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Minority Child Care Providers' Perspectives of Barriers to Timely Associate Degree Completion

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
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Abstract

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Sonia G. Pruneda-Hernandez

MS, Nova Southeastern University, 2004

BS, University of North Florida, 2002

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

December 2020

Abstract

The problem this basic qualitative study sought to address was the length of time it takes minority childcare providers (MCCPs) seeking an associate of applied science degree in early childhood (EC) education to graduate from a community college. For MCCPs to acquire a degree and meet educational requirements, they often work full time to complete the degree, which may result in loss of employment, closure of their family child care homes, demotion in positions, or decreased salaries. The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of MCCPs on the barriers to timely degree completion of an associate degree in EC. Yosso's asset-based theory of community cultural wealth grounded this study. A purposeful sample of 12 MCCPs, who completed an associate's EC degree at a community college, were employed during the program, and took 7–10+ years to graduate, participated in semistructured interviews. Data were analyzed through coding and theme development. Participants faced barriers navigating the college process, passing placement exams and remedial courses, locating supports at the college and workplace, connecting with campus life as nontraditional students, and balancing family and college commitments. It is recommended that college administrators provide accessible support systems for MCCPs to navigate the college process, assign knowledgeable advisors of the EC degree and willing to meet with students during nontraditional hours, and establish an EC education club for MCCPs' to network with other students. These endeavors may lead to positive social change when campus leaders, faculty, and staff are involved with MCCPs to overcome barriers; thus, reducing the time to completion for many students facing the same barriers.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to the child care providers, nontraditional students who consistently challenged me to continue my education, just like I challenge them. There may be barriers and challenges along your educational path, but remember that there are also many resources and people to help you overcome those hurdles. As students, you have many assets to support you in your journey to obtain a degree. Fuerza y sigan adelante!

Acknowledgments

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Finally, to all my colleagues that have continuously encouraged me to complete, thank you for your support! Special thanks to Estelle Flank, Nelida Andres, and Dr. Eric Benjamin; I appreciate your constant belief in my abilities even when I could not see them in myself. I am finally done, and officially "Doc Pruneda-Hernandez."

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Child care providers throughout the United States are encouraged and at times mandated by employers and accrediting early childhood organizations to continue their formal education to complete, at a minimum, a 2-year degree (Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2015; NAEYC Accreditation, 2018; Office of the State Superintendent of Education, 2016). The benefits of child care providers returning to college for degrees and applying that knowledge to an early childhood classroom contributes to creating high-quality child care programs (Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2015; Manning et al., 2017; Pianta et al., 2016). However, due to a fragmented system and inconsistent data collection, specifically on child care providers in college, accurate data are not available on the percentage of child care providers who are enrolled in colleges in specific regions of the United States as a whole (Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2015; Kaplan, 2018; White et al., 2016).

Resarch does confirm that child care providers returning to higher education are enrolling at community colleges at higher rates than 4-year colleges, due to affordability (Cho, 2016; Kaplan, 2018). However, child care providers enrolled at community colleges face challenges, within and outside the institution, that hinder their time to completion in less than 7–10 years (Cheng et al., 2018; Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2015; Limardo, Hill, et al., 2016).

There is minimal national data on child care providers' time-to-degree completion at 2-year community colleges due to inconsistencies in degree titles and data collection (Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2015; McCormick Center for Early

Childhood Leadership, 2018; Whitebook, 2014). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, n.d.) lists that in 2009, 41% of Associate of Applied Science of Early Childhood Education majors took 6-plus years to complete the degree. The NCES does not track students taking more than 6 years to complete a 2-year degree (2016). Child care providers usually take, and may be advised to take, one class per semester, making the average time to complete 10 years for a 2-year degree (National Research Council, 2012).

National researchers and the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Early Learning, outline recommendations for career pathways and support systems to reduce time to completion for degrees; however, they acknowledge the minimal and inconsistent data collection for early childhood education degrees (Limardo, Hill, et al., 2016; Whitebook, 2014; Whitebook, McLean, Austin, & Edwards, 2018). In 2016, on average, it took child care providers enrolled at one community college 5 years to complete the One Year Certificate which is the half way point of credits to the Associate of Applied Science degree in Early Childhood Education (Institutional Research and Effectiveness, 2017).

The majority of child care providers enrolled in the Associate of Applied Science degree in Early Childhood Education at community colleges are nontraditional students, female, working full time, paid minimal wages, and may require English language courses and remedial courses before beginning college-level coursework (Deutsch & Riffin, 2013; Eberly, 2016; Garavuso, 2016; Sakai et al., 2014). The child care workforce to date is an underrepresented, marginalized group that is not part of the teaching

workforce in the public's eye. Child care providers are viewed as needing few skills to care and educate young children, have low status, and low pay in society (Whitebook, 2014). Institute of Medicine & National Research Council (2015) stated that the child care workforce requires, "making substantial improvements in working conditions, well-being, compensation, and perceived status or prestige" (p. 2).

There are many plausible opinions as to what the barriers may be for time to completion for child care providers enrolled at community college but limited data to answer the question from the perspective of the minority child care providers themselves (Cheng et al., 2018; Kaplan, 2018). Research on child care providers focuses on educational levels and quality of early childhood care environments with little research on the perspectives of child care providers' actual pathway experience to complete the degree (Bullough, 2016; Hall-Kenyon et al., 2014). Research on the perspectives of minority child care providers may provide community college early childhood program faculty, state organizations, and minority students' insight on how to eliminate barriers to reduce time to completion.

Chapter 1 provides a background of what changes are occurring nationally in the field of early childhood education requirements that affect child care providers. Also presented are the problem statement, the purpose of the study, research questions, and a summary of the conceptual framework. This chapter provides the definitions, assumptions, and limitations of this study. Finally, this chapter includes the significance with an explanation of how this research may impel early childhood programs at

community colleges and early childhood organizations to support minority child care providers in reducing time to graduation.

Background

In 2015, the Institute of Medicine and National Research Council (2015) published a study with the recommendation that comprehensive pathways be created for child care providers to move towards obtaining bachelor's degrees to care and teach children birth through age 8. The recommendation came on the heels of previous recommendations by the National Research Council (2012) and followed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), which in 2006 established new early childhood teacher qualifications for accreditation. The timeline set forth by NAEYC in 2006 stated that by 2020, all NAEYC accredited programs would have teachers with a minimum of an associate degree, and 75% of teachers would have a bachelor's degree with over 30 credits in early childhood education. That same year, NAEYC introduced its Early Childhood Associate Degree Accreditation, which proposed that higher education institutions awarding associate degrees be evaluated on specific NAEYC Professional Preparation Standards to ensure colleges deliver high-quality programs that meet NAEYC higher education standards (Lutton, 2006). This study addressed a gap in practice as well as a gap in the literature regarding barriers to timely degree completion for the Associate of Applied Science in Early Childhood Education at community colleges for minority child care providers.

In the United States, child care programs that are center-based or family child care are regulated by the state. There are no national standards, and all states set different

minimum requirements for qualifications except for Head Start and Military Child Care (Bernoteit et al., 2016; Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2015; Steinhaus & Walker, 2016; Whitebook, 2014). In 2016, Washington, DC, became the first city in the nation to add formal education requirements for lead teachers to obtain an associate degree by 2020 into their regulations and provided child care providers, center and family-based, a 4-year timeline to meet the new regulation (Office of the State Superintendent of Education, 2016). Due to online feedback from the community and child care providers, in June of 2018, the Muriel Bowser Administration announced an extension to the timeline extending the new requirement to 2023, providing child care providers a 7-year timeline to complete a 2-year degree (Office of the State Superintendent of Education, 2017).

In setting new educational regulations, the mandate set off a national debate in the early childhood field asking whether degrees for child care providers were necessary since degrees did not necessarily equate to higher pay (Council for Professional Recognition, 2018; Russell, 2018; Stringer, 2018; Washington & Gadson, 2017). Furthermore, degree attainment for child care providers is coupled with long standing issues in the field including fractured workforce nationally, low pay, having majority of child care providers as women of color, and expectations that caring for young children does not require expertise (Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2015; Whitebook, 2014). Limardo, Hill, et al., (2016, p. 2) described circumstances faced by the child care workforce in the following way:

A number of factors impact the ability of ECE professionals to attain education and training. These challenges are particularly debilitating for disadvantaged individuals, such as low-skilled adults and English Language Learners (ELLs) that currently comprise a notable portion of the ECE workforce.

With new requirements in Washington, DC, early childhood organizations, government agencies, and community colleges throughout the DC region area were collaborating in the formation of a subcommittee task force focused on higher education. The Washington Area Women's Foundation Early Care and Education convened the task force to support career pathways including degree attainment for child care providers throughout the Washington, DC, region (Washington Region Early Care and Education Workforce Network, 2016). Part-time students at community colleges take, on average, 6 years to complete a 2-year degree; however, for child care providers at one particular site in the Washington, DC, region, the average number of years to obtain a 2-year degree is 9 (Juszkiewicz, 2016; Martin et al., 2014). To lessen the time-to-degree-completion, several community colleges in the surrounding Washington, DC, region have approved providing credit for prior learning to Child Development Associate (CDA) holders and developed fully online courses with open educational resources to reduce the cost of college (T.E.A.C.H. D.C. Early Childhood Scholarship Program, 2020a). However, there are no current data on whether providing credit for prior learning, online degrees, or open educational resources eliminates barriers or supports child care providers decreased time to completion for an associate degree (D'Amico et al., 2014; Samuels et al., 2019).

The requirement for child care providers to acquire, at minimum, an early childhood education associate degree, coupled with educational requirement changes in early childhood nationally, has meant that child care providers are often working full time while spending 7–10 or more years completing a 2-year degree at a community college. If educational requirements are mandated with specific time limits, such as Washington, DC, implemented in 2016 (but then had to extend in 2018), minority child care providers throughout the United States may be greatly impacted by loss of employment, closure of their family child care homes, demotion in positions, or decreased salaries because they did not meet the educational requirement within the time limit (Brown, 2019; Office of the State Superintendent of Education, 2017).

Problem Statement

The problem this basic qualitative study sought to address was the length of time it takes minority child care providers seeking an Associate of Applied Science degree in Early Childhood Education to graduate. As of 2018, it was believed that child care providers would take 7–10 years or more to complete a 2-year degree in early childhood education at community colleges (Kaplan, 2018; Office of the State Superintendent of Education, 2018). The efforts in the United States to improve the quality of child care by mandating the educational requirements of child care providers resulted in this population returning to college with little knowledge of how to navigate higher education institutions (Lin & Magnuson, 2018). Such navigation requires students to be knowledgeable about institutional systems in place for enrolling, registering, and tutoring, if needed. Without this knowledge, students may confront errors in their schedules, take classes they may not

need, may not be encouraged to stay in school, and may not understand financial aid requirements that may lead to more time to completing a degree.

There is evidence that higher teacher qualifications, including higher education, results in higher quality classrooms of young children. A meta-analytic review of longitudinal research demonstrated a correlation between teacher education levels and high-quality early childhood classroom environments (Manning et al., 2019). Poor quality in child care settings can affect the overall development of all children, regardless of background, and can be detrimental to disadvantaged children (Manning et al., 2019, p. 370). During the early years of a child's life, the brain is establishing connections that may either weaken or strengthen for later learning in adulthood (Center on the Developing Child, 2019). The impact that child care providers have on young children can last a lifetime. The knowledge that child care providers gain from obtaining an Associate of Applied Science degree in Early Chilhdood Educaiton may support them to apply developmentally appropriate practices to their work environment with young children.

The population of child care providers in the United States is 96% female; their demographics are diverse, with over 50% self-identified as minorities, and one-fifth of whom speak a language other than English (Cheng et al., 2018; Gould, 2015). It is estimated that minorities make up one-third to one-half of the child care providers in the United States, while public school teachers are only one-fourth teachers of color (Whitebook, 2014). Current initiatives, such as Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.) and the Child Care Career and Professional Development Fund

(CCCPDF), throughout 17 states as well as the District of Columbia, support child care providers returning to college by covering full tuition and books to support child care provider degree attainment (Cheng et al., 2018; Division of Early Childhood, 2020; T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood National Center, 2015). Despite the financial support, child care providers face additional barriers such as English as a second language courses, remedial courses, working full time, and familial obligations, which add to their time to complete a 2-year degree (Eberly, 2016; Kaplan, 2018; Mertes & Jankoviak, 2016).

Child care providers enrolling in community colleges already work in the field as child care teachers; they are majority female and nontraditional students (Buettner et al., 2016). Higher education early childhood degree programs, along with accessible support services during nontraditional hours at community colleges, play an essential role in child care providers attaining degrees in less than 7–10 years or more (Kaplan, 2018; Sakai et al., 2014). The meaningful gap in research on practice is that, while this topic has been researched in 4-year institutions, there is little research that identifies what, for this specific population of students, may be the barriers to timely degree completion for a 2-year degree in community colleges (Sakai et al., 2014).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of minority child care providers about barriers to timely degree completion for an Associate of Applied Science degree in Early Childhood Education. The results of this study may provide data to community colleges, early childhood faculty, and minority child care providers on how to better support this population of students to complete degrees in less

than 7–10 years. In a single case study on early childhood educators, Eberly (2016) focused explicitly on Latino early childhood educators and wrote: “due to the narrow focus of this project, this type of research should be expanded to other institutions of higher education beyond the single community college represented” (p. 15). The qualitative approach of this study was used to explore the perspectives of minority child care providers who have graduated with an Associate of Applied Science in Early Childhood Education, about the barriers to timely degree completion in community college.

Research Question

The basic qualitative study with interviews was based on a central question: What are the perspectives of minority child care providers regarding barriers to timely degree completion for an Associate of Applied Science degree in Early Childhood Education?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework I chose for my study was the asset-based theory of community cultural wealth by Yosso (2005). Community cultural wealth framework provides context to explore the perspectives of minority child care providers as nontraditional students, underrepresented students, and a marginalized group. Community cultural wealth is a conceptual framework informed by critical race theory and it focuses on “education access, persistence and graduation of underrepresented students” (Yosso, 2005, p. 73). Yosso (2005) challenged the deficit model used to describe marginalized groups and proposed that a new lens be used to “document and

analyze the education access, persistence and graduation of underrepresented students" (p. 73).

Yosso (2005) challenged the traditional cultural capital theory of Bourdieu (1986), proposing that cultural capital be applied to marginalized groups. Yosso (2005) stated that minorities and families are faulted for poor academic performance because of deficit thinking in education systems. The deficit model perpetuates education systems that do not value cultures outside of the norm. Education systems with a deficit model approach do not look at changing the flawed system, but instead place blame directly on the student and family for poor performances in an educational system that was not created to support diverse students (Garcia & Guerra, 2004).

Child care providers as a group face many challenges, are disadvantaged, are majority women of color, and are not viewed by society as professionals (Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2015; Limardo, Hill, et al., 2016; Whitebook, 2014). The Institute of Medicine and National Research Council (2015) described the child care workforce in a manner that I propose in this study (see pp. 27-31) and that aligns with Yosso's (2005) definition of a marginalized group:

> Despite their shared objective of nurturing and securing the future success of young children, these professionals are not acknowledged as a cohesive workforce, unified by their shared contributions and the common knowledge base and competencies needed to do their job well. (p. 1)

Further supporting the acknowledgement of minority child care providers as a marginalized group, Whitebook, McLean, Austin, and Edwards (2018) stated, "a

workforce comprised almost exclusively of women, of which 40 percent are women of color — is reinforced by gender and racial pay inequities in the U. S. labor market" (p. 9). Child care providers fit the definition of Yosso's marginalized groups (2005), according to the Institute of Medicine and National Research Council (2015) and Whitebook, McLean, Austin, and Edwards (2018).

Drawing upon the community cultural wealth's six forms of capital, I sought to explore the central question: What are the perspectives of minority child care providers regarding barriers to timely completion degree completion for an Associate of Applied Science in Early Childhood Education? Yosso (2005) proposed that six types of capital, from an asset-based perspective, apply to marginalized groups: aspirational capital, familial capital, linguistic capital, navigational capital, resistant capital, and social capital. The approach to the research question in my study is important from the perspective of minority child care providers as nontraditional students, underrepresented students, and as a marginalized group. The sample was made up of minority child care providers who may be nontraditional students, female students, and who may have been placed into English as a Second Language classes or remedial classes. The sample in my study took 7–10 years or more to complete a 2-year degree. This study sought to explore, from the participants' perspective, the "various forms of capital support nurtured through cultural wealth" and the barriers these students overcame to complete the Associate of Applied Science degree in Early Childhood Education (Yosso, 2005, p. 69).

In relation to my research study, a qualitative research approach allows for the construction of new knowledge using the framework of community cultural wealth. The

"six forms of capital that compromise community cultural wealth and most often go unacknowledged or unrecognized" are applied to the minority child care providers perspectives to frame the study and form the research question (Yosso, 2005, p. 70). Using Yosso's theory community cultural wealth and the six forms of capital described, allowed me to construct new knowledge from semistructured interviews with minority child care providers that met the set criteria. Thematic data analysis allowed for new themes to emerge using a priori and open codes based on the six forms of cultural capital.

With national debates on mandating college degrees currently in the field of early childhood education and a large percentage of the field being women of color, the perspectives of actual minority child care providers are seldom heard or brought to the decision-making tables of the early childhood profession (Council for Professional Recognition, 2018; Shdaimah et al., 2018). Minority child care providers length of time-to-degree-completion is most often viewed through a deficit model, placing emphasis on the child care provider for not completing their associate degrees in what is considered by higher education institutions as acceptable times to completion (Juszkiewicz, 2017). This study, framed by the theory of community cultural wealth, shifted the view of the deficit model and asked the central question of this study: What are the perspectives of minority child care providers regarding barriers to timely degree completion for an Associate of Applied Science degree in Early Childhood Education?

Nature of the Study

The research method for this study was a basic qualitative study with interviews. Such a study sought to explore participants' perspectives and what those viewpoints

meant to the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Basic qualitative studies, which are one of the most common forms of research in the education field (Merriam, 2009), are practical and flexible in researching practical problems in the field. In this qualitative design, data were collected through observations or interviews and then analyzed for themes (Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This type of study was appropriate for exploring minority child care providers' perspectives on barriers to timely degree completion for an Associate of Applied Science degree in Early Childhood Education.

The method of data collection for this study was interviews. They can provide detailed, rich information to understand the perspectives of the participants (Seidman, 2013). I used semistructured interviews to collect data and then constructed themes from the participants' shared perspectives (Percy et al., 2015). I used purposeful sampling with set criteria. The main data source collection was semistructured interviews with 12–15 participants who were graduates of the Associate of Applied Science degree in Early Childhood Education in one region of the United States. I conducted semistructured virtual interviews with open-ended, probing questions.

Thematic analysis was used for this study to explore people's perspectives (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The interview data were transcribed, reviewed for familiarity, and then coded using a priori and open coding to determine emerging themes.

Definitions

Asset-based. Focusing on the talents, potential and strengths that students bring to the classroom setting from their communities, families, or organizations they belong to

(Association of College & Research Libraries Instruction Section Research Scholarship Committee. (2018).

Associate of Applied Science Degree. A degree that prepares the child care provider for the workforce. The degree includes no less than 60 credits and no more than 70 credits. The degree may or may not transfer to a 4-year institution (Maryland Higher Education Commission, 2013).

Aspirational capital. The "hopes and dreams" of the students even when faced with barriers or obstacles. Aspirational capital keeps students motivated and looking towards a better future for themselves and their families (Yosso, 2005).

Child development associate. A child development associate (CDA) is a professionally recognized credential based on set national competency standards that require 120 clock hours of training, one year of work experience, evaluation of a professional portfolio, and completion of an assessment (Council for Professional Recognition, 2017).

Childcare providers. The term used for a person providing care for young children for compensation, whether home-based or center-based and is the person legally operating following his/her state laws (Office of Law and Revision Counsel, 2000).

Community cultural wealth. A conceptual framework informed by critical race theory that identifies six forms of capital that marginalized groups possess. "Community cultural wealth is an array of knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression" (Yosso, 2005, p. 77).

Deficit-based. The belief that specific populations of students such as nontraditional, low income, and minorities fail due to family and student's fault. The students and families are blamed for deficits from home or internal lack of ability. Fault is placed on student or family for failure (Valencia, 1997).

Early childhood educators. The term used to describe any professional working in an Early Learning and Development program and includes both center-based, family-based child care providers, home visitors, and administrators (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

ECE workforce. Defined as a person who cares and educates children birth through five for pay (Maroto & Brandon, 2012).

Familial capital. The connection to one's family and all those who are included in the family, including friends and community. Familial capital supports the student and connects them to a sense of belonging and support (Yosso, 2005).

Linguistic capital. The communication and language skills of the student. This is not necessarily only language, but how the students communicate with those around them and the ability to orally communicate because of cultural forms of communication they have been brought up in (Yosso, 2005).

Minority. Refers to a group that is identified by social, religious, ethnic, racial, or other characteristics and that is oppressed or discriminated by groups that hold higher status or power in society (Perkins & Wiley, 2014).

Navigational capital. Defined as learning to navigate institutions with dominant cultural norms by using social networks (Samuelson & Litzler, 2016; Yosso, 2005).

Nontraditional Student. Defined as students that are not the typical student, are over the age of 24, have financial obligations to support themselves and possibly dependents, are returning students to higher education, or maybe immigrants with no prior schooling experience in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.).

Resistant capital. The ability to resist opposition and develop skills to persist when faced with repression (Da Graca & Dougherty, 2015). Resistant capital can be passed down from generation to generation or can come from community and historical legacy (Da Graca & Dougherty, 2015).

Social capital. The resources through people who can help navigate the actual society and higher education institution that family may not have knowledge about (Yosso, 2005).

Time-to-degree-completion. The literal time it takes a student to complete their degree from enrollment to graduation (Shapiro, et al., 2016).

Child care providers/early childhood educators/ECE workforce are all used interchangeably in research studies and literature. For this study, the term child care provider was used to define those working for pay in the early childhood field, including centers and family child care.

Assumptions

This study was based on assumptions that were believed to be true but could not be demonstrated as true. I assumed that all participants answered the verification of criteria honestly and had a sincere interest in the research study with no ulterior motives. Participation was voluntary and no money or gifts were provided. I also assumed that all participants' oral interview responses were accurate and presented an honest depiction of their experiences outside of the college and within the college while completing their 2-year degree. This assumption was important since the purpose of the study was to explore perspectives of the minority child care providers' time to completion.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of 12–15 participants who completed an Associate of Applied Science degree in Early Childhood Education in one region of the Eastern part of the United States. The study sought to explore the perspectives of minority child care providers on barriers to timely degree completion of an Associate of Applied Science degree in Early Childhood Education. I chose this focus because of the changes implemented to child care provider educational requirements across the national and the impact that it may have on minority child care providers. In 2019, NAEYC released updated Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators, which implemented new national guidelines for child care providers to complete an associate or higher level degree. According to data from Office of Child Care Credentialing Branch in FY 2019, 460 child care providers were enrolled in higher education programs and were receiving full tuition and book funding

from the state to complete the degrees. Of these students, 46 graduated, and 91 withdrew from the program for a variety of reasons. Child care providers are enrolling in community colleges but they are not completing degrees in less than 3 years or are withdrawing from college before graduating.

My research study was delimited to participants who took 7-10 years or more, from 2000 to 2020, to graduate from community colleges in one region of the United States, who graduated with an Associate of Applied Science in Early Childhood Education degree, were working in child care while enrolled at a community college, and identified as minority students. The study did not include currently enrolled minority students in the Associate of Applied Science in Early Childhood Education at community colleges. Early Childhood Education majors currently enrolled in the Associate of Applied Science degree throughout the region began taking college courses in 2012 or before 2012 and are currently taking classes. The study excluded students in the Early Childhood Associate of Arts degree in Teaching (AAT). Students enrolled in the Associates of Arts in Teaching are focused on transfer and teaching in public schools, Pre-K–3rd grade. The AAT majors are mainly traditional students who attend college full time during the day. The careful selection of the study's sample augmented transferability to other contexts. To further enhance transferability, I provided detailed descriptions of the sample population, study, and findings (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). Purposeful sampling, using clear selection criteria, also allowed readers of the study to apply the research more broadly (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The conceptual framework most related to the area of study was Tinto's theory of institutional departure (Tinto, 1993). Tinto (1993) stated that for students to persist in college, students must be integrated into the college formally and informally. I decided not to use this theory because of the focus of the institution itself. It would have been difficult to apply it to the child care provider perspective on barriers outside of the institution.

Limitations

One limitation was the number of participants selected for this study, 12, limited the number of perspectives in the study. Limitations also present in the study were child care providers were from one specific region, they were all minority students, and were majority female. Participants selected were graduates of community colleges in one specific region of the Eastern part of the United States and graduated with the Associate of Applied Science in Early Childhood Education. Minority, female students who have graduated from the Associate of Applied Science in Early Childhood Education may be a limitation because it narrows the population sample to minorities, a specific gender, and specific degree which may limit the possibility of transferability to other contexts outside of the population of female, minority child care providers.

I explored my own position on the topic to be aware of my biases. In qualitative research, this is called researcher's position or reflexivity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015*).* Being aware of one's own position on the topic is critical since biases may affect the research process. As the researcher, I needed to identify my own position to remain objective during the research process and interviews. A reflexive journal was kept

documenting the decisions I made and why I made them. Respondent validation was conducted with the participants to get feedback on the emerging themes to ensure accuracy and to ensure that the participant's insights were correct. To check biases, an early childhood expert reviewed the questions to determine alignment to the field of study and suggest additional questions based on whether content was missing.

Potential biases include the participants knowing me without me knowing them. As an early childhood faculty who has been actively involved in the early childhood field, I present at local, state, and national conferences; therefore, it is possible for a participant to know me as a presenter without me knowing the participant. Throughout interviews, I needed to maintain a neutral stance and to ensure that I did not reinforce any positive feedback from the respondent (Birt et al., 2016). Maintaining a neutral stance required that I not express my personal opinions, that I focused on questions that can have meaningful responses, avoided questions that asked the participant to agree or disagree, and ask open-ended questions that allowed the participant to respond freely.

Due to the sample population, the findings were not generalizable; however, they may be transferable. To minimize limitations of transferability, strategies are in place to abate questions of credibility and dependability. Credibility occurs by applying different strategies to increase the credibility of the findings and to ensure that the participants' perspectives align with the researcher's interpretation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Tufford & Newman, 2010). Dependability refers to the consistency of data collection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Tufford & Newman, 2010). I included audit trails documenting detailed steps throughout the study for trustworthiness (Pandey & Patnaik, 2014). The audit trail

included detailed, documented data collection, how themes were selected, a description of how the data were analyzed, and all decisions made throughout the research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Transferability refers to how the results can be generalized or transferred to other contexts (Trochim, 2020). For transferability, I wrote rich, thick descriptions of participants, including detailed quotes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I also included a thorough, detailed description of the interview settings and findings of the study to enable transferability. The ultimate goal of transferability is that readers can apply the findings to other contexts (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Trochim, 2020).

Significance

The results of this study may provide insight and contribute knowledge to national early childhood organizations, state agencies, community college early childhood programs, and child care providers by exploring the perspectives of minority child care providers regarding how to reduce the time-to-degree-completion. In addition, the findings from the research study may add to current literature on child care providers time to completion and further research that will benefit the early childhood field. Due to a fragmented system and limitations of how data are collected, there is unreliable data to assess time-to-degree-completion for minority child care providers. There is a need to understand how to better support minority child care providers to timely degree completion at community colleges (Kaplan, 2018; Limardo, Hill, et al., 2016). If community college early childhood faculty and child care providers understand the research results, social change may occur by reducing barriers to the degree completion at

community colleges for minority child care providers enrolled in the Associate of Applied Science degree in Early Childhood Education. Community college faculty and administrators may be able to identify specific barriers acknowledged by the minority child care providers, and may implement changes to eliminate or reduce those barriers. The findings may result in not only supporting change for minority child care providers at community colleges but may also result in change for other minority students enrolled in other Associate of Applied Science degrees at community colleges.

Summary

The problem this qualitative study sought to address was the length of time it takes minority child care providers, seeking an associate degree in early childhood education, to graduate. The purpose of this study, as reflected in the research question, is to explore, from the perspective of the child care provider as a student, what barriers, both from the institution internally and externally, prohibited minority child care providers from completing a 2-year degree in a timely manner. The conceptual framework in this study was based on Yosso's theory of community cultural wealth (2005) and applied to child care providers as minority students. Participants were graduates of the Associate of Applied Science degree in Early Childhood Education and were from the Eastern part of the United States. Chapter 1 gives an overview of the study that includes the significance and how it may be important to early childhood education community college faculty and students.

This study may contribute to positive social change by providing knowledge to community college faculty and administrators that can be applied to their programs to

eliminate barriers for child care providers as minority students. If changes are made at community colleges to eliminate barriers, minority child care providers may be able to complete Associate of Applied Science degrees in Early Childhood Education in less than 7–10 years. The benefit to these minority child care providers may be an increase in pay for completing a degree and promotion to a lead teacher in a child care classroom.

In Chapter 2, I provide a review of the literature. I review the conceptual framework based on Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth. I also review the literature on the background of child care providers, the current literature that addresses the child care provider themselves, and the barriers to college. Chapter 2 concludes with a review of the major themes and addresses the gap in research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 2 consists of the review of the literature, literature search strategies used, including databases and search engines, with key terms and combinations used to complete the research. The conceptual framework is identified, defined, and synthesized with findings of a key theorist, along with an explanation of how the phenomenon directly applies to the study. This is followed by a detailed review of over 50 current sources drawn from peer-reviewed journals related to the phenomenon with a discussion of how the research directly applies to the study. Finally, Chapter 2 ends with a summary and conclusion, summarizing the themes and noting how the study fills a gap in the literature.

Due to a lack of established national educational requirements for child care providers, the early childhood education profession is undergoing educational requirement changes in the United States (Deutsch & Riffin, 2013; Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2015; National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2019). Every state has different educational requirements for child care providers, which range from no educational requirements for entry-level positions to associate degrees. There is no nationally recognized career pathway to guide child care providers towards a 2-year degree (Bernoteit et al., 2016; Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2015; Limardo, Hill, et al., 2016; Limardo, Sweeney, & Taylor, 2016; Whitebook, 2014; Whitebook, McLean, & Austin, 2016). Community colleges throughout the region offer early childhood degrees; however, the courses within the early childhood degree may differ. NAEYC is leading efforts to professionalize the

field of early childhood education by setting specific educational requirements to be used nationally. The changes proposed by the NAEYC and supported by national affiliates requires that child care providers return to higher education institutions and, at minimum, earn an associate's degree in order to be a lead teacher in a classroom with children from birth through age 5. Even with an associate's degree, the teacher needs to be supported frequently by a person with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education (Power to the Profession, 2019).

The problem this basic qualitative study sought to address was the length of time it takes minority child care providers to graduate with an associate degree in early childhood education. Research indicates that it may take child care providers 7–10 years or more to complete a 2-year degree; however, research does not provide conclusive evidence as to why it may take child care providers this length of time (Kaplan, 2018). If national and state requirements mandate degrees and set specific timelines for completion, as recommended by the Institute of Medicine and National Research Council (2015), child care providers may be negatively impacted by lost employment, closure of family child care homes, or demotion from lead teaching positions to assistant teachers in child care centers (Bullough, 2016; Hall-Kenyon et al., 2014). According to Gould (2015), 95.6% of child care workers are female and over 50% are women of color. Child care centers and family child care homes employ more females than do public schools, with 18% of the overall workforce being immigrants and 23% of those in family child care speaking Spanish (National Research Council, 2012; Park, et al., 2015; Whitebook, 2014). It is estimated that 14% more child care providers may be needed in the United

States by 2022 (Limardo, Sweeney, & Taylor, 2016; Schilder, 2016; U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018). The pathway to meet high standards and educational requirements is complicated, challenging to navigate, and varies for child care providers (Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2015; Schilder, 2016). Miller and Bogatova (2009) found that African American and Hispanic students, as well as those with high school diplomas or GEDs, who began higher education programs to major in early childhood education, were more likely to drop out of the program than those who already had some college credits. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore, from the perspectives of minority child care providers, what barriers, if any, cause a delay in time-to-degree-completion.

Literature Search Strategy

For this research study, the following databases were searched for the years 2015–2020: ProQuest, Eric (EBSCO), JSTOR, Child Care and Early Education Research Connections, and SAGE. The keyword pairings were *early childhood students* and *community colleges*, *child care providers* and *education*, *child care workforce* and *educational requirements*, and *child care workforce qualifications*. Due to the variety of titles for those who work as teachers in child care centers and family child care homes, I substituted *child care providers*, *early childhood educators*, *family child care provider*, and *early childhood workforce*.

Conceptual Framework

In this study, Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth is applied to minority child care providers length of time to completion in 2-year degree associate programs.

Community cultural wealth is a conceptual framework informed by critical race theory "described by values and capacities cultivated by communities of color that enable persistence often in the face of significant obstacles" (Burciaga & Kohli, 2018, p. 71). Yosso (2005) stated that marginalized groups have different cultural capital than middle and upper-class dominant groups in society. The traditional form of cultural capital theory does not recognize the cultural capital from marginalized groups. Yosso (2005) challenges the discourse that marginalized groups do not possess or inherit the necessary traditional forms of cultural and social capital required to succeed in higher education institutions and may have cultural deficiencies (Yosso, 2005). The cultural capital identified by Yosso for marginalized groups can add value to a student's experience in a classroom, but may not be recognized by the upper-middle class as an asset. The capital that students of marginalized groups do have is what Yosso termed as community cultural wealth. Yosso (2005) proposed that six types of capital apply to marginalized groups: aspirational capital, familial capital, linguistic capital, navigational capital, resistant capital, and social capital.

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) stated, "the 'voice' component of critical race theory provides a way to communicate the experience and realities of the oppressed, a first step on the road to justice" (p. 58). Minority child care providers who can continue through education studies for 7–10 years or more and complete the degree must maintain aspirational and resistant capital as they slowly progress towards the degree. This minority student population must also learn to navigate the college system, have a social support system, and continuously progress even when barriers are in place. Community

cultural wealth shifts the emphasis from the minority child care provider for not completing degrees within a specific timeframe and focuses on the assets the student brings with them to the college. Community cultural wealth guided the framework to exploring the perspectives of minority child care providers regarding what barriers, if any, may influence a delay in timely degree completion.

Yosso (2005) utilized a critical race theory lens to critique the deficit model of cultural capital theory that is applied to students of color and marginalized groups and instead introduced the theory of community cultural wealth with six forms of capital that students bring as assets to the higher education environment with them. Bourdieu's (1986) cultural capital referred to the skills and knowledge that a person acquires from belonging to a particular social class. Such skills and knowledge include understanding how to navigate higher education institutions (Exposito & Bernheimer, 2012). Minority students may not possess the cultural capital, as defined by Bourdieu's (1986) needed to navigate the higher institutions of learning. Minority students do not always possess the cultural capital, as defined by Bourdieu's, required to successfully navigate enrollment process, financial aid, and other processes involved with matriculation. Cultural capital also "refers to credentials and qualifications such as degrees or titles that symbolize cultural competence and authority" (Longhofer & Winchester, 2016, para. 6). With the traditional definition of cultural capital, minority students enter college with a deficit, not understanding the system (they do not know what they do not know). Minority students enrolling at community colleges are majority first-generation and attend part-time (Davidson & Wilson, 2017). As first-generation college students, families, and

communities of these students may not possess the social capital of understanding higher education to pass onto their children. The concept of the traditional terms of cultural and social capital speaks to a deficit model of minority students (Yosso, 2005).

Deficit models place the responsibility on the student for not possessing the necessary cultural and social capital allowing them to navigate and persist in college (Davidson & Wilson, 2017; Garcia & Guerra, 2004; Gay, 2010; Yosso, 2013). Higher education institutions are designed for students to have some understanding of how to navigate the system and the institution. Therefore, when students do not navigate the higher education institution or fail to understand the different enrollment processes, responsibility is placed directly on the student. Yosso (2005) proposed that instead of the deficit model, a new lens be used to support socially marginalized groups and the cultural wealth for which they are not recognized. Minority students' community cultural wealth, or what they do bring with them to an educational setting from learned experience in their cultures, communities, and families, needs to be utilized to support the students in enrollment and completion (Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2014; Yosso, 2005). In my study, minority child care providers are a marginalized group in the United States and are a subgroup or “subdivision of a group” to elementary school teachers. Childcare providers – those working with infants through age five – earn just above poverty wages and have had no real increases since the late 1990s (Isaacs et al., 2018; Whitebook, Phillips, & Howes, 2014). “Child Care workers are 95.6% female and are disproportionally workers of color” (Gould, 2015, p. 1). Child care providers working in child care centers or family child care with children ages birth to age five are not part of publicly funded educational

requirements, do not have set qualifications, and currently, in the United States are not viewed as a profession in comparison to public school teachers (Gerde et al., 2014; Kashen et al., 2016; National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2016; Whitebook, 2014). Child Care is not viewed as a teaching profession and is listed separately as child care workers in the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019).

Minority child care providers may not possess the navigational nor social capital to traverse higher education institutions (Gardner et al., 2019). However, minority child care providers possess a quality of aspiration and resistant capital taking 7–10 years or more to complete a 2-year degree. Therefore, minority child care providers should not be seen through a deficit lens. Institutions of higher education need to draw from minority child care providers' wealth of experience in the field, knowledge, resistance, persistence, and aspirations to support their time to completion. Engaging the minority child care provider in the college community may help the students to overcome barriers both internally at the institutions of higher education and externally in their personal lives to obtain degrees in the early childhood field in the least amount of time as possible (Davidson & Wilson, 2017; Gardner et al., 2019; Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2014).

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts

Historically in the United States, teacher education preparation focused on preparing teachers to teach elementary school children beginning with first grade. In the late 1800s, with Froebel and Montessori as models, several women, including Susan Blow brought the concept of kindergarten to the United States. Kindergarten preparation programs in the late 1800s and the early 1900s focused on training European-American

women to teach kindergarten and was viewed as preparation for motherhood. Education courses at training institutes were practical (New, 2016). The teacher education preparation programs did not take into account families in poverty of this period. “From the beginning, we have had day nurseries (or daycare or child care, to use the modern terms) for the poor and early childhood education for the affluent” (Cahan, 1989, p. 5). Early childhood programs focused on education were staffed with trained teachers, while early childhood programs for the low income focused on care were staffed with untrained personnel that were required to meet minimal standards. The history of early childhood education and childcare has been one of underfunding and lack of training for those working and caring directly with young children (Cahan, 1989; Whitebook, 2014).

As early childhood educators learned more about child development and theories emerged, the field of early childhood evolved with advocates of early childhood education organizing and forming organizations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (New, 2016). Even with the progress of child development, early childhood services remained as a private responsibility of the families (Barnett & Riley-Ayers, 2016). Historically, the U.S. government has had a very limited role in childcare and only stepped in during WWII to support women entering the workforce (Barnett & Riley-Ayers, 2016). Child care throughout the history of the United States to the present has remained the responsibility of the family with few exceptions, such as Head Start and subsidies that are focused on serving low-income families. Because of the history of early childhood, the system is fragmented with limited data and research, including no consistent terminology (Hall-Kenyon et al., 2014; Lin & Magnuson, 2018;

Whitebook, 2014). Diversity within the early childhood workforce has been discussed minimally throughout the history of early childhood education. Research has been limited with the focus on higher education of child care providers connected only to classroom quality (Hall-Kenyon et al., 2014; Whitebook, 2014; Whitebook & Ryan, 2011). Early childhood education is fragmented due to the historical belief that early childhood care is different from early childhood education. Unlike early childhood education, early childhood care costs are the responsibility of the parents, and thus affects salaries of child care providers in the form of low wages (Gould et al., 2017).

In the present time, the child care workforce is perceived as not needing higher education due to the distinction made between caring and educating children (Limardo, Hill, et al., 2016; Whitebook, Phillips, & Howes, 2014). Public perception assumes that caring for young children requires no educational background while educating young children requires degreed teachers (Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2015). In a report published June of 2016, U.S. government agencies acknowledged that young children need high-quality experiences with a highly qualified workforce (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & U.S. Department of Education, 2016). However, a highly skilled workforce is difficult when the child care sector lacks pay parity and standardized national educational requirements for child care provider. Child care providers not only care for young children, but also provide daily educational experiences through developmentally appropriate practices in classrooms with young children from birth through age five that support the overall development of the child,

including social, emotional, language, cognitive, and physical (Meloy & Schachner, 2019).

In understanding the historical background of child care providers in the United States to the present time, minority child care providers align with Yosso's (2005) definition of "marginalized group that often goes unrecognized and unacknowledged" (p. 69). Yosso (2005) proposed that six types of capital from an asset-based standpoint apply to marginalized groups: aspirational capital, familial capital, linguistic capital, navigational capital, resistant capital, and social capital. Minority child care providers who can continue through educational studies for 7–10 years or more and complete a 2-year degree must maintain aspirational capital as they slowly progress towards the degree (Stechuk et al., 2019). As nontraditional students, this population must also learn to navigate the college system, have a social support system, and continuously progress even when barriers are in place. Using community cultural wealth as the framework to move the responsibility away from the student guides the research question to understand what barriers are in place both internally and externally that impede the minority child care provider from completing a degree in a timely manner.

Aspirational Capital

Apirational capital is defined as hopes and dreams of students, even when faced with barriers (Yosso, 2005). Community colleges are 2-year programs; however, many child care providers take 7–10 years or more to complete. Aspirational capital may be what keeps students motivated to continue year after year to complete a degree. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (2015) supported a data

finding project to hear from what ealry chilhdood educators had to say about educational requirements. The research market team of Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Assoicates and Public Opinion Strategies conducted an online survey of 3,750 current and former National Association for the Education of Young Children child care providers throughout the United States, it was found that over 80% believed that set qualifications should be required for child care providers to ensure higher compensation; however, there was no consensus on degree requirements. As per the National Student Clearinghouse report, time-to-degree is the time elapsed from the time of enrollment to actual degree attainment (Shapiro et al., 2016). According to the authors, the average time for degree attainment of an associate degree for a traditional student at a community college is 3.3 years, with 35% of students completing in four or more years. Students considered nontraditional took longer to complete the associate degree; however, the National Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data System only tracks data up to six years, meaning that no data are collected after 6 years of no completion of a degree (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, 2016). With the current research, minority childcare providers continue year after year with the hope of completing an associate of early childhood degree.

The perspectives of minority child care providers as students and their aspirations to complete a degree depend on supportive environments that respond to students' needs within the institution and outside the institution (Bergman, et al., 2014; Sandoval-Lucero, et al., 2014). However, limited data exists as to child care providers’ perspectives at community colleges regarding their aspirations and barriers. In one study, Miller and

Bogatova (2009) found that only 14.9% of participants remained in a program with a significant number of African American and Hispanic students dropping out. The number is significant overall to minority child care providers disenrolling from programs and provides further evidence as to the gap in understanding how some minority child care providers continue towards completion and others drop the program. Sandoval-Lucero, et al. (2014) recommend that colleges view student success through the perspective of students of color to support them towards degree attainment. With minority child care providers, perspectives and aspirational culture should be viewed through the populations as a whole to support them through degree completion.

Familial Capital

Cultural differences regarding family. Minority students returning to school have family responsibilities (Park et al., 2015). Minority child care providers who are women may face additional responsibilities outside of work and college (Gardner et al., 2019; Kaplan, 2018; Stechuk et al., 2019). Many childcare providers have the responsibility of caring for their children and tending to domestic duties (Stone & O'Shea, 2013). What faculty at higher education institutions view as barriers may not be the barriers that minority child care providers see as barriers due to family responsibilities and cultural differences. The United States' cultural norms are different from the cultural norms of people who most recently immigrated to the United States. Therefore, family responsibilities may outweigh setting college coursework as a priority. At the NAEYC 2018 Conference, one Spanish session focused on changes to the early childhood profession and changes to early childhood career pathways. Two students currently

enrolled in higher education programs spoke on their lived experience of higher education.

> I feel guilty for having missed so many events; my children have missed out on dinners and me being there to support them with homework. They are older now in college; however, that guilt has stayed with me throughout these years. (Student Presenter 1, 2018 NAEYC Conference)
>
> I have a very supportive husband, I have waited until my children are older so now that they are in high school and college; I'm returning to better my English since I already have a degree from my country. I miss out on making my family dinners; however, they have been very good supporting me (Student Presenter 2, NAEYC Conference, 2018).

Family support. Sandoval-Lucero, et al. (2014) found that family support while enrolled at community colleges was critical for students to remain enrolled and complete college. Family support can range from moral support to financial to help the student during the time of enrollment. Financial support ranges from supporting the student financially to providing any assistance such as living at home. Moral support provides encouragement to continue, to succeed, and to complete even when a family member may not fully understand the educational process. For many non-traditional students, physical support can be essential and lessen the guilt associated with spending less time with the family. Physical support includes families completing extra household work, cooking for families, and taking on more responsibility for children in the home. Lin (2016) found that female students enrolled in higher education had higher levels of stress

when they had little family support. Having the families of students invested in the student's success can reduce attrition for minority students (Bergman et al., 2014; Bohl et al., 2017). Community colleges have a place within the community that can allow them to host events that involve families. At one college in the Washington, DC, region, a community college hosts Family Day or Dia de la Familia, collaborates with the county council to host events such as Multicultural Celebrations on the college campus, and reaches out to the community to host college nights at elementary/high schools (Montgomery College, 2010; CultureSpotMC.com, 2016). Bergman et al. (2014) recommend that colleges reach out to families and make them part of the student academic journey so families could feel a sense of inclusion in their students' higher education experience.

Linguistic Capital

English language learners. The actual environment of early childhood associate programs can influence a child care provider's ability to return to formal education and time to complete a degree. Many minority child care providers returning to college are nontraditional students and working full time (Cheng et al., 2018; Limardo, Hill, et al., 2016; Whitebook, McLean, & Austin, 2016). A significant number of child care providers throughout the United States are English Language Learners or require remedial courses for English (Kaplan, 2018; Limardo, Sweeney, & Taylor, 2016). Twenty-three percent of childcare providers speak another language, while 16% speak Spanish (Cheng et al., 2018). The total number of immigrant workforce in early childhood education has increased from 9% to 18% since 1990, leading to more female

caregivers who are immigrants since childcare provides faster access to employment (Park et al., 2015).

However, accessing higher education is not easy for this population of minority child care providers due to the complex U.S. higher education system, limited financial resources, and at times limited language skills even in their native language (Cheng et al., 2018; Eberly, 2016; Gardner et al., 2019; Limardo, Hill, et al., 2016). Adding to the barriers is the inability to access financial aid for noncredit English language classes or remedial noncredit courses. When child care providers qualify for financial aid, they may not be able to receive grants due to the requirement of attending part-time each semester (Cheng et al., 2018). Minority child care providers who are English language learners (ELL) may spend several years in English preparation classes before beginning college-level course work, which adds several years to completion of an associate degree (Park et al., 2015).

Remedial English classes and culture. Hodara and Jaggars (2014) found that students placed in lower English remedial courses tended to have a higher attrition rate. Returning to a formal educational setting can be intimidating due to childcare providers, not understanding how to navigate the college system, and having to complete many remedial English courses (Eberly, 2016). Supporting students to understand how to navigate the college system is important and students tend to find faculty or advisors who they are comfortable with to ask for support. Linguistic capital is more than language. Linguistic capital is also how the students communicate with those around them and the ability to orally communicate because of cultural forms of communication they have been

brought up with (Yosso, 2005). Students tend to find faculty and advisors who look like them or that they feel may understand their culture (Fairlie et al., 2014; Gopalan & Brady, 2019). Students may not relate to faculty due to differences in culture or vice versa. Race and ethnicity of instructors can affect students' overall success in a class and completion. Fairlie et al. (2014) found that the instructors' race or ethnicity influenced students' long-term decisions of selecting their major and that having minority faculty as instructors positively affected students' degree completion.

Navigational Capital

Qualifications. Child care in the United States is complex and made of many different types of child care, such as private for-profit, public nonprofit, private center-based, public PreK, Head Start, and family child care. Throughout the United States, there are no set national qualifications or degree requirements for child care providers to work as teachers in child care centers or to open a family child care (Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2015; Klein, et al., 2016; Whitebook & Austin, 2015). Minimum teacher qualifications in 27 states mean that child care centers and family child care providers require only a high school diploma to qualify as an assistant teacher of infants, toddlers, preschool children, or open a family child care home (Ackerman, 2016; Limardo, Sweeney, & Taylor, 2016; Maroto & Brandon, 2012). When staff is hired who do not have any experience in early childhood education, inadequate and limited training is provided.

Professional development. To improve teacher quality, early childhood advocates have focused on increasing professional development trainings of childcare

providers (Brown & Englehardt, 2016). However, studies have found that childcare providers complete professional training to meet state requirements and that there is limited application of the knowledge gained in classrooms (Brown & Englehardt, 2016; Linder et al., 2016). Other findings on professional development included having over-representation in professional development by specific groups who were educated and experienced and being underrepresented by assistant teachers and family child care providers (Weber-Mayrer et al., 2015).

Most of the states require professional development training to be completed by new staff to become a lead teacher in a classroom of children ages infants through age five; however, the training requirements are different state by state (Cheng et al., 2018; Gardner et al., 2019; Stechuk et al., 2019). A person with a high school diploma and professional development training is then qualified to write curricula, plan daily schedules, and be trusted to lead a classroom of children with developmentally appropriate practices. “Only 18 states and Washington, D.C. require lead teachers in child care centers to have more than a high school diploma” (Bornfreund et al., 2015, para. 5). With no set minimum requirements, young children are taught by child care providers who have had minimal training in early childhood education. Yet, research by Barnett (2003), Institute of Medicine and National Research Council (2015), and Whitebook (2003) recommended that lead teachers in care and education settings be required to have a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education.

Accreditation standards. In 2006, NAEYC made changes as to what would be acceptable for teacher qualifications in NAEYC Accredited Programs. The qualifications

were to change gradually throughout nine years. The purpose of the changes was to ensure that accredited centers have highly qualified teachers by the year 2020 (Freeman & Feeney, 2006). NAEYC defined highly qualified to include higher education degrees (Freeman & Feeney, 2006). In 2017, NAEYC embarked on Power to the Profession, which aims to professionalize the early childhood field by setting specific qualifications that include educational requirements for the child care/early childhood education teachers (Power to the Profession, 2018). Highly qualified teachers have many different meanings throughout the United States and in public school settings. In pre-K–12, highly qualified is defined as "Personnel who have the appropriate training and specialized skills to support children's development and learning during the critical early years" (National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators, 2009, p. 4). The National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (2009) further states that teacher certifications should be required in state-funded preschool programs. As of the present, the NAEYC and those working collaboratively with the organization have not defined what highly qualified teacher in the early childhood field means. Nationally, for child care providers caring for children who are infant through age 5 (before entering kindergarten), there are no clear definitions of a highly qualified teacher, and degrees for early childhood education vary from college to college and state to state (Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2015; Schilder, 2016; Whitebook & Austin, 2015).

Navigating higher education. Navigating higher education institutions can be a challenge for nontraditional students such as minority child care providers due to institutions that focus on traditional students and college services with set traditional

working hours (Bohl et al., 2017; Sims & Barnett, 2015). Counselors may lack an understanding of the early childhood programs and guide students to a different major, therefore, adding time-to-degree completion for the child care provider (Douglass et al., 2015; Glazer et al., 2017; Goncalves & Trunk, 2014; White et al., 2016; Whitebook, 2014). Nontraditional students who work throughout the day are not able to meet with advisors, and when they do, they may find that general education advisors have little knowledge of the early childhood program thus advising the student to meet with an early childhood faculty (Gardner et al., 2019; Glazer et al., 2017; Goncalves & Trunk, 2014; Martin et al., 2014). Advisors may incorrectly guide students to noncredit workforce development or an Associate of Applied Science degree when a student is focused on a transfer degree or vice versa.

Higher education institutions have barriers that limit access to child care providers enrollment in early childhood programs (Glazer et al., 2017). Barriers can include time availability of classes, semester schedules, articulation from a 2-year community college to a 4-year institution, and access to services such as writing centers, tutoring, and counseling (Glazer et al., 2017; Limardo, Hill, et al., 2016; Steinhaus & Walker, 2016; White et al., 2016; Whitebook, 2014). Community college's availability of classes, schedules, and hours do not reflect the community college student population enrolled at the college (Davidson & Wilson, 2017).

With no national requirements or guidelines for child care providers, higher education institutions throughout the United States have early childhood programs that vary in coursework, degrees, and standards. There are higher education early childhood

programs that focus on preschool with no courses on infants and toddlers while other higher education programs offer courses ranging from birth through age eight (Austin et al., 2015; Buettner et al., 2016; Whitebook, 2014). The only current national standards for early childhood higher education programs are from NAEYC. Early childhood higher education programs can elect to be accredited by NAEYC. Accreditation by NAEYC is voluntary for higher education institutions and requires annual fees to maintain accreditation (NAEYC Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs, 2017).

Research conducted by Friedman-Krauss et al. (2016) focused on comparing higher education of teachers with quality preschool and childcare. The research demonstrated that programs that employ teachers in preschool with 4-year degrees have long-term effects on children, families, and the community. Long-term studies such as the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project, the Abecedarian Project, and Abbot Preschool Program Longitudinal Effects Study: Fifth Grade Follow Up demonstrated long-term impact on low income and minority children (Barnett et al., 2013; Elango et al., 2016; Friedman-Krauss et al., 2016). The long-term effect of highly qualified teachers goes beyond academics; studies demonstrated that the long-term effects on children were social, emotional, and economically beneficial (Heckman, 2016; Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2015). A teacher's influence on a child goes beyond the time that the child is in care. Studies have demonstrated that the first five years of a child's life are crucial in their long-term development and that the learning experiences in the early years can have a long-term impact (Manning et al., 2017; Tierney & Nelson, 2009).

By contrast, a study by Lin and Magnuson (2018) found that more than higher education is required for high-quality childcare programs and that teacher education is only a part of identifying a high-quality childcare program. Teachers still need materials and curriculum support. Of the seven childcare programs studied, the data revealed that the teacher's higher education played a role in classroom quality and benefited the child's development. Child care providers with no early childhood education had lower classroom quality, while teachers with some training such as the Child Develpoment Associate (CDA) Credential or some higher education college classes in early childhood had higher classroom quality. However, education was not significant enough to state that it was the only contributing factor to quality. Fuligni et al. (2009) concurred, stating that teachers with a bachelor's degree alone were not enough to demonstrate significant outcomes for young children. Child care providers and experts in the field agree that a degree does not necessarily equate to high-quality child care professionals (Limardo, Sweeney, & Taylor, 2016; Washington, 2015; Washington & Gadson, 2017).

National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (2009) recommended that all early childhood teachers in publicly funded preschools be required to have a 4-year degree. In one specific state in the region, the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant that offers PreK to low-income children requires that the PreK teacher be a 4-year degreed certified teacher and that the assistant teacher has at minimum, an associate's degree (Division of Early Childhood, 2019). Throughout the state, many pre-K programs that are operated by the local school system are housed in childcare centers. A child care center may have a classroom with a certified teacher and right next door a pre-K classroom with

a teacher who has only the training hours required for lead teachers in the state (Division of Early Childhood, 2019). The need for continuing formal education is demonstrated by the overall extent that teachers with formal education have on children's overall learning and development (Manning et al., 2017). Manning et al. (2017) conducted a meta-analysis of 80 studies and found that there was a significant relationship between teacher qualifications and early childhood education quality. For current child care providers to meet higher educational qualification standards, significant changes beginning with financial and educational support are required (Shdaimah et al., 2018). With current compensation being amongst the lowest for child care providers nationally, affordability for professional development and college courses may be out of reach for many in the field.

Completing college courses has a professional impact on child care providers. After completing higher education courses, many child care providers find themselves with new professional knowledge about growth and development, curriculum planning, and how to better manage a classroom setting (Kipnis et al., 2012). Child care providers can apply what they have learned to the classroom and have the ability to articulate to families the theory behind what they are doing in a classroom with young children. A study conducted by Lo et al. (2017) reported that child care providers conveyed that child care providers' image as professionals changed from caretakers to educators once they had completed early childhood education courses. Lo et al. (2017) described changes in the child care providers' interactions with their children, their academic work, including higher English proficiency, and a better

understanding of early childhood education, which they applied to their working environment. Having highly qualified degreed teachers in child care programs brings assumptions that child care providers may not remain in low paying jobs. Actual data are conflicting, and a meta-analysis conducted by Totenhagen et al. (2016) found that studies provided mixed results. Some research found that child care providers who earned degrees might leave a particular child care job or center due to compensation, but remain working in the child care field. A five-year longitudinal study by Miller and Bogatova (2009) on the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Project in Pennsylvania found that turnover with the participants in childcare centers was only 10% compared to the national average of 25% turnover for all child care providers in centers after completing a degree.

Turnover rates in child care centers are high regardless of the teacher qualifications due to low compensation in the field. States and T.E.A.C.H. that support child care providers with tuition funding require that the child care provider remain working in child care after the degree is completed (T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood National Center, 2015). Child care providers know this as payback with time. States and T.E.A.C.H. both view this as supporting the field and helping to reduce turnover.

Resistant Capital

Resistant capital is described as responding to oppressional structures by challenging inequality and persisting until the student succeeds (Samuelson & Litzler, 2016; Yosso, 2005). Resistant capital does not necessarily come from parents, but can come from community and historical legacy (Da Graca, & Dougherty, 2015). Students

can apply resistant capital in different ways, such as continuing in higher education regardless of the institutional barriers and becoming involved in social networks that support to dismantle the barriers. Samuelson and Litzler (2016) stated the following about what resistant capital looks like in students: “responding to negative stereotypes and macroaggressions by succeeding (proving others wrong); response to injustice through conformist strategies; cultural knowledge of racist structures to transform them” (p. 96).

Due to the disjointed early childhood system, no national standards, and inconsistency in terms of guidelines, research and data on child care providers' experience in higher education are limited (Bullough, 2016; Cox et al., 2015; Hall-Kenyon et al., 2014; Whitebook, 2014). Thus, child care providers must work against a system that has not set guidelines for the profession. Early childhood higher education programs vary from institution to institution and are challenging to navigate for child care providers (Kennedy & Heineke, 2014; Limardo, Hill, et al., 2016). The 2018 Early Childhood Workforce Index highlighted that child care providers earning degrees received low wage bumps from entry-level to an associate's degree and likewise from associate’s degrees to bachelor’s degrees (Whitebook, McLean, Austin, & Edwards, 2018). Whitebook (2014) stated,

> Almost every state lacks a preparation pipeline for pedagogical leaders in ECE—including teacher educators, mentors and coaches, and program administrators—and thus, many who are engaged in educating and training teachers are themselves in need of opportunities for professional development. (p. 14)

Continuously, minority child care providers must overcome the oppressional structures of an early childhood system that is fractured and changing. The oppressional structure goes beyond the national system and can also be seen at higher education institutions with affordability and scheduling, impacting minority child care providers directly.

Affordability. As of May 2017, the median income for a child care provider in the United States was $10.67 an hour, an annual salary of about $22,190 per year (U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018). According to the Poverty Guidelines by the U.S. Health and Human Services, the child care provider making $22,190 with two children, would be below the poverty line, which is poverty level wages qualifying child care providers for many governmental low-income services (Limardo, Hill, et al., 2016; Park et al., 2015). Linnan et al. (2017) concluded that child care providers, as per national data, are low income and considered to be under or at the poverty line.

The income earned by child care providers is not sufficient to allow them to pay for college courses or training at community colleges (Deutsch & Riffin, 2013). Minority child care providers must advocate for themselves to locate funding in the form of scholarships that may cover their tuition due to working in the low-wage child care sector. “Minorities are disproportionately harmed by increasing income inequality because they are often trapped in jobless enclaves and lower-wage job sectors that make them more vulnerable to any kind of social or economic threat” (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013, p. 12). Minority child care providers must be persistent in overcoming the oppressional obstacle of low wages that meet poverty standards.

The college cost per three credit at community colleges in the region range from $517 to $541and includes the additional fees (Montgomery College, 2019; University of the District of Columbia Community College, 2019). Most community colleges with semester-based courses schedule three-credit classes making the cost of one class over $500 or more when taking into account additional fees that do not include textbooks or other required materials needed to complete the course. Child care providers making an average of $22,190 and trying to help maintain a family would not be able to afford this expense out of pocket. Financial aid is limited to students enrolled in halftime or more, which is equivalent to two college classes per semester (Federal Student Aid, n.d.).

The higher education system has oppressional structures that make it difficult for minorities to succeed. While more minorities are going to college, the system is unequal and "magnifies the racial and ethnic inequality in educational preparation it inherits from the K-12 system" (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013, p. 7). Minority child care providers who enter college as English language learners may not qualify for enrollment in college-level courses due to limited English and, therefore, must enroll in English as Second Language (ESL) classes. Financial aid and scholarships do not pay for noncredit courses, and it may be difficult to find a scholarship that does pay for noncredit classes. Many states do not cover the costs of ESL classes through T.E.A.C.H. or other state tuition funding programs for higher education (Office of the State Superintendent of Education, 2017; T.E.A.C.H. D.C. Early Childhood Scholarship Program, 2020b).

Scheduling. Unlike public school teachers who may have summer, spring break, and winter break, child care providers work year-round. Child care centers and family

child care homes are open to ensure that hours are convenient for parents to drop off before work and pick up after work. Child care centers and family child care homes may open from 6:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., making for long working hours for child care providers. Due to their working hours, child care providers need opportunities to access counseling, the registrar's office, and the financial aid office during evening hours; however, colleges are not structured to serve nontraditional working students (Douglass et al., 2015). Child care providers that need advising or need to review financial aid must take time off work to meet with faculty, counselors, or financial aid staff. Campus office hours from 8:00 – 5:00 do not meet the nontraditional population's needs and place barriers to services. Hours for support services at colleges are not conducive to nontraditional student schedules (Mertes & Jankoviak, 2016; Saar et al., 2014). To overcome the obstacle of scheduling, minority child care providers must "utilize transformative resistance capital as they attempt to transform the oppressive structure they encounter through indirect and direct activism" (Hudson, 2018, p. 5). Minority child care providers are left to attempt to figure out how to overcome the scheduling challenges by their activism.

Community colleges must be able to provide child care providers classes in the evening, online, and on weekends to accommodate their working schedules. Counselors do not recommend that child care providers enroll in online courses due to the counselors' assumptions or stereotypes that nontraditional students may not be successful with online courses (Shea & Bidjerano, 2014). A study conducted by Shea and Bidjerano (2014) found that students who completed online classes graduated at higher rates and that

females enrolled in online courses at higher rates than males. Having online courses is not enough; courses must be made available throughout the year with set schedules for child care providers to access and develop long-term academic plans.

Social Capital

Child care providers are enrolling or returning to community colleges due to the changing educational requirements currently being discussed nationally (Whitebook & McLean, 2017). A significant number of the child care providers are English language learners and may have no prior experience with the higher education system in the United States; thus, have a fear of unfamiliar college requirements (Cheng et al., 2018; Whitebook, Schaack, Kipnis, Austin, & Sakai, 2013). The nontraditional student population faces challenges that traditional students may not encounter, such as working to support their own family, having their children in college or school, and only being able to attend college classes during the evenings, weekends, or online (Chu, 2016; Lin, 2016). Students who identified as having families that supported them in higher education had lower attrition rates than those identified as not having family support (Whitebook, Schaack, Kipnis, Austin, & Sakai, 2013).

Lack of people to help navigate. Community colleges tend to enroll more students in early childhood programs than universities that enroll in early childhood bachelor degree programs. However, community colleges may lack the full-time faculty to support graduation attainment and nontraditional students' needs in early childhood education (Cheng et al., 2018; Power to the Profession, 2019; Sakai et al., 2014). Counselors at higher education institutions may not fully understand how to guide the

student and may discourage the student from the field due to the perception of low wages and perceptions of early childhood careers (Buettner et al., 2016; Cheng et al., 2018; White et al., 2016). Thus, students who may have started in an early childhood degree may change their major after completing courses. Changing degree major impacts students' length of time to graduation since courses previously completed may not be accepted by the new major selected. The high student-to-faculty ratio means that early childhood education faculty are not able to support all students in the early childhood program, yet colleges may not have counselors who understand the early childhood education field and population (Buettner et al., 2016; Cheng et al., 2018; Kaplan, 2018). Due to the high student-to-faculty ratio, students seek out available advisors; therefore, they may meet with three or more advisors who may not have the early childhood knowledge to support them with an academic plan. Students who do not have an assigned advisor may receive inconsistent advising that can lengthen their time to completion (Cheng et al., 2018).

Community colleges also lack opportunities for nontraditional, minority students to engage and be involved in making connections within the institution. Students who lacked forming connections to the institutions were found to not prioritize school due to lack of information to make informed decisions about their education, leading to attrition and non-completion (Bers & Schuetz, 2014; Price & Tovar, 2014). Goncalves and Trunk (2014) found that nontraditional students expressed feeling isolated and disconnected from the college due to limited opportunities for them as students.

Summary and Conclusions

The literature review is a synthesis of current research related to the topic of minority child care providers. The current focus on early childhood, child care, and qualifications for people teaching young children highlight the need for research on the topic. Due to the complexity of the early childhood field and no formal structure with set definitions of terms used in early childhood education, studies that have been conducted are difficult to compare. Perspectives of minority child care providers are rarely heard in the studies, and therefore a gap exists.

Chapter 2 includes a review of the literature on child care providers and their challenges as students in higher education. I identified a gap in practice in existing literature regarding barriers child care providers experience to timely degree completion for a 2-year degree in community colleges. Chapter 2 also included a review of the framework based on community cultural wealth.

Chapter 3 consists of describing how the gap in practice was researched using the methodology basic qualitative with interviews, the rationale, recruitment procedures, and the data analysis plan. Chapter 4 focused on a detailed description of the data analysis procedures and a detailed description of the results. Finally, Chapter 5 provides an interpretation of the findings, recommendations, implications with recommendations to practice, and the conclusion.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of minority child care providers on barriers to timely degree completion for an Associate of Applied Science in Early Childhood Education. In Chapter 3, I describe the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, methodology, trustworthiness of the study, and ethical procedures.

Research Design and Rationale

The research question for this basic qualitative study with interviews was as follows: What are the perspectives of minority child care providers regarding barriers to timely degree completion for an Associate of Applied Science degree in Early Childhood Education?

In this study I explored the perspectives of minority child care providers on the barriers to timely degree completion for an Associate of Applied Science in Early Childhood Education (Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The basic qualitative study with interviews (Merriam, 2009) was used to "[understand] the meaning a phenomenon has for those involved" (Merriam, 2009, p. 22). Qualitative research seeks to understand how people interpret a phenomenon and what their lived experiences mean to them (Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015; Seidman, 2013). Qualitative research allows the researcher to capture the participants' perspectives (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 2009). "Researchers who conduct these studies, which are probably the most common form of qualitative research in education, simply seek to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, or the

perspectives and worldviews of the people involved" (Merriam, 1998, p. 11). The process of qualitative research involves the researcher beginning with a question and allowing participants to describe their perspectives. I explored the participants' perspectives by collecting data, analyzing it for emerging themes, and then interpreting the findings (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Qualitative researchers focus on understanding a phenomenon from the participant's point of view (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2015). Qualitative research allows the phenomenon to be answered from the perspectives of the participants. The study was conducted using one-on-one interviews, which allowed participants to answer questions in an open-ended manner. Research on minority child care providers' perspectives may offer insight to community college early childhood programs, state organizations, and students' into how to eliminate barriers to reduce time-to-degree-completion.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in a qualitative study is to complete all aspects of data collection and analysis in an ethical manner. As the researcher begins the study, the researcher should explore personal positions associated with the phenomenon to review biases and assumptions about the phenomenon that warrants objectivity. Being aware of one's own position and how it may affect the research process is critical to identify and establish trust with the readers and is called the researcher's position or reflexivity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). As the researcher, I explored my own biases and assumptions before beginning interviews and remained objective during interviews of data collection and when analyzing for themes. As an early childhood education major

myself, I took seven years to complete an associate's degree. Understanding that this is a potential for bias, I kept a reflexive journal to document decisions made about the research and why those decisions were made to make clear to the reader how my own beliefs or theories may have affected the research study (Maxwell, 2013). Member checking is returning the summary findings to the participants for them to check the findings for accuracy of their data.

As an early childhood faculty and presenter for the county, state, and national conferences, there was potential for participants to know me as a faculty or presenter in the early childhood field. However, participants in the study were not my current students. Specific criteria were set for the selection of participants. All participants were graduates and were not current students in any community college in the region; this ensured no conflict of interest or any power over the participants.

Methodology

The method used for my study was a basic qualitative study with interviews focused on the perspectives of the participants who have all experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014).

Participant Selection

Participant recruitment was through a partnership with statewide and regional early childhood organizations. Statewide and regional early childhood organizations received an email explaining who I was, the purpose of the email, the purpose of the study, and asking if they would collaborate with me as the researcher to only email out the recruitment letter to their members with the SurveyMonkey link. Additionally, the

organizations were asked to post the recruitment letter with the SurveyMonkey link on their social media page for a period of 4 weeks to provide ample time for potential participants' views. As part of the email, I explained to organizations that Walden University Institutional Review Board would contact the organization's contact person. The email requested that the organization respond if they agreed and provided a contact person with the email.

My study used purposeful sampling with minority child care providers from one region of the United States. "Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). Using purposeful sampling allowed me to select the participants who met the criteria, had experienced the phenomenon, and could provide in-depth information (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015).

Participant selection was set for a sample size of 12 to15 participants. The sample size was "based on expected reasonable coverage of the phenomenon given the purpose of the study" (Patton, 2015, p. 314). Qualitative research is used to capture the participant's perspectives by conducting in-depth interviews to provide detailed information.

Participant selection was based on participants meeting the following criteria: (a) were child care providers during their time in a 2-year Associates of Applied Science degree in Early Childhood Education, (b) had completed the 2-year Associate of Applied Science degree, (c) took 7 or more years to graduate between the years 2000 and 2020,

and (d) identified as a minority student during their time in college. After the 4 weeks of recruitment, I reviewed the SurveyMonkey to select participants who met all the criteria. The selected sample were graduates from community colleges throughout one specific region in the Eastern part of the United States. Only graduates of the Associate of Applied Science degree in Early Childhood Education who were no longer students nor enrolled in any classes at the community colleges were selected as participants. This criterion assured that all participants had an essence of shared experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Interviews occurred over a three-week period, and member checking followed completion of data analysis.

Instrumentation

Basic qualitative research "data are collected through interviews, observations, or document analysis" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p.24). The primary data collection for my basic research study were semistructured interviews. Interviews were conducted using an interview protocol and open-ended semistructured questions. The interview questions were developed to elicit the perspectives of minority child care providers regarding barriers to degree completion. To establish content validity, the interview questions were reviewed by an early childhood expert in the field. The early childhood content expert is a current professor at a state university that oversees the child development graduate and doctoral programs. Furthermore, the interview questions address the six forms of capital identified by Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth as follows: IQ. 1: aspirational capital; IQ. 2 and 3: familial capital; IQ. 4 and 5: linguistic capital; IQ's. 6, 7, and 8; navigational capital; IQ. 9, 10, 11, and 12: resistant capital; and IQ. 13 and 14: social

capital. The focus of the interview questions on the six forms of capital "encompass the range of questions necessary to adequately measure the construct or knowledge" (Putman & Rock, 2018, p. 103). The 14 main interview questions and the follow-up probing questions were open-ended to allow the participant to provide detailed, rich descriptive data (Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Participants were recruited using a purposeful sampling technique through a partnership of statewide and regional early childhood organizations during a four-week period. Along with the early childhood organizations that sent out the SurveyMonkey link, I also posted the SurveyMonkey link on social media to established social media child care groups throughout the region. Interested participants first were required to complete the informed consent prior to completing the SurveyMonkey. If participants agreed to the informed consent, the survey allowed them to continue to the questions. The informed consent had my email and cell phone for any interested participants to contact me with any questions directly. The SurveyMonkey link had questions that interested participants were required to answer to see if they met the criteria. To ensure that participants did not feel coerced by the organizations, organizations were asked only to post the SurveyMonkey link on social media with information stating that the researcher would be the only person able to view the completed Survey Monkey. The participant's information from the completed SurveyMonkey is not available to organizations. In the surveys, participants were identified as meeting criteria by being asked specific set questions about their education level, the time it took to complete the 2-year associate

degree, if they were working in child care during the time enrolled in the 2-year associate degree, and if they identified as minorities during their enrollment at a community college. The Survey Monkey also asked for participants for their contact information so that I could schedule virtual interviews.

Participants who met the criteria were contacted using the contact information they listed in the SurveyMonkey. During the first call, participants were reminded of the purpose and rationale of the study was explained to each interested participant, and one 50-60 minute appointment was scheduled for virtual interviews with each participant. The interviews were scheduled throughout a four-week period to ensure that participants had an opportunity to review their calendars and set a date that was convenient for them. Interviews were conducted using Zoom and ensuring all security measures are followed to ensure security and confidentiality. Security measures in Zoom included having each scheduled interview password-protected, setting up a waiting room to ensure the researcher was the only person who allowed entry to the participant and locked the interview meeting once the interview began (Zoom, 2019). Participants received an email three days prior to the interview as a reminder of the interview date, time, and Zoom link.

On the day of the interview, I locked the Zoom meeting for security purposes after the participant entered the meeting. The following protocol was followed during the interview (Appendix A):

- Introduced self to the participant.
- Followed the introductory protocol script:
    a. Had participant orally consent to the recording.

b. Had the participant sign consent form digitally.

c. Thanked the participant.

d. Briefly restated how long the interview took and answer any questions the participant had before beginning the interview.

- Turned on the audio recorder.
- Began the interview with demographic questions and followed through until the end of the interview questions.
- During the interview and upon the participant's request, paraphrased or restated any question as needed.
- Asked the participant follow-up or probing questions.
- Stated when all questions had ended and end the interview.
- Confirmed the participant's contact information and thanked the participant for partaking of the study.
- Ended protocol.

Consent forms with the outlined process of how confidentiality was maintained and how data was reviewed with each interested participant. A reminder of voluntary participation with no monetary compensation for participating was provided to all interested participants and was followed by informed consent detailing the risks and benefits of participating in the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). The participants were asked to sign the informed consent digitally and return prior to the interview proceeding. Interviews were recorded with oral consent as required by state law from the participant via digital format at the beginning of the virtual Zoom interview. After the interview, the

researcher transcribed the interview by hand and used NVivo for organization and data storage.

After the interview, I thanked the participant and explained that if additional information was needed, a second virtual interview of 20–30 minutes would be scheduled. I also explained that the participant would have the opportunity to review the findings for accuracy of their data and would only take the participant 20–30 minutes to review. I asked the participant to return the review within 7 days of receiving it. I reminded the participants that all data would be kept for a period of 5 years beyond the completion of the study in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home office. At the end of the 5-year period, all data would be destroyed by shredding or permanently deleting recordings.

Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis is described as the process of making sense of data collected and finding answers to the questions asked in the study (Merriam, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The type of data analysis used for a basic qualitative study must align with the research method to maintain integrity (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). The software NVivo was used for sorting and storage. Qualitative software allows data to be efficiently organized, searched, and sorted (Creswell, 2014). The data was stored on a computer that is password protected.

The first step in the data analysis plan is to transcribe the interviews as soon as possible. I transcribed the interviews verbatim, which allowed me to become familiar with the data. After transcribing, I organized, read, and reviewed data numerous times to

ensure familiarity (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). The second step was coding the data. A priori codes were developed using the six forms of cultural capital to align from the conceptual framework, research question, or interview questions (Saldana, 2016). Using the constructs within each predetermined code, I reviewed the raw data highlighting, writing questions in the margins, and taking notes. I then reviewed the raw data and a priori codes to open code the data. To open code, I reviewed the transcripts, searching for repeated words, phrases, and ideas. Open coding allows new codes to emerge from the data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Maxwell, 2013). During the coding process, I created a summary table in NVivo by documenting the open codes by participant (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). The data summary table was a tool that assisted me in tracking the information in an organized manner.

After I finished coding, the third step was to generate themes. Themes are broader than codes, and codes were sorted into categories (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Braun & Clarke, 2006). To generate themes, I searched the open codes and raw data for categories to form temporary themes. I then returned to the categories to search for patterns among the categories, and then I reviewed the temporary themes. I then organized the temporary themes into main themes, subthemes, or miscellaneous, which may be discarded.

The fifth step was defining and naming themes. Defining and naming themes was by done by identifying the essence of each theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I also reviewed to identify any sub-themes that needed to be named. Themes and sub-theme names were concise to “immediately give the reader a sense of what the theme is about” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p 23). After themes were defined and named, I developed

rational statements to connect the themes to the research problem. I continued to review the codes and themes to continuously analyze with detailed written synthesis to elucidate the research question. The final and sixth step in the data analysis plan was writing the findings. I wrote the findings in an "engaging, meaningful, and credible manner" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019, p. 256). The findings have specific examples and quotes that relate to the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To enhance credibility, I presented data that supports alternative explanations that resulted from discrepant data (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2015). Discrepant data that contradicts the themes were fully described and discussed. "By presenting this contradictory evidence, the account becomes more realistic and more valid" (Creswell, 2014, p. 202). Furthermore, including full disclosure of the discrepant case is useful for the reader to draw conclusions about the results (Maxwell, 2013; Wolcott, 1990). The findings were written in a logical and interesting manner that tells the story of the data with evidence of the process or how I did the research.

Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, trustworthiness refers to credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Credibility. Credibility ensures findings are tenable and occurs by applying a number of strategies to establish the truth of the findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). One of the strategies that I used was member checking. Member checking is returning the findings to the participants using a two-page summary of the findings for the participant to check the findings for accuracy of their data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Member

checking was used throughout the data analysis process seeking participant's feedback on findings.

> This is the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspectives they have on what is going on, as well as being an important way of identifying your own biases and misunderstanding of what you observed. (Maxwell, 2013, pp. 126-127)

Participants were emailed a two-page summary of the findings with instructions to review the summary for accuracy of their data. The instructions directed the participants to review and make any corrections by noting them directly on the two-page summary. If the participants had any questions or concerns during the review, the instructions included my phone number for them to contact me. The participants were asked to email any corrections back to the researcher within one week.

Transferability. Transferability refers to how the results can be generalized or transferred to other contexts (Trochim, 2020). For transferability, I wrote rich, thick descriptions in detail of participants, including detailed quotes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I also included a thorough, detailed description of the settings and findings of the study to enable transferability since the ultimate goal of transferability is that the findings can be applied to other contexts by the reader (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Trochim, 2020).

Dependability. Dependability means ensuring "whether the results are consistent with the data collected" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 251). Dependability can be

accomplished through member checking. Member checking was completed by sending a two-page summary of the findings to the participants. The participants were provided specific instructions to review the findings for accuracy of their data and asked to return any corrections by email within one week of receiving them. To enhance trustworthiness, I kept an audit trail documenting detailed steps I take throughout the study (Pandey & Patnaik, 2014). The audit trail included "how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout inquiry" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 252).

Confirmability. Confirmability is ensuring that the researcher can confirm the data (Trochim, 2020). To achieve confirmability, I checked the data continuously throughout the study, kept a detailed and organized audit trail, and kept a reflexive journal detailing the procedures used throughout the research. For the audit trail, I kept a research journal documenting the steps taken in the research. I added records and memos to the research journal of the research process documenting what I did during the research process and how the data were analyzed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I also kept a reflexive journal with regular entries that provide documented information on decisions made throughout the research study, the reason for the decisions, and reflections on the decisions made (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Ethical Procedures

The first step in ensuring my study followed ethical procedures was to receive Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval through the application process before the collection of any data. During the time my study was undergoing the university research

review (URR), I completed and submitted Form A: Description of Data Sources and Partner Sites to the Institutional Review Board at Walden University with the required information. After submitting Form A, I received feedback stating that my next step was to complete Form D to submit to the IRB since the participants were not considered a vulnerable population. The IRB provided me ethics feedback and assisted me in working out ethical issues. I continued the process of submitting Form D with revisions until approved by the IRB on July 30, 2020.

I was required to complete the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) modules to learn about protecting human subjects. I completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) in May 2020. My ID for the CITI training is 9110962. I completed and passed the following courses History and Ethical Principles, Assessing Risk, Informed Consent, Privacy and Confidentiality, Unanticipated Problems and Reporting Requirements in Social and Behavior Research, Internet-Based Research, and Consent and Cultural Competence. I complied with the ethical standards to protect the participants in this study. I adhered to Walden University's ethical requirements and contacted the IRB using the Adverse Event Reporting Form if I had any concerns regarding recruitment or data collection.

Due to conducting virtual interviews, participants were emailed an interview reminder of the interview date and time. The informed consent included detailed information about the study, how personal data were kept confidential, any possible concerns such as refusing to participate or withdrawing from the research, and finally, having the participant agree to their willingness to participate (Patton, 2015). Participants

were notified of having the option of refusing to participate in the study or withdrawing at any time during the research.

Using social media as a recruitment tool did provide concern for participant privacy (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As the researcher, I monitored that potential participants did not reply publicly by disabling commenting. Interested participants were directed to the SurveyMonkey to complete the informed consent and criteria questions. After participants submitted the survey, I reviewed the responses to criteria verification. Then participants who met the criteria were contacted via the contact information they provided in the SurveyMonkey.

After the completion of the study, emails were printed and deleted. The printed emails were kept with the audit trail and reflexive journal. All documents, including emails, audit trails, reflexive journals, were kept locked in a file cabinet in my home office. The data were stored for 5 years beyond the completion of the study in a locked cabinet in my home. After 5 years, any paper documents were shredded, and recordings were permanently deleted.

All participants were provided confidentiality with pseudonyms used in the study to replace participant names. Participants were informed of the use of pseudonyms that minimized the risk of confidentiality and privacy during the research process and in the written findings. Participants received written notification of the privacy and confidentiality procedures, the amount of time the data was kept, and how recordings were destroyed (Appendix D).

Summary

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of minority child care providers regarding barriers to timely degree completion for a 2-year degree at community colleges. Chapter 3 provided detailed information on the research design and rationale. The chapter also explained the role of the researcher, participant selection, data collection, and data analysis. The chapter included information on trustworthiness and how credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability would be established. Finally, the chapter concluded with ethical procedures that were followed to ensure participant anonymity and privacy.

The following Chapters, 4 and 5, provide the results of the data collected, followed by discussion, conclusion, and recommendations.

Chapter 4: Reflections and Conclusions

The purpose of this basic qualitative study with interviews was to explore the perspectives of minority child care providers on barriers to timely degree completion for a 2-year degree at a community college. Purposeful sampling was used to recruit participants who met criteria in one region of the United States. The research question for this study was designed to attain a better understanding of the participant's point of view. The research question was as follows: What are the perspectives of minority child care providers regarding barriers to timely degree completion for an Associate of Applied Science degree in Early Childhood Education?

In Chapter 4, I present the results in the following sections: setting, data collection, data analysis, results, evidence of trustworthiness, and summary.

Setting

The setting for this basic qualitative study with interviews was one region in the eastern United States. I recruited participants and conducted interviews during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time of recruitment and interviews, all participants worked in child care, and were required to take extra precautions to ensure their safety.

The target population was recruited through partnerships with regional, state, and local early childhood education organizations. The early childhood education organizations emailed the recruitment flyer with the SurveyMonkey link to their members and posted the recruitment flyer in their social media groups. The SurveyMonkey site included informed consent as the first item that any interested person was required to read and sign before answering the criteria questions. I received 23

responses to the survey. Seventeen of the 23 responders completed the informed consent and the criteria questions. Thirteen of the 17 responders met all the criteria for the research study. Thirteen interviews were scheduled; however, one participant did not keep the scheduled interview appointment. The participant did not respond to the email or telephone requests to reschedule the interview.

The 12 participants who were interviewed met the following criteria prior to being interviewed: (a) were child care providers during their time in a 2-year Associates of Applied Science in Early Childhood Education, (b) had completed the 2-year Associate of Applied Science degree, (c) took 7 or more years to graduate between the years 2000 and 2020, and (d) identified as a minority student during their time in college. I assigned participants numbers P1 through P12 to replace names and maintain confidentiality. Table 1 presents the participants with their start year at a community college and their graduating year.

Table 1

Participants' Demographics

Pseudonym	Year started at community college	Year graduated from community college
P1	2000	2017
P2	2006	2020
P3	2009	2016
P4	2013	2020
P5	2000	2020
P6	2004	2012
P7	2005	2015
P8	2002	2012
P9	2001	2014
P10	2003	2011
P11	2010	2018
P12	2003	2012

The study focused on the perspectives of minority child care providers. The 12 participants were from diverse backgrounds who self-identified during the interview as Latino, Black, Asian, Middle Eastern, and other. Eleven participants were female, and one participant was male. Participants self-identified themselves as single parent, married with a family, and single with no children during the interviews. Three participants stated that they had degrees in other fields from their native countries; however, the U.S. equivalent had only evaluated the degree as an associate's degree. Nine participants self-identified as immigrants to the United States, and three identified as born in the United

States. One of the three born in the United States self-identified as the first generation in the United States. Eleven participants were currently working in child care or family child care, and one participant continued education by transferring to a 4-year university. One participant stated that they were waiting on a final job offer as a para-educator from the local school district, but the participant did not plan to leave the child care field. The participant planned to continue to work in the school-age care program before and after school in the same school that the participant would be a para-educator. The state the participant lives in classifies before and after school-age care as child care.

Data Collection

The data collection began once I received approval from Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB approval number for this study was 07-31-20-0415133. I used purposeful sampling to recruit and interview 12 participants from one specific region of the United States.

I established partnerships with regional, state, and local early childhood education organizations with approval from IRB. The early childhood education organizations emailed the recruitment flyers to their members and posted the recruitment flyer to their social media pages. I posted recruitment flyers in Facebook early childhood education groups from the region. Any person interested in participating in the research study was directed to the SurveyMonkey link. The SurveyMonkey site was organized with the consent form as the first item the interested person was required to read and agree to before completing the criteria questions. Any participant who completed the SurveyMonkey consent form and met the criteria was contacted by email first and then

contacted with a follow-up phone call to schedule a one-on-one recorded interview via Zoom.

I contacted the participants who met the criteria by phone and scheduled 60-minute Zoom audio-recorded interviews. The interviews were scheduled throughout a 3-week period and with four interviews scheduled each week. To begin the interview, and as per the state law, I asked each participant to provide verbal consent to audio record the interview. After the verbal consent, I followed a set protocol (see Appendix A). All participants were asked the same 15 interview questions followed by probing questions in the same order to ensure that the same general information was collected from each participant. The interviews were audio-recorded via Zoom, and the recordings were saved to a flash drive. After each interview, I explained to the participant that I could follow up with a second virtual interview of 20-30 minutes if any additional information was needed. I then transcribed the audio recordings verbatim and reviewed the transcripts against the recordings for correctness. I saved the transcriptions in NVivo 12 for easy retrieval.

The participants' received a summary of the findings by email to review for accuracy. Participants had 7 days to return the summary of the findings with any corrections. All participants responded that there were no edits or additions to the summary of the findings. The laptop used for the study had all information transferred to a flash drive; however, to ensure security protocols, the laptop is password-protected, and I am the only person with the password. All data I collected for this study and data I

transferred to the flash drive were locked in a cabinet in my home. I am the only person with access to the locked cabinet.

There was a variation to the plan presented in Chapter 3. To ensure that ethical standards were met, I followed Walden University IRB's feedback and embedded the consent form into the SurveyMonkey site and did not send it directly to the participant. The consent form was the first item in the SurveyMonkey site that a participant was required to review and agree to before answering the criteria questions. The SurveyMonkey site was designed not to allow the participant to continue if the participant answered no to informed consent. Walden IRB reviewed the SurveyMonkey consent form, criteria questions and approved the plan.

No unusual circumstances were encountered during the data collection. If any unusual circumstances had been encountered, the circumstances would be disclosed and discussed.

Data Analysis

The researcher conducted data analysis in the following six steps: transcribe the interviews and organize data, code the data, generate themes, review the themes, name themes, and write the findings. I used NVivo version 12 to organize and sort the data.

The first step in the data analysis was to transcribe the interviews. After each interview, I transcribed the interviews by listening to each audio recording and writing each word verbatim. Transcribing each interview verbatim allowed me to become familiar with the data. I reread the transcripts to ensure that no identifiable information could be located and then reread a third time to ensure I was familiar with the data. I

labeled the transcripts with numbers to identify the participants as per confidentiality protocols. I saved the transcripts to my laptop and then uploaded them to NVivo 12.

After summarizing the findings for participants to review, the next step in the data analysis was to code the data. I used two forms of coding for data analysis: a priori coding and open coding. The a priori codes were based on the constructs of the conceptual framework, which was community cultural wealth's six forms of capital that aligned with the main research question and interview questions. As I read the transcripts, I would highlight keywords or phrases related to the a priori codes, write questions in the margins, and would write notes using the constructs of the community cultural wealth framework's six forms of capital (Yosso, 2005). A list of the constructs, a priori codes, participants' identifier, and a sample of excerpts from the interview transcripts are shown in Appendix B (p. 143).

Once I completed a priori coding, the second phase of coding was to employ open coding. I went back through the data searching for repeated words, phrases, or ideas, noting keywords or phrases. I repeatedly reviewed for emerging codes and listed the codes in NVivo 12, highlighting each code with a different color. Thirty-one codes emerged. The next step was to examine the codes placing all similar codes in one group and thus creating groups. As a visual learner, I typed up all the codes listed in NVivo 12, cut them out, and laid them out on a table. I then highlighted codes that were similar with the same color. The same color codes were grouped together. Seven groups emerged from the open codes (see Table 2). The final phase of coding was to identify patterns in the groups for a priori and open coding. The codes were searched for patterns and sorted

into temporary themes. I followed the same procedures of typing up all the groups, laid them out on a table, and highlighted groups that were similar with the same color. This process provided me with a visual of the patterns.

Table 2

Open Coding

Open codes	Groups
Not understanding the registration process for classes Not being sent to counseling to receive academic counseling when first enrolling Difficulties finding buildings at the college Not understanding course sequencing Not finding people to approve registration for classes	Navigating the college system
Placement exams for English and mathematics (i.e., Accuplacer) Not prepared for English and mathematics exam	Placement exams
Repeating English and mathematics classes Online mathematics classes English and mathematics tutors Wrong English or mathematics class	Remedial classes
Time off work to get to college before closing Classes starting early for evening students No open services in evenings (i.e., food, bookstore, No advising after 5:00 No child care for evening students Children not allowed on campus	Support for nontraditional students
Nontraditional student Adult student Feeling old in classes or campus Feeling “dumb,” “inadequate,” “not smart” No events in the evening No fun student clubs for adult students	Feelings of not belonging as an adult student
Feelings of guilt for little time with children	Time with family

Not having time for the family due to homework	
Arriving home when kids are asleep	
Weekend classes mean no family time	
Household chores my responsibility	Time for household chores
No time for chores	
Waking up earlier or staying up late to do chores	

The third and fourth steps were to generate themes and review themes. I developed themes by searching and reviewing the categories and placing them into temporary themes. I reviewed the categories several times, looking for patterns among the categories. I would then place the categories by pattern together, creating temporary themes. The temporary themes created were setting difficulties with navigating the college processes; placement exams and remedial classes; difficulties with locating supports; campus connections, and no family time and no time for chores.

The fifth step in the data analysis plan was to name the themes**.** Themes were defined and named by reviewing the patterns and identifying the essence of each of them (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I developed a rationale statement to connect the themes to the research problem and research question. The two themes that were defined and named were barriers and support from family and friends. Theme 1 had five subthemes identified and named as navigating the college processes; barriers to placement exams and remedial classes; barriers to locating supports at the college and workplace; barriers to connecting with campus life as nontraditional students; barriers to balancing family and household responsibilities while attending college. The themes and subthemes were

derived from the codes in relationship to my research question, conceptual framework, and related literature.

Discrepant data are inconsistent with or contradict the themes (Creswell, 2014). I did not find evidence of discrepant data during the data analysis process. If discrepant data had been evident, I would have fully disclosed, described, and discussed the inconsistency in findings.

Results

In this basic qualitative study, I explored the perspectives of minority child care providers regarding barriers to timely degree completion. I used semistructured interviews to collect data from child care providers who had completed the Associates of Applied Science in Early Childhood Education. The interview method allowed me to collect in-depth and detailed responses from the participants. In this section, I discuss the results of the interviews with 12 child care providers. The results are addressed as an answer to the study's research question: What are the perspectives of minority child care providers regarding barriers to timely degree completion for an Associate of Applied Science degree in Early Childhood Education?

Theme 1: Barriers

Subtheme 1: Navigating the college processes. The 12 participants in this study identified difficulties with some part of the college's enrollment process and expressed they felt lost with the process. They expressed poor academic advising as part of the enrollment process. They described not being informed about counseling to receive academic advising. Therefore, they turned to friends or family who had already been

through the college process to assist them with enrollment, advising, and navigating college.

The most challenging part of all participants' enrollment process was understanding what courses to take as part of their degree. P3 stated, “I didn’t know when I enrolled [in college] what classes I needed to take. I registered for a class because I was required to take a class to be qualified as a [child care] director.” Participants expressed a misunderstanding regarding which classes to register; therefore, registered for courses that were not part of their major. Participants stated that registering for classes required signatures from college department chairs in college departments prior to registration. The process of collecting signatures required participants to take time off from work to go to the campus, locate the person for the signature, and return the signed form to the registrar’s office before 5:00 pm. Participants identified the struggles of classes filling and being placed on a waitlist for classes. Participants stated that this misunderstanding cost money and added time to completing their degree.

Participants expressed not understanding the rationale of course sequence policies and did not comprehend why one course, such as mathematics, had to be completed before taking biology. Participants did not understand the rationale of the sequencing of courses or prerequisites. P4 stated,

> For instance, prior to taking [a] biology [class], I had to complete [a] math [class]. You must complete math classes before you can register for [a] biology [class]. I didn’t understand the rationale and why I couldn’t take the two classes together.

Participants who had difficulty with registration also had trouble with the scheduling of the classes. Ten of the 12 participants in this study began taking classes in the early 2000s and expressed not having the option to take online classes due to online courses not existing when they started in the early 2000s; therefore, they completed classes at campuses during evenings or on weekends. Schedules for early childhood education did not offer many options, and participants were often required to wait a semester if a class filled, was canceled, or was not on the schedule. Eleven of the 12 participants identified having problems with taking classes when needed due to the course not being offered, canceled, or filled at the time of registration. P10 stated, “I completed classes at night; however, not all classes were available. I couldn't always take classes when I wanted to.” Participants also expressed not having the option of taking online classes due to online courses not being offered as an option when they first started college compared to when they graduated. P8 expressed, “At the time I started college [2001], classes were not online. Classes were only face-to-face, so I could not take classes online.”

Eight of the 12 participants expressed having difficulties with the field experience, observation hours, or practicums required when asked about barriers faced with college policies. Participants explained that the observations and practicum hours outside of the class time were difficult to meet due to the requirement of completing hours outside of their work schedules or workplace, which required them to take time off work. P12, a family child care provider, described having to open her family child care late due to the difficulties of completing the required observations. P12 stated, “Doing the

observations, I did have to open the daycare late a couple of times so I could get those observations in."

Subtheme 2: Placement exams and remedial classes. All participants who identified as foreign-born stated that they were required to take a placement exam for English language learners. Of the nine participants who took the placement exam for English language learners, only one tested at college-level English. The exam tested their English proficiency, including reading, writing, and speaking. All but one of the participants stated that they did not prepare for the exam. P5 prepared for the placement exam by reading children's books, viewing children's programs, and attending free English classes at night. P5 stated, "Before I went to take the English exam, I started reading children's books, newspapers, and watching children's programs. I also was taking English classes at night that the school offers for free." Several participants stated that they did not know what the exam would consist of and then expressed surprise and disappointment at placing in the noncredit remedial English classes.

Eight participants stated that they were required to complete the noncredit remedial English courses before starting their college degrees. Participants expressed that taking English remedial courses was a long process and, at times, confusing. Several students explained that the remedial English courses did not count towards their degrees; however, they paid for the classes as if they were credit courses and finished their degree with more credits than English credit classes. Participants also explained that they repeated noncredit English remedial courses two and three times due to not passing the writing components. P11 stated,

> When I was taking non-credit classes, I had to repeat classes many times, especially [the writing course]. I repeated that class four times because the writing part was difficult for me. I had a hard time putting my thoughts on paper.

Participants in the noncredit English remedial courses did not identify any resources of support at the colleges. Instead, they relied on family members or friends to help tutor them with English language courses. P6 remarked, “I had help from my children’s older friends. They were in high school, or they were in college. They helped me proofread the essays that I needed to write and helped me edit my English.” Once the participants passed to credit English at the college level, the participants discussed the importance of the writing centers. P3 discussed using the campus-learning center for the English college-level classes and expressed,

> I used the learning center when I enrolled in credit English classes a lot, so the support is there. I think when [students] do not know about the resources as noncredit students, or they do not know who to ask for help, it can be challenging. [Noncredit students] do not know about the resources, and I think they just have to ask.

The results also revealed that nine of the 12 participants who completed the mathematics placement exam were placed in remedial mathematics classes. Participants discussed having to take a mathematics placement exam, being placed in remedial noncredit mathematics courses, and repeating remedial mathematics classes several times. P1 stated, “I've always had problems with math.” P12 explained, “I did have to take one [remedial] math before starting with the [college level] math class that was

required for the degree." Mathematics was one of the classes that delayed students' completion. P4 expressed, "I didn't want to continue because I had to take [a] math class and [a] biology [class]." Nine of the 12 participants identified repeating remedial mathematics classes. P8 stated, "The only struggles that I faced were the [remedial] math [classes] because I had to take the [remedial] math class twice." Mathematics seemed to delay students' timely completion, and students expressed avoiding mathematics classes until the last semester. P2 stated,

> I left [the] math and science [classes] until the end. All I needed was the math and science [classes]. However, I had to take [the] math [class] before taking [the] science [class], so it took me two more semesters to complete my associates.

Subtheme 3: Locating supports at the college and workplace. Participants expressed that the colleges provided limited guidance and supports for students. Participants identified having to ask many questions to find the support they needed. Participants located college support by asking questions or asking a family or friend who had previously attended college. Participants stated they had difficulty finding people to help them at the college. P7 said, "So there were all these different questions that I had to negotiate. I wasn't sure how to do it. I got help from a family member." Likewise, P4 expressed the frustration of navigating not only the college enrollment process but also the campus,

> I had to locate all the different buildings. [I asked myself], "Where do I go?" It was frightening. To be honest, I am not sure I would have located the buildings alone. It would have been frustrating if I did not have someone to guide me and

> tell me this is where to locate the buildings. I spent one day running around locating all the buildings. A family member helped me locate all the buildings.

Ten of the 12 participants identified having challenges with counselors. Participants stated that they were not assigned a counselor; therefore, they met with multiple counselors throughout their college time. Participants expressed concerns with advising or incorrect advising regarding classes required for the early childhood education degree. The misinformation received from the counselors affected participants' time to completion of their degree. P7 expressed her frustration at learning that she would not graduate when she planned and would have to attend college an additional semester for one class she was missing. P7 stated,

> One of the advisers told me, "You are going to graduate. You only need two more classes to graduate." [After completing the two classes], I went back and said, "I think I'm going to graduate now." She responded, "No, you have one more class." I was upset because I could have completed the three classes and graduated, but instead, it took me an additional semester [to graduate].

Participants discussed not meeting with a counselor to develop an academic plan; therefore, they took courses that were not required for their major. P9 explained, not understanding which classes to register for, "I didn't know which courses to take, so I was registering for whatever. I registered for everything, like management classes." Participants' also described being informed by counselors that they could not take more than one class if they worked full time. P2 stated, "Since I was working full time, I was told by a counselor that I was only allowed to take one class."

Participants identified difficulties in understanding how to apply for financial aid and stated they were unaware of childcare providers' scholarships when they first started college. Participants explained not understanding how to complete the financial aid forms and not knowing who to ask for help. Ten of the 12 participants stated that they began with only one class when they first started college due to no financial aid or scholarships. Participants learned about scholarships from early childhood education faculty once they began taking early childhood, education classes. Participants also identified applying for financial aid with the faculty guidance. All participants received state-funded scholarships for child care providers or qualified for financial aid once they started taking college credit courses that lead to an early childhood education degree. All participants explained that due to childcare providers' low wages, attending college without a scholarship or financial aid would was impossible. P4 expressed, “Initially, I didn't know about scholarships, so paying for classes was challenging until I heard about the [early childhood] scholarship.” P5 described wanting to take two remedial classes per semester but not affording the tuition. P5 stated, “I wanted to take two [remedial] English classes, but the [tuition] cost was over $1000. I couldn’t afford it. To pay for one class, I had to use my credit card so I could give [monthly] payments.”

None of the participants described any difficulties with early childhood education faculty. Eleven of the 12 participants expressed gratitude for the faculty. The results indicate that early childhood education faculty were flexible and seemed to understand the students as working child care providers. Several participants commented that the faculty would allow them to arrive late to the class; however, participants made it clear

that they approached the faculty first to make those arrangements. P4 stated, “Even when I arrived late for face-to-face class because I didn't get time off, the professors were supportive. They understood.” Nine of the 12 participants explained that the early childhood program faculty informed them of scholarship opportunities specifically for child care providers. Nine of the 12 participants applied for scholarships specifically for child care providers with the early childhood education faculty's guidance.

Participants identified having difficulties trying to arrange working schedules each semester to register for evening classes. They discussed that their workplace administrators wanted them to complete degrees and tried to be supportive; however, challenges arose if there were staff shortages at work. P1 recalled having to convince his workplace supervisor to support him with a new schedule, “I told him what my [class] schedule was, and I knew I had to convince him to change my [work] schedule.”

Nine of the 12 participants expressed complications with colleagues due to their changing class schedules each semester. Participants conveyed difficulties in arranging their work schedules each semester to ensure they could leave work early and arrive at evening classes on time. Participants expressed not registering for evening classes at times if colleagues were unwilling to switch scheduled hours with them. If the participant could not register for the evening class, and if the class was not offered on Saturdays, the participant’s time to completion was delayed by a semester. P3 identified having struggles with colleagues, even if the schedule had been changed to accommodate attending evening classes. P3 stated, “There were times we were short-staffed or the

person who was supposed to cover me was out sick, which meant I would be late to class. I would try to email or text my professor."

Subtheme 4: Connecting with campus life as nontraditional students.

Participants identified themselves as working adults in college or nontraditional students. Participants explained that they were working adults during the day and attended college classes during evenings or weekends. The results revealed that participants felt that colleges had limited student support services for working adults as nontraditional students. Participants claimed that college academic support service offices were not open past 5:00 p.m. or weekends. Participants further discussed not taking time off work to access student support services. P4 stated, "There was a time I was under the impression that the colleges were not thinking about students that work due to offices being closed [after 5:00 p.m.] …A lot of us [majoring] in early childhood education work."

Participants posited they could not integrate with traditional students due to age differences, working, and having families. Participants discussed not identifying with younger students when enrolled in the same classes. P4 stated,

> A couple of semesters, I enrolled in early morning classes and realized that the students in the class were just out of high school. I felt like a grandma in the class, and it was intimidating because I was much older.

P1 expressed feelings of frustration returning as a working adult to college.

> Coming back as an adult was very frustrating because from my perspective, coming back [to college] and trying to work and go to school as an adult, I instantly knew I did not fit in [with younger students]. …It's very hard to do.

The results indicate that all participants in this study identified the early childhood education club and early childhood education faculty as their networks to support them through different challenges faced at the college. P11 stated,

> Once I decided to change my major to education, I started attending an early childhood education club. I met other people that helped me be involved in a [college] community. I learned what education had to offer. I was able to meet different people, meet different professors, and continue my education as well.

P3 compared the early childhood education club to belonging to a family,

> A professor mentioned the ECE Club in class, and I attended. Everybody [in the club] was working in the same field, and everybody had the same challenges. [I felt], 'I'm not alone. I'm not the only one'. It was nice to hear from all the people, teachers, and professors because we look up to professors. I loved it. ...The [ECE Club] felt like family.

Subtheme 5: Balancing family and household responsibilities while attending college. Participants expressed that family time and their household responsibilities were their priority. The results indicated that 10 of the 12 participants identified feelings of guilt for not being at home caring for the household and spending time with their children. Participants' described limiting the number of courses taken per semester so that they did not spend too many evenings or weekends away from family or household

responsibilities. Ten of the 12 participants, who were parents, described feeling a sense of guilt for the time spent away from their children. P8 expressed,

> I guess it is mainly about myself. I feel guilty when I come home and my children are asleep. I mean, I love reading them stories. I love playing with them, but when I come home, they are asleep, and I did not like that.

Participants postulated that certain responsibilities in the home, such as household chores, cleaning, and cooking, were their responsibility. Four participants recalled staying up long hours or waking up earlier to ensure that the household responsibilities they felt were their responsibility were completed. P9 described trying to balance home responsibilities, family, work, and school, “The problem was with me. I have no time, I work outside the home to get money, I have to take care of my kids, I have to take care of my home, and I want to take classes.”

Theme 2: Support from family and friends.

While there were barriers to timely completion, the data provided evidence that family support was critical to participants balancing family and household responsibilities to the eventual completion of the degree. The 12 participants expressed the importance of family support to them as students attending college and completing the degree. They stated that they would not have completed the degree without family support or friend support that replaced family support. Family support extended beyond the immediate family of spouse and children. Two participants identified the support of their mothers-in-law in different forms. P8 expressed relying on her mother-in-law for support with English courses, “My mother-in-law at the time was an English teacher in the county. She was retired, so she…helped me through the English classes.”

Family support was critical, and participants who did not have family support expressed that friends substituted for the family. Friends stepped in as family support encouraging, motivating, and guiding students to complete the degree. Friends substituting for the family to support the participants was essential for degree completion. P11 stated,

> I met [a lady] at the gym, and we just became friends. …her family has been very good to me as well, embraced me as a part of the family. She's been very supportive, and she said, “you know, you're going to graduate. You've got to keep going. It's not gonna be easy.” She's been there [for me].

Friends substituting for family support was also critical if the participant did not have family living close to them. P6 expressed having no family in the state where she lives and that friends were her support throughout college.

Family support was a key component to all participants finding a balance between home and college to complete the degree. Participants identified family support as the people who rallied around the participants for emotional support and stepped in to help the participants with household responsibilities that they could not complete while attending classes on campus. P2, a single mom, explained how her son supported her,

The only family I had was my son. My son was going to high school at that time. He was supportive. On the days he did not have a lot of homework, he would proofread my assignments or help me…the other thing he would do is tell me, "you can do it, Mommy, you're doing well" or something like that. His support was always there [for me], and I supported him too.

I did not find evidence of discrepant data. If discrepant data had been evident, the discrepant data would have been disclosed and discussed.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility. Credibility is establishing an objective truth of the participant's reality in the research study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To increase credibility and ensure that I did not misinterpret the data with my own biases, I used member checking during the data analysis process. I emailed participants a two-page summary of the findings and asked them to return with any edits or feedback within 7 days. None of the

participants requested any corrections and stated that the findings depicted an accurate description.

Transferability. Transferability is how results can be transferred to other contexts or settings (Trochim, 2020). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that the most common strategy is “the use of rich, thick description” (p. 256). To ensure the use of detailed and rich descriptions. I also provide a detailed description of the setting and findings so that readers can apply to other contexts.

Dependability. Dependability refers to data collected being consistent with the study results (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Two strategies were implemented in the data collection and data analysis process to establish dependability, member checking and audit trails. In addition to the two-page summary previously mentioned, I kept an audit trail by documenting detailed information about the data collection process and how I made decisions in the data analysis process. I kept a detailed research journal of the process.

Confirmability. Confirmability refers to the extent to which the researcher can confirm the data and findings of the study (Trochim, 2020). I implemented two strategies throughout the data collection and the data analysis to establish confirmability. First, I kept a detailed and organized audit trail documenting the steps and decisions in the research process. Second, I wrote regular entries in a reflexive journal documenting information about the decision process and why I made decisions.

Summary

In Chapter 4, I presented the setting, data collection, data analysis, results, and evidence of trustworthiness. In this basic qualitative study, I explored the perspectives of minority child care provides regarding barriers to timely degree completion for an Associate of Applied Science in Early Childhood Education. The participants' responses to the interviews indicate that minority child care providers face barriers at both college and work that extend their time to completing a degree. Results also validated what current literature states regarding family or friend support being critical to completing a degree.

Based on the data analysis, I generated two themes and five subthemes. The12 participants identified facing different barriers navigating the college process, including challenges with enrollment, locating support, and registration. Participants identified challenges with English and mathematics placement exams and remedial courses in these subjects. Over half of the participants, seven of the 12, identified facing challenges with placement in remedial mathematics classes, repeating mathematics classes, and trying to pass the required mathematics classes successfully.

Participants faced negative structures such as college policies, counseling, paying for college, and scheduling classes. The results also indicated that 11 of the 12 participants faced challenges in the workplace and with colleagues. However, they found support with the early childhood education club that met at the campus during evening hours. All 12 students identified facing challenges as working adults in college as nontraditional students. Finally, participants identified feeling guilty for not spending

time with their children or not completing household responsibilities they identified as their responsibility. All participants faced barriers that they had to overcome to complete the Associate of Applied Science in Early Childhood Education.

Chapter 5 provides the interpretation of findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and the conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study with interviews was to explore the perspectives of minority child care providers on barriers to timely degree completion for a 2-year degree at community colleges. The study is significant because of current proposed changes in early childhood education: Educational requirements have been proposed to mandate, at a minimum, an associate degree for child care providers. There are limited data on how the proposed mandate may impact child care providers and child care providers' time to completion at community colleges (Kaplan, 2018).

The findings indicated that child care providers faced barriers at both college and work that increased their time to completion. Participants were delayed in completion because they experienced challenges with navigating the college process. They had difficulties with limited early childhood education course offerings, noncredit remedial English and mathematics courses, and locating college supports during evening and weekend hours. Participants faced challenges arranging work schedules to register for evening courses and with the availability of academic student support services. Participants discussed limiting the number of classes per semester due to family and household responsibilities.

Interpretation of the Findings

My interpretation of the findings takes into account the literature and the conceptual framework of this study. The study was based on one research question: What are the perspectives of minority child care providers regarding barriers to timely degree completion for an Associate of Applied Science in Early Childhood Education?

The findings indicate that participants faced barriers at college, home, and work that contributed to their time to complete a degree.

Theme 1: Barriers

Subtheme 1: Navigating the college processes. From enrollment to registration, participants in the study did not understand the process of navigating the college system. The findings are consistent with research by Bohl et al. (2017), who identified that nontraditional students had limited knowledge of what supports are available and how to locate supports, such as advising and tutoring. As nontraditional students, participants faced institutional structures that limited their access to student support systems and reported seeking guidance from friends or family who had previously attended college.

Participants identified barriers that impeded them from registering for courses, adding semesters to their time to completion. As working child care providers, they were limited to selecting courses offered evenings or weekends. Participants stated that when they began college, the college did not offer online courses as an option. Early childhood education course schedules did not seem to be structured to support working child care providers. Douglass et al. (2015) and Glazer et al. (2017) found that early childhood education class schedules could be a barrier to working child care providers' access to higher education.

Subtheme 2: Placement exams and remedial classes. As in previous studies (Cheng et al., 2018; Kaplan, 2018; Limardo, Sweeney, & Taylor, 2016; Park et al., 2015), this study confirmed that the participants who were English language learners spent many semesters in noncredit English classes before beginning college-level courses, which

added time to their degree completion. Two important findings in the study were (a) participants did not prepare for the English placement exam, and (b) participants did not seek out tutoring resources for English writing until they progressed to the credit level English class. This barrier is confirmed by a combination of Rosso's (2005) linguistic capital and resistance capital. Students did not develop effective communication skills to secure their equity nor did they develop problem solving skills to overcome challenging problems. Had they developed these skills, time and money spent might have been reduced.

As with the English class challenges, participants identified mathematics placement exams and remedial mathematics classes as barriers to completion. Participants specified having to begin with noncredit remedial mathematics courses, repeating mathematics classes, or not being able to register for other general education requirements because they had not completed a mathematics class. Participants expressed leaving mathematics and any other courses that required mathematics as a prerequisite until the last semester.

Subtheme 3: Locating supports at the college and workplace. Students had limited knowledge of where to locate support at the colleges and had limited support from their workplace to attend classes. Participants also faced challenges with advising, not having an academic advisor assigned to them, not meeting with advisors as nontraditional students, and general advisors not understanding the early childhood education degree. The findings are consistent with research in chapter two that identified limited advising as a barrier to completion for child care providers (Douglass et al., 2015;

Glazer et al., 2017; Sakai et al., 2014). Studies (Douglass et al., 2015; Glazer et al., 2017; Goncalves & Trunk, 2014) found that college supports such as academic advisors who understand the students lead to lower attrition rates. This barrier aligns with Yosso's (2005) navigational capital. Students were empowered to maneuver work and school environments by developing effective communication skills at work and community college.

All participants received financial support from funding specifically for child care providers or from financial aid. However, participants did not receive funding until registering for-credit courses. With large numbers of child care providers starting their higher education pathway with noncredit English language courses or noncredit mathematics courses, participants lacked funding support for noncredit required classes. Low wages for child care providers impede them from accessing and paying for noncredit courses out of pocket or places them in a position of incurring debt (Cheng et al., 2018; Limardo, Hill, et al., 2016; Park et al., 2015).

Participants expressed having difficulties arranging their work schedules to enroll in evening college classes. Although work administrators wanted participants to complete college degrees, the work schedule was difficult to arrange at times. I found that participants in this study arranged their work schedules with colleagues and changed schedules when needed without supervisors' support. Participants having to arrange work schedule changes with colleagues was difficult and did not always work due to issues that arose. Cheng et al. (2018) and Kaplan (2018) found that it was rare for employers to support employees' degree goals.

Subtheme 4: Connecting with campus life as nontraditional students. All participants identified as nontraditional students. Participants expressed that college academic support services were limited after 5:00 p.m. for the working students enrolled in evening classes. Participants expressed the need for college administrators to ensure access to college academic student support services without the student having to take leave from work. Research by Bergman et al. (2014), Gardner et al. (2019), Goncalves and Trunk (2014), Kaplan (2018), and Sakai et al. (2014) concluded that there is a need for availability of college services during nontraditional hours for the working student.

All participants identified an early childhood education club as a support system and a place to network with other students. Participants attended meetings and events because club advisors structured meeting times for nontraditional students. Bohl et al. (2017) found that nontraditional students favored having student clubs that met their needs and could engage them with college activities. Community colleges supporting nontraditional students with early childhood education clubs may combat students' feelings of isolation and reduce attrition (Bohl et al., 2017; Goncalves & Trunk, 2014; Price & Tovar, 2014). This notion is aligned to Yosso's (2005) idea of social capitalism. Because students accessed the early childhood education clubs, they were in contact with peers and others who assisted them to access types of supports for success.

Subtheme 5: Balancing family and household responsibilities while attending college. The results of the study confirmed that the participants faced additional responsibilities outside of work and college. Participants viewed themselves as the primary caretaker of their children and responsible for specific household responsibilities

even if spouses, children, or other family members agreed to help. The participants' perceptions are consistent with a study by Lin (2016), which found adult students to have multiple roles and responsibilities outside of college, including family and household responsibilities. Participants experienced guilt for not attending to household responsibilities they felt were their responsibilities, spending time away from their children, or arriving home from college when their children were asleep. A study by Stechuk et al. (2019) found that one of the challenges for child care teachers as students was "reduced opportunities to interact with their children" (p. 21).

Theme 2: Family and friend support

The results also indicated that all 12 participants identified family support as one of the main contributing factors to balancing family and household responsibilities while attending college. In this study, family support was identified as encouragement and physical support, including household work, cooking, and overall responsibilities in the home. Family support was critical in students' success and completion. Participants identified familial support as people beyond the immediate family and encompassed extended family and friends. Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model recognized that familial capital within minority communities ranges from extended family to community and friends.

Limitations of the Study

There were no additional limitations than those identified in Chapter 1 that arose from executing this study.

Recommendations

The purpose of my basic qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of minority child care providers regarding barriers to timely degree completion for an Association of Applied Science degree in Early Childhood education. There is limited research on child care providers' time to completion for an associate degree at community colleges. I found that participants in this study faced many barriers to completing degrees. The following are recommendations based on the strengths, limitations, and literature review of my current study.

The first recommendation is for researchers to replicate the study with child care providers from other geographical areas. Having child care providers from different geographical regions may provide additional data regarding timely degree completion for child care providers at community colleges. The second recommendation is for researchers to conduct the study with child care providers; however, changing the criteria to all early childhood education associate degrees. I found that many child care providers had completed early childhood education associate degrees that were not an Associate of Applied Science degree.

My third recommendation is based on questions that arose from the findings. Why did participants not prepare for the English placement exams, and why did participants not seek out tutoring resources at the college for English writing until they progressed to the credit level English class? These questions could be answered using a basic qualitative approach to explore participants' answers to these questions. Finally, my last recommendation is for researchers to conduct a quantitative comparative study that

investigates the differences in attitudes towards minority care givers between early childhood of early childhood education community college professors and staff. Further research on community college early childhood education students' attrition and completion rates could be conducted as a descriptive quantitative study.

Implications

The results of my study have several implications for social change; therefore propose recommendations for practice as implications for positive social change. The results indicate that the participants faced barriers from enrolling in college and barriers as nontraditional students that potentially added time to their degree completion. However, participants overcame the challenges faced at home, work, and college. The possibilities for positive social change from my study may contribute knowledge to community colleges and early childhood education faculty to reduce barriers identified at the institutions and reduce the time to completion for child care providers.

Methodological implications for my study may be that the sample population had specific criteria to meet, including (a) their time in a 2-year Associates of Applied Science degree in Early Childhood Education, (b) had completed the 2-year Associate of Applied Science degree, (c) took seven or more years to graduate between the years 2000 and 2020, and (d) identified as a minority student during their time in college. In addition, recruitment for all participants was from one regional area of the United States. Due to the narrow sample population, research should be expanded to include sample populations from other parts of the United States. Future research that broadens the degree to any associate degree in early childhood education may reveal data from

students who have completed or majored in the Associates of Teaching in Early Childhood Education and Associates of Arts in Early Childhood Education.

Implications for positive social change include highlighted awareness to community college faculty and staff regarding specific barriers minority child care providers face as nontraditional students at community colleges. Minority child care providers need support systems that are accessible to them as nontraditional students at community colleges. The first recommendation is that community college early childhood administrators and faculty identify support for child care providers to navigate college upon enrolling as a student and majoring in early childhood education. Communicating with the registrar's office and providing contacts for early childhood faculty and counselors may reduce child care providers' frustration with navigating the college process of enrollment, registration, and counseling.

My second recommendation is that community colleges implement a system to assign advisors, faculty, or counselors to child care providers that are knowledgeable about early childhood education degrees and meet with the students during nontraditional hours. In my study, I found that participants had difficulties locating counselors or meeting with multiple counselors, thus receiving conflicting advising. I also found that participants had to take time off work to meet with counselors, which affected their pay. Having faculty or counselors assigned to specific students who can support them during nontraditional hours can reduce students' frustration, reduce registering for the wrong classes, and establish a relationship between the student and faculty.

My final recommendation is that community college early childhood faculty meet with the office of student life to establish an early childhood education club or student group as a support system for child care providers enrolled at the college. Participants in this study identified early childhood education club meetings as an effective support system for nontraditional students during evening hours. The students networking as nontraditional students were vital in fostering relationships with other students with similar situations and establishing relationships with faculty that understood the student population (Goncalves and Trunk, 2014).

Conclusion

The perspectives of minority child care providers regarding barriers to timely degree completion are critical when the early childhood education field moves to mandate associate's degrees as the minimum requirement in child care programs. My study aimed to explore barriers child care providers faced as minority students during their time at community colleges and why it took over seven years to complete a 2-year degree. Through the child care providers' lenses, I strived to document the perceptions of barriers they faced, how they overcame challenges, and how they persisted to completion.

The results of my study filled a gap in the literature due to limited research on the perspectives of minority child care providers at community colleges. My research aims to provide insight and understanding to early childhood education faculty, early childhood education organizations, and child care providers as students in reducing the time to completion. Supporting child care providers with overcoming barriers at community

colleges has the potential to significantly reduce the time to completion for many currently in programs facing the same barriers.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

- Introduce self to participant.
- Follow the introductory protocol script:
    a. Have participant orally consent to virtual recording.
    b. Thank the participant.
    c. Briefly restate how long the interview will take and answer any questions participant may have before beginning the interview.
- Turn on the audio recorder.
- Begin the interview with demographic questions and follow through until the end of the interview questions.
- During the interview and upon the participant's request, paraphrase or restate any question as needed.
- Ask the participant follow-up or probing questions.
- State when all questions have ended and end the interview.
- Confirm the participant's contact information and thank the participant for partaking of the study.
- End protocol.

Introduction Script

My name is Sonia Pruneda-Hernandez. I am a doctoral student at Walden University working on completing my doctoral degree in Education with a concentration in Early Childhood. I am conducting a research study on perspectives of minority child

care providers regarding barriers to timely degree completion for an Associate of Applied Science in Early Childhood Education. The results of this study may provide data to community colleges, early childhood faculty, and child care providers on how to better support this population of students.

Interview Introductory Protocol Script

To facilitate the note taking of the interview, I would like to record our discussion today. Do you agree to being virtually recorded? Please verbally agree or disagree to the virtual recording. For your information, I will be the only person with access to the recordings, and I will destroy the recordings five years after the study is complete. You have signed a consent form to meet human subject requirements. The consent form essentially stated: 1) that I will hold all information confidential, 2) your participation is voluntary, and you may stop at any time, and 3) I do not intend to cause any harm. I appreciate and thank you for agreeing to participate.

I have planned this interview to last 50-60 minutes. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Interviewee Background Questions

1. What year did you begin studying at the community college?
2. What year did you graduate from the community college?
3. How many classes per semester did you register for each semester?

Guiding Semistructured Interview Questions

RQ: Research question: What are the perspectives of minority child care providers regarding barriers to timely degree completion for an Associate of Applied Science in Early Childhood Education?
Aspirational Capital
IQ. 1: Tell me about any challenges (barriers) you faced with achieving your hopes and dreams to earn a degree. o Describe how you overcame those challenges (barriers).
Familial Capital
IQ. 2: Tell me about any challenges (barriers) you experienced regarding a sense belonging with family while attending college. o Describe how you overcame those challenges (barriers). IQ. 3: Tell me about any challenges (barriers) you experienced with support from family during your time in college. o Describe how you overcame those challenges (barriers).
Linguistic Capital

IQ. 4: Tell me about any challenges (barriers) you experienced with the college readiness placement exam for English.

- Describe how you overcame any challenges (barriers) with the assessment placement exams.

IQ. 5: Tell me about any challenges (barriers) with remedial English classes you were placed in after the placement exam.

- Describe how you overcame any challenges (barriers) with the remedial classes you were placed in.

Navigational Capital

IQ. 6: Tell me about your challenges (barriers) you experienced navigating the college processes of enrolling at the college.

- Describe how you overcame the challenges (barriers) navigating the processes of enrolling at the college.

IQ. 7: Tell me about any challenges (barriers) you experienced with registering for classes.

- Describe how you overcame the challenges (barriers) you experienced with registering for classes.

IQ. 8: Tell me about any challenges (barriers) with locating faculty, counselors, or staff at the college to support you in navigating the college system.

- Describe how you overcame any challenges (barriers) with locating faculty, counselors or staff at the college to support you in navigating the college system.

Resistant Capital

IQ. 9: Tell me about any struggles you had with faculty, counselors, staff, or students.

- Describe how you persevered through the struggle with faculty, counselors, staff, or students.

IQ. 10: Tell me about any struggles you had with college policies or practices in completing the Associate of Applied Science in Early Childhood Education.

- Describe how you persevered through the struggle with college policies or practices.

IQ. 11: Tell me about any challenges (barriers) you had paying for college.

- Describe how you overcame that challenge (barrier).

IQ. 12: Tell me about any challenges (barriers) you faced with the scheduling of classes.

- Describe how you overcame that challenge (barrier).

Social Capital

IQ. 13: Tell me about any challenges (barriers) you faced with your social network supports such as workplace and colleagues.

- Describe how you overcame challenges (barriers) with social network supports such as workplace and colleagues.

IQ. 14: Describe any challenges (barriers) you experienced with community college clubs, activities, or events.

- Describe how you overcame the challenges (barriers) of being involved with college clubs.
- Describe how you overcame the challenges (barriers) of being involved with college activities.
- Describe how you overcame the challenges (barriers) of being involved with college events.

Closing question
IQ. 15: Is there anything that we have not discussed that you would like to add?
Potential follow up questions that I kept visible as I interviewed participants:
1. What did you mean by…? 2. Can you tell me more about…? 3. What do you mean by…?

Appendix B: Constructs, A priori Codes, Participant Identifiers, and Sample of Interview Excerpts

Constructs	A priori Codes	Participant Identifiers	Excerpts
Aspirational	Goals	P3	"You have to have very set clear goals."
		P7	"I didn't really want to attend for 10 years. I was just going to take a couple of classes as my first goal."
		P8	"You set your goal and just be determined to reach that."
	Self-determination	P4	"I just knew that I had to do it. One of the motivations was to prove that I could do it. I wanted to do it for myself."
		P8	"It's determination."
		P12	"I just had to do it."
Familial	Feelings of guilt	P3	"I have to make sure that my children have food or things that I feel is my responsibility…You know, you're the mother when you get home."
		P5	"When I was studying, they wanted to talk to me and I was like not right now because I'm busy."
		P7	"First of all, being a mom with four children and I'm working full time was a challenge by itself."
	Support from family	P1	"I did ask for help. My mom was able to help me with a lot…"

		P2	"My only family I had was my son…He was very supportive."
		P3	"Yes, it's a lot of family support, I have to say."
		P5	"My husband was always helping me, telling me to continue."
Linguistic	English Placement	P8	"When I took the placement test, I could not believe it. I was an English major in my country so I could not believe that I had to take lower English classes."
		P9	"English placement, I took at the beginning of college and I start from the beginning of all the grammar courses."
		P2	"The counseling advisor told me the first step for me to be in college will be the English test so I went for the assessment."
	Remedial English classes	P5	"I started taking English classes as noncredit in 2013."
		P6	"For the first two years, I was taking English as another language."
		P11	"In the beginning I was taking noncredit classes. I had to repeat classes many times, especially one class ESL 104."
		P9	"They told me, 'you must decide your major otherwise you can't

			register' so I simply just say 'accounting' not knowing anything."
	Locating support	P3	"Looking back, I know I never had any orientation…"
		P5	"You want to find somebody who explains the college and takes their time."
		P11	"The process with finding an advisor. Every time I would go, I had someone new…"
	Registration	P3	"I went kind of like blindfolded and I just registered for anything…"
		P7	"A couple of times I registered online and I got knocked out. And then I start classes and I'm told you aren't registered…"
		P9	"I didn't know which courses to take so I was registering for anything…"
Resistant	College policies	P1	"Working in before and after school programs or trying to do the after school, for me the practicum was a little different because I wasn't technically student teaching so that was a challenge…"
		P4	"You can't take 136 before 135, which makes sense because that is a prerequisite for the other one. But the math and the biology, I just don't get why you can't do biology without math."

		P5	"I have a degree, an associate degree in education from my country, but it didn't count. I was expecting the college to give me credit for some of the classes…"
	Overcoming struggles with faculty, staff, and counselors	P2	"I went and she starts to scream at me right away and said, 'I do not know what class of English you took, but you are failing'…
		P10	"I met with counselors to go ahead and get some of my classes that I needed because some of the classes you had to have a form signed off in order to get into the class.
		P11	"When I go to ask for advisors, that was the difficult part. That's why I believe I became so lost and I spent so many years taking different courses…"
	Paying for college	P1	"I had financial aid help me. I didn't have enough money to pay for the classes and I received grants from the college and from outreaches of the college."
		P5	"The scholarship was so helpful because I paid some of my classes and later they gave me a scholarship."
		P10	"I did get a scholarship; I received it from somebody at the college."
		P12	"Being a family child care provider, I was able to qualify for a fund in the state. They fully funded my AA degree…"

	Scheduling classes	P1	"Because of going to school and working, that was a challenge because of the schedule of some of the classes."
		P2	"I was taking statistics. I was so excited, and then the professor said we had to take the test on campus. I went after work to take the test and the assessment center was closed. They were open from 8 to 4. I said, 'I'm working, I can't do that.' The class is supposed to be online."
		P5	"It took me longer because going to work full time and taking classes, especially at night. Back then the college didn't have that many online classes so that is why it took me longer."
Social	College clubs, activities, and events	P3	"I attended and I was like, Ok, this is nice. You know, everybody is working in the same field; everybody has the same challenges that we're facing. I'm not alone"
		P6	"I tried my best to be involved with the early childhood education club and even attended the NAEYC convention as a member of the club."
		P8	"I enjoyed meeting people. I enjoyed learning new stuff or reminding myself about what you already learned. It's good to be with other professionals and that's

		pretty much how I socialized when I was in school."
Workplace and colleagues	P3	"There were times, we were short staff or the person who was supposed to cover for me got sick. I would be late. I would try to email or text my professor."
	P4	"I had to take time off. I had to and of course, I had just started working there so I didn't accumulate any time yet, so it was like okay, you're on your own. It was no pay."
	P12	"Being a family child care provider, I don't have co-workers because I work by myself…Anytime I would have to do anything that I couldn't work around my husband's schedule, I would just close down because it's really hard to have a working substitute."