Students’ Perspectives on a Developmental Critical Reading Course: A Qualitative Inquiry

Leah Deasy
St. John Fisher College, ld02057@sjfc.edu

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Abstract
Developmental courses in higher education require significant investments in human and financial resources. With low pass rates, retention, and graduation rates, there is concern that these courses are not meeting the institutional outcomes for which they were originally designed. The purpose of the study was to identify if the students applied any skills learned in a critical reading developmental course and in an introductory college-level course. The study was conducted using a qualitative, phenomenological research design. This method examined nine student perspectives toward college and their learning gained in the critical reading developmental course and in the introductory college-level course. The participants were able to identify eight skills and strategies they used in the critical reading developmental course. Also, all of the students believed that the skills they learned in the CRDC did transfer to other courses. However, not all skills transferred to the introductory college-level courses identified. There are four recommendations learned from the study. First, to teach the 19 skills in the classroom in a different format than what is currently being taught. Second, developmental instructors, faculty, staff, and administrators should be better informed on the purpose of developmental education courses and remove the stigma surrounding developmental education in higher education. Next, for faculty and staff that work with students in developmental education to continue to read research articles to continue to support this underrepresented population. Last, to utilize a first-year experience including more aggressive academic advising for students entering community colleges.

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Students’ Perspectives on a Developmental Critical Reading Course:

A Qualitative Inquiry

By

Leah Deasy

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Ed.D. in Executive Leadership

Supervised by
Kim VanDerLinden, Ph.D.

Committee Member
C. Michael Robinson, Ed.D.

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education
St. John Fisher College

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Dedication

I would like to acknowledge the support and guidance I received from my dissertation chair and advisor, Dr. Kim VanDerLinden, who was tremendously knowledgeable about community colleges, gracious with her time, extremely patient, and kept me on track with my research. I would like to thank Dr. C. Michael Robinson, my dissertation member, for his feedback and time.

My many friends, colleagues at SUNY Jefferson, all members of Cohort 2 at St. John Fisher College, and most importantly, my family: I cannot thank enough for keeping me focused. In addition to my parents, my three children, Dakota, Aliza, and Loralei, have kept me inspired to complete my doctorate. Each of them inspired in different ways. Dakota would encourage me by telling me, “If anyone can do it, you can.” Aliza would say, “Just think, the program is almost over,” even though this was not long after the program began. Loralei created my first name plate with my upcoming credentials for my desk, using a brown square piece of wood and a black sharpie. Most importantly, I cannot say how grateful I am to the love of my life and soulmate, my husband, Shaun. We have been together for 22 years, and I have been attending college for over 10 of them. I appreciate that you believe in higher education, and you have supported me throughout all of it. You have been such an amazing support for me. We have completed this journey together, and for that, I cannot say how incredibly grateful I am.
Biographical Sketch

Leah Deasy is currently an Assistant Professor of Reading and Liaison (Chair) of the Committee on Developmental Education at SUNY Jefferson in Watertown, NY. After completing her Master’s degree in Literacy (2003) from SUNY Oswego and her CAS in Disabilities Studies (2009) from Syracuse University, she attended St. John Fisher College starting in the fall of 2013 and began doctoral studies in the Ed.D. Program in Executive Leadership. Ms. Deasy pursued her research focusing on students who first passed a developmental reading course and then enrolled in an introductory college course, under the direction of Dr. Kim VanDerLinden and Dr. C. Michael Robinson and received the Ed.D. degree in 2016.
Abstract

Developmental courses in higher education requires significant investments in human and financial resources. With low pass rates, retention, and graduation rates, there is concern that these courses are not meeting the institutional outcomes for which they were originally designed. The purpose of the study was to identify if the students applied any skills learned in a critical reading developmental course and in an introductory college-level course. The study was conducted using a qualitative, phenomenological research design. This method examined nine student perspectives toward college and their learning gained in the critical reading developmental course and in the introductory college-level course. The participants were able to identify eight skills and strategies they used in the critical reading developmental course. Also, all of the students believed that the skills they learned in the CRDC did transfer to other courses. However, not all skills transferred to the introductory college-level courses identified. There are four recommendations learned from the study. First, to teach the 19 skills in the classroom in a different format than what is currently being taught. Second, developmental instructors, faculty, staff, and administrators should be better informed on the purpose of developmental education courses and remove the stigma surrounding developmental education in higher education. Next, for faculty and staff that work with students in developmental education to continue to read research articles to continue to support this underrepresented population. Last, to utilize a first-year experience including more aggressive academic advising for students entering community colleges.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The number of developmental education courses in higher education has been steadily rising over the past decade to accommodate students who are not academically prepared for college-level courses (Arendale, 2010; Zimpher, 2014). Because so many students are taking developmental courses in higher education, there is a concern about cost. The cost to the student, the institution, and the community. Critics state that taxpayers should not be required to pay twice for the same learning opportunities, once in high school and again in college (Bahr, 2008). While the cost of remediation to the taxpayer is substantial, the student bears the brunt of the financial cost that includes psychological and opportunity costs (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010). While enrolled in developmental courses, students incur debt, spend time and money, and lose potential wages (Confronti, Sanchez, & McClarty, 2014). Because of the added classes, many students become discouraged and will not complete their degree or go on to transfer to a 4-year university. Furthermore, many of these students are high school graduates and are surprised when they learn they need developmental courses that ultimately frustrate and discourage students (Bailey et al., 2010).

As defined by Bringsjord (2014) developmental education courses are non-credit courses and are course levels that are typically numbered under the 100-level. In contrast, credit-bearing courses are numbered above 100 and are considered college-level courses. Non-credit developmental education courses do not count toward students’ graduation
requirements. However, students may be granted financial aid for these credits (Bringsjord, 2014).

The Community College Research Center (2014) indicated that 68% of community college students take at least one developmental education course. Of those students in developmental education classes, only 28% go on to earn a degree in eight years (CCRC, 2014). The majority of community colleges require students to enroll in developmental courses based on test score(s) earned on college placement tests (Arendale, 2010; Conforti, Sanchez, & McClarty, 2014; Hodara, Jaggars, & Karp, 2012; Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2011; Perin, 2006). A common practice at community colleges is to mandate successful completion of these developmental courses before allowing a student to enroll in college-level courses (Arendale, 2010; Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2011; Perin, 2006).

Published in the *Washington Post* (Douglas-Gabriel, 2016), there is a widely held belief that only students attending community colleges are enrolled in developmental courses. In reality, 45% of students enrolled in developmental courses are from middle- and upper-income families, and nearly half of all students attend public and private 4-year colleges, while the remainder are enrolled in community colleges. Across all higher learning institutions, students report taking two developmental courses during their first year of college (Douglas-Gabriel, 2016). In addition to the cost, students who started in developmental courses are 74% more likely to drop out of college. Within the State University of New York (SUNY) program, the overall number of students who placed into developmental courses between the fall of 1996 and fall of 2012 increased by 68% (Bringsjord, 2014). Approximately one out of every two traditionally aged, first-time, and
full-time matriculated students at SUNY community colleges reported taking a developmental course (Bringsjord, 2014). Students pay an average of $3,000 and borrow nearly $1,000 for developmental coursework. The costs for developmental courses are four times higher for wealthy students, whose families earn more than $113,440 a year and whose children attend private 4-year colleges. The students who are in developmental courses at private institutions suggest that colleges are enrolling low-achieving, high-income students (Douglas-Gabriel, 2016).

By the end of the first decade of the 2000s, developmental education had become the focus of expanded research with many media reports, many newly established organizations’ interests, and the attention of legislative reforms (Boylan & Trawick, 2013). Institutions are carefully observing developmental education because of the resources required to remediate students. While developmental programs help people increase human capital, there is a high cost to remediation because of the high-risk nature of the students (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Retention rates, graduation, and transfer rates are also monitored. Arendale (2010) stated there are many concerns associated with developmental education in higher education. First, developmental education was created for students who were unprepared for the accepted standards at post-secondary schools in the United States. Secondly, higher standards and greater access to post-secondary institutions created a gap in learning for students throughout the inception of higher education in the United States. With the increase of students being placed into developmental courses, many United States community colleges are conducting research and collecting data to determine the efficacy and benefit of developmental education at
the post-secondary level, because there is a cost to the institution and a cost to the student (Arendale, 2010; Boylan & Trawick, 2013; Bringsjord, 2014; Perin, 2006).

Developmental courses were designed to teach underprepared students skills applicable to subsequent college-level coursework (Arendale, 2010; Kalamkarian, Raufman, & Edgecombe, 2015). The significant number of students enrolled in developmental courses, combined with low pass rates and low graduation rates, suggests that developmental courses are not meeting the instructional outcomes for which they were originally designed. Consequently, there is a need for institutions to examine the effectiveness of the developmental courses in supporting students’ skills in their subsequent courses.

**Statement of the Problem**

Developmental education requires a substantial investment in human and financial resources. For example, in 2012, the State University of New York (SUNY) community colleges spent more than 70 million dollars on developmental education (Morgan, 2012). The cost was for paying faculty, support staff, and tutoring.

Also, there is a cost to the student who is placed into developmental courses. Students pay for classes with student loans, financial aid, or out-of-pocket remittance, but they do not receive college credit (Perin, 2006). Also, taking developmental courses prolongs the time to graduation for these students.

Research studies have identified mixed results of the outcomes for students who begin their college career in developmental education classes. Some quantitative studies reveal low retention rates, low course pass rates, low graduation rates, and low transfer rates to 4-year institutions (Horn, McCoy, Campbell, & Brock, 2009; Hughes & Scott-
Clayton, 2011; Secolsky, Krishnan, & Judd, 2013), while other studies reveal more positive results of increased pass rates (Arendale, 2010; Perin, 2006; Snyder, 2002).

Goudas and Boylan (2012) stated that since 2007, foundations have funded some studies in developmental education, such as the Bill Gates Foundation, Complete College America, and Educate Reform Now. The results are marked by varying qualities of methodology and the data analysis is accompanied by conflicting and sometimes inconsistent conclusions. However, Goudas and Boylan (2012) also stated that if the research were read in depth, it would be clear the data do not support the claims of inefficiency. The majority of researchers believe that after students complete developmental classes, they should perform better and have higher graduation and transfer rates, and have grade point averages (GPAs) higher than their peers who did not take developmental courses (Goudas & Boylan, 2012).

Boylan (2002) stated that failure to ensure that there is a match between developmental courses and the college-level courses is one of the biggest mistakes a developmental program can make. He further argued that if there is a weak link between the two, students will be unsuccessful in the college curriculum, and the developmental education program will be considered a failure. Moreover, a gap in the literature shows that few, if any, qualitative studies have been conducted from the perspective of the student to examine if developmental skills align with credit-bearing college courses at the community college-level (Bremer et al., 2013; Jeffcoat et al., 2014; Kuhn & Rundle-Thiele, 2009). Therefore, further research from the perspective of the students who completed developmental education courses and subsequently enrolled in an introductory college course would be beneficial.
Theoretical Rationale

Since the inception of community colleges, social mobility has been promoted for students who are underprepared for upward mobility (Auerbach, 2016). Community colleges’ missions are to extend opportunities to students and serve as an agent for education, social selection, social equality, and to increase the economic efficiency of students (Brint & Karabel, 1989). However, Brint and Karabel (1989) stated that while there is immense support from 4-year colleges and universities for students to attend community college, there was fear from those 4-year colleges and universities that the masses of ill-prepared students would be clamoring at their gates.

Social mobility, as defined by Auerbach (2016), is allowing an overlap between social mobility and structural mobility to be taken into account in a larger paradigm of mobility in American society. Social mobility is a growth mindset toward status; a person’s status is something that can change, and climbing the socio-economic ladder is possible (Destin & Kosko, 2016).

Levin (2008) stated the purpose of higher education is to improve the position of students in the acquisition of basic rights and duties. For many, community colleges are the first step toward earning a college degree and bridging cultures and educational gaps by offering students a chance to become college students regardless of past academic performance and family background (Morest, 2013). Since 1965, the focus was on community colleges because the promise of those colleges was centered on the individual advancement of social mobility (Levin, 2008). However, for students who are disadvantaged, the institution serves as a place of containment for a large segment of the population (Levin, 2008).
Destin and Kosko (2016) stated that American society provides opportunities for people to succeed because equality is an ongoing issue in the United States that often prevents individuals from moving into a higher status and achieving the same dreams as the majority of people. The reasons for this could be that the majority has better access to public or private schools or find they live in a geographic area that is more conducive to social mobility than others (Auerbach, 2016).

Auerbach (2016) determined that to achieve social mobility, it is dependent upon a person’s action. Therefore, people need to develop and hone skills, receive career training, take advantage of government services, and work toward their goals. However, inequality is an issue in the United States, one that prevents people from moving to a higher level and achieving goals. Students who have better access to public services and schools are more able to achieve social mobility than those students who do not. The biggest indicator of social mobility is intergenerational mobility, that is, children tend to attain the same social status as their parents and grandparents did. Institutions of higher learning make choices and discriminate in their treatment of students, mostly students with disabilities and students in programs that have low institutional prestige such as developmental education (Levin, 2008).

Morest (2013) reported there is a debate on whether community colleges offer social mobility. For many, community colleges bridge cultures and educational gaps by providing students with a chance to become college students regardless of their past academic performance. Community colleges enroll large portions of under-prepared students, making it necessary for more than half of first-time students to enroll in developmental math and English courses. Also, one of the most important roles played by
community colleges is providing first-generation college students with access to higher education. Also, community colleges have multiple sequential levels of developmental courses, making it possible for students to enter community colleges and requiring a full year of developmental courses, thereby making community colleges critical in the preservation of the American ideal of social mobility.

Destin and Kosko (2016) stated that American society provides opportunities for people to succeed and experience social mobility; however, there is not equality for all individuals. Also, the authors stated that to understand whether social mobility is possible, motivation and focus have an effect on people’s idea of whom they might become. Some students know the cost of higher education, but they do not understand what resources are available to them. Yet, reaching college does not ensure success. College climates toward diversity can either support or impair the motivation of those from underprivileged backgrounds. Lastly, the authors believed that for students to gain an understanding of higher education, institutions can demonstrate the tangible benefits of education and illustrate what programs exist to support students.

Muller (2015) stated that increased participation in post-secondary education among United States students has been coupled with debates over opportunity, access, curriculum, and outcomes. The hurdles associated with college completion are central to the discussion of social mobility. Therefore, sending a signal to students who they are not college ready may lower a student’s self-esteem, be stigmatizing, or represent an additional barrier to college success (Clotfelter, Ladd, Muschkin, & Vigdor, 2015).

Social mobility is designed for people to change or move up in social status, pay, or job through education. When students enter college in developmental education
courses this will impact access and lessen the opportunity of social mobility because taking developmental courses will lengthen the time of graduation. If a student does not pass college-level classes, this too will lessen the ability of social mobility.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to identify, from the perspective of the student, what skills were learned in the Critical Reading Developmental Course (CRDC) and then used in one of the subsequent introductory courses. The study explores whether the developmental course was successful in teaching students the proper skills and if the students applied those skills to a college-level introductory course.

**Research Question**

The research question addressed in this study is:

From the perspective of the student, what skills learned in the Critical Reading Developmental Course were applied in the following community college-level introductory courses: Introduction to Sociology (SOC 144), Introduction to Psychology (PSY 133), American History to 1877, (HIS 150), American History 1877 to Present (HIS 151), State and Local Government (POL 122), Elementary Statistics (MTH 144), and Algebra, Functions, and Modeling (MTH 155)?

**Potential Significance of the Study**

There are three potential areas of significance to the research study. The first is identifying if students believe a course is beneficial to their overall college learning experience. If the students feel the course is useful, the benefits could have an overall impact on their continued success in college.
The next significance would be for the community college. The results could indicate that the skills learned in the CRDCs were serving the students in the introductory courses. However, if the results suggest that the students did not learning the necessary skills, then the study could assist in curriculum redesign. Lastly, the results of the study could be a topic for professional development for faculty who teach developmental education courses by trying to align the courses to subsequent courses. Furthermore, work could be shared between developmental education instructors and introductory course instructors.

Currently, the SUNY system has started to ascertain the efficacy of developmental courses. SUNY created a benchmark that 75% of students should be able to pass the developmental course, which would also increase retention and graduation rates (Bringjord, 2014). The SUNY system is considering alternatives, including the possible shift of offering developmental courses from the fall and spring semesters to summer workshops to enable students to begin college-level courses faster. The SUNY system is also looking at standardizing college placement test scores (Zimpher, 2014). Therefore, the third possible significance would be to inform policies at the system level.

**Definitions of Terms**

*Critical Reading Developmental Course (CRDC)* – A non-credit-bearing class of instruction at SUNY Jefferson Community College. The formal name of the class is: “Critical Learning Skills (CLS) 099; Critical Reading and Thinking Skills Course.”

*Community College* – Two-year public institution of higher learning (Arendale, 2010).
Developmental Education Course – Non-credit-bearing class of instruction, some of that are designated by faculty as “credit-equivalent remedial courses” and bear the imputed credit that counts toward financial aid eligibility but not degree completion. Other non-credit remedial courses do not count toward either financial assistance or graduation (Bringsjord, 2014).

College Introductory Courses – Developmental classes of instruction at SUNY Jefferson (HIS 150, HIS 151, MTH 144, PSY 133, and SOC 144) are foundational instruction classes for some students enrolled in the first or second semester of community college. At community colleges, it is a common occurrence to prevent students from taking credit-bearing courses until they complete the developmental course(s) (Arendale, 2010; Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2011; Perin, 2006).

Remedial – A term used by policymakers and politicians that has a negative connotation regarding developmental course work, and it is primarily employed in a deficit model (Kozeracki, 2005).

Skills – Student application of reading strategies to their college readings (Snyder, 2002).

Social Mobility – The pursuit of a better life in modern society as a result of changes in occupation, wealth, or income (Auerbach, 2016).

Chapter Summary

Students who are unprepared for standards set at post-secondary schools in the United States enroll in developmental education courses. Therefore, it is important to understand from the perspective of the student if they feel they transferred skills learned in the developmental course to the college-level introductory course. Since 2005, the
number of developmental education courses in higher education has been steadily rising, in order to accommodate students who are not prepared for college-level courses.

Because so many students are taking developmental courses in higher education, there is concern about costs to the student, the institution, and the community. While enrolled in developmental courses students incur debt, spend time and money, and lose potential wages (Conforti et al., 2014). This will all impact the students’ ability for social mobility.

Chapter 2 describes the empirical research that exists on developmental courses in higher education. The review of literature includes research conducted on the most commonly used college placement test (CPT). Also, research on the academic performance of developmental education students, student outcomes in developmental education, and the course structure and alignment between developmental courses and college-level courses is discussed. The research design, methodology, and analysis are discussed in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 presents a detailed analysis of the results and findings. Lastly, Chapter 5 discusses the findings, implications, and recommendations for future research and practice.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction and Purpose

This chapter describes the empirical research that exists on developmental education courses in higher education. The review of the literature included the history of developmental education in post-secondary schools and research conducted on the most commonly used college placement test (CPT). Also discussed is the research on the academic performance of developmental education students, student outcomes in developmental education, social mobility, community colleges, and the course structure and alignment between developmental courses and college-level courses.

Developmental education courses came into existence to bridge the gap between what students know and what educators felt students needed to know to be successful in college. Developmental education courses are typically skill-based courses such as reading, writing, and math (Arendale, 2010). College placement tests are administered to assess college readiness in those three subject areas. If a student does not score above a predetermined cut-off score, the student is placed into developmental education course(s) (Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2011; McPherson, 2009; Perin, 2006). A common practice at community colleges is to withhold the student from taking college courses (course levels of 100 or above) until the student completes, and passes, the developmental course(s).

It is necessary to this study to recognize the over-reliance placed on college placement tests. Nearly all incoming community college students are administered the CPTs (Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2011). Some colleges use alternative measures to place
students in developmental education courses, such as earning a particular score on the ACT or SAT, or a predetermined grade on a standardized high school English test.

**Review of the Literature**

**History of developmental education in post-secondary schools.** Arendale (2010) stated that developmental education courses began as learning assistance in six phases, starting in the 1600s through today. The first phase began with the founding of United States colleges in the 1600s through to the 1820s (Arendale, 2010; Stark & Lattuca, 1997). During this period, an individual could participate in one-on-one tutoring if unprepared for college.

During the mid-1800s, academic preparation academies emerged (Arendale, 2010). In addition, Arendale (2010) stated that these academies were equivalent to public high schools, which were not common during this period in the United States. At that time, the expansion of post-secondary education was essential to support the middle class of merchants, tradesman, engineers, and scientists to meet the needs of the growing nation (Arendale, 2010). During this period, there were a large number of students who needed remediation, and providing tutoring for students was insufficient to meet the students’ needs. Therefore, more services emerged in the coming years (Arendale, 2010).

Developmental education focused on cognitive deficits that students lacked, and only after a prescribed level of proficiency, were students deemed equal to their peers (Arendale, 2010). It was during phase three, from the 1870s to mid-1940s, that remedial education classes were incorporated into colleges. During this period, the federal government established The First Morrill Act (1862), that involved land grant colleges (Arendale, 2010; Stark & Lattuca, 1997). This access enabled students of lower academic
ability and lower socioeconomic backgrounds to attend higher education institutions with the possibility of social mobility (Auerbach, 2016).

Frye (1993) stated that when community colleges were introduced, they were considered a different institution. Community colleges were designed to increase access to higher education without compromising and burdening the existing 4-year colleges (Kane & Rouse, 1999). There were two models applied to community colleges when they were introduced (Frye, 1993). The first model was that they would enable students to attend higher education, who would, otherwise be denied entrance to other colleges. The second model was that a 2-year degree should be a terminal degree with no transfer to a 4-year university. Still, many universities argued that community colleges would be an extension of high school, commonly known as Grades 13 and 14 (Frye, 1993).

Between phase four and phase five, there was a 10-year gap where community colleges expanded. Before the 1940s, community colleges were restricted to the Mississippi Valley, Texas, and California (Frye, 1993). With the expansion of the 1960s, community colleges were open access, meaning academic admissions requirements were removed (Arendale, 2010). More students were enrolling at the community colleges who would had traditionally gone into the workforce and, therefore, it meant that more students were academically unprepared to attend the community colleges (Arendale, 2010).

In the fifth phase of developmental education, from the 1970s to the mid-1990s, new learning assistances were introduced. These included non-credit-bearing courses. During this period, there was a shift from teaching high school deficits to teaching students the skills they needed to complete college-level courses (Arendale, 2010).
In the sixth and last phase of developmental education occurred from the mid-1990s to the present day. In the 1990s state and local legislators pushed to have developmental education reduced, or even eliminated, at 4-year colleges and have the developmental courses relegated to the community colleges. The reason for this was because the cost of remediation, and political leaders felt the community colleges would better fit the needs of the students (Arendale, 2010; Doughtery, 2011; Grubb & Cox, 2005; Squires, 2012).

Dougherty (2011) stated that, today, community colleges are one of the most important sectors of United States higher education. However, community colleges have taken on a host of functions. The majority of students enroll for workforce preparation and economic development. Three-quarters of all first-time community college students aspire to earn at least a baccalaureate degree within 5 years of enrolling full-time at a community college. At the time of this writing, community colleges offer sizable programs in developmental education, adult education, and community services. Community colleges are now widely distributed and located in rural, urban, and suburban areas. The cost of attending a community college is significantly lower than a 4-year public or private institution. Unfortunately, community colleges have high dropout rates due to less-advantaged backgrounds of the attendees and the students are less prepared academically than their 4-year college counterparts (Dougherty, 2011).

**History of over-reliance on college placement tests.** The U.S. Department of Education (2008), stated there are 1,045 community colleges in the United States with 6.2 million students enrolled at those community colleges. The Community College Research Center (2015) reported in the 2012-2013 academic year that 45% of all undergraduate
students were enrolled at a 2-year or community colleges, which is approximately 7.7 million students. Currently, 92% of community colleges in the United States use a CPT to place students into classes (Arendale, 2010; Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2011; Perin, 2006).

College placement tests are used to identify if students are college ready in reading, writing, and math (Secolsky et al., 2013). CPTs are essential to the research problem because they are administered to nearly all students, and the test score determines where the student is placed. The two most commonly used CPTs at community colleges are the Accuplacer and Compass (Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2011). A common practice at community colleges is to use the developmental courses as gate-keeper courses and withhold the student from taking credit-bearing college courses (course levels of 100 or above) until the student completes the developmental course(s) (Arendale, 2010; Goudas & Boylan, 2012; Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2011; McPherson, 2009; Perin, 2006; Squires, 2012). Consequently, students who place into the developmental courses, because of the placement test, do not earn college-level credits for the courses (Bringsjord, 2014).

Social mobility at the community college. Social mobility in higher education is not new; however, in the past few decades, the emphasis has been on political, cultural, and educational focus (Dervin & Byram, 2008). Auerbach (2016) defined social mobility as the pursuit of a better life in modern society as a result of changes in occupation, wealth, or income. He further stated that this is serious in a capitalistic society, and it is important to note that social mobility does not review the accomplishments of the overall society but it, rather, acts on the premise that all people operate on an equitable plane (Auerbach, 2016).
Levin (2008) stated that the reason students participate in post-secondary education is multidimensional, ranging from cost and time to self-perceptions. While this is accurate for both the distribution and gaining of an advantage, there are specific populations that do not gain as other populations, such as students in developmental education. For the most part, community colleges fail to further the education of the disadvantaged. Levin conducted an empirical study on 13 community colleges in nine states. The data was gathered from interview feedback, document analysis, and on-site observations. Data was analyzed using the analytical framework of justice to understand the institutional practice of adults and disadvantaged students. The outcome of the study revealed that institutions that went above the level of resources and federal and state policies to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds performed better than those that did not. These college employees were ranged from presidents to the mid-level administrators to faculty and staff, and they relied on their personal ethical standards to benefit the students (Levin, 2008).

VanOra (2012) conducted a qualitative study with a total of 18 community college students who included eight women and 10 men. The ages of the participants ranged from 19 to 47 years old with a mean age of 23 years. The participants all placed in the lowest level of developmental reading and writing, and all but two grew up as non-native speakers. The results of the study indicate that there were student challenges, multiple demands on time, the difficulty of coursework and writing assignments, and lack of student motivation for persistence.

Curriculum design. Perin (2002) stated that there are two curriculum models used in developmental education in higher education. The two types of models are
mainstreamed and centralized. The mainstream design is made up of pre-college level courses, and it is offered in an academic department such as math or English. Typically, these courses are taught by faculty who also teach college-level courses within their curriculum. Because the faculty members were part of the college curriculum, this model allowed the faculty to mingle with other professors who were teaching college-level courses.

The centralized design was offered in a separate department, and the faculty only taught developmental courses and focused their attention on other faculty who were teaching developmental courses. Besides offering the courses, the centralized department also provided support services, such as counseling and tutoring. The instructors were paid through the centralized department’s budget (Perin, 2002).

Cohen and Brawer (2008) claimed there were some integrated programs that combined instruction in reading, writing, and math with tutoring, counseling, study skills, and specialized interventions. The programs included reproducible instructional sequences presented through learning laboratories. Nearly half of the instructors use computers as an interactive tool. Some of these programs are identified as bridge programs, which are used to close the gap between high school and college. While another college, Bronx Community College, created a comprehensive academic and counseling program for first-semester students who required at least three developmental courses. Parkland College offered a non-graded, 12-week program to prospective students free of charge.

Overall, Cohen and Brawer (2008) concluded that there are numerous paths to encourage students to become successful. They further argued that colleges have
abandoned the practice of allowing students to drop in and out of courses, and the schools have moved into a mode of mandatory assessment and placement in sequences to promote students to complete an academic or vocational program satisfactorily.

**First-year experience.** Most first-year experience (FYE) courses are designed to introduce students to campus resources, provide training in time management and study skills, and to address student development issues (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Bers and Younger (2015) defined the FYE as a variety of services and practices that will improve areas such as orientation, advising, and an early alert system. In addition, they stated that FYE is also linked to common reading programs, learning communities, service learning, and problem-based learning. Those in developmental education courses have improved retention and graduation rates by 4% when enrolled in an FYE; whereas, not taking developmental education courses improve retention and graduation rates by 8%. Non-academic support is also necessary and this includes creating social relationships, clarifying student aspirations, and enhancing college knowledge (Bers & Younger, 2015).

The U.S. Departement of Education (2016) conducted a study on FYE at community colleges. While numerous colleges provide FYE and 38 of the colleges’ FYE initiated participation in the study, only 19 were eligible to participate. However, only one of the 19 participants met the requirements, the other 18 did not meet the group design standards of the study.

The U.S. Department of Education (2016) stated that in the one study that met the design standards of the study, there were 911 freshman college students at one technical community college. Three student-level outcomes included academic achievement,
progress through developmental education, and credit accumulation and persistence. The result of the study was that there were no discernable effects on those three student level outcomes.

**Advising at community colleges.** Academic advising is a key service that helps students address topics such as classes to take, coping skills, accessing other student services, interacting with professors, and staying on track to graduate on time (Scrivener et al., 2015). Scrivener et al. (2015) stated that typical community colleges advise that full-time enrollment is not required, taking developmental courses are encouraged, and graduating in three years is not encouraged. Also, student advisor ratio, students to advisors, could be between 600:1 or 1,500:1 depending on the size of the community college. Furthermore, 80% of students only meet with an advisor their first year and spend an average of six times that period.

**Structure of developmental courses.** While research has been conducted on outcomes and persistence, research has also been performed on the course structure. Hodara and Jaggars (2014) conducted a quantitative empirical study on the impact of an 8-week semester versus a 15-week semester in developmental English and developmental math courses at the six CUNY community colleges. The shortened semester allowed students to have access to college courses at a faster rate, but limited evidence existed to the shortened semester. Data were collected through CUNY’s Office of Institutional Research. The English treatment group \((n = 7,148)\) that was enrolled in the two short sequence groups completed the English college course within three years of starting college. The math treatment group \((n = 4,098)\) that were registered in the two short sequence groups completed the college-level math sequence. The data revealed that
students were successful with shorter sequences in developmental English and developmental math courses and were able to enroll in college courses sooner.

**Academic performance and student outcomes in developmental education.**

Researchers focused on the academic performance and outcomes of students in developmental courses. Horn et al. (2009) conducted a quantitative study to compare the grades of an English 101 course between students, which took the developmental education course first and those who did not. Students who took the developmental reading course scored higher grades in English 101 than those who did not take a developmental reading course. Two students who did not take developmental reading course failed the subsequent English course.

In another study of academic performance and outcomes for students in developmental education, Crews and Aragon (2004) sought to determine if there was a substantial difference between the mean English 101 grade of students in the developmental writing course as compared to students not enrolled in a developmental writing course. The results of the study indicate the long-term academic performance of a student who completed the developmental writing course. Those students who completed developmental writing had significantly higher grades in the English 101 course and higher GPAs than students who did not take the developmental writing course.

Also, about academic performance and student outcomes in developmental education, Moss and Yeaton (2013) conducted a study to determine if students in developmental courses were as successful as the non-developmental group in a college English course. The study was performed on five cohorts of first-time college students. Two groups were identified in the study: developmental education students ($n = 1,085$)
and non-developmental education students \((n = 2,531)\) from five community colleges during five consecutive terms. For the students in the developmental education course, their weaknesses were identified (grammar and spelling), and the students learned strategies for recognizing and correcting writing mistakes. This course was created to provide a foundation for success in all future course work. Moss and Yeaton (2013) reported that the developmental education students who were taught strategies had a positive impact on their grades over five consecutive terms.

Bremer et al. (2013) conducted a quantitative study on retention, completion, and GPA among students taking developmental courses. Three colleges participated in the study for a total of 7,898 students. Students chosen for the study had to be enrolled in at least one developmental course the first semester of college. The students were divided into two cohorts based on the semester that the course(s) were taken. The results showed retention rates into the third year for the developmental education students were similar to those students who did not take the developmental education courses. No GPA differences were noted in students in the developmental education writing or reading versus those not in developmental courses. However, that was not the case for students enrolled in developmental math classes. Students who entered with higher math placement scores were more likely to persist because they did not need developmental math classes. Those students who needed developmental math courses were less likely to persist. The majority of the Bremer et al. (2013) study disputes previous claims that students, overall, in developmental education have low persistence over time.

Bahr (2008) conducted a study on the relative success or failure of remedial math in community colleges on credential attainment and transfer. A significant limitation is
that three out of four (75.4%) developmental math course students did not remediate successfully, and the academic achievement of those students was troubling. More than four in five did not complete a degree and did not transfer to another learning institution. Archival national data was used to identify students \( n = 85,894 \) placed in developmental math courses starting in the fall of 1995. The results of the study show that for those students who successfully passed the developmental math courses exhibited the attainment similar to those who did not test into the developmental math courses. The results indicate that, as it pertains to students who remediate successfully in math, the primary goal of remediation for transfer and degree attainment was achieved.

Pierson and Huba (1997) conducted quantitative research on the developmental course outcomes at a community college. Students \( n = 313 \) were placed into three groups. The control group \( n = 45 \) consisted of students who were exempt from taking any developmental courses. The completed group \( n = 17 \) consisted of students who completed all four developmental skills classes. A third group \( n = 252 \) consisted of students who needed at least one developmental course but did not complete it. The students who completed all of the assigned developmental courses (GPA = 2.44) were significantly different from the students who did not complete the developmental courses but should have (GPA = 2.35). The authors reported that the difference in GPA of the students who were exempt from the developmental courses, but should have taken the developmental courses and did not, were slightly different (.09).

Other researchers examined student persistence. For example, Crisp and Delgado (2014) conducted a quantitative study to measure the impact of developmental education on community college students’ probability of persistence and vertical transfer. Data was
collected on the students \((n = 2,780)\), who were under the age of 24 years old and were from the Beginning Post-Secondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS) that included transfer rates, co-enrollment, persistence, and degree attainment. The results indicated that the developmental course students had lower high school GPAs and were less likely to have taken advanced mathematics courses during high school. Regarding outcomes, 77\% of non-developmental course students persisted to the second year of college compared with 79\% of the developmental course students. The reverse was true for the transfer outcome; however, 44\% of non-developmental students transferred compared with 35\% of developmental students. Some differences were seen when comparing students enrolled in mathematics (80\%), reading (35\%), and English (25\%) remediation. Students who took English developmental courses were least likely to transfer to a 4-year institution.

Schnee (2014) conducted a qualitative study on student experience in the context of a learning community in developmental education at a northeast community college. A small cohort of students \((n = 15)\) was followed for 3 years after being placed into a developmental English course, an introduction to psychology course, and a student development course during their first semester. The students were asked their perception of the developmental English sequence of classes and if they felt the course was useful. At the start of the study, students stated they were embarrassed they were in the developmental course and were worried about how long it would take to graduate. Also, the students felt that they did not understand the significance of the placement tests. After the study was completed students were asked their perception of whether the initial developmental courses were useful. One student stated that once she was enrolled into the
credit-bearing English course, she was proud of how well she wrote, and she earned an A- in the class. Another student stated that the developmental English class gave him a foundation and a pillar to take the other harder classes. Of the 15 students in the study, five graduated with a 2-year degree in less than 3 years. One student had one more semester before graduating with a 2-year degree; one student graduated with a bachelor’s degree (3.5 GPA), and another student was going to graduate with a bachelor’s degree the following semester. The seven remaining students from the original cohort left the college before graduating. Of those who left, only one student was unable to complete the developmental English class successfully. The study revealed that more research is needed on student perspectives of developmental education.

**Lack of curriculum alignment.** Curriculum alignment in developmental education is defined as scaffolding in sequential learning for subsequent course sequences (Jeffcoat et al., 2014) or an agreement or match between two categories (Squires, 2012). Scaffolding is important because developmental education courses try to bridge the gap between what the students know and what they need to know to perform in college-level courses. Also, the sequence of the academic plan must be related to the ability, previous preparation, and goals of the learner (Stark & Lattuca, 1997). For sequential learning to occur, skills learned in the developmental courses need to align with the skills required in college courses.

Many developmental education courses focus on discrete sub-skills that do not have relevance to college-level tasks, such as identifying relationships between sentences or paragraphs (Grubb, 2013). If students perceive their developmental coursework is weakly connected to the demands of college-level work, the students may lose their
motivation to succeed in their course (Grubb, 2013). Moreover, the design of college-level courses and developmental courses have been in existence for so long, it is not clear even to those sponsoring such programs; there seems to be no alignment (Stark & Lattuca, 1997). Furthermore, a limited amount of research exists on the curricular alignment of developmental education with subsequent courses. As stated above Boylan (2002) stated a failure to ensure that there is a match between developmental courses and college-level courses is one of the biggest mistakes a developmental program can make. He further argued that if there is a poor link between the two, students will be unsuccessful in the college curriculum, and the developmental education program will be considered a failure.

Caverly, Nicholson, and Radcliffe (2004) conducted a study 4 years after an initial cohort \( n = 36 \) took a developmental reading course. The study focused on the effectiveness of a heavy-reading, intensive history course. The students were considered developmental students because they failed the Texas Academic Skills Program Reading and scored less than the cut-off score on the SAT, or less than 20 on the ACT English test. The authors revealed there was significant improvement in the comprehension post-test compared to the comprehension pre-test. While the results of the trial demonstrated improvement, the students still failed the comprehension post-test.

Caverly et al. (2004) then researched whether the strategic reading skills learned in a developmental reading course transferred over 4 years against the group that did not take a developmental reading course. The results of the post-test of the developmental reading group were significantly higher than of the control group. Also, the history students who were taught the strategic reading skills in developmental reading were
compared to those that were not taught the skills, and the treatment group earned a higher grade than the control group.

Additionally, Ewert (2011) conducted a quantitative study to determine if English as a Second Language (ESL) students were prepared in the developmental reading courses to complete a college English composition course. At the start of the study, there were seven developmental reading courses offered. Ewert analyzed the seven syllabi looking for sequential learning between each of the courses. Ewert found the seven courses were not in sequential order, and the skills did not build on each other. Due to the results, the courses were scaled down from seven to three.

After the new curriculum had been implemented, Ewert (2011) revealed that the students enrolled in at least one developmental reading course raised their post in-house writing scores compared to their pre-Indiana Proficiency Exam writing scores. Ewert conducted the study for four semesters with different students and observed a significant change in pre- and post-grades, demonstrating the shift in the curriculum was beneficial. This study illuminated the possible benefits of aligning developmental courses with college-level courses.

**Chapter Summary**

The chapter described empirical research that exists on developmental education courses in higher education. Also, this Chapter 2 discussed the research on the academic performance of developmental education students, student outcomes in developmental education, and the course structure, curriculum design, and alignment between developmental courses and college-level courses.
Despite the availability of alternatives, most students are still placed into developmental courses based on the results of College Placement Tests (CPTs). Because of this, scholars have conducted empirical studies in the validity of CPTs, which have led to both positive and negative results. With different cut-off scores used at various institutions, there does not appear to be a clear answer if the CPTs are a good indicator of whether students need developmental education.

Because many students place into developmental courses, many resources are spent on remediation, even though the mechanisms to put students into developmental education has limitations that are noted in the literature (McPherson, 2009; Perin, 2006). Therefore, there is a cost to the institution and the student. There is the impact on the performance of the establishment and impact on the individual attending college.

Social mobility in community colleges has been promoted for students who are underprepared for upward mobility. While the purpose of higher education is to improve the position of the student, for those students who start their college career in developmental education their chance of upward mobility lessens because of low pass rate, low graduation rate, and low transfer rate, thereby making social mobility nearly impossible for students entering developmental education at the community college.

There are two types of curriculum design for developmental education in the community college, they are mainstreamed and centralized. Mainstreamed is set up for faculty to work with other faculty teaching other courses besides developmental courses. Centralized is a program that separates developmental teachers from college-level teachers but allows students more services, like counseling and tutoring.
First-year experience (FYE) is significant to developmental education and is typically a three credit hour course. First-year experience introduces students to the campus, culture, and resources the college provides. In addition to this FYE also provides students with study skills, and time management skills. Implementing a FYE will increase retention and graduation rates for students in developmental education.

For students in developmental education the importance of academic advising increases because students are not familiar with the culture and the programs of college. Many college advisors meet with students once a semester to schedule courses. This is different than academic advising. Academic advising is a service that helps students with coping skills, interacting with professors, and monitoring their course program to graduate on time. For students who start in developmental education courses, academic advising is more important because students will already be taking at least one extra semester of college courses. In addition, many students in developmental courses do not understand the significance of taking at least one semester of courses before being able to enroll in college-level courses. Academic advising could support these students.

In recent years the structure of developmental courses has changed. Instead of a 15-week semester research was conducted on a shorter eight-week sequence. Shorter sequences of developmental course work are more beneficial for developmental students, because in the shorter sequence students could take college-level courses sooner, if those courses were offered in the eight-week format as well.

Lastly, there appears to be a lack of curriculum alignment between developmental courses and college-level courses. Alignment between the developmental courses and the college-level courses is important because the developmental courses were designed to
bridge the gap between the two so students would perform the same as students not enrolled in developmental courses. For sequential learning to occur skills needed in the college-level course need to align with what is learned in the developmental course. If there is no connection between the two and students do not feel there is relevance students may lose motivation to succeed in their course. Boylan (2002) stated that if there is poor linkage between developmental courses and college-level courses the developmental program will be considered a failure.

The research design, methodology, and analysis are discussed in Chapter 3. Then in Chapter 4 presents a detailed analysis of the results and findings. Lastly, Chapter 5 discusses the findings, implications, and recommendations for future research and practice.
Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

Introduction

Developmental teaching in higher education requires substantial investments in human and financial resources (Arendale, 2010; Morgan, 2012). Students enrolled in developmental education in higher education has steadily risen in the last decade. Because so many students are taking developmental courses in higher education there is concern about the cost to the student, the institution, and the community. Research has been conducted on retention, persistence, and graduation rates of students who start higher education in developmental education with varied results. Very little research has been conducted on the transferability of skills between developmental courses and college-level courses, for which developmental courses were designed.

This study was conducted using a qualitative, phenomenological research design. It is important to examine student attitudes toward college, their learning, and the critical reading developmental course. Interviews can provide information about students’ perceptions of their educational experiences that cannot be captured or defined through traditional quantitative measures (Grubb & Cox, 2005; Higbee et al., 2005). A phenomenological research design was selected to identify, from the perspective of the student, what skills were learned in the CRDC and then applied in an introductory college-level course.

A qualitative research design was chosen because it is an inquiry process that explores social problems (Creswell, 1998). Through qualitative research, the researcher
builds a complex picture by examining words and reports and detailed views of information (Creswell, 1998). It is important to examine student attitudes toward college, their learning, and the critical reading developmental course. Also, qualitative research contributes valuable information to complex issues of access and retention in developmental education. Interviews provided information about the students’ perceptions of their educational experiences that cannot be captured or defined through traditional quantitative measures (Grubb & Cox, 2005; Higbee et al., 2005). A phenomenological research design was selected to identify, from the perspective of the students, what skills were learned in the Critical Reading Developmental Course and then what skills they applied in an introductory college-level course.

The participants were identified through a purposeful sampling, and semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted. The interviews were completed to gain an account of the shared experiences of the interviewees on interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Saldaña, 2015). The phenomenon explored the lived experiences of students who had completed a developmental reading course that was followed by an introductory college-level course.

**Research Context**

This study took place at the SUNY Jefferson, located in Watertown, NY. SUNY Jefferson is one of the 30 community colleges of the 64 campuses that comprise the SUNY system. SUNY Jefferson’s campus is located 10 miles from the Fort Drum military base. Due to the proximity to Fort Drum, 40% of the students enrolled at SUNY Jefferson have a military affiliation either as active military, spouses, dependents, or retirees (Quick Facts, n.d.).
Developmental courses at SUNY Jefferson were first introduced in 1964 to strengthen student writing skills, and they had limited enrollment until 1970. In 1985, a developmental English course was reintroduced, and by 2014, there were 439 students enrolled in the course (Figure 3.1).

In 1971, a college-level, critical-reading course was offered. However, developmental reading and developmental math were not implemented until 1985. In 1985, there were only three students enrolled in two reading sections. By the fall of 2014, there were 189 students enrolled in 13 course sections (Figure 3.2)
SUNY Jefferson requires that all entering full-time students to take standardized tests in reading, writing, and mathematics. The results of those tests are used to determine the degree of preparedness for college-level coursework. In the case of the Accuplacer Reading Test, SUNY Jefferson uses a locally determined cut-off score of 71 to identify underprepared students. During the period of this study, nearly 60% of the population entered the college with test scores below the cut-off score \((n = 1234)\).

The Committee on Developmental Education (CDE) oversees SUNY Jefferson’s developmental education programs. The CDE consists of six faculty and staff members. Included are three full-time instructors teaching developmental reading, writing, and math. Also, the directors of advising, the federal bridge program, and a full-time tutor are also part of the CDE. The CDE is chaired by a liaison who reports to the Associate Vice President of Liberal Arts.

The committee has two measurable outcomes to assess the effectiveness of the developmental education programs. The first goal is to meet or exceed the 75 percentile
using the results of the National Community College Benchmarking Project (NCCBP).

The two measures are:

1. Percentage of students who were referred to the course and who completed the highest level of math, English, and reading in the developmental course.
2. Percentage of students who were referred to the course and who completed any college-level course in math, English, or reading.

In addition to the campus-based effectiveness goals, SUNY has been charged by the New York State Assembly (2013) to develop a comprehensive plan related to remedial education to accomplish the following goals:

1. Improve community college outcomes by reducing the time to degree completion or transfer to a 4-year university.
2. Reduce state and local sponsor expenditures on remedial coursework.
3. Improve overall community college graduation rates and employment prospects.

The CRDC at SUNY Jefferson is a required course for those students who, based on assessment testing scores from the college placement test (CPT), need to improve reading comprehension skills and strategies. The course offers instruction in critical thinking and reading strategies and supports students in developing these learning strategies by effectively applying what they learn. The main instructional goal for the course is: Apply strategies and specialized procedures for improved understanding in other academic areas.

The course focused on 19 topics/skills that the students defined and then researched. In class, the discussions focused on the topics, and then the students applied
them to various genres. Many developmental education courses focus on discrete sub-skills that do not have relevance to college-level tasks. These sub-skills are throughout developmental courses. For instance, in developmental reading students are to identify thought patterns when reading or identify the major and minor details in a passage. If students perceived the curriculum of their developmental coursework curriculum weakly connected to the demands of college-level work, they could have lost their motivation to succeed in their course (Grubb, 2013).

**Research Participants**

The students who enroll at community colleges include those who have just graduated high school, as well as those who may be returning to school after some time. Further, community college students may be enrolled full or part-time. Community colleges also enroll students from a range of diverse groups of demographics, socio-economic status, family background, and educational experiences. According to the social mobility theory, community colleges should enable students to have mobility and rise through more education and secure better-paying jobs.

The research participants for the study were existing, matriculated, full-time students over the age of 18 at SUNY Jefferson. The research participants were predetermined with a purposeful sample through the researcher’s class roster at SUNY Jefferson. Purposeful sampling is essential to phenomenological research design because the participants can inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study (Creswell, 2014). The sample consisted the researcher’s students who passed the CRDC in the fall 2015 semester and were, at the time of the
study, enrolled in one of the recognized introductory college courses (SOC 144, PSY 133, HIS 150, HIS 151, and MTH 144) in the spring 2016 semester.

Appendix A further illustrates the student demographics at SUNY Jefferson. In the fall 2014 semester, there were 2,154 full-time students enrolled. Of those students, 768 were new students, 618 were non-traditional (25 years or older), and 1,536 were traditional students. Also, of the 768 new full-time students, approximately 460 (60%) of the students enrolled in at least one developmental course.

The researcher used the college’s computer software to identify the fall 2015 CRDC class list. Of the 34 students, 15 were eligible to participate because they were enrolled in the chosen introductory courses. The researcher emailed the students to participate with dates and times available to be scheduled for their interviews. If the participant emailed the researcher back with his or her willingness to participate, then the informed consent form (Appendix B) was sent via email for the student to read. At the interview, both the participants and the researcher signed the consent form. Creswell (2014) informed that up to 10 interviewees are appropriate for a phenomenological study.

**Data Collection Instruments**

The data collection method was in-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews of former CRDC students who had passed the developmental course, and at the time of the interview, had enrolled in at least one identified introductory college-level course. Semi-structured interviews were selected as the data collection method because “personal interviews are the best way to ask sensitive questions . . . to build rapport and trust that is needed for respondents to report” (Fowler, 2014, p. 65).
Interviewing protocols included an introduction to the proposed study, the body of
the interview, and a closing of the interview (Fowler, 2014; Saldaña, 2015). Within the
body of the interview, the interviewer asked semi-structured questions, probes, and
follow-up questions (Charmaz, 2002). There was digital voice recording and note taking
to ensure trustworthiness of the interviews (Creswell, 2014; Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman,
2004; Shenton, 2004). Digital voice recordings are useful to the researcher because the
recording can be transferred directly to a computer where it can be stored, played for
analysis, and later transcribed (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

The individual interviews took place in a reserved classroom at SUNY Jefferson
at the time convenience of the participant. As described by Creswell (2014) the classroom
is the natural setting where participants experienced the phenomena under study. Before
the interview, the participants received the informed consent to read over. At the
beginning of the interview, the interviewer introduced herself, the study, and the
participant, and the researcher signed the informed consent (see Appendix B). Brinkmann
and Kvale (2015) stated that informed consent is to inform research participants about the
purpose of the study and the features of the design, and include any possible risks and
benefits in the research project. The interviewer asked the interviewee if any information
needed clarification.

The interviewer was the prober in this natural setting and proceeded with the
semi-structured questions (Appendix C). Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) described the
prober as not content to record opinions and attitudes but to get beyond the surface and
inquire into layers of the subjects’ world. Also, Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) concluded
that interviews conducted in qualitative research are completed to gain an account of a
shared experience of the interviewee on interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena.

During the interview, the interviewer was a key research instrument of inquiry. The interviewer knows the topic of the interview, has mastered conversational skills, and has a sense for good stories (Creswell, 2014). The interviewees responded to up to 10 scripted, open-ended questions. If needed, secondary questions were asked of the interviewees for further descriptions and clarification of meanings and emotions. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) ensured that “questions should be easy to understand, short, and devoid of academic language” and because the data analysis was coding, the interviewer “continually clarify[ies] the meaning of the answers” (p. 157).

At the conclusion of the interview, the interviewer asked if the interviewees had any additional questions about the topics discussed. To reinforce what was discussed, the interviewer mentioned the main points learned from the interview (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Afterward, the interviewer stopped the recorder and thanked the interviewee for participating in the study, and for taking part, the interviewee was given a $10 gift card for the SUNY Jefferson bookstore/café.

After the participant/interviewee left the classroom, the researcher spent an extra 10 to 15 minutes reflecting and writing down perceptions from the interview. This reflection and the additional note-taking step are important because it may provide a valuable context for the later analysis of transcripts (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

After the interview process was complete, the transcription of the digital audio files occurred. When transcribing from the oral conversations to written text, there is an importance in reliability, validity, and ethics (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015). Also, when
transcribing from oral to written text, checking for accuracy is the main function of the research. The researcher listened to the recordings more than once to check for accuracy and comparison to the transcription. That trustworthiness was met, the researcher checked four criteria. The first criterion is the credibility to internal validity, which means that the interview questions were well thought out and will answer the research question. The second criterion is the transferability to external validity. The researcher must ensure that enough information gained in the study is transferable so the readers can make the transfer to their study or work (Shenton, 2004). The third criterion is the dependability in preference to reliability. It is important that the process of the study be reported in detail so that another researcher can repeat the study regardless if the results are the same. The last criterion is the confirmability in preference to objectivity must be clear (Shenton, 2004). The researcher must be aware of her biases. Steps must be taken to ensure that the findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the participant, rather than the features and ideas of the researcher (Shenton, 2004).

In addition, the transcription contains ethical issues. The ethical issues include the storage and handling of the interview recordings and the transcripts. Consequently, when the researcher completed the transcription process, the interview recordings were erased/deleted with the intent that the transcriptions would be locked in a desk at the investigator’s home for at least two years.

**Data Analysis**

The data consists of interview transcripts and participant field notes. The data analysis for the study centered on coding. Codes in the qualitative inquiry are most often
a word or phrase that represent a cumulative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data (Saldaña, 2015).

As recommended by Saldaña (2015), for the first time using coding, the researcher employed in vivo coding and analytic memo writing from a printed transcription. Also, Saldaña (2015) recommended that for first-time studies, the researcher code on hard-copy printouts before using software. Using paper first allowed the researcher to review the printout as opposed to a computer screen. This technique provided the researcher with the opportunity for additional reflection on both the coding process and choices, as well as the participant responses, and ownership of work.

After the initial first cycle, the researcher used focused and axial coding followed by theoretical coding. Focused coding “categories coded data based on thematic or conceptual similarity” (Saldaña, 2015, p. 264). Axial coding extends from the first cycle of in vivo and focused coding and describes a category’s properties and dimensions and how the categories and subcategories relate to each other (Saldaña, 2015). Finally, theoretical coding functions like an umbrella and accounts for all other codes and categories (Saldaña, 2015).

Summary

A qualitative study using a phenomenological research design was selected to identify, from the perspective of the student, what skills were learned in the Critical Reading Developmental Course and were applied in an introductory college-level course. The chapter described the research problem, research question, the research design, and the methodology used in the research study. From the chosen method, the researcher
identified the research context and the process of selecting research participants.

Additionally, a detailed description of the collection and analysis of data was given.

The detailed analysis and the results of the finds are discussed in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 discusses the findings, implications, and recommendations for future research and practice.
Chapter 4: Results

Research Question

The study sought to answer the following question from the students’ perspectives at SUNY Jefferson, who were enrolled at the time of the study, in a critical reading developmental course in the fall 2015 semester, and then they were concurrently enrolled in an introductory college-level course for the spring 2016 semester:

From the perspective of the student, what skills learned in the Critical Reading Developmental Course were applied in the following community college-level introductory courses: Introduction to Sociology (SOC 144), Introduction to Psychology (PSY 133), American History to 1877, (HIS 150), American History 1877 to Present (HIS 151), State and Local Government (POL 122), Elementary Statistics (MTH 144), and Algebra, Functions, and Modeling (MTH 155)?

These particular courses are considered gatekeeper courses. Therefore, all developmental courses are to be completed before enrolling in the introductory courses.

The potential participants were selected through a purposeful sampling and determined through the researcher’s fall 2015 class roster. The researcher had two critical reading developmental courses with 17 students in each course (n = 34). Of those students, five failed the course, and two withdrew from the course; therefore, 27 students were in the initial group to participate in the study. Then, those potential participants’ spring semester schedules were examined for possible matches to the introductory courses chosen, allowing for 14 eligible participants to take part in the study. The
researcher emailed the potential participants using the SUNY Jefferson email accounts. After 1 week with no responses, the researcher went on to SUNY Jefferson’s computer software SOAR program to check students’ alternative email addresses. Within the next two weeks, 10 of the 14 participants agreed to participate via email. The researcher sent informed consents via email and confirmed a date and time to meet for the interviews. Of the 10 participants that decided to be interviewed, eight interviews took place.

Because only eight interviews were completed, the study was opened to all other critical reading developmental courses, which were all taught by adjunct professors. Eight additional participants were emailed to participate, but only one potential participant responded for a total of nine complete interviews.

Upon the start of the interviews, the researcher asked the participants to read over the informed consent, and both the interviewee and interviewer signed it. The researcher asked permission to audio record the interviews. While there was only one research question, there were 10 open-ended interview questions. The first interview question was an ice breaker to help the participants relax and think about the courses they were enrolled in at that time in the semester.

After each interview, the recorded interviews were transcribed by the researcher. The researcher listened to the interviews numerous times and reread the transcriptions for accuracy, consistency, and clarity. The notes taken during the interviews were added to the transcriptions to develop more robust notes.

**Data Analysis and Findings**

The researcher used four sets of coding on the collected data. The first was in vivo coding, which enabled the researcher to use the students’ own words and phrases. The
first round of codes identified the main themes that the students identified as remembering from the CRDC. After the initial first cycle, the researcher used focused coding. This was to develop categories without distraction. The second round of codes specifically identified the types of skills that were identified and applied to the introductory courses and other courses. Next, axial coding was used to reassemble the codes and move them around. Finally, theoretical coding was used to eliminate redundancies and function as an umbrella and make an accounts for all of the other codes and categories.

**Participant profile.** The participant profiles were collected using archival data from the software program Banner after the spring semester was completed. There were four male participants and five female participants, therefore, eight students between the ages of 18-20 participated with only one student between the ages of 25-34. Six different programs of study were represented: the introductory course(s), and four out of nine students passed with a C or better (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

*Participant Profile*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>C or Better Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Allied Health</td>
<td>PSYCH 133</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Hospitality &amp; Tourism</td>
<td>MTH 144</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Criminal Justice</td>
<td>PYCH 133</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>MTH 155</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>MTH 144</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>HIS 151</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>HIS 151</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Criminal Justice</td>
<td>MTH 144</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Criminal Justice</td>
<td>PSYCH 133</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>MTH 155</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The participants were able to identify eight skills and strategies they used in the critical reading developmental course. Also, all of the students believed that the skills they learned in the CRDC did transfer to other courses. However, not all of the skills transferred to the introductory college-level courses that were identified.

**Skills.** Based on the students’ perspectives, nearly all nine participants were able to transfer skills learned in the CRDC to their college-level courses. The courses represented in the research study were: Psychology 133, Math 144, Math 155, and HIS 151, and one student enrolled in more than one introductory course during the second semester. From the perspective of the students, three out of four participants stated they were unable to transfer skills from the CRDC to Math 155.

The students identified eight skills that they learned in the developmental reading course, and they were able to use in an introductory college-level courses: research skills, test-taking skills, the identification of facts and opinions, vocabulary development, connections to the text, puzzle reading, attention to detail, and cause and effect.

**Research skills.** The most frequently identified skill was asking questions, researching, finding answers, and citing sources both online and in the text. Participant 3 stated, “The most important thing I learned was to ask good questions.” Participant 3 further explained, “I think it is important because I use it in other classes or life because if I do not know something, I can find the resources.” Participant 3 further clarified, “If there are words I do not understand, I write out questions and then find the answers.” At the start of the semester, students told the researcher, asking questions about a topic is the hardest part to learn. They also stated they never had to ask questions in high school because the majority of learning in high school was memorization.
Participant 2 stated the second most important thing learned in the class was, “Websites, for research. I know now to look at websites that are .edu or .org, and I should stay away from .com.” In class, the discussions focus on what each of abbreviations means and what websites are the best for academic learning. The students know that .com means commercial, and anyone can own a .com website whereas .edu is education, .gov is government, and .org is an organization. In addition, the class discusses biases among websites.

In addition to research skills, Participant 6 shared identifying the source of where the information came from:

Part III, all in the details workbook, we looked up a magazine article, you asked us the title of the article, the author of the article, the publication date. In English, now, we are using MLA citation, so I felt like I really know it, so it really popped out at me because I was so used to it in your class, and we would focus on those things, so it was like boom, boom, boom, boom.

While the students had to identify sources from articles, the researcher did not have them place the sources in any particular format (MLA, APA, or Chicago style).

Participant 7 responded with the most important thing that was learned in the class with, “learning how to research, because research is where I feel like I had a weakness and finding useful websites.” Research is taught in the course because, within the students’ college courses, there will be information presented that the student will not know or understand. This skill enables students to find background knowledge on topics they have not yet learned.
Test-taking skills. Test-taking skills were also identified as an important skill that was learned in the course and transferred to other courses. Participant 1 stated, “I remember that you had us answer test questions and try to compare the questions to what we were reading.” She responded further by saying, “I think the most important thing was how to answer the multiple-choice questions and how to go back and try to figure out which answer fit best.” Participant 1 further explained this was important, “Because answering test questions were the hardest part for me before taking your class, when it came to doing quizzes and tests.” Participant 1 recalled that she used this skill in Biology 106.

Participant 4 said that test-taking skills were the most important thing that was learned because, “It is critical reading when taking a test, rereading the questions over and over again until I understand what they are asking.” Answering the follow-up question, Participant 4 responded,

Well, before. I would just read a question, and NOT KNOW what I just read. So then I would just be like, oh whatever, and I would just pick one. So I would circle a random answer and not know what I was choosing and have horrible test grades. Since then, I have seen improvement.”

Being able to answer multiple-choice questions correctly is a common problem for students in developmental reading. For many of them, they may have scored low on the placement test because they were never taught how to read and answer test questions.

Furthermore, Participant 8 added more about test-taking skills,
in understanding what I am reading, especially quiz taking, and for exams. Before I used to miss the answer even though the answer could be right in front of me. Now I read everything carefully, and I can identify the answer easier.

Many students can correctly identify two good answers to the test question but have a difficult time picking between the two. The researcher modeled how to respond to a test question by “thinking out loud.”

**Fact and opinion.** The third skill that the participants discussed was fact and opinion. Specifically, one of the assignments covered identifying factual information from a picture and not make assumptions or forming opinions. For instance, if a person was smiling in the picture, a person should not assume the person is happy, rather that the person was smiling. Participant 1 stated, “I remember you had us identify what’s in pictures and to try not assume.” Participant 5 stated, “analyzing pictures for what they were based on facts.” Participant 5 further illustrated, “When the instructor speaks about numbers in math class, I try to apply it to terms I know, and I can relate to them. For example, with the visual learning with the photos, like I can use that.” Also, Participant 7 felt, “sticking to facts. I think, yeah and stating facts and working off that. Instead of trying to put opinions in and stuff.” Participant 7 added, “When you read a passage . . . you have to fall back on the stats which are the fact.” At the end of the semester in the workbook, students pick their favorite picture and analyze the picture without bias, and they only describe what they see in the picture. Many students say this is the first time they have never been able to tell their opinion and only focus on what is proven.

**Vocabulary development.** The fourth skill the participants learned was vocabulary development. Participant 5 stated that when trying to learn things in biology this
semester, “there are three or four letters of the word, and it means a negative or a positive, so when you see that, you know what the word means. We did that in your class, prefixes, and suffixes.” Vocabulary development covers chunking big words into smaller words to understand the meaning of the word. Also, the participants identified prefixes, suffixes, and context clues. Participant 6 recalled:

I use context clues. I just finished a book in my business class, and some of the words were hard to figure out. I was looking at the sentence to figure out what was the word. In your class we just did so much of that, I was like, “ok, this is what the word means.”

Participant 8 remembered applying chunking to psychology:

Yes, psychology is a subject that if you do not read carefully, you can miss many things. Two words can be spelled nearly the same, for instance, psychology and physiological. Many words are spelled similar[ly], so you have to chunk the word down.

Vocabulary development and context clues are taught heavily in elementary school and then there is a focus on student’s vocabulary in high school. However, these skills are not retaught or revisited in high school. So when students perform poorly in reading comprehension, being able to identify new, more challenging words is important.

*Connections to texts.* The fifth skill learned was connections to texts. The students learn to connect what they read to themselves and other literature. For instance, Participant 4 responded with the second most important thing learned in the course was, “Connecting to what I read to the outside world, other books, and myself. This skill makes it easier to write essays.” Participant 6 said, “Connections to text. It helps me
better understand the concepts of whatever the given assignment is.” Participant 7 said, “like sometimes when we read, we need to compare the reading to our life.” Connections to the text are important because the students are able to give more meaning to what they are reading, remember what they read, and be able give background knowledge to the topic.

**Puzzle reading.** The participants identified this sixth skill as hidden details or puzzle reading. Participant 2 recounted:

I did like that weird article we read in your class, and we had to think what happened in it. Puzzle reading stuff, that you had to figure it out. Because they did not tell you what happened in it. For instance, in *Hills Like White Elephants*, the girl got the abortion. They never said she did, we had to figure it out, I call it puzzle readings. This semester in English class I have to find hidden details.

Participant 8 reported:

How to read thoroughly and how to read a single sentence and break every sentence down, because sometimes I used to read and miss important details in the passage, but now I read every sentence, and now I can find hidden details. I find hidden details in my English course this semester.

Within the CRDC, this skill is identified as inferencing or unstated information in the text. Inferencing is the most difficult skill to teach because students have to have background knowledge, use the stated facts in the passage, and then identify a logical conclusion. The easiest way to explain inferencing is to ask students, “Has anyone ever told you a joke, and you do not understand the punch line or the answer?” They all laugh and nod and the reply is, “That is the inference.” By the time students are in high school,
the teachers believe students should be able to infer but this skill is not retaught or revisited.

**Attention to details.** The seventh connection was attention to details for better reading comprehension. Participant 5 said, “I understand the readings a lot better now and I pay attention to more details.” Participant 6 said, “It helps me understand the entire concept of the different assignments that are given.”

Participant 8 said, “I learned in your course, before I submit a paper in English class, I need to read it thoroughly and slowly. I read it two or three times.” In part III of the workbook, the discussion focused on how, if a student misses one word in the reading, the entire meaning of the whole passage can change. At the start of the semester, the first question that is discussed are reading and listening similar? Based on the students’ replies, the definition is written on the board. Then the researcher reads 12 riddle questions that need to be listened to carefully in order to answer the question. For instance, the first question asked, “Is there a fourth of July in England?” The students usually respond with no, because they are thinking the celebration of the United States’ Fourth of July. The response to this question is, “Yes, the fourth of July in England comes after the third.”

**Cause and effect.** The eighth connection was cause and effect. Participant 6 felt that cause and effect had been used in a history and business class during the semester. Participant 6 stated,

In business class, we talk about managers. If they make a good choice or a bad choice, it affects the entire loop. With accounting, if you take money out of a certain
account, it will affect your owner’s capital. In learning history, we talked about us winning WWII, and [how] the war impacted the economy of the entire world.”

**Not all courses transferred skills.** Most of the students stated that the skills learned in the CRDC were transferable to the college courses that would be coming up in the next semester. However, three out of four students said that the reading skills did not transfer to math courses. When thinking of the reading, have you used many of the information in MTH 155 this semester? Participant 4 responded by saying, “No I have not, because it is using the calculator.”

Participant 8 shared that, “I use the reading in all of my classes but math.” Participant 9 responded with, “I am not a fan of the Math 155 course.” Participant 5 responded with the opposite on transferring skills to math, “Ah yes when he speaks about numbers I try to apply it to terms that I know and relate to.” Both courses of Math, 144 and 155, the students have to read within the course. In Math 155, the students have to read articles, form opinions, and write papers that include statistics.

**Heavier course loads after developmental courses.** Of the nine participants, three participants acknowledged that this semester they were in at the time of the interview, their course loads were heavy. After identifying the courses, the student was currently enrolled in, the researcher responded with, “Wow, you are busy this semester!” Participant 1 responded with a contrast from the previous semester, “Yes, the classes they made me take, both Math 098 and CLS 099, were not credit-bearing, so this semester I am punching it all in to graduate on time.”

Participant 5 said:
It is bad, really bad. The BIO 106 is a 4-credit-hour class from 5:30-8:30, so my day starts at 6:30 AM and then my time ends at 10:00 PM, because of practice and with baseball, I am trying to figure it out. I’m struggling right now. It takes a toll. I spoke to my sister the other day, and she wants to help me out. Like, cope with everything.

Participant 4 started with 15 credit hours at the beginning of the semester and stated, “I had to drop my online course, too much work, it was History of Rocking Roll.” Because the students are advised only to take 12 credit hours their first semester while enrolled in developmental courses, the students second semesters are typically 15 credit hours or more to make up for the lack of college credits. For this study, during their second semester, the students were enrolled in 15-19 credit hours.

**English and reading class confusion.** All nine students felt the reading course better equipped them to write better essays in other courses. While some students took CLS 099 and ENG 099 together, other students can take CLS 099 and ENG 100. Three of the participants were confused between course content in ENG 099 and CLS 099.

Participant 3 asked, “Did you bring us to the library?” The researcher does not bring these course students to the library. Participant 3 stated, “ENG 099, that worked on the blue book that was assigned to us. In this book, we asked many questions about the different topics.” The CRDC does utilize a blue workbook. However, the student identified the course as ENG 099 rather than CLS 099.

Participant 8 remembered working on, “grammar and stuff.” However, grammar is not covered in the developmental reading course. The same participant went on to say that the second most important thing learned in the reading class was, “How to write a
good complete paragraph. How to start off with a thesis statement and supporting details and what type of supporting details are appropriate for that paragraph and not put in unnecessary stuff.” Participant 8’s reasoning, “That goes a long way in helping you get a good grade on an essay. The last thing you want to do is write, and write, and get it wrong. It would be irrelevant.” Many colleges integrate developmental reading and developmental writing courses together that are taught as one course. However, at SUNY Jefferson, these courses are taught separately. All of the same topics are taught in both courses, although one is through the lens of the writer, and the other is through the lens of the reader.

**Reading and English course transferability.** The highest transferable skills were between the CRDC and the ENG 100/101 level course. All nine students discussed the benefits of the CRDC course and four participants connected to specific applications to an English course.

Participant 8 said:

> I feel critical reading helps students a lot, lot, lot, lot because it teaches some students who need help as far as reading, writing, and grammar. Also, how to break down an essay and how to write a research paper. Moreover, the reading course helps a lot with college. Right now in English 100, we are already three essays in, and I focus on writing things that are important.

Participant 4 said:

> For instance, we had to analyze and write an essay on an advertisement. Because I work at Sally’s Beauty Supply, I picked a cultural norm and discussed race and gender because there are white women and black women in the ad, but when I am
at work, there are men that come in and they do not show men in the ad.

Moreover, many other ethnic women come in, and they do not indicate that in the ad either. My teacher thought it was pretty good. In the CRDC, we also discuss stereotypes based on gender and advertisements.

Participant 9 recalled, “Our English teacher set up the course that we have a big final paper. We have four projects that will lead up to the final paper. I was lucky on how we did that in the CLS class.” Participant 7 said, “I feel like it betters my writing skills. It helps me know stuff in English 100.” This particular participant was not the researcher’s student in the previous semester. Also, the researcher does not teach how to break down assignments or chunk them into smaller sections. Furthermore, many colleges integrate developmental reading and developmental writing courses together that are taught as one course. However, at SUNY Jefferson, these courses are taught separately. All of the same topics are taught in both courses, though one is through the lens of the writer, and the other is through the lens of the reader.

**Summary of Results**

The purpose of the qualitative phenomenological study was to understand from the perspective of the students if the skills learned in the CRDC were used in introductory college courses. Eight strategies and skills were identified, and four themes emerged. The eight skills were (a) researching skills, (b) test-taking skills, (c) identification of fact and opinion, (d) vocabulary development, (e) connections to text, (f) puzzle reading, (g) attention to details, and (h) cause and effect. Four themes emerged from the data, and not all courses transferred. There were heavier course loads after the CRDC, such as English, and reading class confusion, and reading and English transferability. All of the categories
and themes were relevant to the lived experiences of the students in their second semester at SUNY Jefferson and who participated in this qualitative study. The following and final chapter of this study provides a further summary of the findings, in addition to describing the study’s limitations, implications, and recommendations.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

This chapter summarizes the research process that uncovered barriers that affect the success of developmental reading courses for students. This chapter addresses four areas: the statement of the problem, review of methodology, a summary of the results and their relevance to the research question investigated, and a discussion with recommendations for further research and implications for policy and practice in the field of post-secondary developmental education.

Statement of the problem. Developmental education requires substantial investments in human and financial resources. For example, in 2012, the SUNY community colleges spent more than 70 million dollars on developmental education courses (Morgan, 2012). The cost incurred was for paying faculty, support staff, and tutoring. Also, there is a cost to the student who is placed into developmental courses. Students pay for the courses with student loans, financial aid, or with out-of-pocket remittance, but they do not receive college credit (Perin, 2006). Also, taking developmental courses prolongs time to graduation.

Research studies have identified mixed results of outcomes for students who begin their college career in developmental education classes. Some quantitative studies reveal low retention rates, low course pass rates, low graduation rates, and low transfer rates to 4-year institutions (Horn et al., 2009; Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2011; Secolsky et al., 2013) while other studies reveal more positive results of increased course pass rates.
(Arendale, 2010; Perin, 2006; Snyder, 2002). Goudas and Boylan (2012) stated that over since 2010, foundations have funded some studies in developmental education. For instance, the Bill Gates Foundation, Complete College America, and Educate Reform Now have contributed to developmental education courses. The results are marked by varying qualities of methodology and data analysis that is accompanied by conflicting and sometimes inconsistent conclusions. However, Goudas and Boylan (2012) also stated that if the research were read in depth, it would be clear that the data do not support the claims of inefficiency. The majority of researchers believe that after students complete the developmental classes, they should perform better and have higher graduation, transfer rates, and GPAs than their peers who did not take developmental courses (Goudas & Boylan, 2012).

Boylan (2002) stated that failure to ensure that there is a match between developmental courses and the college-level courses is one of the biggest mistakes a developmental program can make. He further argued that if there is a poor link between the two, students will be unsuccessful in the college curriculum, and the developmental education program will be considered a failure. Moreover, a gap in the literature shows that few, if any, qualitative studies have been conducted from the perspective of the student to examine if developmental skills align with credit-bearing college courses at the community college-level (Bremer et al., 2013; Jeffcoat et al., 2014; Kuhn & Rundle-Thiele, 2009). Therefore, further research would be beneficial from the perspective of the students who completed developmental education courses and subsequently enrolled in an introductory college course.
Summary of results. Some skills and themes emerged from the data. Students were able to identify eight skills they learned in the critical reading developmental course, and they transferred that knowledge to the introductory college-level course. Also, four main themes emerged: (a) not all courses transferred skills, (b) heavier course loads after CRDC, (c) developmental English and reading class confusion, (d) and the transferability between CRDC and college-level English. The themes encompassed a spectrum of factors that facilitated or impeded their success.

Implications of Findings

Academic performance in the introductory courses. The courses that were chosen for the study were considered “gatekeeper” courses, because until the student passed the developmental course, he or she was prohibited from taking the credit-bearing introductory courses. Many colleges employ this technique in the belief that students will not adequately perform in the college-level courses.

Observing the academic performance of the nine participants who successfully completed the developmental reading course, only one of three completed PSYCH 133 with a C or better. This finding supports that the students did not have the skills necessary to complete the introductory college-level course, even after finishing the developmental course.

Also, one out of two participants passed HIS 151 with a C or better. HIS 151 is a reading intensive course. Also, two out of three participants passed Math 144 with a C or better, and last, only one in every two students passed Math 155 with a C or better. Therefore, while the students felt that the skills transferred to other courses, the overall grades in the identified introductory college-level courses did not support this
assumption. While research had been conducted on same-subject developmental course to a college-level course, there were positive outcomes (Crews & Aragon, 2004; Horn et al., 2009; Moss & Yeaton, 2013). Yet, in searching through the literature, there is limited research on course transferability from developmental to introductory college-level courses.

Nearly all of the students felt that they learned skills from the Critical Reading Developmental Course and were able to transfer those skills to a college-level course. There were eight skills identified: test-taking skills, fact and opinion, vocabulary development, connections to text, puzzle reading, attention to details, and cause and effect. Also, the students were not transferring development course skills to math. The second-semester course load was heavier than the first, and there was confusion between developmental reading and developmental writing and developmental reading and college-level English course transferability.

**Skills learned.** In the current study, the participants were taught 13 different topics. Before the 13 topics, the participants learned six reading strategies. The reading strategies learned in the CRDC were chunking, context clues, connection to texts, visualization, keywords and researching, and questions and answers. Therefore, the findings of the study are that nearly all of the literacy strategies were represented and transferred to the introductory courses in the interviews with participants. However, only four of the 13 skills transferred to the introductory courses. The findings of this illustrate that while educators felt that the 13 topics were important, the students did not see them as useful or necessary to the introductory college courses.
**College placement test over-reliance.** There are 1045 community colleges in the United States, with 6.2 million students enrolled (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Currently, 92% of community colleges in the United States rely on college placement tests (CPTs) to place students into classes (Arendale, 2010; Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2011; Perin, 2006). All nine participants were given the Accuplacer placement test, and all nine participants completed the course by scoring a 71 or greater on the exit exam. The exit exam is similar to the CPT. One of the skills learned in the critical reading developmental course was test-taking skills.

Cohen and Brawer (2009) suggested there is little connection between placement test scores and course grades in remedial instructions, and they further stated that student disposition is a more powerful predictor of success than test scores. While the nine participants successfully passed the developmental course most were unsuccessful in passing the introductory course with a C or better, thus illustrating the need for the developmental course to be aligned with skills needed in the introductory college-level courses.

**Course alignment.** While students were able to transfer skills from the developmental reading course, not all of the skills transferred, and additional resources are needed for students to pass the introductory course successfully. The study found that the introductory college courses must be evaluated both from the perspective of the developmental education instructor and the introductory college-level instructors. A question to the introductory college instructor would be, “What does a student need in skills to be successful in your course?”
Social mobility. The purpose of higher education is to improve the position of students in the acquisition of basic rights and desires (Levin, 2008). Consideration of whether social mobility is possible has a significant effect on the focus of school for students from homes and neighborhoods with few resources (Destin & Kosko, 2016). Giordano and Hassel (2016) stated that strong ongoing support in academic areas is necessary for producing the kind of learning, persistence, and degree attainment results that make higher education a source of social mobility for our most vulnerable students.

Cohen and Brawer (2008) stated, if the purpose of college is to pass the most students through to the baccalaureate degree, then the community college is a failure by design. They further argued that any restricted educational system run counter to social policy, whether the restriction is wealth, sex, race, or scholastic testing no social mobility exists. Community colleges are effective at controlling mobility between classes because their students come primarily from the lowest socioeconomic classes of college students. The dropout and graduates enter lower-level occupations than the equivalent who attend higher-status colleges (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Based on the results of this study, while the students felt the skills transferred, the pass rate of those courses was, overall, less than half passing with a C or better. Those students who failed the class will have to retake the course, and this will prolong their time to graduation, making social mobility more difficult (Destin & Kosko, 2016; Levin, 2008; Morest, 2013). Therefore, sending a message to students who starting their college education in developmental courses, they are not college ready and represent an additional barrier to college success (Clotfelter et al., 2015).
Unexpected findings. There were four instances where unexpected themes emerged from the study. The first theme that emerged was participant’s lack of coping strategies. There is the thought that after taking developmental reading, the students would have the skills necessary to successfully complete introductory college-level courses. The participants were not able to cope with the increased course work and the extra semesters that will have to be added to their time in college before graduation.

In addition to the lack of coping skills, participants lacked in time-management skills. While one participant was able to chunk a large assignment into smaller assignments, the following semester after the developmental course, no other participant was able to do so. Because the researcher does not teach time management skills in the classroom.

Next, students were unfamiliar with academic advising. Academic advising is a key service that helps students address topic such as classes to take, coping skills, accessing other student services, interacting with a professor, and maintaining a desired graduation date (Scrivener et al., 2015). Most advising is scheduling and students are not aware of the extra semesters that will be added to their time for graduation because of being placed into developmental courses. More thorough academic advising would better prepare the students. One participant dropped an online course because it was too much work. Another participant was overwhelmed with sports and coursework and did not know where to find resources to help (Boylan, 2002).

The last theme that emerged was the one participant enrolled in the TRIO program. The TRIO program is a federally funded program consisting of eight programs designed to assist low-income students. The program consists of tutoring, academic
support, and academic advising for specific students who meet the guidelines of the program (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). The participant that was enrolled in the TRIO program performed well in the introductory college-level course with the support of the TRIO program, even though the participant did not want to discuss math at the interview. Students in the TRIO program get individualized instruction whereas the typical community college student enrolled in developmental courses do not.

**First-year experience.** Because of the unexpected themes that emerged from the study, the researcher advises SUNY Jefferson to implement a first-year experience (FYE). The FYE is designed to introduce students to campus resources, provide training in time management and study skills, and to address student development issues (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

**Limitations**

While only up to 10 participants were needed for the study, more participants would have been beneficial. Also, only one participant came from a class the researcher did not teach. This participant was unable to recall any vocabulary from the strategies or skills taught from the workbook. The participant remembered being taught time-management skills or breaking down an assignment into smaller segments to complete the work on time. Having more participants from other courses would have provided more feedback on what skills adjuncts were focused and what useful skills students did learn from other instructors. So while the participant remembered some things, it would have been beneficial to have more than one participant from another course.

When the researcher contacted possible participants for the study, many did not respond to the emails sent. It was observed that those who did not respond were failing
the introductory courses at mid-term. The one participant who did contact the researcher and set up an interview did not show up and failed the introductory course.

Another limitation is the time between the participants took the developmental course and then were interviewed for the study. There was essentially eight months from the time the students started the developmental reading course to the interview. Therefore, there could have been more skills the students remembered or applied than what was represented in the study.

Last, there was bias on the part of the researcher. Because the researcher is the only full-time reading professor and the chair of the committee on developmental education, there was initial bias. The researcher mitigated the bias by acknowledging them. The researcher wanted the course to be useful for students and use what they learned in the course in other courses. The researcher acknowledged this to ensure the findings were that of the participants rather than the features and ideas of the researcher.

**Recommendations**

This study illustrates that while participants felt that skills transferred the researcher acknowledges that the reading program at SUNY Jefferson is not effective. Furthermore, there is no alignment between the developmental reading course and the introductory college-level courses. In addition to updating the reading program, there is a stigma for those students who enroll in developmental education at the college-level and the culture needs to change in order for students to be successful. To change the culture and the stigma, there is a need to have the faculty, both developmental teachers and college content teachers to come together to discuss the discourse within the college community.
Understanding students’ perspective on taking a CRDC and then taking a college-level introductory course will inform developmental educators and higher education of the barriers that continue to hinder the success of developmental education courses for students. There are five recommendations that were learned from the study; they are to teach the 19 skills in a different format than what is currently being taught. Also, developmental instructors, faculty, staff, and administrators should be better informed on developmental education courses in higher education. Next, to continue to read more journal articles on research to continue to support this underrepresented population. Then, recommend that students take 15 credits their first semester in addition to the developmental courses. Last, to utilize the first-year experience (FYE) including more aggressive academic advising for students entering community colleges.

First, the participants were able to recall and apply nearly all of the reading strategies to their introductory college-level courses. However, the participants were not able to recall and implement all of the 19 skills they learned. Therefore, a recommendation is to apply the skills to content-specific coursework in the developmental reading course. In doing this, the researcher also recommends coordinating with the introductory college-level courses to identify the basic skill level needed for the student to be successful. In doing so, this would align the developmental course with the introductory college courses. Most specifically, the recommendation is to focus on PSYCH 133, Math 155, and HIS 151 content and instructors. Because only one of the three participants that enrolled in PSYCH 133 passed with a C or better. Also in both Math 155 and HIS 151, only one of two participants passed with a C or better.
Therefore, the recommendation to focus on the introductory college courses in the developmental reading class.

Second, there is a stigma about developmental education course in higher education. Furthermore, the climate on many campuses is that students are underprepared, and remediating students to become proficient is difficult. The faculty, staff, and administration need more information to make an informed decision on how the courses are taught, who has the necessary background to teach them, and the best format in which the courses should be offered. In addition, the faculty, staff, and administration should understand what testing requirements should be used for students and the accountability the college has for this type of open-access policy.

Third, developmental educators need to have more knowledge on developmental education. The literature states that many developmental educators have no prior knowledge of the history of developmental education and therefore may not be serving the needs of developmental education students (Arendale, 2010). As more research is being conducted in developmental education, it is imperative to continue to observe and update courses as needed.

Fourth, more aggressive academic advising and utilizing a first-year experience (FYE) will bridge the gap for students not prepared for college in both time management skills and coping skills.

Lastly, it is recommended that all students in their first semester of developmental courses take fifteen credits rather than twelve. While administration thinks that students are unprepared for the rigors of college while enrolled in developmental courses, based on the results of this study students are overwhelmed when taking 15-19 credits the
semester after developmental courses. Therefore, taking five courses their first semester will allow students to know what the following four semesters will emulate.

The issue of developmental education, especially in the community college, is as multifaceted as the profiles of the community college student. With remediation comes a cost to the student and the institution. Also, starting in developmental education prolongs graduation. Furthermore, the analysis of the lived experience of the participants obtained in this study also led to some conclusions that recommend consideration of changes to policy, classroom instruction, and professional practice.

A more rounded approach for students entering community college would be beneficial for the student. A first-year experience and experiential learning would most benefit and expose students to a diverse culture who are academically unprepared for college. Both will help promote social justice for these students and improve the overall community (Boylan, 2002).

**Future research.** Three recommendations are given for further studies. Because the students did not transfer skills to the introductory course, the first recommendation is to interview introductory college-level instructors to determine what skills they believe students need to be successful. Finding out what skills are needed would better align the developmental course to the college-level introductory course.

The second recommendation for future research would be to repeat this study after aligning the developmental course to the introductory course. In addition to interviewing students after the initial developmental course, repeat the interview after two full semesters of college-level courses. Thus answering the question, are the skills learned in the developmental course still applicable in additional courses?
The third recommendation for future research is to conduct a mixed method study on students who are taking one combined developmental reading and writing course. What are the rates of passing, retention, and graduation of these students once they are enrolled in introductory college-level courses? Once in the college-level introductory level course, conduct a face to face interview to ask students what skills were learned in the combined class and if and how they are using the skills in their introductory courses.

**Policy.** Creating and maintaining powerful educational environments requires effective leadership and an appropriate organizational culture (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). While it is important to understand and define an institution’s core values, mission, and vision, emphasis should also be placed on making people the prime resource, to learn from the people it serves, analyze strengths and weakness for program development, and invest in professional development (Chickering & Reisser). When 60% of colleges’ populations start their college careers in developmental education based on the college placement tests and, like other studies, there is low retention, graduation, and transfer rates, then this population of students is not being served properly (Bringsjord, 2014). Additionally, there will be low social mobility of the students who are enrolled in developmental education.

Policymakers must make informed decisions based on the best solutions for the benefit of the students. Also, administrators should challenge the instructors to design the courses and curriculum to scaffold skills to the college-level courses for which the developmental courses were designed to do. Instructors should continually examine course goals and objectives to ensure that they achieve their intended outcome. Also, college instructors teaching developmental courses should be aware and read updated
research and practice on developmental education studies about placement and remediation. There is a wide diversity of institutions, communities, and state-level governance systems that exist across the community college organizational field (Meier, 2015).

**Improve practice.** VanOra (2012) recommended a freshman success course that focuses on study skills and time management that might help students feel better prepared for college-level coursework and exams. SUNY Jefferson does not have a required freshman success course. In addition, because students are not transferring skills to the college-level courses supplemental instruction (SI) is recommended to improve practice. SI utilizes course content as the basis for skills after identifying high-risk courses rather than high-risk students (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). SI is done by linking two or more classes and having students who have previously taken the course to assist the new group outside of class, allowing students additional time spent on learning skills they must have to succeed in required classes. For the purpose of this study, Math 155, Psychology 133, and History 151 are considered high-risk courses because of the overall pass rate among the nine participants. While the pass rate was not good for these courses, the students were able to transfer skills that a more seasoned student would be able to illustrate to other students the thought process to learn new material (Perin, 2013).

For improved practice for students, there should be additional time spent reinforcing reading strategies in high school. Relearning or reintroducing these strategies would benefit the students not only to become college ready but also to improve learning in high school. The recommended strategies to be relearned throughout high school are test-taking strategies, vocabulary development, and connections to the text.
**Curriculum design.** The design of the courses needs to be updated for students to learn the skills needed in the introductory courses. Mainstreaming is when developmental courses are offered in academic departments (Perin, 2002). The research illustrates that students enrolled in developmental coursework in centralized departments are provided assistance in a separate department whose function is only to offer pre-college-level courses. In a study completed by Boylan, Bliss, and Bonham (1997), centralized students earned a higher first-semester grade point average, overall grade point averages, higher retention rates, higher math and English grades, than students in a mainstreamed developmental program. Currently, SUNY Jefferson utilizes the model of mainstreaming versus centralization. The researcher recommends centralization over mainstreaming because the structure makes it easier to coordinate student services (advising and counseling) and communication among staff (Perin, 2002).

In addition to updating the design of the program, there is evidence that students perform better in an 8-week format rather than a 16-week format. The participants in the study were enrolled in a 16-week developmental course at SUNY Jefferson. Since the fall of 2015, 8-week semester courses have been implemented. Data suggests that students are more successful with shorter sequences in developmental courses, and they were able to enroll in college courses sooner (Hodara & Jaggars, 2014). Based on the data, the researcher recommends that strategies continue to be taught in the developmental reading course with more content-based course textbooks.

Lastly, high schools should be revisiting and teaching reading skills and strategies in all classes. There appears to be a wide held belief that teaching context clues should stop at the elementary school. When students enter high school they are learning
vocabulary that is more complex. In addition to the more robust vocabulary, there is more content specific information for the content specific courses. Therefore, reinforcing the use of context clues, chunking, and connections to text the students would most likely perform better at the high school level and have more background knowledge in both study skills and content specific information.

Conclusion

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2008), there are 1045 community colleges in the United States with 6.2 million students. Community colleges today have taken on numerous roles for workforce preparation and economic development. Three-quarters of all first-time students aspire to earn a baccalaureate degree. Unfortunately, because the students have less advantaged backgrounds, and they are less prepared academically, they have high dropout rates compared to their 4-year counterparts (Dougherty, 2011).

Understanding the historical context of community colleges is essential to understanding the community college’s role in the present time (Meier, 2015). Developmental education in higher education requires significant investments in human and financial resources (Arendale, 2010; Morgan, 2012). With low pass rates, retention, and graduation rates, there is concern that these courses are not meeting the institutional outcomes for which they were originally designed (Goudas & Boylan, 2012). Because so many students are taking developmental courses in higher education, there is concern about costs to the student, the institution, and the community. While enrolled in developmental courses, students incur debt, spend time and money, and lose potential
wages (Perin, 2006; Conforti et al., 2014). In 2012, SUNY community colleges spent more than 70 million dollars on developmental education (Morgan, 2012).

Despite the availability of alternatives, most students are still placed into developmental courses based on the results of CPTs. Because of this, scholars have conducted empirical studies to validate CPTs, which have led to both positive and negative results (Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2011). Unfortunately, with different cut-off scores used at various institutions, there does not appear to be a clear answer as to if the CPTs are a good indicator of whether students need developmental education or not (Arendale, 2010; Boylan & Trawick, 2013; Bringsjord, 2014; Perin, 2006).

The researcher identified empirical research that exists on developmental education in higher education. Also, the research on the academic performance of students enrolled in developmental education, student outcomes in developmental education, and the course structure, curriculum design, and alignment between developmental courses and college-level courses resulted in backing up the claims that the developmental reading course are not meeting the instructional outcomes for which they were originally designed.

The significant number of students enrolled in developmental courses, combined with low pass rates and low graduation rates, suggests that developmental courses are not meeting the instructional outcomes for which they were originally designed. The study was conducted using a qualitative, phenomenological research design. This method examined students’ perspectives toward college and their learning in the critical reading developmental course and the introductory course. Also, qualitative research contributes valuable knowledge to complex issues of access and retention in developmental
education. Individual interviews provided information about the students’ perceptions of their educational experiences that cannot be captured or defined through traditional quantitative measures (Grubb & Cox, 2005; Higbee et al., 2005).

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to understand, from the perspective of the students, if skills learned in the Critical Reading Developmental Course were used in introductory college courses. Eight strategies and skills were identified, and four themes emerged. The eight skills were (a) researching skills, (b) test-taking skills, (c) identification of fact and opinion, (d) vocabulary development, (e) connections to text, (f) puzzle reading, (g) attention to details, and (h) cause and effect. Four themes emerged from the data, and they consisted of, but not all courses transferred, heavier course load after CRDC, English and reading class confusion, and reading and English transferability. All categories and themes were relevant to the lived experiences of the students in their second semester at SUNY Jefferson who participated in this qualitative study.

The findings of this study support the studies and literature already conducted. For instance, the focus needs not to be on the effectiveness of developmental education coursework as much as the acceleration through better assessment of readiness at the outset. Also, ongoing learning support is needed as the students’ progress into reading-intensive coursework (Giordano & Hassel, 2016), because students struggle to adapt to the new demands of advanced course work in multiple disciplines.
References


Appendix A

JCC Fall 2014 Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Demographics</th>
<th>Fall 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall Full-Time Headcount</td>
<td>2154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit Hours Per Student</td>
<td>13.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Students</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer Students</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing Students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Returning Students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concurrently Enrolled HS</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 18</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-19</td>
<td>841</td>
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<tr>
<td>20-21</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-24</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Traditional</td>
<td>1536</td>
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<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>169</td>
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<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>101</td>
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<tr>
<td>50-64</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Non-Traditional</td>
<td>618</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>1597</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## St. John Fisher Informed Consent Form

**Title of Study:**
Student Perspective on a Critical Reading Developmental Course: A Qualitative Inquiry.

**Name of Researcher:**
Leah A. Deasy

**Faculty Supervisor:**
Dr. VanDerLinden, _____________________

**Purpose of Study:**
To identify from the perspective of the student, what skills did they learn in the Critical Reading Developmental Course (CRDC) and apply in an introductory college course.

**Location of Study:**
SUNY Jefferson

**Risks and Benefits:**
The risks include, embarrassment of taking a developmental course, and/or not being able to recall what was learned in both the CRDC and the introductory college course. Because the student did not have to pass the introductory college course to be in the proposed study, there could be embarrassment on failing or earning a low grade. The benefits include calling greater attention to student perspective of a developmental reading course. The results of the study may support program improvement and replication.

**Confidentiality:**
The participants in the study will be confidential.

**Your Rights:**
As a research participant, you have the right to:
1. Have the purpose of the study, and any risks and benefits explained to you prior to your participation.

2. Withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

3. Refuse to answer a particular question without penalty.

4. Be informed of the results of the study.

I have read the above, received a copy of this form, and I agree to participate in this study.

___________________  __________________ _________________
Print Name (Participant)  Signature   Date

___________________  __________________ _________________
Print Name (Researcher)  Signature   Date

If you have any further questions regarding this study or experience any physical discomfort due to participation in this study, please contact the researcher, Leah A. Deasy at the following email and/or phone number:

________________
________________

The researcher will refer you to appropriate Health and Wellness support that is available to you. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of St. John Fisher College has reviewed
this project. For any concerns regarding confidentiality, please call Jill Rathbun
___________. She will direct your call to a member of the IRB at St. John Fisher
College.
Appendix C

Data Collection Semi-Structured Interview

The purpose of the proposed study is to identify, from the perspective of the student what skills were learned in Critical Reading Developmental Course (CRDC) and used in the introductory college course. A semi-structured 30-minute face-to-face interview will be completed to gather data. There are four sections to interview protocols. They include the introduction, opening question, body of the interview, and the closing (Charmaz, 2002).

To start the interview, the interviewer will introduce the proposed study and discuss what they can expect. These includes confidentiality, if there is something they do not wish to answer to let you know, signing the informed consent form, permission to record and then ask if they have any additional questions before getting started (Charmaz, 2002).

The opening question is a single question designed to get the interviewee talking about what is meaningful to them (Charmaz, 2002). Because the interviewee has been out of the CRDC for at least two semesters the interviewer will begin with the question:

Questions:

1. What courses are you taking this semester?

Then the interviewer will proceed with the body of the interview using the following questions. The interviewer will ask probing questions if the questions are not answered fully or need to expand on what the interviewee stated (Charmaz, 2002;
Probing questions are not to be asked if they are not relevant to the respondent’s experience or views (Charmaz, 2002).

2. Last semester you completed the critical reading course (CRDC 099). What are some things that you remember about the reading class from last semester?

3. What do you think was the most important thing you learned in the reading course?
   a. Why do you think that *(repeat what student said in Q2)* was important?

4. What do you think was the second most important thing you learned in the reading course?
   a. Why do you think that *(repeat what students said in Q4)* was important?

5. Is there anything else that you remember learning about in the reading course last semester?

6. In thinking about the things that you learned in the reading course, have you used any of the information/skills in your classes this semester?

7. What about in the introductory course? Have you used any information/skills from the reading course in the introductory course?
   a. Can you think of a specific example (maybe an assignment or class activity) where you used something that you learned in the reading course in the introductory course?

8. Is there anything else you would like to share about how you’ve applied what you learned in the reading course to your courses this semester?

9. Do you think that the reading course is helping you to be successful in your courses this semester?
a. If yes to Q9, how so?

b. If no to Q9, why not?

10. Is there anything else you would like to share about the reading course last semester or your courses this semester?

At the closing of the interview, the interviewer will thank the interviewee for their time, give contact information if they have additional questions, and give the ten-dollar gift card for SUNY Jefferson bookstore/café honorarium for participating.

Table 2

CRDC Instructional Goals Broken Into Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listening Skills</th>
<th>Reading Vocabulary and Strategies</th>
<th>Critical Reading</th>
<th>Thinking Skills</th>
<th>Other Academic Areas</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary from “ALSTYL”</td>
<td>Chunking</td>
<td>National Geographic</td>
<td>Inference</td>
<td>Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Presentations</td>
<td>Text to Text</td>
<td>Novel-Twisted</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Geography</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Discussion</td>
<td>Text to Self</td>
<td>“ALSTYL”</td>
<td>Tone</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flash Cards</td>
<td>Text to the World</td>
<td>The Lottery</td>
<td>“Twisted”</td>
<td>Math</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>“ALSTYL”</td>
<td>“Crusader Rabbit”</td>
<td>“Crusader Rabbit”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flash Cards</td>
<td>Visualizations</td>
<td>Main Idea</td>
<td>Asking Questions Finding Answers</td>
<td>History</td>
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<td>Context Clues</td>
<td>“Hills Like White Elephants”</td>
<td>Other</td>
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