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Hispanic Adult Learners' Support Expectations in a Higher Education Hispanic Serving Institution

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Abstract

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MBA, Daniel Webster College, 2016

BS, ITT Technical Institute, 2012

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Hispanic learners have lagged behind their White peers by about 7% in completing an associate degree within 3 years, a lag in completion that has closed to some degree over the decade of 2004 to 2014 but still persists. Since the percentage of Hispanic learners who are adults is increasing, the impact of the lag on this demographic could further increase. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine the expectations Hispanic adult learners have regarding supports a community college provides, especially if it aspires to be designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution. The conceptual framework consisted of Yosso's community cultural wealth model and Terenzini and Reason's college experience model. The 2 research questions addressed what expectations of community college supports Hispanic adult learners have when perceived from a community and cultural perspective as well as what supports Hispanic adult learners who have been in a community college for at least 1 semester perceive would help them persist to graduation. The interview responses of 8 students 25 years old or older were coded in search of emergent themes. The findings showed that Hispanic adult learners expect supports to assist them in establishing a connection with their culture and their campus, furthering family involvement, and assisting Spanish-speaking students. They also need language supports, tutoring, student orientation and hospitality, flexibility in scheduling classes and due dates, and childcare. The results of this study may be used by administrators, staff, professors, and community members to help adult Hispanic students' complete community college, which may positively affect their socioeconomic status.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to all those who have believed in and supported me over the years of my education career; especially during this doctoral journey: my wife, my children, my doctoral chair and committee, my peers, my colleagues, and the Southwest Oklahoma City Library. Without each of you, this dissertation would not have been possible.

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- My current committee member, Dr. Alice Eichholz, who agreed to step in to replace Dr. Weidner when she retired, and who has helped talk me through decision-making along the way.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Hispanic students have trailed their White peers by about 7% in persistence and graduation rates regardless of the type of postsecondary institution they have attended (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). Hispanics are defined by the U.S. government as any ethnicity of Central or South American origin (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). The lower persistence and graduation rates were occurring at a time when Hispanic enrollment in postsecondary institutions was at an historic high of 3.6 million students in 2014 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). With 46% of Hispanic students choosing to use loans to pay for college (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016) and about 9% of them borrowing $26,500 or more for their undergraduate degree, not completing the degree could lead to a worsening of their socioeconomic condition instead of making it better (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016).

All adult learners experience many challenges that may put them at risk of not persisting or graduating; Osam, Bergman, and Cumberland (2017) categorized these challenges as situational, institutional, and dispositional barriers. Situational barriers include constraints, such as finances, family life, health, work conflicts, and transportation (Hunter-Johnson, 2017; Rabourn, BrckaLorenz, & Shoup, 2018). Institutional barriers are those such as policy, programs, and supports (Hunter-Johnson, 2017; Rabourn et al., 2018). Dispositional barriers include fear of failure, a like or dislike of intellectual activity, and whether the adult learners think they can succeed (Hunter-Johnson, 2017; Rabourn et al., 2018). A survey conducted by Champlain College Online (2017) found that the main reasons for not returning to school were value,

affordability, and time. In this survey, adult students considering going back to school also indicated that they thought they were too old to go back and that it would not really benefit them because of their age. Some of them also noted that they were already paying for someone else's way through college and could not afford to pay for themselves as well (Champlain College Online, 2017).

The challenges faced by both Hispanics and adult learners could put those students who identify as both Hispanic and adult learner at risk of being unsuccessful in college (Lascher, 2018; Osam et al., 2017; Rabourn et al., 2018). Research has shown that the number of years of education completed correlates to a lower rate of crime (Lochner, 2011) and a lower poverty rate (Ladd, 2012; U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). Those findings indicated that individuals with fewer years in school could be at higher risk of committing a crime; living in poverty; lacking medical care; and having difficulty in getting other supports, including childcare and even more basic necessities, such as food and clothing. These findings might apply to many adult learners, but being of Hispanic ethnicity has been found to be an added risk factor (Oyserman & Lewis, 2017). Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) help with reaching Hispanic students, including those who are Hispanic adult learners, because of the added resources made available by the federal government (Arbelo-Marrero & Milacci, 2016; Higher Education Opportunity Act, 2008). In the 2018–2019 school year, there were over 500 HSIs located in 27 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, and these institutions enrolled 67% of the Latino undergraduates in all institutions of higher education (Excelencia in Education, 2020). In this study, I explored what Hispanic adult learners who have been in a

community college for at least one semester expect of community college support and what supports Hispanic adult learners perceived would best assist them in succeeding.

In this chapter, I introduce the study by examining the background of the problem and describing the problem. The purpose of this study is then explained, followed by the research questions that guided this study. Lastly, I summarize the conceptual framework I used in this study and discuss the nature of the study, definitions I used, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance.

Background

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2016), 61.6% of all students attending a university had not attained a 4-year degree within the expected timeframe of 6 years (1.5 times the time it takes to complete), which indicates that they were at a higher risk of not persisting to graduation. Multiple studies point to situational barriers, such as finances, family, health, transportation, and work conflicts, faced by adult learners, especially of Hispanic ethnicity (Hunter-Johnson, 2017; Rabourn et al., 2018). In addition, that same research points to dispositional barriers, such as attitude, perceptions of the chance of success, and fear. On top of these situational and dispositional barriers, there are also the potential institutional barriers of policy and lack of support as well. For example, student interactions with faculty influenced all three student outcome variables (i.e., gains in general education, gains in career preparation, and gains in personal development) in a study about the support of faculty towards Latino/Latina students for the latter to meet the expectations of those faculty positively (Lundberg, Kim, Andrade, & Bahner, 2018). Herrera, Chapar, and Sánchez (2017) found

a positive impact of student engagement with faculty for peer, academic, and social engagement in HSIs. Considering that persistence to graduation involves peer, academic, and social engagement, faculty relationships with students can drive those positively, especially with this as an identified expectation of these students (Lundberg et al., 2018).

Concerning situational barriers, Nuñez, Sparks, and Hernández (2011) found that Hispanics prioritized personal reasons, family reasons, and academic programs as criteria for choosing or not choosing a college. Vega (2016) also found that academic rigor, support networks, internal motivation, and the responsibility of any student who is the first in their family to attend college helped explain the factors that influenced the participants' postsecondary enrollment and persistence or lack of persistence. Internal motivation and responsibility were also ways to overcome dispositional barriers (Vega, 2016). Supports offered to adult students in higher education to help them persist to graduation included student advising, student life services, academic advising, faculty advising, tutoring, internships, and specialized environments like lactation rooms and daycare (Vega, 2016). To help the Hispanic demographic and other disadvantaged populations in both attending and graduating from higher education institutions, the U.S. federal government approved the appropriation of $175 million for the fiscal year 2009 (Higher Education Opportunity Act, 2008). The same funds were allotted each year for 5 additional years, and HSIs were among those eligible for receiving those funds that would help them provide these services (Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities, 2019).

Different aspects of experience can influence student outcomes. Mayhew et al. (2016) looked at *between-college effects* (such as size and financial standing of the institution) and emphasized that those effects or aspects are inferior predictors of student outcomes. Based on their own previous research, Mayhew et al. concluded that despite the varied differences between colleges, such as size and structure, the student outcomes were mostly the same. The similarity of outcomes, regardless of differences, indicated to them that something more proximal to the student is driving successful outcomes, and these could be individual characteristics and organizational programs, which they defined as *within-college effects*. Ro, Terenzini, and Yin (2013) also found that it is the effects that are the closest to the student that make the difference. Variables associated with successful student learning outcomes are an active/collaborating learning scale based on teamwork, scenario-based learning outcomes, and additional experiences that extend formal learning (Ro et al., 2013). Nuñez, Ramalho, and Cuero (2010) studied teaching in their HSI, finding that there were three factors of the student experience that led to a construct they termed *pedagogy for equity*: personal biographies, sociocultural group contexts, and the broader systemic level of social institutions. Those factors, in some combination, provided insight into the expectations of Hispanic students in HSIs (Nuñez et al., 2010). Garcia (2017) offered further support for these findings in a study examining what it means for postsecondary institutions to be Latinx serving. Garcia interviewed administrators, faculty, and student affairs staff, along with conducting focus groups with students in a case study that analyzed various documents and performed passive observations. After analyzing the data, Garcia found six indicators of a Latinx

serving institution: graduation, graduate school enrollment, employment, community engagement, positive campus climate, and support programs.

Ro et al. (2013) used Terenzini and Reason's (2005) model and found that students' characteristics gained before college, the institutions' structural-demographic, and the internal organizational context features were correlated to the kinds of academic and extended formal learning experiences (e.g., internships) students have on those campuses. Ro et al. found this relationship by analyzing survey data from 32 four-year engineering colleges. Both Ro et al. and Terenzini and Reason indicated that these findings applied to both traditional and nontraditional students, including adult students. In a study conducted at a community college in the southwest United States, Tovar (2015) also reported a small but significant impact of support programs, such as tutoring or childcare, and institutional agents' interactions with Latino/a community college students on their success and intention to persist to degree completion.

Although research has been conducted focusing on Hispanic students, adult learners, supports, and challenges, such as those mentioned previously in this chapter, none has taken place in the southcentral United States addressing Hispanic adult learners' expectations of supports from higher education institutions. This study is important because of this growing demographic group and the effect their education could have on their socioeconomic status and those of their community as well.

Problem Statement

In addition to the consistency of the lack of persistence to graduation rates, Hispanic learners have lagged behind their White peers by about 7% in persisting to

degree attainment within the 3 years it should take them to complete an associate degree; this lag in completion has closed some over the decade of 2004 to 2014 but still persists (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). HSIs, by definition, were developed to seek to channel resources for Hispanic students to complete an undergraduate degree (Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, 2009). In 2018–2019, there were 539 HSIs located in 27 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, and these institutions enrolled 67% of Latino undergraduates in all institutions of higher education (Excelencia in Education, 2020).

The problem is that many administrators of community colleges do not consider what the students are bringing with them from their culture and how that will influence their engagement (Elliott & Parks, 2018). For example, if a student is struggling in a course, faculty and administrators, guided by a cultural awareness, may look to family for help (i.e., familial capital) or look to Hispanic peers in their class to help reach the student struggling, drawing on their social capital (Rodriquez, 2016). Using the social capital the students arrive with may help them persist to graduation in a way that other methods may not. It is, therefore, important for community colleges aspiring to become HSIs to know what the students expect of such an institution in the way of supports. Although Elliott and Parks (2018) stated that administrators struggle with recognizing and incorporating what Hispanic learners bring with them culturally, Rodriquez (2016) stated that most administrators and educators do their best to engage with Latino students. The information I have presented thus far has shown the challenges facing Hispanic adult learners and although Tovar (2015) found correlation between support programs and

positive learning outcomes for this demographic, it is unclear if Tovar's findings are representative of every region of the United States. In addition, it is also unclear if Hispanic adult learners expect the same supports regardless of what institution they go to, especially if that institution is aiming to become, or already is, designated an HSI. Collecting data from Hispanic adult learner perspectives on what supports an HSI community college should provide could lead to policy changes at institutions that will help these students persist to graduation. This would benefit themselves and their communities by increasing their socioeconomic status, and by proxy, the world as a whole.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine the expectations Hispanic adult learners have regarding the supports a community college provides, particularly if it aspires to be designated as an HSI. I explored what Hispanic adult learners who have been in a community college for at least one semester expect of community college support as well as what supports Hispanic adult learners' perceived would better assist them in succeeding.

While such a study has been conducted at an HSI based on survey data (i.e., Tovar, 2015), the current study had a different setting, a small community college in the southcentral Plains that is aspiring to become a designated HSI and has begun the process of applying for that, and a different demographic focus on Hispanic students categorized as adult learners, aged 25 years old and older. Less than 20% of the population of the target institution was Hispanic at the time of the study, but since the college was in an

area with a large Hispanic population, the administration was working to make the institution more attractive to this demographic.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What expectations of support do Hispanic adult learners have of their community college as perceived from a community and cultural perspective?

RQ2: What supports do community college Hispanic adult learners perceive would help them persist to completion?

Conceptual Framework for the Study

In this study, I used two models as the conceptual framework. The first was Yosso's (2005) community cultural model, which looks at six different forms of capital that communities of color bring into a life experience:

- *aspirational capital*: The ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real or perceived barriers.
- *linguistic capital*: The intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style.
- *familial capital*: Cultural knowledge nurtured among familia (i.e., kin) that carries a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition.
- *social capital*: Networks of people and community resources.
- navigational capital: Skills of maneuvering through social institutions.
- *resistant capital*: Knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality. (pp. 77-81)

The second model is Terenzini and Reason's (2005) college experience model. This model frames the first year of student learning and persistence through student characteristics and experiences gained prior to college, the organizational context (i.e., missions, characteristics, and cultures), and the peer environment.

I used Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model to help design the components of this study. The responses to the interview questions were framed within Terenzini and Reason's (2005) college experience model. Yosso's community cultural wealth model informed RQ1, and Terenzini and Reason's model informed RQ2. The interview questions were derived from both the research questions and the framework. More on this framework and the two models involved are found in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was a basic qualitative inquiry design involving open-ended response, individual interviews with eight to 12 Hispanic adult learners aged 25 years old or older who had completed at least one semester of a degree program at a community college aspiring to become an HSI. Qualitative research "attempts to understand individuals, groups, and phenomena in their natural settings in ways that are contextualized and reflect the meaning that people make out of their own experiences" (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 1). This study fit the purpose of a basic design approach, which Merriam and Tisdell (2015) suggested examines answers to pragmatic questions but does not try to frame that examination within an explicit theoretical, philosophical, epistemological, or ontological viewpoint. I analyzed the resulting data manually by transcribing, coding, categorizing, and theming.

Definitions

In this study, the following key terms were used:

Adult learner: Students who are aged 25 years old and older (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1998)

Hispanic or Latino: Anyone of Latin American origin, including Cuba and Puerto Rico, as described by the U.S. federal government (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018)

Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI): An undergraduate institution that has at least 25% of their enrollment as Hispanic students (Higher Education Opportunity Act, 2008)

Assumptions

In this study, I assumed that participants would give honest answers, including accurate age and ethnicity, and would be truthful about their campus experience. It was also assumed that the participants with at least one semester of experience on campus had enough experience to be able to respond to the interview questions. I also assumed their memories of campus experiences would be accurate enough to be of value.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study included only those support functions offered by community colleges and what Hispanic adult learners expect. In addition, only those students who self-identify as Hispanic were considered for participation in the study. Anyone younger than 25 years old and not self-identifying as Hispanic was not included in this study. The participants also had to have completed at least one semester of their degree program.

Limitations

The findings of this study may be transferable to other community colleges that are aspiring to become HSIs in the southcentral plains of the United States. However, not every community college in the southcentral plains of the United States is homogenous, so there will be localized aspects that may affect those institutions beyond those affecting the host institution of this study. On a larger scale, since community colleges do share a core mission, the findings of this study should still benefit those outside the region of focus as well. Because the participants self-selected, any claims made in this study were limited. My bias as a White male and the privilege that it brings also had to be accounted for through journaling while I analyzed the responses of Hispanic participants.

Significance

The significance of this study lies in its possible application to meeting the needs of the growing population of Hispanic adult learners in the United States by informing the creation, implementation, or tailoring of support policies and programs that will help these students persist to degree completion. The findings could positively apply to their socioeconomic status and that of their families, their communities, and the nation as a whole. HSIs could become better equipped to assist this population and its outcomes for the better.

Summary

This study is important to the Hispanic community and adult learners because it may impact these populations and lead to better completion rates for them. Hispanic students have trailed their White peers by about 7% in persistence and graduation rates

regardless of the type of postsecondary institution they have attended (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). To inform policy to this extent, Hispanic adult learners, 25 years of age or older that have completed at least one semester at a community college were interviewed to learn their perceptions and expectations of what supports should be in place at a community college that is aspiring to become a HSI. That missing knowledge concerning the expectations of this population in the southcentral plains of the United States is a gap that needed to be filled. These participants were also asked what supports they think would be most helpful to them.

In Chapter 2, I will discuss the literature that supports the existence of this problem and knowledge about it and point to a gap in that knowledge that this study aimed to address.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Hispanic learners in the United States are lagging behind their White peers by about 7% in persisting to degree attainment within 150% of the time it should take them to complete an associate degree (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). This is a gap that was closed some over the decade of 2004 to 2014 but still persists. Compounding this problem is the fact that Hispanic enrollment in postsecondary institutions is at a historic high of 3.6 million students (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016) and considering that 46% of Hispanic students choose to use loans to pay for college (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016) and that about 9% of them borrowed $26,500 or more for their undergraduate degree, not completing the degree could lead to worsening their socioeconomic condition instead of making it better. The purpose of this study was to examine the expectations of Hispanic adult learners concerning supports of a designated, or aspiring to be designated, HSI. Research has shown that HSIs can help reach Hispanic students who are already considered vulnerable because of socioeconomic disparities that have led to the persistence gap mentioned earlier (Arbelo-Marrero & Milacci, 2016; Fosnacht & Nailos, 2016).

Considering the purpose of an HSI, the continued gap in understanding of the expectations of students who attend these schools, when contrasted with the reality of a given HSI's organizational characteristics, could lead to deficient outcomes for the students the HSI seeks to serve. This lack of understanding could then lead to an undermining of the mission of the HSI.

In this chapter, I explain the literature search strategy, including the keywords and databases used; discuss the conceptual framework; and provide a comprehensive literature review related to key concepts of this study.

Literature Search Strategy

For the literature review, I used two primary search engines: EBSCO Discovery Service and Google Scholar. Through those search engines, I accessed the following databases for relevant resources (not provided in any particular order): EBSCO eBooks, Education Source, ERIC, Google Books, Project Muse, ProQuest Central, SAGE Journals, and Taylor and Francis Online.

I started out searching for resources with the following generic terms: *higher education*, *adult learners*, *support*, and *Hispanics*. Later in the process, these search terms were combined and included the modifiers *Latino* or *Latina* for *Hispanics*, and *college*, *community college*, *junior college*, *post-secondary*, or *university* for *higher education* as well as *academic advising*, *financial aid*, *finance management*, *veterans' obstacles*, *family issues*, *childcare*, *parent issues*, *mental health issues*, *navigating college*, and *flexibility*. To address the six categories in Yosso's community cultural wealth framework, I searched using the terms: *aspirational capital*, *linguistic capital*, *familial capital*, *social capital*, *navigational capital*, and *resistant capital*. In addition, these cultural capital terms were combined with *challenges*, *barriers*, *difficulties*, *issues*, *problems*, *limitations*, or *obstacles*, and *cultural barriers*.

Conceptual Framework

I used two models as the conceptual framework for this study. The first one, Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model, was used to examine factors for student success through their possession of six forms of capital. The second model, Terenzini and Reason's (2005) college experience model, was used to examine those factors through supports provided by the organization and by peers in the institution.

Community Cultural Wealth Model

Yosso (2005) created the community cultural wealth model after seeing issues with how Bourdieu's (1977) cultural capital theory was interpreted and how it was impacting people of color. Yosso defined people of color as both African Americans and Latino/as. Bourdieu's cultural capital theory focuses on how members of society view certain cultures as having history and experiences that are more important than others, even if this assertion is subtle. Bourdieu posited that it is this line of thinking that has led to the marginalization of particular cultures, such as those associated with African American and Latino/a ethnicities.

Cultural capital is defined as the "sense of a group consciousness and collective identity" (Franklin, 2002, p. 175). Yosso (2005) also asserted that there are forms of cultural capital not recognized by Bourdieu (1977) that another theory, critical race theory, does and, therefore, shows capital as having value; that capital is what Yosso drew on. Critical race theory, as Yosso explained it, examines racism as the primary cause of how White culture was made the norm in the United States to the subversion of all other cultures. Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, and Thomas (1995) used the phrase

"Whiteness as property" to illustrate that the more Whiteness you had as part of your life, the more "property" or capital you had. Oliver and Shapiro (2006) asserted that although the gaps between Whites and people of color have shrunk over time through more opportunity, there is still a long way to go in terms of the consistent accumulation of wealth for people of color such as African Americans. Yosso focused on more than just the financial and material capital that Oliver and Shapiro concentrated on and what Crenshaw et al. spoke of about the subversions of other cultures that were not White. Yosso's focus centered on the culture and experiences of Latino/a culture as a source of capital and how the knowledge and wisdom derived from them lead to other forms of capital, such as financial and material.

In the community cultural wealth model, Yosso (2005) broke down capital into six forms, based on previously mentioned models and theories. Aspirational capital encompasses the motivation and tenacity of an individual to realize their dreams. Linguistic capital emphasizes the value of multiple forms of communication. Familial capital refers to the knowledge and culture passed down from a person's family members and others viewed as family. Social capital is the network of people and community resources that an individual can access. Navigational capital deals with the ability to navigate through other cultures and their institutions. Resistant capital is the knowledge and skills obtained through resistance to inequality. In this study, I used the community cultural wealth model to guide probing questions asked of respondents to gather what they perceived as important for HSIs to consider when developing support programs or policies.

The College Experience Model

Terenzini and Reason (2005) developed a comprehensive model that lays out the college experience across two areas. The first area, organizational context, was derived from Berger and Milem (2000) and involves internal structures, policies, and practices as well as academic and formal education extending programs, policies, practices, and faculty culture. The second area, the peer environment, was derived from the work of Astin (1985), Tinto (1993), and Pascarella (1985) and incorporates sociological and social psychological aspects. Peer environment involves individual student experiences, such as curricular and extracurricular, as well as experiences that extend formal learning. Inputs to these two areas include the students' precollege characteristics, such as sociodemographic, academic preparation and performance, personal and social experiences, and their dispositions (Terenzini & Reason, 2005). The researchers' goal was not to identify every feature, but the examples they give in their model are those they consider to be influential to the college experience.

In this study, I used this model to probe respondents concerning their feelings about the organizational and the peer environment of the community college study site. The students' precollege characteristics were used as background for their responses so that those inputs were considered as well. For example, I asked how Hispanic students feel about what supports are offered and what supports they think best meet their needs. Tinto (2015) used this model in a study of students' perceptions of institutional persistence.

I used Yosso's (2005) and Terenzini and Reason's (2005) models in this study to examine Hispanic adult learners' perceptions of what supports should be offered to them in a community college through the lens of community cultural wealth and how that fits into the college experience. The participants' responses gave insight from a community and institutional perspective.

Literature Review Related to Key Factors

Many factors can present challenges to adult learners, and those challenges are compounded when students are also from an underprivileged demographic, such as Hispanic. In this section, I discuss of these challenges as issues specific to adult learners in higher education, institutional support programs, and issues specific to Hispanic student populations.

Competing Priorities and Stresses of Adult Learners in Higher Education

Adult learners face a variety of challenges, many of which are different from those faced by traditional students. This is due, in part, to the many roles and challenges they have to take on, such as parent, caregiver, employee, and student.

Student parents. Peterson (2016), in interviews with 15 students acting in parental roles from three community colleges, identified themes of support, addressing stress, study strategies, and awareness of self as challenges to those students. The students also mentioned needing financial, academic, social, emotional, psychological, and childcare supports. Accessibility, access to information, flexible study options, balancing multiple roles, and feeling socially excluded were also identified by van Rhijn, Lero, Bridge, and Fritz (2016) in their longitudinal study of 270 students from four

Ontario, Canada universities over the course of 3 years. As Chung, Turnball, and Chur-Hansen (2017) pointed out, the presence of these challenges and struggles does not mean that nontraditional students are less resilient; instead, as a result of all the challenges these students were faced with, they became more resilient.

Role conflict does make academic persistence more difficult. Markle (2015) found that many women mentioned the conflicting roles of parent and student and the negative effect they had on them in persisting to graduation. This conflict is worsened when external influencers expected these women to adopt more traditional views of women's places in society such as an individual that stays in the home and tends the children instead of going to college (O'Shea, 2015). Similarly, Hunter-Johnson (2017) found these conflicts to not just be a problem for women but for the majority of students in parental roles, including men. Student parents also, like many other students, have their core introspection that can impact whether they find support and how effective that support is for them when they garner it (Friede, Westring, & Ryan, 2010). In a study with 520 student participants who were involved in parental roles from six universities, Friede et al. (2010) found that those with higher core introspection (i.e., high ego, high generalized belief in efficacy of self, internal locus of control, and low neuroticism) have lower conflict within themselves and higher internal enrichment of themselves. In other words, it is not just about supports but also about the effects of experiences before college for the student in parental roles as well.

Military veterans. The veteran status of military veterans also adds a role to their student identity. Alschuler and Yarab (2016) observed that many National Guard

members had conflicts, such as sudden deployments, that made it hard to stay engaged in a course or to persist through to completion. Gregg, Kitzman, and Shordike (2016) found that 38% of veterans found it difficult to manage finances in civilian life, especially with college finances added as an additional challenge. The same percentage of veterans said they needed environmental supports, particularly those dealing with reacclimating to civilian life, for them to persist to graduation.

Caregivers. Whether for elderly parents or young children, caregiving added the problem of finding others to provide that care so that students could attend class or do homework (Hunter-Johnson, 2017; Keyes, 2017; Markle, 2015; Peterson, 2016; Samuel & Scott, 2014; Sandoval-Lucero, Maes, & Klingsmith, 2014). Nursing women have found it difficult to attend class because of issues with not being able to find lactation rooms, which these women said were critical for them in open-ended interviews with Brown and Nichols (2012). Forbus, Newbold, and Mehta (2011) found that over half of students surveyed at a midsized southwestern university worked more than 21 hours per week, which meant they would have to choose between work and school many times. Carnevale, Smith, Melton, and Price (2015) stated that out of 20 million college students in 2014, 70% of students were working at least a few hours a week and 40% of undergraduate students work more than 30 hours a week. Supporting these findings, Schatzel, Callahan, Scott, and Davis (2011) reported that adult learners with significant responsibilities are hesitant or not interested at all in enrolling again in college due to role conflicts, time constraints, or lack of finances.

Institutional navigation. Many have difficulty navigating higher education, including where to find resources and who to go to when those resources are not found. Markle (2015) found, in a mixed-methods study of 494 nontraditional adult learners, that many adult learners expressed the need for improved student advising and increased access to faculty. Martin, Galentino, and Townsend (2014) found that support from administration, staff, and faculty was very important for the 11 adults they interviewed persisting to graduation. Lack of knowledge about available resources and how to take advantage of them was another concern that surfaced in a study conducted by Heagley and Benson (2017). Those same students noted that they did not want to be a "be a burden" to staff or faculty. One seeming conflict that Brinhaupt and Eady (2014) found among 171 faculty from universities and community colleges was a view of nontraditional students needing less assistance since they seemed to be more responsible and better managers of time.

Caring for personal, psychological problems. The feeling of being a burden to the school's personnel is one symptom of a larger problem with adult learners. Hunter-Johnson (2017) found that 31% of the study's 100 adult learner respondents indicated that they had at least one episode of mental illness during their college experience, including maladies such as depression, anxiety, and emotional instability. Friede, Westring, and Ryan (2010) also stated that students in parental roles have experiences with interrole conflict that are correlated with "increased depression, alcoholism, health complaints, burnout, and turnover intentions and decreased job satisfaction, life satisfaction, and quality of family life" (p. 1816).

Stress is a major contributor towards mental health issues as nontraditional students indicated they experienced this due to work, family, school, and commuting (Forbus et al., 2011). Loneliness was a theme that was mentioned by Markle (2015) as well as Hunter-Johnson (2017) who found that many adult learners interviewed throughout the Bahamian community felt they did not belong in college or did not feel a part of the campus. Forbus et al. (2011), as well as Goncalves and Trunk (2014), also mentioned loneliness as an issue when their survey indicated that most nontraditional students did not feel they belonged to the campus environment. Witkowsky et al. (2016) noted that one of their participants said "[o]n the surface everyone appears to be included and respected; however, [the institution] in general caters to students of money and young kids straight out of high school" (p. 37). Another student wished the institution they were apart of would offer something for students in parental roles such as family nights/days. In a study conducted by Peterson (2016), student-parent adult learners (three men and 12 women) mentioned the need for support concerning social, emotional, and psychological issues. Peterson found that, although these students did acknowledge that they cannot completely rely on external support, including through the institution, that more needed to be done to help these students help themselves.

Veterans often deal with mental challenges, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (Alschuler & Yarab, 2016). As a result of not finding the support they needed, almost all of the adult learners in the study conducted by Martin, Galentino, and Townsend (2014) at a large community college the southeastern United States said they had to either become their own support mechanism solely or had to find a champion to support them.

Rejection by peers or the institution was another concern for students, either because someone told them that they did not belong in college or worse, like with women, that their place was in the home (O'Shea, 2015).

Family issues. Family issues such as illness, childcare, and a lack of support on multiple levels, made it difficult for adult learners to persist. For example, Markle (2015) said many women interviewed had to try to balance school with work and family, and sometimes had to choose between present needs and future investments. Also, the women Markle interviewed said the majority of professors made it clear that they would need to put their kids and family life on the back burner to succeed in college. Men and women in the study said they thought many of these conflicts were a matter of outdated policies geared toward traditional students and that neglected adult learners. An example of an issue where policy decisions did not align with nontraditional student needs is academic libraries and children. Keyes (2017), through an analysis of 80 academic libraries' websites, found that about 50% of academic libraries had no clear policy about children being on the premises, with some being openly hostile to those children being present at all. Hunter-Johnson (2017) found in interviews that students directly mentioned a lack of class attendance as a result of not being able to resolve issues with family.

Financial issues. Adult learners have to also contend with financial barriers as they juggle costs associated with family and costs associated with their education (Hallett & Freas, 2018; Hunter-Johnson, 2017; Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2014). This issue has a significant impact on homeless students. Hallett and Freas's (2018) study with eight

homeless students found that they mentioned many problems connected to their situation. First, there was the difficulty of even registering for courses, and then the challenge of actually staying engaged during them. Affordable transportation was one issue, but even when they found transportation, they would often have to use the money on food or other needs. On average, the researchers found that it took about 7.5 years for these transient, and sometimes homeless, students to complete an associate degree. This amount of time could jeopardize their ability to get financial aid because of federal rules on the amount of time a student can take to complete a degree program. Transportation was also found to be an issue by Forbus et al. (2011) who found that 66% of nontraditional students traveled more than five miles to get to school. This distance made attendance extremely difficult for students who did not have a reliable means of transportation.

Lack of flexibility. One theme that weaves through all of those mentioned thus far is that of flexibility. Students in many studies indicated the need for flexibility and the often lack of it (Heagney & Benson, 2017; Howley, Chavis, & Kester, 2013; Hunter-Johnson, 2017). This encompassed course schedules, tuition payments, and assignment due dates. Xuereb (2014), after an open-ended response questionnaire involving 176 undergraduates, noted that the most common reasons for these students discontinuing their studies were academic workload and problems related to their courses. The City University of New York (CUNY) also noted that a lack of flexibility was why persistence rates were not as high as they could be. When not providing this flexibility, CUNY found that 20% fewer adult learners persisted to graduation than if provided in the ways previously mentioned, like through their Accelerated Study in Associate Programs

(Kolenovic, Linderman, & Karp, 2013). Many adult learner students involved in a study conducted by Kinser and Deitchman (2007) ranked competing time demands as the top reason why they had stopped out when they had started college previously; a finding also supported by Wyatt (2011), who stated students had articulated in interviews that "they had multiple obligations in their busy lives, and college was just one of them."

Institutional Supports at Community Colleges for Adult Learners

Over the decades since community colleges first began, institutions have developed many supports to help students succeed. One support that many institutions have implemented is the first-year experience (FYE) program, otherwise known as the freshmen year experience program (Goodman & Pascarella, 2006; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989). Although not always the first choice for students, many are encouraged by their family, friends, community members, and even institution staff, to register for the program at colleges where enrollment is voluntary (Goodman & Pascarella, 2006).

The University of South Carolina (2014) surveyed 896 higher education institutions, of which about 90% offered a FYE program. Vulnerable students, both traditional and nontraditional, were required to enroll at about 60% of the institutions surveyed, where most of the programs focused on common reading experiences, service learning, intensive writing projects, diversity and global learning, and undergraduate research. Those foci, all high impact practices (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2007), are put in place to help students connect with the institution, help them find and utilize campus resources and services, and develop academic skills.

What Works Clearinghouse (2016), in conjunction with the United States Department of Education, looked at four studies involving FYEs. The clearinghouse defined FYEs as designed to introduce students to student development issues, resources, study skills, time management, career planning, and cultural diversity (The What Works Clearinghouse, 2016). Participation in these programs was found to have a possible positive correlation with credit accumulation, degree attainment, and general academic achievement, with two of the four studies indicating a statistically significant positive effect in all three measures. One of the studies showed the same statistically significant, positive effect, in all but the credit accumulation measure. Evidence of this effect of FYEs is supported by a study conducted by Acevedo-Gil and Zerquera (2016), where students in their first year described the types of resources that were made available to them in their FYE such as learning community courses, tutors within classrooms, and assigned advisors, and claimed they would not have made it through their degree program successfully if it had not been for their enrollment in the program. Tutoring is also a valuable resource and is a prominent component in such programs (Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2014; Thistoll & Yates, 2016).

Institutions that do not provide an FYE program may provide mentoring. Komarraju, Musulkin, and Bhattacharya (2010), in a study about faculty interactions with students in colleges involving 242 undergraduates at a midsized, Midwestern, public university, found that about 40% of students had a mentor and that those mentors had encouraged them to go after their dreams. This mentoring is not only for those who reside on or take courses on campus, but it is also offered for online students. Thistoll

and Yates (2016) studied the effects of mentoring for distance learning students using data from two studies: Study A, a qualitative study which consisted of 10 volunteers made up of faculty, managers, and learning and teaching support staff participating in interviews; and Study B, a mixed-methods study which consisted of 34 first time students that participated in a survey and interviews. Participants stated that mentoring was crucial for not just encouraging them to finish, but especially for those courses that they found difficult. The researchers speculated the mentors' faith in their mentees is passed on, and mentees instill that in themselves. Langer (2010), however, found that some of the adult learner interviewees in his study saw mentors either as surrogate parents or that they did not show adequate interest in their growth.

Other forms of support that community colleges offer are for other groups, including families and veterans. For families, this can come in the form of childcare. Some community colleges provide childcare for students who are parents. This care can be during class time or when they are at their academic library (Keyes, 2017). For veterans, campus groups have helped them feel like part of a community and provided resources for them to get help (Alschuler & Yarab, 2016). They also mentioned important services that are provided, such as helping them when they have to take a leave of absence due to military obligations (Griffin & Gilbert, 2016).

Course planning and early alert systems that help students to know what is available to them with regard to campus resources, what courses are available to them, which are relevant, and when to take them, are important for nontraditional students

(Thistoll & Yates, 2016). Early alert systems have been found to be helpful in identifying struggling students so they can receive timely help (Samuel & Scott, 2014).

Students from different ethnic backgrounds and life experiences have emphasized how they believed the support services offered by community colleges would be more helpful if integrated for easy access (Griffin & Gilbert, 2016; Hallett & Freas, 2018). This is something that FYEs such as CUNY's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs have done effectively (Acevedo-Gil & Zerquera, 2016; Kolenovic, Linderman, & Karp, 2013). In a study of culturally relevant practices at one HSI, the university completed this integration by offering courses and supports that were relevant to Latino/as such as courses focused on their culture or courses that approached learning English from a cultural perspective (Garcia & Okhidoi, 2015).

Another support that is needed by students attending college for the first time, including adult learners, is navigating the financial aspect of attending college. This aspect can present barriers to adult students based on confusion about how the process works or the reality of how debt can impact their ability to pay for college. Remenick (2019) noted that although junior colleges and universities provide services to assist with these barriers, many times the individuals tasked with this have the view that the students that come to them are traditional students. This mindset can then lead those individuals to overlook the barriers adult students may have that their traditional peers do not.

Issues Specific to Hispanic Student Adult Learners

Although many of the issues facing vulnerable populations, such as adult learners, can be generalized across those same learners from all backgrounds, some issues may be

specific to subsets of adult learners. One major issue that most first-generation Hispanic migrants enrolled in community colleges and their children face is that of a linguistic barrier. Torres, Arrastia-Chisholm, and Tackett (2018) found that Hispanic language learners' anxiety levels were heightened the more they perceived their English language skills were deficient. Making this barrier even harder to overcome is how English is taught, including composition and speech, at different institutions (Ruecker, 2014). This difference in instruction leads to confusion and can inhibit the ability of Hispanic students who are learning English as a second language, to succeed. Reading, writing, and speaking English has been a significant challenge, especially in higher education where more advanced vocabulary is used (Mahaffy & Pantoja, 2012), and that many of these students see a lack of bilingual services being available as making it harder. However, being bilingual has the advantage of helping these students retain a connection to their culture, which can serve as an anchor for them when navigating a diverse institution (Pérez, 2014).

Most Hispanic students see family as their primary support mechanism, even more so than college professors or staff (Langer, 2010). There are many reasons for this. Langer (2010) found that many minority adult learner students did not feel comfortable coming to a mentor of a different ethnicity or gender. Family, along with other community supports, were seen by adult Hispanic learners on one campus as a stopgap when campus resources were not available, in a qualitative study involving the interviewing of 30 students who identified themselves as Latino/a (Mahaffy & Pantoja, 2012). This prioritization of family did not mean that institutional agents, such as

faculty, were not impactors upon Hispanic students' persistence to graduation (Tovar, 2015). Even though the family was turned to more often than institutional supports and agents, Tovar (2015) found that there was still a small but significant impact on the success of Hispanic students from institutional supports and agents.

Matos (2015) found, after interviewing 24 Hispanic students across three varied higher education institutions that the family members' level of education had no bearing on how Hispanic students viewed them as supports because if those members could not help in one way, they were able to help in others. For example, while Storlie, Moreno, and Portman (2014) found that a family member's inability to help with students' academics or help them navigate their college experience was an inhibitor, Sáenz, Garcia-Louis, Drake, and Guida (2018) found the family members' encouragement and life supports were considered enablers. Blood relatives were not the only individuals seen as a family as friends were seen in the same light and often as an extended family (Mahaffy & Pantoja, 2012). In addition to their encouragement, friends, especially those who attended college with them, were able to help Hispanic students navigate college (Espinoza, 2013; Vega, 2016). Sometimes employers have been reported as an extended family who encouraged them and validated Hispanic adult learners (Allen, 2016). Related to family issues is that of poverty and their parents' own past negative experiences with education (Storlie et al., 2014).

The importance of community manifests further through the themes of cultural unity and, campus engagement and connection. Hispanic adult students in a study conducted by Mahaffy and Pantoja (2012) mentioned how they felt a disconnect with

their culture's community on campus. Although many institutions lump those considered "Latino/a" together, Mukherji, Neuwirth, and Limonic (2017) asserted that many Latin American countries are different from each other in enough ways to where generalizing the culture does a disservice to students from those countries and inhibits their ability to succeed in higher education institutions, including HSIs. Garcia, Patrón, Ramirez, and Hudson (2018) also stated that not only did a lack of connection with Latino/a culture prove to be isolating for Hispanic adult learners, but when attending a predominately White institution, these students also felt conflict between their culture and the role they felt they had to take on in White culture. Sandoval-Lucero et al. (2014) found in a qualitative study of 22 minority students of both adult and traditional learners that the connection was felt through many means such as activities or social gatherings. Rodriguez, Parrish, and Parks (2017) also found that in addition to intergroup issues there were also intragroup problems such as racism, marginalization between Hispanics and Latinos, and lack of institutional resources.

However, the Hispanic community was not the only community where Hispanic adult learners wanted to feel a connection. In two studies on community college Hispanic adult learners, the adults interviewed claimed they also wanted to feel like part of the campus as a whole. This belonging had to do with more than just having venues for their participation, but also included campus personnel taking an active interest in their lives (Espinoza, 2013; Samuel & Scott, 2014). Storlie et al. (2014), in a qualitative study comparing 1,060 peer-reviewed articles about Hispanic adult learners and their postsecondary challenges found that discrimination, racism (including microaggressions),

lack of exposure to positive role models, especially outside the family, and a fear of failure were negatively impacting this effort to be a part of the campus community. These challenges can be experienced both inside and outside the school as was attested to by many of the 24 Latino adult males that participated in a qualitative study conducted by Garcia et al. (2018).

Arbelo-Marrero and Milacci (2016) studied the college experiences of 10 adult learner Hispanic students from two HSIs in the southeast United States. They found that along with the same issues aforementioned in earlier paragraphs, these students also had the burden of being a role model for others in their community and feeling they had to measure up to a preconceived standard. The students also cited the need for flexibility concerning the completion of assignments because of schedule and role conflicts.

As a result of many minorities occupying a low socioeconomic status, financial concerns and constraints are a major inhibitor in either enrolling in college for the first time or enrolling again (Schatzel, Callahan, Scott, & Davis, 2011). Brown and Nichols (2012) echoed this noting that in their study of mostly African American students in parental roles, the support themes of daycare, financial aid, scheduling, and transportation emerged with three of those themes relating to finances. In a qualitative study by Shaw (2014) using focus groups, he found that many minority adult students, regardless of ethnicity, are afraid to take out loans for education because they do not want to burden their loved ones with debt or face the possibility of those loved ones having to deal with the debt if they die before it is paid off. The National Center for Education Statistics

(2016) reported that undergraduate students, regardless of ethnicity or age, spent on average about $1,800 or 10% of their yearly budget on transportation costs.

Summary and Conclusions

The literature review shows that adult learners, especially those of Hispanic ethnicity, have expressed, whether through qualitative or quantitative means, the challenges they face when trying to complete college successfully. These challenges for adult learners revolve around finances, time, family, schedule conflicts, parenting, transportation, homelessness, veterans' issues, and inclusion. Postsecondary institutions have responded to these challenges by creating FYE programs to mitigate these problems during the first year of school. Some postsecondary institutions, especially community colleges, have also created support programs such as childcare on campus, and help with rent for housing. Hispanic adult learners stated that having to deal with racism, lack of campus inclusion, language barriers, and not understanding how to navigate college were additional inhibitors to their academic success.

From prior studies, findings show that adult learners need supports to ensure they persist to graduation. These supports encompass everything from institutional to familial to the community. These needs are present at every school in some measure as mentioned in those studies, although it may be more of an issue at some institutions than at others. Studies also show that Hispanics look to family and community more often than they do to faculty and staff. In addition to issues faced by first-generation adult learners, cultural and foreigner aspects also play a role in most Hispanics not knowing

where to find institutional supports or how to utilize them. Hispanic students have expressed what supports they need in general, but not necessarily in detail.

In Chapter 3, I present the methodology used to conduct this study. This methodology incorporated the models mentioned above as well as the approach, sampling, data collection, and data analysis methods used.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine the expectations Hispanic adult learners have regarding the supports a community college provides, particularly given that it aspires to be designated an HSI. I explored what Hispanic adult learners who had been in a community college for at least one semester expect of community college support and how Hispanic adult learners' perceptions indicated what supports would better assist them in succeeding. In this chapter, I discuss the research design and methodology, my role as the researcher, how the data were collected and analyzed, and the ethical issues involved.

Research Design and Rationale

The questions addressed by this study are:

RQ1: What expectations of support do Hispanic adult learners have of their community college as perceived from a community and cultural perspective?

RQ2: What supports do community college Hispanic adult learners perceive would help them persist to completion?

Supports and culture were the key concepts in this study. These concepts and the research questions were explored through a basic qualitative inquiry, defined as asking open-ended questions of people while observing matters of interest in real-world settings to attempt to solve problems, positively improve programs, or develop policies (see Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Burroughs (2017) stated that the basic qualitative research design is used to look at what experiences mean for those who have lived through them. Since the data were sourced from interviews, a basic qualitative inquiry

was the most appropriate for this study. In addition, the research questions for this study were basic and did not fall into any other tradition because I looked at a real-world problem and for input from students in order to inform policy development.

Phenomenology focuses on how individuals take experiences and turn them into a part of their consciousness (Patton, 2015; Vagle, 2014). Although participants recounted their experiences during the interviews in this study, deeper personal experiences were not the focus, only their perceptions of pragmatic aspects of the college experience were; therefore, phenomenology was not a suitable fit for this study.

The research tradition of case studies was another approach considered, but this approach focuses more on collecting a detailed and rich story about something in a bounded setting (Yin, 2014). I was also not gathering data in the form of artifacts or documents, and since case studies require more than just interviews, this design was not appropriate for the current study.

Role of the Researcher

My role in this study was as the interviewer and analyzer of the data. Expounding on this, I participated in the study in that I was interacting with the participant through questioning and asking follow-up questions. As an observer, I listened to the participants' responses and observed their body language, including their tone of voice.

Although I was a professor at the host institution, I did not interview any students I had taught to remove as much bias or conflicts of interest as possible. My biases were managed by journaling my thoughts and about my past. Since I worked in the

environment from where I recruited participants, I was cognizant of any desire on my part to advance myself and my place of employment when I collected and analyzed data.

Methodology

This was a basic qualitative inquiry (Burroughs, 2017; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016) in which I used in-person interviews to acquire data. Since I wanted rich data from a specific population demographic for the study, I used a purposeful sample to select participants. I provide more details concerning the methodology of this study in the following subsections.

Participation Selection Rationale

The population for this study was made up of eight adult learner (i.e., those 25 years of age or older), Hispanic, community college students who had finished at least one semester of their degree program at a community college that desired to be an HSI. The number of participants specified provided just enough data to provide data saturation. The location was South Central Community College (SCCC; a pseudonym), which is a community college located in the southcentral United States. Since SCCC wanted Walden University to approve the study first, I requested conditional approval from Walden University after which SCCC provided approval as the IRB of record, and then Walden University gave full approval, noting that Walden did not oversee data collection. Upon approval from both institutions, SCCC's Planning and Research Department assisted in identifying students who met these criteria and self-identified as Hispanic by searching through the college's registration database and e-mailing them

basic information about the study. In addition, flyers were posted at the study site to advertise for recruiting participants as well.

I used purposeful sampling because I was looking for a specific demographic to answer questions specific to a particular institution. If recruitment had not achieved a sufficient number of participants, then the recruitment period would have been extended by letting SCCC's Planning and Research Department know so they could continue assisting with a second round of e-mail recruiting communications to prospective participants and by leaving any advertising for participation up longer with the approval of campus administration.

Instrumentation

I used interviews with an open-ended question method to collect data from the participants. This interview protocol (see Appendix), contained questions (e.g., "What stands out for you about how your first semester went academically?") based on the conceptual framework that was utilized in this study as well as factors that were probed for that were suggested by the empirical literature review. The open-ended question method enabled me to gather rich data with which to answer the research questions for this study by not restricting the participants' responses.

Data Collection

Through the process I discussed in the Participant Selection Rationale subsection, I expected to interview eight to 12 Hispanic adult students aged 25 years old or older who had completed at least one semester at SCCC as a convenience sampling, which would provide just enough participants to have a better chance of securing quality data. When

potential participants contacted me responding to the invitation forwarded by SCCC's Planning and Research Department's e-mail or the recruitment flyers, I responded by sending them the informed consent form and arranging a time and place for in-person interviews.

I tried to have a pool of participants with some diversity within the Hispanic adult learner demographic at the community college, including males and females, parents and nonparents, and military and nonmilitary participants, though these demographics were only of general interest and not related to research questions. Because of time constraints, I accepted participants who met the criteria (i.e., being Hispanic, 25 years old or older, and having attended SCCC at least one semester) without regard for diversity regarding other characteristics.

While I planned to collect the data at SCCC by myself, using an easily accessible, quiet, and discreet room on campus, this was not realized fully because of COVID-19. I had planned to interview each participant once for 45–90 minutes and record them via computer microphone, with the data stored on a password-protected hard drive, with a second set of both used at the same time for redundancy, however, five of the interviews had to be conducted via Zoom video conferencing software At the end of the interview, I gave the participants each a $20 gift card, but some declined the gift saying that they did not need it. I transcribed the responses to the interview questions manually. After transcribing the interviews, I listened to them again to ensure that the final transcription was accurate. I then gave participants an opportunity to review the transcripts to help ensure a high level of accuracy.

Before the interviews, I advised each participant of their rights, including withdrawing at any point, stopping the recorder, or requesting a detraction of information they divulged should they had felt they said more than they wanted to. In addition, they were reassured that their identity would remain confidential. These rights were also established in the letter of consent. I also explained to them that they had the opportunity to review their individual interview transcript to ensure their accuracy, make any corrections, and add any additional thoughts. This participant review process helped to establish validity of the data.

Data Analysis Plan

The interview questions, including follow-up questions, informed the research questions. Data analysis started with a marked-up copy of the transcriptions in which I identified words or sentences that indicated what I thought different passages meant (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012). That marking up involved coding passages throughout the data using descriptors. It was not unusual for many passages to have several descriptors assigned to them. Assigning those codes definitions helped maintain continuity throughout the analysis. After coding the transcripts, passages that had the same codes were contrasted, compared, and grouped into categories using descriptors, as suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2012). From those categories, I developed themes based on reoccurring differences or similarities between categories that were used in participants' responses.

Issues of Trustworthiness

It is not enough to simply collect data from a target demographic; the data collected must also be able to be trusted. I established this trustworthiness through a methodology of transcription review and analysis, including interview protocols and analysis protocols. In addition, I examined my own background and ethnicity to acknowledge any bias I may have had that could have affected both the interview and analysis processes. More detail about the processes of establishing trustworthiness can be found in the following subsections.

Credibility

To establish credibility, I worked to reach saturation by recruiting eight to 12 participants. I also included transcript reviews to ensure that the transcriptions of the interviews were accurate. When analyzing participant responses, more than one explanation, perspective, or theme was examined to avoid assumptions about a participant's meaning behind their statements (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Transferability

I achieved transferability by including thick descriptions in the presentation of the analysis of the data to help a reader better judge what can be transferred to other similar problems. The setting of the study was also described to help show the distinctiveness of where it took place.

Dependability

To achieve dependability in the study, I followed the set protocols laid out earlier in the data collection and analysis process to ensure that the data could be trusted and that

the analysis of it could be as well. These protocols included making sure the source data could be easily accessed and that all transcription and coding could be easily understood.

Confirmability

I achieved confirmability by documenting the interview and data analysis processes and acknowledging my personal biases. Although I did my best to avoid letting my bias influence the study, I acknowledge I did not do this perfectly. However, a reader of the study will be able to keep my biases in mind while reading the analysis. My prior research of the subject matter, frameworks, and question construction further helped confirmability (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Ethical Procedures

I received agreements from SCCC that provided access to the participants. Since SCCC wanted Walden University to approve the study first, Walden University gave me conditional approval so that SCCC would approve the study, and then Walden University could give full approval. The host institution was the IRB of record and their approval consisted of a letter of approval. Walden University's approval came as an email. Neither institution provided an approval number. In addition, I protected participants by keeping their responses confidential and storing them on a hard drive using full-disk encryption. The interview location was a spot that it would have been hard to know that they were participating in an interview or study.

Should participants have been uneasy with participating, I would have sent them an e-mail to see if I could address any issues or questions they had to assuage their concerns. If, during the interview, a participant would have had a negative response

toward me as the researcher, I would have attempted to defuse the situation by explaining the reason for the question or by offering to move on to another question. If a student had started showing signs of distress, I would have asked the student if they were willing to continue the interview and possibly offer counseling resources to them.

I collected data in the interviews in a confidential manner where participants were assigned a pseudonym as an identifier. This confidentiality occurred both in data collection and data analysis as well as in the presentation and publication of the findings. Data were stored internally on a password-protected hard drive using full-drive encryption. After 5 years, I will delete the research data using the Department of Defense 5220.22-M Wipe Method.

Summary

In this study, I used a basic qualitative inquiry design and interviewed Hispanic adult learners who had been through at least one semester of a community college degree program about their expectations of supports from that institution and how they perceived those supports were effective. Interview data were collected by myself, verified by participant transcript review, analyzed by coding and theming, and stored on a hard drive utilizing full-drive encryption.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine the expectations Hispanic adult learners have regarding the supports a community college provides, particularly given that it aspires to be designated an HSI. I explored what Hispanic adult learners who have been attending a community college for at least one semester expected of community college support as well as what supports Hispanic adult learners perceived would better assist them in succeeding.

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What expectations of support do Hispanic adult learners have of their community college as perceived from a community and cultural perspective?

RQ2: What supports do community college Hispanic adult learners perceive would help them persist to completion?

In this chapter, I review the setting where I conducted the study and the demographic group focused on. Then, I describe the data collection process as well as the process of data analysis. Evidence of trustworthiness is then discussed before I present the results of the study.

Setting

The setting for this study was a community college in the southcentral United States referred to as SCCC, a pseudonym. During data collection, the COVID-19 pandemic took place, which caused changes in how the interviews were conducted. Interviews were conducted via videoconferencing and phone calls instead of via in-person meetings. No other changes were made to the way the study was carried out as

described in Chapter 3. I recruited participants for the study by posting flyers on campus and sending out a mass e-mail to a list of students provided by the institution's Planning and Research Department that met the selection criteria. The mass e-mail generated all of the responses; however, I had to send out three rounds of e-mails to garner enough participants.

Demographics of Participants

All eight participants self-identified as Hispanic, were at least 25 years of age or older, and had completed at least one semester of community college. Five of the participants were enrolled in the nursing degree programs at SCCC. In addition, all but one was female. Ages varied from 25 to 60 years old. Three of the participants were first-generation college students, while the others had family members who had received a degree, some of whom were extended family. The majority were working at least part-time jobs and also were caregivers for children. Two participants were still living with a parent for needed support. Each participant was given a pseudonym: Alberto, Calista, Estela, Gloria, Julia, Philippa, Reia, and Sofi.

Data Collection

I conducted the first three interviews in a private study room in the site's library; however, because of the COVID-19 outbreak, the campus was closed, including all facilities. I then moved the interviews to a videoconferencing format using the Zoom Messaging Client. Only one interview had to be conducted via phone call due to Internet bandwidth stability issues. Each interview lasted from 45–75 minutes, except for the first one that lasted about 25 minutes.

I audio recorded all the interviews with a digital voice recorder, regardless of the setting. Two digital recorders were used for redundancy and fault tolerance. All eight participants answered every question, and each question was followed up with one or more probes. Most questions were answered with in-depth responses from most of the participants.

Reiterating what I mentioned earlier, the only unusual circumstance encountered was the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic and its corresponding social restrictions on how data were collected, which went from an in-person to a virtual setting. Each interview was transcribed in a Microsoft Word document. Participants had the chance to review each transcript to see if there were any changes they suggested; no participant requested that any changes be made.

Data Analysis

In order to move from coded units to themes, I looked for the frequency of phrases and experiences covered by the participants and then the similarity in what they discussed about those concepts (e.g., how many participants talked about supports and then what they said about those supports). Then, I went back to see how many participants talked about those supports in a given way.

Each interview, after it was transcribed, was coded using the following codes: flexibility, resource utilization, knowledge, accessibility, uniformity, supports, time utilization, sense of belonging, false assumptions, cultural considerations, and prejudice. I used multicolored highlighting to mark excerpts of the interview as matching a code. From there, I divided the responses up between those that informed RQ1 and those that

informed RQ2. Finally, I derived my themes from the codes in relationship to each of the two RQs. For RQ1, I derived the three themes of connection with culture and campus, family involvement, and assisting Spanish-speaking students. For RQ2, the four themes were tutoring, student orientation and hospitality, flexibility in scheduling classes and due dates, and provide childcare.

There were few instances in which there was a lack of uniformity among responses from participants, but when this occurred, they overlapped with other themes. Experiences of prejudice were also mentioned by two participants, but only mentioned once by each. Since these were only mentioned once or twice and did not seem to be a common issue, they were not included with themes.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

The credibility of the data was established in several ways. I worked to reach saturation by recruiting eight participants and included transcript reviews to ensure that the participants verified that the transcriptions of the interviews were accurate. When analyzing participant responses, more than one explanation, perspective, or theme was examined to avoid assumptions about a participant's meaning behind their statements (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Transferability was provided by including thick description in the presentation of the analysis of the data to help a reader better judge what can be transferred to other similar problems. I described the setting of the study to help show the distinctiveness of where it took place.

Dependability was achieved by following the data collection and analysis protocols laid out in Chapter 3, except for the cited discrepancies mentioned earlier, to ensure that the data could be trusted and that the analysis of it could be as well. These protocols included making sure the source data could be accessed easily and that all transcription and coding could be easily understood. I stored the data securely and made it easily accessible for authorized persons.

Confirmability was demonstrated through documenting the interview and data analysis processes and acknowledging my personal biases. The reader of the study will be able to keep my biases in mind while reading the analysis. My prior research of the subject matter, frameworks, and question construction further helped confirmability (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Results

The results of this study are broken down by the research questions and themes. Each theme is represented by excerpts from the interviews.

Research Question 1

The three themes related to RQ1 were connection with culture and campus, family involvement and assisting Spanish-speaking students.

Connection with culture and campus. Participants expected that they would be able to connect in a meaningful way with their own culture and the campus overall. For instance, Reia said "I would have liked to have been able to be a part of some of the things." However, 7 of the 8 participants said that this did not happen for the most part. Reia said,

> I like, um, to be a part of things. Because I am Hispanic, it does make it a little bit harder. I was also at a prior college, that's where I did a lot of my classes and there's not a lot of Hispanics there. So, I know that [being Hispanic and the lack of much of a Hispanic community] was one of the reasons for me, that I backed away from a lot.

Time constraints or lack of communication led to 7 out of the 8 participants not being able to participate in extracurricular or cultural events such as clubs. Gloria said,

> I think I saw an e-mail for groups and organizations, like a conference in the main building and that's something that I made note to attend, and I did attend at the time I could attend and there were very few people at the table, so I wasn't able to get as much information. Um, I signed up for a couple of things, but then as the semester unveiled itself, I wasn't able to attend any of the meetings, because I was in clinicals or it was too early in the day for me to get to school to be able to study before class. It's almost 100% time conflicts, because I would really love to participate, I would love to go and interact and find out more information about what everybody is doing.

Having flexible time was hard for her, as she explained that:

> I'm just not able to do that because there's only one time slot for the organizations that I signed up for, and it's usually smack dab in the middle of the day. And I was doing clinicals from 2 to 11 o'clock at night, and when you have an organization meeting from 12 to 1, that's not going to happen for me to drive 30

> minutes to the organization meeting and then drive another 30 minutes back to my clinical. I just, I wouldn't be able to do it.

Philippa thought it would help Hispanic students feel more of a connection if they were able to interact with administration more, saying,

> I think it would be nice for a lot of us to kind of see someone from his office or even him . . . just so we know that he is there. Like . . . "ok that's the president," because I think a lot of people who are social would even take it upon themselves to go say hi or something.

Julia, however, found a place in TRIO [a federal outreach and student services program] and Students Connecting with Mentoring for Success (SCMS):

> I found out that I was also qualified for TRIO and this make a huge difference, because now I have more support, because the advisor there don't [sic] have many students so I don't need to schedule many times an appointment with her. She knows me there because we are close as a group. They improve me a lot because, for example at SCMS, the members there [who] are close to us ask us if we needed help, they tutor us, they can share information, books, materials.

Family involvement. All of the participants said that family should be involved in their family member's education in some way. For example, the kind of involvement they hoped for was having their families able to help them make decisions about their college career but that without language and other supports this would be difficult. Indeed, all of them mentioned that their families were involved in some way in their

education, whether emotionally, financially, or academically. Gloria stated this when talking about the central role of family in Hispanic culture,

> There are certain nuances in the Hispanic community – so there are certain things culturally that are important. Family is extremely important. Community is extremely important. If any of that becomes endangered, I'll say, that's going to take precedence. So, understanding that, you have to think outside of just the academic needs. The Hispanic community is all about family, all about family. That's going to be number one all the time. School is something to help the family.

Participants indicated that their families have helped them in several ways. Reia, for instance, said "my sister is very proud of me." Sofi said there are differences in how her husband, mother, and extended family express that support but that they are all supportive,

> So, my husband is very encouraging and [his family] wants to know everything about how [college is] going. My family has been also, so I guess the way that I say "encouraging" when I try to tell you that, when I first told my mom, to me, her being encouraging is just saying "ok," you know? And with my husband's family, when I told them I was going to do this, he immediately told his family, and it was like they already know [because of my husband telling them], I didn't have to do anything, but every time there's big events um, his mom calls me, and she tells me. . . "hope everything is going great, good luck", they are all very encouraging. And I was married when I got my bachelor's and they wanted to

> come to the graduation; they are just excited and happy for me and they just want to be there. So, they make a bigger deal about things. My family, um, I think when we were younger, we were taught not to be so open with our feelings.

She went on to talk about how her mom was supportive through other means, like caregiving,

> So [my oldest sister] started having kids when she was in high school, but she still got her college degree – I can't remember how long it took. My mom helped her out, like she tried to help her out with the kids a lot. I mean that was just second nature to my mom, to be able to help her.

Calista said that her daughter was supportive emotionally and academically,

> My daughter is always telling me like "I'm proud of you" and she helped me in the beginning with English because for me it was like, I saw that I was writing good, but she was like "Mom, you know, you're still thinking in Spanish, that's not making any sense in English." So, she was like "you have to change this," so she was helping me.

However, family were not always able to help the students or were even supportive. Alberto said about academic support from his mother: "Yeah in terms of like classes or like homework or anything academic, she hasn't been able to really help me at all like ever since like the 6th grade. So, in that sense I've mostly been on my own." Sofi said,

> I told you my mom was real education based but she didn't know anything about how college works here. So she could only encourage us so far and then um she

> wasn't very much about being open and loud about you know "hurray you did this" but she did um sort of have her own expectations about all her kids, she wanted all of us to go to college and you know and have a degree and to choose something that you know that we're proud of or appreciate that would help us out later on in life. I think maybe that's what it was, maybe she just didn't know a lot about it.

Estela talked about how some families believe college is a waste of time,

> If they come from a place where academics was not promoted, then they are not going to reach out for anything dealing with academics either, but at the same time we have those things here in America with White culture where [their families] say "you don't need college."

Assisting Spanish-speaking students. All of the participants indicated in some way that Spanish-speaking students need assistance. Reia talked about a student at the junior high school she works at needing assistance, and related it to how much more higher-level students need it,

> We had a Spanish speaking math teacher and he just had to leave on an emergency family thing. Um, so he just left unfortunately and the issues. And he was helping one of the girls and so she was starting to bring [the math situation] up and she told him. And he was like "Ok," so then unfortunately, now we have an English-speaking teacher. It's going to make it more difficult. So, then she's like, she comes to me, she says "I don't understand," so then we were talking to our principal, she said "we're trying to get it together." Because they [the

> students] are not able to understand [the math], at that level, how are they going to be able to survive high school?

Estela talked about particular ways the campus could be more helpful to Spanish speakers – including using Spanish in the campus signs,

> Honestly, I would expect that there would be a lot more signs designating where to go in the matter of location in Spanish. I used to speak Spanish much more fluently, but now I've completely lost it. Even though I know the structure of a sentence and everything, it's the vocabulary that is gone. And I used to be biliterate. But I've had plenty of people ask me for directions. I can understand them in Spanish, but I cannot reply in Spanish. I can only reply in English. So, if they understand English, that's great, but I would expect for signs to be in Spanish and English. I mean that's the first service you can do.

She then went on to say that employees should have some basic Spanish language skills to better communicate with Hispanic students,

> The next thing I would honestly expect is for people, at least employees, maybe to encourage them to learn another language or at least get the understanding of basic words that are in Spanish. Like I said, back to directions, you don't have to be fluent, but be able to give them directions in Spanish – left, right, etc. I think right now, starting off basic wise, is to have Spanish available and to have that understanding where so they are not walking into a facility and questioning where am I? Knowing that they can at least navigate somewhere, 'cause not everyone can get someone to translate for them all the time. Sometimes they have to bring

> their kids, and their kids have a limited vocabulary. That would be the first part. Yeah, being able to explain a subject in Spanish. I want to say that is something that should be available.

Estela then gave an example of how the lack of Spanish speaking skills can impact the ability to assist students,

> Coming from an area where that's what I already do. I'm a lab assistant at the Physical Science Center at SCC, so I tutor in Chemistry or Physics. There are specific words I can go ahead and redirect or if they're having a little bit of trouble, I can switch to a word in Spanish that can help them draw that connection.

She did, however, acknowledge the difficulty of having this expectation of staff,

> Yeah, that would be amazing, but at the same time, it would be really difficult to have that expectation for a college. If they are really trying to promote or project this as a school that is very welcoming to the Hispanic community, then yes, that is something they need to have.

Although speaking Spanish could be a challenge in certain instances, three participants also explained how speaking Spanish had been a benefit. Philippa said, "it helped me being bilingual with the terminology that is used in the medical field." Reia said something about welcoming new students,

> If I was able to come back and [encourage Hispanic students] then I would be a voice for that, I really would. To say [to] those that are [Hispanic], to encourage [them]. And I could do it in Spanish. I really could do it in Spanish. Because I

> can speak Spanish, so um just to encourage [the Hispanic students]. You can do this. It is possible.

Research Question 2

RQ2 was what supports do community college Hispanic adult learners perceive would help them persist to completion? For RQ2, the four themes regarding what would help regarding persistence to completion are tutoring, student orientation and hospitality, flexibility in scheduling classes and due dates, and provide childcare. Language supports were also considered important for persistence to completion, as indicated in the theme *assisting Spanish-speaking students* in RQ1.

Tutoring. Seven out of 8 of the students said that use of the tutoring center would be useful, although not all of them used it. Alberto said of his use of the center, "yeah, the resources there are excellent. They give excellent feedback and I can't think of a time that I had any problems [with them]." However, he also said, "I know that I would have like to have seen more specialized kind of tutoring," referring to tutors that specialize in certain subject matter. Estela said that tutoring is needed but that,

> [Hispanics] don't know how to even approach other people for help. They worry that people down at the Physical Science Center are going to be mean, or the Biology Center are mean, especially if Math is their first class is taken there, they are afraid other places will be the same.

Calista said that the tutoring she received was not helpful and that it needed improved:

> With the writing center I remember [I had a} problem, especially with it being Comp I, English Comp I. Um, you go there, they read whatever paper, you know you go in and they tell you to do changes, blah, blah, blah, and sometimes you change the whatever and you do the changes and you go back to your professor and it's like "No, this is wrong" and I say "Ok, I went to the writing center and they told me I was not good and I have to make changes and I made the changes" and now, and it wasn't only me, it was other classmates that they were frustrated because they say "Calista, I went there and they told me to change this and I did change it and now it's worse."

Julia also commented about the quality of the tutoring staff,

> When I went to the writing center, I was feeling disappointed at one point because when I asked for help, the lady there told me that maybe for my age or for the many years that I wasn't in school, that's why I was struggling to write the essay. So, these comments made me feel uncomfortable.

Some students, like Sofi, did not even realize that tutoring was available and said it would have helped her a lot if she had known.

Student orientation and hospitality. All of the participants said they were not given a student orientation or tour. Five of the 8 participants indicated that this gave them some sort of trouble when trying to navigate the institution. Sofi said,

> Even when I enrolled, I had a lot of difficulty figuring out how the process worked. Like you know, dropping classes if it's not working or um putting too many classes on a workload. Sometimes when I would talk to counselors – so it

> took me a little while to get my bachelors because I talked to a few different counselors and I had a few tell me to go in different directions. And so, it just left me confused. And so, I was very frustrated for many years. Because I kept thinking I'm going the wrong way, not doing the right things.

She then gave an example of how she got lost because of a lack of information that a tour or orientation could have provided,

> So that first day of lab I couldn't remember where it was. I guess I got the rooms mixed up and then they are in different places because the nursing lecture room is getting either remodeled or some kind of construction is going on in that area so we couldn't use it. So, we've been using this other room. Anyway, it would have been great to you know.

Calista talked about how for her, coming from a different country, the lack of an orientation made things confusing:

> I think so, I think so, because especially that I have friends that are from Columbia here in the United States and they asked "Calista, you didn't ask me how many classes. You took too many classes you should have just started with two or three" and I said, "Well I thought I could handle it."

Reia stated:

> When a new person is coming in, I think [staff] probably doesn't think about it because they've been here for so long, and they're just like "we never thought about that." Um, and it's like it's someone that's done something for so many years, that they don't realize it. But somebody new that comes in and it's just like

> "Oh, ok, this is how they do things." And so, it's like when a new kid comes to school and they're coming from a whole different state, how do you think that kid feels. Like a really scared kid.

She then gave an example of how fear can affect your college experience,

> So, when I'm a registrar at a middle school, so the first thing we do is "Welcome to our middle school." You make them feel very, very welcome, so they're not scared. And you make them feel like "Don't be afraid, you know I know you just came across the country, left your school, but we're going to make you feel really, really welcome." It's the same thing coming to college. You know, make that person feel welcome, not terrified coming to college. Doesn't matter how old you are, it doesn't matter how old, you're still scared. You're still just like, "Oh my gosh, I'm in this big building, I don't know where they heck anything is." You can be however old, but still you're scared. It's the same thing. You need to make them feel welcome.

Flexibility in scheduling classes and due dates. All of the participants said that flexibility was necessary for them to be able complete their respective degree programs. This flexibility had to do with due dates and event schedules. Gloria said with regard to club meeting schedule conflicts that it would be a good idea to offer,

> . . . virtual meetings while the in-person meeting is happening. Even if you could just call in to hear and to maybe add some insight or perspective would be helpful. I tried to join and I'm technically on their lists, but it's been so difficult to actually participate. I wish there were more opportunities as far as scheduling different

> times, possible having more than one meeting in a week for students that are either day or evening. Um, again the meeting minutes being distributed, e-mail, communication, telephone call in for meetings, that would be extremely helpful.

All the participants said that the majority of their professors have been willing to work with them as far as due dates were concerned, but that there were a few who were not willing to accommodate them. Estela said,

> Yes. It depends on the professor, because I've seen some professors that are more than willing to do what they can, especially for someone that has a medical situation and they know the character of that student because like I said, they were fine, everything was great and they saw that they were a great student and now suddenly they're fainting everywhere [because of health issues].

Julia said of her professors,

> I think that I found that the professors of the courses that we have during the night, … they understand our situation, so they push us to work a little bit more, but they understand when we have something that happens. So I think this is important information that the students need to know. That they can communicate with the professors, they have more information about how to do it and how this can help.

Alberto talked about the need for flexibility with regard to scheduling classes:

> I was very, very frustrated with last semester, setting up my schedule for spring, …that there's not availability for these classes outside of those hours. So I have two more classes that I need to take that are um, that are requirements for the poli-

> sci associates that I can't take because they're only offered Monday, Wednesday, or Tuesday, Thursday, from like 10-12, and that's simply impossible with my work schedule, um and they're only offered in the spring. So, there's really no availability for me to take that class during the summer or in the evenings or on the weekend, or whatever it may be, there's not accommodation for schedules.

Provide childcare. All of the participants said that childcare was a good idea for those who have no one else to watch their children while they attend classes. Four of the 8 participants said they had been personally impacted by this issue. Philippa said,

> For me, whenever I stopped going to school it was because I couldn't afford child care, and I didn't have, you know, my parents were working so I could leave my kid anywhere and I know in some classes or in some schools if you talk to the professors, you know, they are ok with you bringing the kid, but I think that, like for me it would have been hard to focus on what I was trying to learn and have my kid with me. And you know you also think about the other students, you know, you don't want to disturb them with your stuff. So that would be something, a good idea, to bring back.

Estela talked about the need as well,

> Yeah, I agree. Especially if SCC is going forward with this 8-week school program, these classes. The whole purpose of why students come to SCC is because, not only is it cheaper, but they can get a degree within a couple years. It enables them to be able to work, take care of their kids, and also go to school and complete those things. The 16-week schedule, especially for someone where it is

once a week on a Saturday where their kids are with their dad or whatever. Doing an 8-week program, just for childcare alone is very challenging. I think if they had that available, they would see a lot of success with the 8-week.

Summary

The results of this study show that Hispanic adult students expect supports to assist them in establishing a better connection with their culture and their campus, furthering family involvement, and assisting Spanish-speaking students. Some participants saw limited examples of this occurring but indicated that more was needed. Hispanic adult students also said that these supports were needed: language supports, better tutoring, student orientation, flexibility in scheduling classes and due dates, and childcare. Some of those supports are available such as language supports and tutoring, whereas some supports, such as student orientation and childcare were not.

In Chapter 5, I will interpret the findings of this study, and its limitations will be discussed. Then recommendations for application and future study will be presented. Finally, implications for positive social change will be discussed.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to examine the expectations Hispanic adult learners have regarding the supports a community college provides, particularly given that it aspires to be designated an HSI. I explored what Hispanic adult learners expected of supports from a community and cultural perspective as well as what supports they perceived would help them persist to completion. I conducted individual, open-ended interviews with eight Hispanic adult learners aged 25 years old or older who had completed at least one semester of a degree program at a community college aspiring to become a HSI. This study aligned with the purpose of a basic design approach, which Merriam and Tisdell (2015) suggested examines answers to pragmatic questions but does not try to frame that examination within an explicit theoretical, philosophical, epistemological, or ontological viewpoint. I analyzed the data manually through transcribing, coding, categorizing, and theming.

The results of this study led to seven themes. In response to the first research question, the analysis indicated participants expected supports to assist them in establishing a better connection with their culture and their campus, furthering family involvement, and assisting Spanish-speaking students. Some participants saw limited examples of the abovementioned supports occurring but indicated that more support in each of the three areas was needed. In response to the second research question, the Hispanic adult students said that the following supports were needed: language supports, better tutoring, student orientation and hospitality, flexibility in scheduling classes and

due dates, and childcare. They reported that some language supports and tutoring was available while student orientation and childcare were not.

Interpretation of the Findings in Light of the Conceptual Framework

In this section, I address the interpretation of the findings of the study in light of the conceptual framework comprising two models: Yosso's community cultural wealth model and Terenzini and Reason's college model experience.

Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth Model

I used Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model to guide probing questions asked of the study participants to elicit their perceptions of what was important for HSIs to consider when developing support programs or policies in respect to RQ1, which was: What expectations of support do Hispanic adult learners have of their community college as perceived from a community and cultural perspective? The community cultural wealth model is broken down capital into six forms: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant (Yosso, 2005). While there was evidence of the need to support all six forms of capital, in this study the findings suggest that familial capital was the most important support factor. Next was linguistic, followed by social and navigational capital in order of importance and salience. Support for inspirational and resistant capital was not mentioned by the participants as having come from the supports in place at the institution or were those types of capital evident in any of the participants' responses. I will discuss familial, linguistic, social, and navigational capital in the order of salience in the data.

Familial capital. Familial capital refers to the knowledge and culture passed down from an individual's family members and others viewed as family (Yosso, 2005). Several study participants mentioned that their parents passed on to them the importance of education and hard work. One mentioned how her family came to the United States with nothing and started a small business, which is still successful today.

Linguistic capital. Linguistic capital emphasizes the value of multiple forms of communication (Yosso, 2005). Two participants of my study indicated that their Spanish-speaking skills were instrumental in helping them understand Latin terms associated with nursing program courses. These skills also enabled them to help others as well.

Social capital. Social capital is the network of people and community resources that a person can access (Yosso, 2005). Participants in this study felt the lack of people networks and community connections was still a weakness with the host institution. However, they reported they made the most use they could of the resources they had access to, whether it was family, friends, peers, staff, or professors. Some were easy to approach, such as family, while others, such as staff and professors, took a while for them to get the courage to talk to.

Navigational capital. Navigational capital deals with the ability to navigate through other cultures and their institutions (Yosso, 2005). This was also a challenge to the participants in this study, especially when institutional staff were not helpful or informative. Some of the participants had gone to other colleges in other countries and found the way the host institution did things was different. All the participants reported

they made the most use they could of the host institution's resources, including the institution's website, programs, and staff.

Analysis of Findings in the Context of the College Model Experience

Terenzini and Reason (2005) developed a comprehensive model that lays out the college experience across two areas: organizational context and the peer environment. These two areas relate to RQ2, which was: What supports do community college Hispanic adult learners perceive would help them persist to completion? In the following subsections, I discuss the findings in the context of both areas.

Organizational context. Organizational context involves internal structures, policies, and practices as well as includes academic and formal education extending programs, policies, practices, and faculty culture (Terenzini & Reason, 2005). There were two perceptions among the eight participants regarding the effectiveness of various internal structures, policies, and practices to support their success. Some praised the institution for doing everything with the resources it had available to it. For instance, Julia mentioned being a part of a leadership class where she was able to learn crucial skills to be a professional. However, some participants, such as Gloria, said that staff seemed poorly trained. She also said that policies, such as quiet area rules, were not enforced. Most participants said there needed to be more integration of Hispanic culture and language into the college, such as with signs and literature.

Peer environment. Peer environment involves individual student experiences such as curricular and extracurricular, as well as experiences that extend formal learning (Terenzini & Reason, 2005). A few students tried to get involved in clubs at the

institution, but, in addition to time constraints, there was also a lack of activity in them. Gloria said that club meetings needed to be held at a different time than the middle of the day and that if that did not work that they could at least have a virtual component to them. Philippa mentioned that she perceived that she was not as connected to some of the classes she was in due to her age when compared with the rest of the students in those classes.

Interpretation of the Findings in Light of Empirical Research

In Chapter 2, I reviewed the extant research on the priorities and stresses that adult learners in higher education have and face. In the following subsections, these priorities and stresses are discussed to show how the seven emergent themes align, partly align, or do not align with prior literature.

Connection with Culture and Campus

The first theme related to RQ1 was connection with culture and campus. Mahaffy and Pantoja (2012) found that Hispanic adult students felt a disconnect with their culture's community on campus. Three of the participants in the current study also related to this feeling by commenting on their inability to join or participate in campus groups such as clubs. In two studies of community college Hispanic adult learners (i.e., Espinoza, 2013; Samuel & Scott, 2014), the adults interviewed claimed they wanted to feel like part of the campus as a whole. In the current study, Julia stated that a result of her joining two groups on campus was that she felt more connected to the campus. Espinoza (2013) and Samuel and Scott (2014) also found that this desired connection was not just about joining groups but also had to do with campus personnel taking an active

interest in their lives. All the participants in the current study said that students needed interaction with administration, with only one reporting that they had any substantive interaction with anyone from administration.

Family Involvement

The second theme related to RQ1 was family involvement. Langer (2010) found that most Hispanic students reported family as their primary support mechanism, more so than college professors or staff. All eight participants in the current study said that family should be involved in their family member's education in some way. Matos (2015) found that the family members' level of education had no bearing on how Hispanic students viewed them as supports because if those members could not help in one way, they were able to help in others. In the current study, the eight participants mentioned a variety of ways in which family could be involved but that there were hurdles to them being as involved as they could be, such as language barriers.

Assisting Spanish-Speaking Students

The third theme related to RQ1 was assisting Spanish-speaking students. Mahaffy and Pantoja (2012) found that reading, writing, and speaking English had been a significant challenge for the participants they interviewed, especially in higher education where more advanced vocabulary is used. Reia mentioned that in the junior high school where she worked, students had trouble with English and math, and that if they could not handle it at that level, she thought that they probably would not be able to handle it at higher levels, including college. Mahaffy and Pantoja also found that many students saw a lack of bilingual services as making learning harder. Estela expressed this concern in

the form of not enough signs being posted in Spanish and went on to stress the importance of having staff and professors who could speak basic Spanish as well.

Pérez (2014) found that speaking Spanish could be a strength because it enabled those people to understand Latin-based terminology easier since Spanish is a Latin-based language. Philippa said that speaking Spanish helped her when working with Latin-based terminology in her nursing degree program and in relating to other Hispanics. Reia also said that being able to speak Spanish gave her the ability to help those who struggled with aspects of college due to language barriers.

Tutoring

The first theme related to RQ2, tutoring, is cited as a valuable resource in multiple studies (Kolenovic et al., 2016; Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2014; Thistoll & Yates, 2016). Seven out of the 8 participants in the current study said that tutoring would be useful, although not all of them utilized it. Those who did not use it explained that it was as a result of a lack of knowledge that it was offered or that those who facilitated the tutoring were not perceived as effective.

Student Orientation and Hospitality

The second theme related to RQ2 was student orientation and hospitality. In a literature review, What Works Clearinghouse (2016) reported that the University of South Carolina (2014) found that FYE programs were used by hundreds of institutions and that they all focused on high impact practices that were put in place to help students connect with the institution, help them find and utilize campus resources and services, and develop academic skills. Participation in these programs was found to have a

possible positive correlation with credit accumulation, degree attainment, and general academic achievement, with 2 of the 4 studies indicating a statistically significant positive effect in all three measures (What Works Clearinghouse, 2016). All of the participants in the current study, however, said that they had not received a tour but would have liked one and would have found it helpful. Some participants mentioned not understanding processes at the college and that they had gotten lost trying to find classes due to a lack of information. Participants also mentioned a lack of friendliness from staff, such as being rushed out of an advising session or being made to feel like a nuisance.

Flexibility in Scheduling Classes and Due Dates

The third theme related to RQ2 was flexibility in scheduling classes and due dates. Students in many studies indicated the need for flexibility and often the lack of it (Heagney & Benson, 2017; Howley et al., 2013; Hunter-Johnson, 2017). This need for flexibility encompassed course schedules, tuition payments, and assignment due dates. All eight participants in the current study said that flexibility was necessary for them to be able complete their respective degree programs. Alberto said that the change from 16-week to 8-week classes made it hard to register for courses due to schedule conflicts. Estela also said that the change to 8-week classes presented a scheduling challenge to students. All the participants said that most of their professors were flexible when it came to assignment due dates.

Provide Childcare

The fourth theme related to RQ2 was provide childcare. Markle (2015) interviewed many women students who said the majority of professors made it clear that they would need to put their kids and family life on the back burner to succeed in college. Keyes (2017) found that about 50% of academic libraries had no clear policy about children being on the premises, with some being openly hostile to those children being present at all. Such restrictions create a need for childcare, however the host institution of my study no longer has a childcare program. All of the participants said that childcare was needed or, as Philippa had to do, they would have to put their education on hold.

Limitations of the Study

This study was conducted in the southcentral United States, and although the results could be generalizable to all community colleges that are seeking to become an HSI, there may be local issues that are specific only to the host institution. My bias must also be considered, especially since I am a White male and have never been immersed in a Hispanic community outside of the college I teach at. No participants had any issues with the way the interviews were conducted or the transcripts they reviewed. Another issue was that four of my participants were in nursing programs and, 7 of the 8 participants were female; both of those issues could lead to skewed data, although the results still align with past studies. Researchers will need to consider how virtual interviews are different than in-person interviews and find ways to minimize any negative aspects to it.

Recommendations

Future research can look at other regions of the United States and the world that have not had data taken from them and analyzed in the lenses of the two models used in this study. This could be important since the United States is not homogenic in how colleges of any type are administrated, and how those who identify as Hispanic adult learners are supported. For example, one could question how states in the southeast United States support Hispanic adult learners differently than those in the northeast United States (Tovar, 2016). Also, future studies could tighten their scope to only include certain degree programs to look for any differences in the data. For example, what the difference is between supporting Hispanic adult learners in a history degree program versus in a computer science program.

Implications

There are many implications of this study across a wide range of subjects. I cover the implications for positive social change, methodology, conceptual aspects, and empirical aspects in this section. Then I make recommendations for future practice.

Positive Social Change

As was mentioned several times in this work, the Hispanic population is continuing to grow in the United States, as is the number of adult learners participating in higher education. This suggests that these two demographic groups' impact on society as a whole will continue to grow as well. Although this study's results may benefit those two demographic groups, the results, by extension, may benefit all of society since Hispanics and adult learners are woven through many segments of society. Studies have

shown that improvement of education has positive implications for individuals, communities, and society as a whole (Elliott & Parks, 2018; Ladd, 2012; Lochner, 2011). By helping institutions to serve their students better, those students have a greater chance of being successful, which then is transferable to others in their sphere of influence.

Recommendations for Practice

Community colleges that continue to operate in a traditional sense should continue examining their practices and policies to see how they impact other cultures. Assuming that all cultures will benefit from what has been a White culturally centric methodology will continue to impact those cultures negatively (Sandoval-Lucero et al., 2014; Yosso, 2005). This is not to say that all traditional methods are bad, but as this study demonstrated, different cultures can have unique expectations. Hispanic adult learners need to have information communicated plainly to them, especially those with a language barrier. They may need to have resources that are available to them presented in different ways so that they will utilize them. This includes campus tours, student orientations, and ways to announce the availability of resources effectively. Staff and professors may want to consider trying to learn some basic Spanish so that the gap between fluent Spanish speakers and fluent English speakers can be filled. Professors who do not budge with regard to due dates and requirements need to consider what effect those policies are having on those who face a multitude of barriers. If a student is trying their best to succeed and a professor or staff member is unwilling to meet them where they are at, then that student may drop out of school and not come back. Administrators

need to do their best to retain talented staff and professors and ensure that they are trained adequately in cultural sensitivity, pedagogy, and andragogy.

Conclusion

This study set out to understand the perceptions of Hispanic adult learners with regard to supports offered by community colleges. This is especially important for those institutions that hope to become HSIs. Hispanic adult learners have indicated that communication and understanding cultural differences is key to institutions helping them to succeed. They have also indicated that their culture gives them many advantages that need to be considered by institutional staff and professors. Helping these students to succeed will help their communities and society overall, which will be critical as this demographic group increases in size.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Welcome participant.

Advise participant of their rights.

Remind participant of how the interview will proceed and the technology involved.

RQ1: What expectations of supports do Hispanic adult learners have of community colleges perceived from a community and cultural perspective?

RQ2: What supports do Hispanic adult learners who have been in a community college for one semester perceive would help them persist to graduation?

1. What stands out academically for you about how your first semester?

Possible probes:

1a. Why?

1b. Did anything else stand out?

2. Did you feel at any time during that first semester that you needed any support? If so, what kind? Some examples could be, but are not limited to, financial aid, student services, tutoring, or veteran services.

Possible probes:

2a. Anything else such as some of the supports I mentioned earlier or others that the college offers?

3. Did you actively look for or use campus supports? Can you tell me about that?

4. What supports did you use that the college offers such as any you or I mentioned earlier?

4a. What was the process of being able to use those supports?

4b. What were your expectations of those supports, especially considering this school is looking to become a Hispanic serving institution to better serve students like yourself?

4c. Can you tell me if there were any other ways those programs were useful for you?

5. Are any of these supports (hand them a list of possible supports included below) relevant to your needs, but you didn't use? What are some examples?

6. Are there any supports you think would have helped you more during your first semester? If yes, can you tell me what those might be?

Possible probes:

6a. What services would you have liked to have that were not available at the college?

7. How effective do you feel the supports you have received at college have been?

Possible probes:

7a. How do you feel they have helped improve your GPA?

7b. What about your ability to learn course material?

7c. Have they helped you in working with administration, staff, professors, or your peers?

7d. What suggestions do you have for improvement?

8. What do you think about the grading structure you've seen used while in community college? What suggestions do you have for improvement?

9. Do you feel your culture gives you an advantage or disadvantage with regard to either finding or utilizing supports?

10. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

***List of Possible Supports to be shared with participants during interview**

- tutoring
- new student orientation
- disability services (including physical and learning)
- financial aid
- financial assistance (including food pantry, housing, bills, and transportation)
- childcare
- counseling (including for abuse and mental health)
- visa/immigration assistance
- clubs/groups (interest, cultural, etc.)
- international support services
- library
- virtual learning center
- writing lab/math lab