapter</td>
<td>Figure out the main details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preread really quick for the introduction</td>
<td>Figure out which is the support details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look what the talk is</td>
<td>(is a part of) Summarizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure out the first and second lines</td>
<td>(something the other person’s idea)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make a lot of question in my mind</td>
<td>(is a way to) Read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read the end of the chapter carefully</td>
<td>(is a way to) Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look for the thesis of the paragraph</td>
<td>(is a way to) Be a student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure out if any sentence makes sense for the introduction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write it in the journal (is a step in)</td>
<td>Writing (is a way to)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dream my essay (is a way to)</td>
<td>Be a student cont'd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make headlines</td>
<td>Keep thinking to find the evidence in the essay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make my ideas clear</td>
<td>Follow the points for the body paragraph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make a sentence for the dimension impression</td>
<td>Give your idea about what you read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow the points for the body paragraph</td>
<td>Use/Add a lot of my own words, not just copy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow points</td>
<td>Focus for the essay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open my computer</td>
<td>Open the essay on the computer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write the essay on my computer</td>
<td>Write a first sentence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put all my notes</td>
<td>Slowly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make my ideas clear</td>
<td>Write a first sentence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make a sentence for the dimension impression</td>
<td>Follow the points for the body paragraph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go in the dictionary</td>
<td>Write the essay on the computer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave it, get my mind</td>
<td>Make my ideas clear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refresh my mind</td>
<td>Make a sentence for the dimension impression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write fast without the attention to the small details</td>
<td>Follow the points for the body paragraph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take a break, then come back</td>
<td>Make a sentence for the dimension impression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write a first sentence</td>
<td>Make my ideas clear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make your idea about what you read</td>
<td>Follow the points for the body paragraph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make my ideas clear</td>
<td>Make a sentence for the dimension impression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow the points for the body paragraph</td>
<td>Make your idea about what you read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go in the dictionary</td>
<td>Make my ideas clear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave it, get my mind</td>
<td>Make a sentence for the dimension impression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refresh my mind</td>
<td>Follow the points for the body paragraph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write fast without the attention to the small details</td>
<td>Follow the points for the body paragraph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step</td>
<td>Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Write fast without the attention to the small details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Start to write the introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Give your idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Make organization for each paragraph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Preread again all the whole paragraphs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Make sure all of the things is correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Go to writing center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Do Smarthinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Summarize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Make a conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Follow grammar rule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Look on the grammars, punctuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Do the final draft with my classmate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Add the title for the essay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Submit the essay on the Moodle for the turnit essay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Look on the grammars, punctuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Do the final draft with my classmate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Add the title for the essay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Submit the essay on the Moodle for the turnit essay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Check the similarity for that essay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Print it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Give it to her [instructor]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>(is a way to)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read newspaper</td>
<td>Practice something new</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch TV without subtitles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translate movies</td>
<td>Know to communicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search for/watch YouTube videos</td>
<td>Stand in front of the class and talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Try to Speak a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make my voice louder so he can hear me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>See which thing instructor require</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do whatever like he or she</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus on/listen to teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Getting ideas/words from the teacher’s mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus on following the grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Take Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See which things are required</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write it down on a piece of paper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search for websites to study grammar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use like daily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repractice exercises</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read something grammar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Read the book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(is a way to)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus on following the grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>Comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t make a procrastinating for the duties next day</td>
<td>(is a way to) Try hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Say that “I can do it”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn any something I don’t know</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Even your English is not good, keep asking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t let one second waste the time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write in your language; go home translate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask kids</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find/Ask the tutor</td>
<td>(is a way to) Get help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask (the master or manager of the school, the teacher, the tutor, my friends)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make my voice louder so he can hear me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[e]Mail her [the instructor]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put my hand up I say, “Can I get help with this stuff?”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to the advisor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Generation 1 learners identified five overall ways to be students, including: Studying, Talking American English, Following the Instructor, Trying Hard, and Getting Help.