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The Academic and Nonacademic Perceived Barriers and Resources of Latinx First Generation Students at a Community College

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Since the 1970s, the college enrollment of Latinx first generation students (FGS) has increased nationally and within the research site. In this vein, the purpose of this qualitative study was to gain an understanding regarding the actual academic and nonacademic experiences that prevent Latinx FGS from graduating community college. This qualitative study was framed by Ladson-Billings and Tate's theory of critical race in education to explore what Latinx FGS identify as barriers in graduating from a community college while providing feedback on how college leadership can support them in graduating. By using a phenomenological tradition, participants used storytelling to define the actual experiences hindering them from graduating college so college leadership could gain awareness. I interviewed 10 individuals who self-identified as a Latinx FGS being of Puerto Rican, Dominican, or Mexican descent and were sophomores attending a community college. The interviews revealed that Latinx FGS may lack social and cultural knowledge capital before entering college, but with specific relevant information, communications in real-time opportunities, more accessibility to online services to mirror in-person on-campus activities, a culturally dedicated safe space, and guidance from culturally competent, sensitive, and responsive professionals to combat the fear of the unknown, they can persist academically and graduate. The positive social change implications of this study include Latinx FGS being able to earn college degrees at the same rate as their ethnic or non-FGS counterparts through access to customized resources, a race-conscious college culture, and holistic support provided by college leadership so they can graduate college.

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Acknowledgments

El proverbio Africano expresa, la necesidad de una aldea para criar a un niño. Permítanme servirle como un testimonio de que este refrán sostiene el poder y la verdad. ¡Estoy muy orgullosa de ser producto de este refrán, producto de la aldea! Quiero agradecer a mis ancestros; mis abuelas fallecidas, padres, tía materna, tía paterna, madrina, mi comadre (comai), mi marido, mi hijo de 10 años, la Dr. Zummo, la Sra. Mason y mis directoras del programa en la universidad. Mi familia me ha inculcado los valores de la importancia del trabajo duro, el sacrificio y de ser una defensora de las voces que no son escuchadas y silenciadas. De el mismo modo, la Dr. Zummo y la Sra. Mason han creído y continúan creyendo en mi capacidad para seguir siendo una líder y seguir adelante a pesar de las adversidades encontradas. Finalmente, me gustaría darles las gracias a mis antiguos directores: el Dr. Tom Cavanagh, el Dr. Roger González y la Dra. Jennifer Mathes, junto con mi nuevo director, el Dr. Nicolae Nistor por ayudarme e guiarme a través de este proceso de obtener mi doctorado. Ellos, al igual que mis partidarios, usan la paciencia y me apoyan cuando pierdo de vista mi objetivo general, que es ayudar a más estudiantes Latinxs de primera generación a actualizar su sueño Americano que consiste en la vida, la libertad y la búsqueda de la felicidad.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

During the 1970s, there were only 4% of Latinx students represented in the total enrollments in college versus about 20% of Latinx being enrolled in college post-2010s (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2018a). Nearly 50% of these Latinx students were identified as first generation students (FGS; NCES, 2018a; NCES, 2017; New York City, n.d.; Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2016). Despite the enrollment of Latinx FGS increasing nationally and at the community colleges of an urban public university in the Northeast region, this population has not graduated college within 2 years as their racial and non-first generation (non-FGS) counterparts ([redacted], 2017; [redacted] Office of Institutional Research [[redacted] OIR], 2016; [redacted] OIR, 2017; [redacted] OIR , 2018; [redacted] Professional Staff Congress [[redacted] PSC], 2016; NCES, 2016; NCES, 2018a). This urban public university did not provide a breakdown of the regions or countries that made up the Latinx students it served, but Puerto Ricans are reported to be one of the largest Latinx groups in New York State and New York City other than Dominicans and Mexicans (Center for Puerto Rican Studies, 2016; The Department of City Planning, 2017; The Hispanic Federation, 2017). Similarly, Puerto Ricans have not graduated at the same rate as their counterparts compared to the larger group of Latinx FGS (Reyes, 2017; Reyes & Rosofsky, 2013). Researchers such as DeAngelo et al. (2011) and Reyes (2017) claimed Latinx FGS are not graduating at the same rate as their counterparts due to having unique academic and nonacademic experiences. However, research has been limited. Therefore, with this study I aimed to bridge the gap in practice of how college leadership understood and met the

needs of Latinx FGS through increased awareness of their actual academic and nonacademic experiences as a means to help this group graduate from a community college while dismantling its cultural identity that disenfranchises non-Whites. Lastly, some major sections of this chapter include the Background, Problem Statement, Purpose of the Study, Research Questions, Conceptual Framework, Definitions, and Significance.

Background

Prior to the 1970s, the number of Latinx students enrolled in 2-year and 4-year institutions was very low compared to their counterparts. In 1976, there were only 4% of Latinx students represented in the total enrollments in college versus 84% of White students, according to the NCES (2018a). Presently, the number of Latinx college students has increased 4 times more than Whites, and make-up about 50% of all students nationally who identify as first generation (NCES, 2018a; NCES, 2017; New York City, n.d.; Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2016). However, less than 20% of this population has graduated college within 4 years, during the last 20 years (DeAngelo et al., 2011; Maietta, 2016; Velez, 2014; Zinshteyn, 2016). At the community colleges of an urban public university in the Northeast region, this phenomenon has also been present despite the public university not categorizing FGS according to race or ethnicity. Specifically, less than 10% of students who were enrolled in associate programs and less than 30% enrolled in baccalaureate programs graduated on time over a 10-year span ([redacted], 2018a; 2018b). Overall, [redacted] serves 75% of minorities but has more Whites graduating at a higher rate than Latinx students ([redacted], 2017; [redacted] OIR, 2017; [redacted] PSC, 2016).

FGS such as Latinx college students have been graduating at a lower rate regardless of whether a postsecondary institution is public or private (NCES, 2017). Latinx FGS such as Puerto Ricans are similarly graduating at a lower rate in the United States, New York State, and New York City (Center for Puerto Rican Studies, 2016; Reyes, 2017; Reyes & Rosofsky, 2013). Moreover, Latinx FGS have been experiencing slower rates of graduation and an inequity of education because their experiential knowledge has been marginalized from the pedagogy, curriculum, and institution's culture caused by the White ahistorical narrative told in America (Decuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Researchers such as DeAngelo et al. (2011) and Reyes (2017) stated that Latinx FGS face unique academic and nonacademic experiences compared to their counterparts. Examples of their unique academic experiences may have included being the first in their immediate family to attend college, being academically underprepared, and having limited knowledge of a college-going culture (Balemian & Feng, 2013; Falcon, 2015; Stebleton & Soria, 2017; Stephens et al., 2015). Additionally, examples of their nonacademic experiences may have included lacking familial or social support, low income, immigration, gender roles, language barrier, poor self-efficacy and mental health, acculturative stress, and failure to adapt to college (Bryan et al., 2015; Desai, 2012; Falcon, 2015; Grigorenko, 2013; Knapp et al., 2009; Patterson, 2017; Perez, 2012; Phillips, 2016; Santiago et al., 2014; Stephens, & Townsend, 2016; Tate et al., 2015).

Moreover, FGS such as Latinx have faced unique experiences such as struggling to find a balance with the institution's cultural identity, traditional culture, and individual

identity (Perez, 2012; Patterson, 2017; Phillippe, 2016; Phillips et al., 2016). Postsecondary institutions have created dominant and oppressed identities (Evans et al., 2016). An institution having a dominant cultural identity means the institution has dismissed the possibility of Latinx FGS sharing their own experiences. As a result, this population has internalized an oppressed identity and faces a cultural mismatch, marginalization, and poor self-efficacy that weaken their academic performance (Evans et al., 2016).

Even though research has been limited, a majority of the research advocates for institutions to have an inclusive design and colorblind policies (Phillips et al., 2016; Stephens et al., 2015). An inclusive design helps Latinx FGS to develop an increased sense of belonging and self-efficacy, which is linked to decreased marginalization, less depression, and, increased involvement on campus (Arbona, 2016; Choi, 2005; Hirudayarag, 2011; Parkinson, 2015; Vuong et al., 2010). Consequently, institutions should be able to retain and increase the rates of persistence and graduation for Latinx FGS (Phillips et al., 2016; Stephens et al., 2015). However, researchers such as Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) advocated against inclusion and color-blind policies because FGS are forced to assimilate through the façade of reduced prejudice that preserves the self-interest of the institutions.

Problem Statement

The problem examined in this study was Latinx FGS were not graduating college at the same rate as their racial and non-FGS counterparts due to having unique academic and nonacademic experiences, while colleges maintained curriculums that catered to the

cultural capital of Whites (Higgins, 2010; University of South Carolina, 2017). Because colleges had curriculums that catered to the cultural capital of Whites, the cultural capital of Latinx FGS was disregarded as they enrolled in college (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). These disadvantages have hindered their ability to understand how to navigate the bureaucratic policies of higher education, thus resulting in them not being able to achieve the same academic success, upward social mobility, gainful employment, and higher quality of life experienced by their counterparts (Iniguez, 2018).

Since the 1970s, the total enrollment of Latinxs in college has increased from 4% to 17% for Latinxs, while Whites decreased by 26% according to the NCES (2017; 2018a). However, from 1995-2015, less than a quarter of Latinx FGS have earned their degrees (DeAngelo et al., 2011; Maietta, 2016; Velez, 2014; Zinshteyn, 2016). Similarly, the enrollment of Latinxs in an urban public university in the Northeast region has increased from 4% to 30% for Latinxs as Whites decreased by 53% (New York City, n.d.). This urban public university has not provided a racial breakdown of which racial group was FGS as reflected in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (2018), but [redacted] OIR (2016, 2017, 2018) and [redacted] PSC (2016) reported an average of 32.7% of Whites who earned certificates or college degrees versus 24.7% of Latinx students. Overall, the graduation rate for Latinx FGS who have earned college degrees in 6 or fewer years at public, nonprofit, and for-profit institutions was lower compared to Whites (NCES, 2017). For example, Latinx FGS such as Puerto Ricans in the United States were earning bachelor's degrees at a rate of about 15% less than Whites (Reyes, 2017). According to Pelco et al. (2014), Latinx FGS were more academically and

psychologically underprepared for college. Examples may have included this population: scoring lower on the SAT, being less likely to take Algebra in high school, and having lower self-efficacy compared to non-FGS (Balemian & Feng, 2013; NCES, 2018b; Pelco et al., 2014). This study was an examination of the relationship between the actual academic and nonacademic experiences of Latinx FGS with how college leadership catered to their needs in hopes of helping this group to graduate college at the same rate as their counterparts.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain an understanding regarding the actual academic and nonacademic experiences that prevent Latinx FGS from graduating community college. By using a phenomenological approach, I interviewed Latinx FGS so they could use storytelling as a tool to define the actual lived experiences hindering them from graduating college (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). I used results from this study to develop an action plan for college leadership to understand and meet the specific needs of this population. I conducted this study at an urban community college located in the Northeastern part of the United States. Information regarding the specific race or ethnicity of first generation college students attending this urban community college does not exist because its Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Analytics (2017b) categorized its students mainly according to the following races: American Indian, Asian, Black, Hispanic, Native Hawaiian, or White to describe students per campus (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, 2018). Specific ethnic groups within these general

categories were not specified (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, 2018; Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Analytics, 2017b).

Because this community college, just as the public university it is a part of, did not specify ethnic groups or identify the specific number FGS there were per racial category, it was imperative to distinguish key findings to put this study into context. This public university reports the overall number of FGS as being over 40%, as reported by the [redacted] OIR (2016). However, even though the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (2018) and [redacted] ([redacted], 2018) reported the same number of Latinx and Whites who earned an associates degree at a percentage of 20.3%, it is important to distinguish that these statistics reflect the numbers of first-time freshmen, not FGS. First-time freshmen are defined as freshmen who never attended college but includes those who enroll during the Fall term, prior Summer term, and students who earned college credits during high school (University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, n.d.). The definition of first-time freshmen is important because FGS, on the other hand, were the first within their immediate family to attend college (Balemian & Feng, 2013), and this difference is key in putting this study into context. Therefore, in this study I referred to the number of how many Latinx FGS, their racial counterparts, and non-FGS enrolled and were recipients of a college degree as reported by the aforementioned reports given, including the NCES and [redacted] OIR.

Specifically, the community college was located in an urban area with a high Latinx population. The college had a student body comprising of over 27,000 students; 57.9% were female and 42.1% were male ([redacted] , 2017; Office of Institutional

Effectiveness & Analytics, 2017a). Of this population, 41% were Latinx, but specific regions or countries were unknown as the specific Latinx population of the urban area where this community college resided was not reported (Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Analytics, 2017b). However, Puerto Ricans were reported to be one of the largest Latinx groups other than Dominicans and Mexicans, with 30% composing the total Latinx population of New York State and New York City (Center for Puerto Rican Studies, 2016; Department of City Planning, 2017; Hispanic Federation, 2017). According to the Research Alliance for New York Schools (2017), Puerto Ricans have had the greatest presence in the Bronx, East Harlem, Lower East Side, and Central Brooklyn. Despite being one of the largest Latinx groups, Puerto Ricans have been earning fewer college degrees compared to their racial counterparts (Reyes, 2017).

There has been limited research regarding the topic as it pertains to Latinx FGS graduating with an associate's degree. Despite more FGS such as Latinx FGS entering college since the 1970s, this population has not been graduating at the same rate as their racial counterparts due to having unique experiences such as different academic preparation and social support. Therefore, by interviewing Latinx FGS, I was able to gain an understanding of the academic and nonacademic experiences that prevent some Latinx FGS from graduating community college.

Research Question(s)

This study was designed to answer the overarching question regarding the experiences of Latinx FGS trying to graduate from a community college. More specifically, the examined research questions were:

RQ1: What do Latinx FGS perceive as barriers to graduating from a community college?

RQ2: What are the perceptions of FGS regarding resources that can be provided at community colleges to support their ability to graduate?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study was Ladson-Billings and Tate's (1995) theory of critical race in education. These authors recognized that education is the key for Latinx FGS to gain upward social mobility and equality amongst their counterparts. However, because Latinx FGS such as Puerto Ricans have been earning college degrees at slower rates compared with White, non-FGS, they may be experiencing an inequity of rights. The constructs of Ladson-Billings and Tate's theory served as a foundation of this study. Any recommendation made to increase the number of Latinx FGS graduating from college within 2 years stems from their academic and nonacademic experiences. These experiences may have included a lack of knowledge concerning higher education, language, social and cultural adaptation, familial support, finances, and positive mental well-being (Jenkins et al., 2011; Stebleton et al., 2014). Moreover, the findings of this study were anticipated to bridge the gap in practice concerning the experiences that prevent Latinx FGS from graduating college within 2 years by using Ladson-Billings and Tate's theory of critical race in education.

Ladson-Billings and Tate's theory (1995) is significant because it centers on America's education system being racist and having byproducts of social-economic barriers that prevent Latinx FGS from achieving upward social mobility. According to

Totten (2014), America's education system has promoted a heritage of injustice caused by inadequate cultural congruence. Moreover, Totten (2014) wrote that Latinx FGS might experience increased academic achievement if they can share their own cultural experiences versus adopting the dominant cultural identity of an institution. By institutions encouraging students to share their cultural experiences, students may share a common pedagogical factor in learning and begin to feel connected to the institution (Totten, 2014; Whannell & Whannell, 2015). Therefore, this study has helped college leadership gain an increased awareness of the unique needs of Latinx FGS and helps dismantle America's systemic racism that disenfranchises non-Whites.

Nature of the Study

Latinx FGS such as Puerto Ricans have not been earning college degrees at the same rate as their counterparts. In this study I aimed to use phenomenology and inductive approaches (Creswell, 2007) to gain Latinx FGS insight as it relates to the actual academic and nonacademic experiences that affect this population graduating college. According to Saunders et al. (2017), using phenomenology and inductive approaches allows a researcher to gain full and enriched personal accounts through the storytelling of the participants. As a result, these stories afford the study an opportunity to highlight individual accounts as well as seeing if any consensus exists across the views shared between all the participants (Saunders et al., 2017). This process creates a deeper saturation of the data (Saunders et al., 2017).

Institutions of higher learning have inadvertently created dominant and oppressive identities (Evans, 2016). As a result, Latinx FGS are marginalized, and their academic

success is minimized as their experiential knowledge and cultural identities are disregarded by the institutions (Evans, 2016).

By using Ladson-Billings and Tate's (1995) theory of critical race in education as a critical lens, this study explored how America's education system hinders Latinx FGS from graduating college, but also how this population can use storytelling to challenge the status quo. Therefore, throughout this study, this population was able to use storytelling as a tool to counter the stereotypes perpetuated by structures within a racially stratified society (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). In addition, I was able to make recommendations for how college leadership can understand and meet their academic and/or nonacademic experiences while acknowledging their own cultural identities.

Definitions

The following definitions were integral to understanding this study:

Academic barriers: Academically related challenges that impede academic success (Lotkowski et al., 2004).

Completion rate: The percentage of students who graduate from college with a degree (Lehr et al., 2004).

Dropout rate: The percentage of students who leave school without earning a degree (Lehr et al., 2004).

First-generation student: Students who were the first in their immediate family to attend college (Balemian & Feng, 2013).

Nonacademic barriers: Nonacademically related challenges that impede academic success (Lotkowski et al., 2004).

Non-first generation student: Students who have parents with college degrees (Pelco et al., 2014).

Persistence rate: The percentage of students who return to any postsecondary institution after their second year in college (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2015).

Retention rate: The percentage of students who return to the same postsecondary institution after their second year in college (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2015).

Assumptions

Through participation in this study, participants were able to share a direct depiction of their lived experiences as a Latinx FGS. Through storytelling, the first assumption was would they have a sense of empowerment in knowing their participation would help this study create an action plan of how they can improve their academic success and college experience based on their actual needs and wants. By this study gathering the testimonies of actual Latinx FGS, the second assumption was would these participants add scholarly content to a subject where there is limited research concerning their actual needs to help more of them graduate college. The last assumption was that the participants would be forthcoming and honest in sharing the academic and nonacademic experiences they face while trying to graduate college within 2 years.

These assumptions were critical to the study because without honesty from participants, college leadership would not be able to include a true depiction of the experiential knowledge and identity of Latinx FGS in its curriculum. As a result, Latinx

FGS would remain marginalized, and the stereotypes that are perpetuated in colleges would remain. Therefore, by this study using the critical race theory in education as a lens, Latinx FGS were able to use storytelling to counter the perceptions made by college leadership when it creates programming with byproducts of dominant and oppressed social identities.

Scope and Delimitations

The study framework captured the academic and nonacademic experiences of Latinx FGS in their own voices, instead of the perceptions made by leadership in community colleges with a dominant cultural identity. In addition, this study framework was important in helping to discover the actual experiences that are hindering Latinx FGS from earning an associate's degree within 2 years as compared to their racial counterparts and non-FGS. Specifically, this study enlisted participants who were sophomores within a community college, self-identified as a first generation student, and identified as Latinx.

For the study to have potential transferability, I first provide readers with a description that is comprehensive and shaped by the participants' storytelling versus my biases (see Creswell & Miller, 2000). According to Creswell and Miller (2000), potential transferability allows the readers to use the strategy of thick description to help them decide the results of the research question. This strategy affords the study dependability. Therefore, I carried out open-ended interviews, used an independent coder, and invited interviewees to participate in the transcript review. This process helped to establish respondent validity while using audit trails to produce transparency (see Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Patton, 2015).

Limitations

Because FGS were not exclusive to race, income, a lack of familial or social support, poor mental health, lack of academic preparation, or low self-efficacy, the generalizability of the findings may have not been applicable to all first generation college students. Participants for this study were selected based on three criteria. Students had to be sophomores attending the community college where the study took place, self-identify as a first generation student, and identify as Latinx. The goal of this study was to have 10 to 15 students who identified as a Latinx FGS. Specifically, I wanted to have 4-5 of Puerto Rican descent, 4-5 of Dominican descent, and 4-5 of Mexican descent because these three groups represent the largest Latinx groups living within New York State and New York City.

However, because I did not recruit the desired participants, I modified the number of participants per ethnicity and gender based on whom I was able to recruit, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study specifically focused on Latinx FGS. Because I personally identify as an Afro-Latinx FGS, I tried to limit bias within this study by inviting participants to review their own interview transcripts to ensure I did not misquote them.

By using storytelling, this study documented actual academic and nonacademic experiences that are needed for college leadership to gain an increased understanding. Furthermore, with increased awareness of their needs, college leadership may be able to rewrite the curriculum while keeping the unique experiences and cultural identity of Latinx FGS in mind. Moreover, I reviewed notes, transcripts, and audio for any

discrepancies (see Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000). Also, I used a field test of my interview questions with my independent coder to do a practice interview. These methods helped me check for any deficiencies so the study could be free of mistakes or biases that may jeopardize its dependability.

Significance

This study helped to bridge the gap in practice because it helps leadership in community colleges gain an understanding of the academic and nonacademic experiences that prevent Latinx FGS from graduating college within 2 years. It was important to identify FGS students because, as Hirudayaraj (2011) stated, it allows college leadership to study and understand the unique needs this population faces entering and exiting college. As FGS get enrolled in college, they experience a cultural mismatch (Phillips et al., 2016). This mismatch occurs when colleges force them to adopt the institution's cultural identity (Phillips et al., 2016). Moreover, studies reported college success might be hindered because of medical and mental health concerns related to acculturation and the struggle for FGS to balance their identity with the cultural identity of higher education (Phillippe, 2016).

The significance of this study is that it provided research regarding the actual experiences of Latinx FGS so leaders at college level institutions can have a better understanding of the unique needs of these students,to help them earn a college degree within 2 years.

Summary

Since the 1970s, the enrollment of Latinx students in college has increased, both nationally and within [redacted] (NCES, 2018a; NCES, 2017). However, less than a quarter of Latinx FGS such as Puerto Ricans have graduated college within 4 years compared to their counterparts (DeAngelo et al., 2011; Maietta, 2016; Reyes, 2017; Velez, 2014; Zinshteyn, 2016). Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative study was to increase the understanding of leadership in community colleges of the actual academic and nonacademic experiences that prevent Latinx FGS from graduating college within 2 years. It is important for leadership in community colleges and universities to gain an understanding of the actual experiences of Latinx FGS so they can help meet the actual needs of this population, instead of institutions maintaining dominant and oppressive identities, something that has caused this population to experience a cultural mismatch, marginalization, and low self-efficacy that compromises their chance at academic success (Evans et al., 2016).

Chapter 2 explores the past and present literature concerning the academic and nonacademic experiences that serve as a challenge for Latinx FGS such as Puerto Ricans to graduate college in 4 years and achieve upward social mobility. According to research, institutions have had a cultural identity that has a one-size-fits all standard that does not appreciate the social and cultural identities or family expectations or emphases with which Latinx FGS come into college (Mayes et al., 2016; O'Shea, 2015; Parkinson, 2015). Instead, an institution's cultural identity has operated around Whiteness as naturalized and power defined as the opportunity to learn the capital needed to navigate

higher education (Decuir & Dixson, 2004; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Phillips et al., 1995; Yosso, 2001).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Latinx first generation students (FGS) were not graduating college at the same rate as their racial and non-first generation students (non-FGS) counterparts due to having unique academic and nonacademic experiences. Colleges have maintained curriculums that cater to the cultural capital of Whites while negating the experiential knowledge of marginalized groups (Higgins, 2010; University of South Carolina, 2017). The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain an understanding regarding the actual academic and nonacademic experiences preventing Latinx FGS from graduating community college. Therefore, this study helps leadership gain an increased awareness of the unique needs of Latinx FGS and helps dismantle America's systemic racism that disenfranchises non-Whites. Current literature reviewed includes the critical race theory, dominant versus oppressed identities, inclusivity, a Nepantla complex, and the neologism of Latinx. Lastly, major sections of this chapter include disparities in higher education including gender, cultural identity, institutional identity, the power of words, the concept of self, and multiple identities, amongst others.

Literature Search Strategy

I conducted the literature review for this study in two parts. I looked at the 4-year college graduation rates for Latinx FGS versus non-FGS, followed by the academic and nonacademic factors that affect their graduation rate. The electronic database that I used for the first part of the search was primarily Proquest using the following keywords: *4-year college graduation rates for Latinx first generation students versus non-first generation students* and *bachelor degrees for minority FGS versus continuing generation*

students. The keywords for the last part of this search were *academic and nonacademic experiences of first generation students* and *challenges for racial minority FGS versus White non-first generation students.* Over 30 articles were found applicable, along with articles found in books, online reports, dissertations, and peer-reviewed journals. Latinx FGS are not graduating college within 4 years at the same rate as non-FGS (Augustine, 2015; Balemian & Feng, 2013; Choi, 2005; DeAngelo et al., 2011; Pelco et al., 2014). This population has unique needs as they may face unique academic and nonacademic factors (Arbona, 2016; Augustine, 2015; Balemian & Feng, 2013; Evans et al., 2016; Falcon, 2015; Pelco et al., 2014; Parkinson, 2015; Perna, 2015, 2016; Phillips et al., 2016; Stebleton et al., 2014; Stebleton & Soria, 2017; Stephens et al., 2015; Tate et al., 2015; Tinto, 1975, 1993, 2016, 2017; Vuong et al., 2015).

Some research advocated for higher education to adopt an inclusive design for Latinx FGS to produce increased retention, persistence, and higher graduation rates (Chickering & Ressier, 1993; Phillips et al., 2016; Stephens et al., 2015). These findings encourage counselors, faculty, staff, and administration to be accessible so Latinx FGS may gain a sense of belonging and strong self-efficacy (Choi, 2005; Hirudayarag, 2011; Parkinson, 2015). Strong self-efficacy has been linked to FGS having decreased feelings of marginalization, less depression, and increased involvement in high impact educational practices (Arbona, 2016; Choi, 2005; Vuong et al., 2010).

However, other research has advocated against colleges adopting inclusion originating from Ladson-Billings and Tate's (1995) theory of critical race in the education model. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) attributed the reason why the

achievement gap between minorities and non-minorities exists to racism. The theory describes the dominant groups in education and society as ahistorical (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Tierney, 2000). Inclusion or color-blind policies are detrimental to Latinx FGS transitioning into college because they do not challenge the status quo nor eliminate prejudice as higher education is encourages minorities to assimilate despite them having their own academic, social, and cultural capital (Decuir & Dixson, 2004; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Because the literature on the academic and nonacademic experiences about Latinx FGS trying to earn a bachelor's degree within 4 years is scarce, I aimed to examine the actual academic and nonacademic experiences they face while trying to graduate community college with the intention of transferring into a 4-year college.

In this chapter, I review literature about the demographics of FGS and the academic and nonacademic barriers in the postsecondary institutions of the United States. The chapter also covers literature as it relates to the differences that exist between FGS and non-FGS and what colleges could do to lessen the achievement gap that exists between the groups. I also acknowledge closely related research and its importance in this chapter. The chapter concludes with an indication of the gap in practice as it relates to current and seminal literature, a summary of limitations of current research, and an introduction to what is covered in Chapter 3.

Conceptual Framework/Theoretical Foundation

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) were the pioneers of the critical race theory within education. This theory provided a framework to assess the inequity of education

caused by the White ahistorical narrative told in America (Decuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). According to Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), minorities such as Latinx FGS were not achieving academic success due to postsecondary institutions having curriculums that catered to the cultural capital of Whites while disregarding the cultural capital with which Latinx students entered college. As a result, the experiential knowledge of Latinx FGS is marginalized by the pedagogy, curriculum, and institution's culture because its inclusion would challenge the status-quo of deficit thinking through counter-storytelling (Tierney, 2000; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). As previously mentioned, the critical race theory in education is integral in helping leadership in community colleges and universities gain an understanding of the actual academic and nonacademic experiences faced by Latinx FGS. For leadership to create an education that is truly equal and conducive to academic success, it must allow non-Whites to use their experiential knowledge as tools of authentic storytelling and resources in countering the racial stereotypes embedded within the institution (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ritchie, 2003; Seidman, 2006; Tierney, 2000).

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variable

FGS are generally defined as the first within their immediate families to attend college (Balemian & Feng, 2013). However, FGS could be further defined as having parents without a college education (Tate et al., 2015). FGS may overlap with historically underserved student populations, including immigrants, low-income, and racial minorities (Stebleton et al., 2014). FGS have different characteristics but may share

similar traits. Some traits are being academically underprepared, having to work full-time, attending college part-time, lacking familial or social support, not being active on campus, and having poor interactions with students, faculty, and staff (Augustine, 2015; MacDonald, 2017; Stebleton et al., 2014).

Specific student populations that are not performing adequately in college compared to non-FGS include Latinx FGS such as Puerto Ricans. According to Excelencia in Education (2016), 13% of 2 and 4-year institutions within the United States were categorized as Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) if their institution had 25% or more Latinx enrolled as full-time. But, HSIs serve over 60% of all Latinx enrolled into college (Excelencia in Education, 2015, 2016; Garcia & Natividad, 2018; Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities, 2017). The Postsecondary National Policy Institute (2016) generally identified 48% of Latinx college students as first generation compared to 28% of Whites. However, less than 25% of Latinx FGS were reported to graduate college within 4 years and 11% within 6 years (Augustine, 2015; Pelco et al., 2014). These rates of degree completion are significantly lower as research reported over 40% of non-FGS graduate college within 4 years and 55% within 6 years (Augustine, 2015; Pelco et al., 2014).

Similarly, Puerto Ricans are not performing adequately in college compared to their counterparts. Puerto Ricans in the United States are earning bachelor's degrees at a rate of about 15% less than Whites, despite experiencing a slight improvement in degree attainment (Reyes, 2017). There are two types of Puerto Ricans who reside in New York. Individuals born in Puerto Rico are called stateside Puerto Ricans, while individuals born

in the state are called New York Puerto Ricans (Center for Puerto Rican Studies, 2016). Despite the classification, Puerto Ricans are generally U.S. citizens by birth (Lopez & Patten, 2015). However, according to the U.S. Census Bureau of 2013, 135,000 individuals of Puerto Rican descent indicated they were not citizens at birth due to being born outside of the United States, Puerto Rico, or having non-U.S. citizens as parents (Lopez & Patten, 2015).

New York State has the most Puerto Ricans in the nation, with a population exceeding one million (Center for Puerto Rican Studies, 2016). However, New York Puerto Ricans have the biggest disparity in degree attainment throughout the nation (Reyes & Rosofsky, 2013). According to the Center of Puerto Rican Studies (2016), 28.5% of New York Puerto Ricans have not earned a high school diploma compared to 22.6% of stateside Puerto Ricans. As a result, New York Puerto Ricans have experienced a higher unemployment rate of 12.2% versus 11.6% of stateside Puerto Ricans, and 8.7% more households have received cash public assistance income compared to 6.9% of stateside Puerto Ricans (Center for Puerto Rican Studies, 2016). Overall, Puerto Ricans living in poverty was 27% higher than the poverty rate in the nation (Lopez & Patten, 2015). But Puerto Rican youth have the least access to services, educational attainment, and household incomes higher than the Federal poverty level (Reyes & Rosofsky, 2013; Reyes, 2017). Puerto Rican youth between the ages of 16–24 have composed 26% of all Latinx youth living in New York, while one-third of their households have been living below the poverty level (Reyes & Rosofsky, 2013; Reyes, 2017).

Disparities in Degree Attainment Including Gender

Disparities in degree attainment at the undergraduate level between Latinxs, Puerto Ricans, and Whites can be seen along the confines of gender. However, disparities has been more significant for Puerto Rican men compared to Puerto Rican women aged 25 years and older. For example, Reyes (2017) reported 61% of White males as completed or enrolled in college or graduate school versus 34% of Puerto Rican men in 2014. The disparity between White and Puerto Rican men has been nearly double, whereas the gap between White women and Puerto Rican women has not been as great. For example, Reyes (2017) reported 66% of White women as completed or enrolled in college or graduate school compared to 45% of Puerto Rican women. Furthermore, research showed that Puerto Rican male youths are the most disadvantaged group in New York City as it concerned school enrollment, educational attainment, and employment (Reyes, 2017). According to the U.S. Census Bureau in 2010 and 2014, nearly 20% of Puerto Rican men aged between 16 and 24 were not enrolled in school, employed, or actively looking for work compared to other Latinxs such as Dominicans and Mexicans (Reyes, 2017; Reyes & Rosofsky, 2013).

Generally, Puerto Ricans have been enrolling in college at a rate that is 10% less than Whites and 16% within New York City (Reyes & Rosofsky, 2013). As a result, Puerto Ricans younger than 25 have been earning bachelors at a rate of 10.7% versus 19.9% of Whites nationally and 8.1% versus 25.2% of Whites within New York City (Reyes & Rosofsky, 2013). Furthermore, Puerto Ricans aged 25 and older have been experiencing the biggest disparity in degree attainment compared to Whites, according to

Reyes (2017). For example, Puerto Ricans aged 25 and older have been earning bachelor degrees at a rate of 11% versus 21% of Whites nationally and 9% versus 31% of Whites within New York City (Reyes, 2017). Overall, female Latinx who are low-income have had lower rates of college persistence compared to their White counterparts but have had higher rates of college enrollment and graduation compared to male Latinx students (Beattie, 2018).

Specifically, the number of female Latinx FGS have been higher in matriculation and graduation rates than Latinx males (Valle, 2017). According to Valle (2017), Latinx females have been more prepared to handle college because they most likely do not need remedials, have high dropout rates, or earn low grades, and they take more college prep interventions compared to their male counterparts. Unlike female Latinx students, male Latinx students are most likely to fall behind academically as they have failed to understand how significant a college education is. Failed recognition of this fact leads to 25% less Latinx males enrolling in college remaining one of the highest underrepresented groups in higher education (Valle, 2017). Moreover, the present conversation concerning why Latinx FGS such as Puerto Ricans are not graduating college within 4 years is attributed to academic and nonacademic factors.

Academic Factors

The academic factors that FGS might face revolve around them having limited exposure to a college-going culture (Falcon, 2015; Stephens et al., 2015). Falcon (2015) stated that FGS lack highly qualified teachers during PreK-12 and have low levels of college preparation. One example included: Latinx FGS scoring an average of 451 in

Critical Reading, 454.33 in Math, and 439.66 in Writing on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), while their White and Asian counterparts earned a score of 527 in Critical Reading, 566 in Math, and 522 in Writing (NCES, 2018b). Similarly, Puerto Ricans within Puerto Rico scored lower than White and Asian counterparts with an average of 452 versus 482 in Critical Reading, 446 versus 498.5 in Math, and 445 versus 471 in Writing on the SATs (CollegeBoard, 2013).

Unlike the Scholastic Aptitude Test, the American College Testing (ACT) college readiness assessment have included Puerto Ricans within the larger Latinx group (Southern Regional Education Board, 2014). According to the Southern Regional Education Board (2014), Latinx students have had more declining ACT test scores compared to White students (Southern Regional Education Board, 2014). Moreover, only 10% of this population has passed all four subjects of Math, Science, Reading, and English on the ACT college readiness assessment (Augustine, 2015). Furthermore, Latinx FGS have been academically underprepared for college, as evidenced by this population needing more developmental courses in Math and English compared to their counterparts (Augustine, 2015).

FGS such as Latinx have been academically underprepared because they are less likely to take Algebra Math, Advanced Placement courses, or college prep while in high school (Balemian & Feng, 2013; Stebleton & Soria, 2017). Algebra has served as a gateway that increases the likelihood of a FGS taking advanced Math in high school and enrolling in a 4-year college (Balemian & Feng, 2013). Correspondingly, Puerto Ricans have been academically underprepared also because of their English proficiency. The

Pew Hispanic Center defined English proficiency as individuals aged five and older within the Latinx population who could read and write proficiently in English (Lopez & Patten, 2015).

Based on a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, 42% of Puerto Rican adults living within the States are English-dominant, and 41% are bilingual versus 15%, and 49% of Puerto Rican adults living on the Caribbean island (Lopez & Patten, 2015). Specifically, Puerto Ricans are reported to have an English proficiency of over 80% versus 91% of the United States (Lopez & Patten, 2015). Consequently, Latinx FGS have been reported to be twice as likely to need Math and English remedial coursework in college compared to non-FGS (non-FGS) (Augustine, 2015). Therefore, FGS have had: ongoing remedials, lower grades during their first year, fewer credits by their junior year, and an increased attrition rate (Augustine, 2015; Pelco et al., 2014, Stebleton et al., 2014, Stebleton & Soria, 2017; Vuong et al., 2010).

FGS have been twice as likely to drop-out after their second year, but low-income FGS have been four times as more likely to drop-out of college after their first year (Augustine, 2015; Pelco et al., 2014; Stebleton et al., 2017; Stebleton & Soria, 2017). FGS have been at risk, even if they have persisted beyond their third year as over 40% of this population has remained without a college degree after six years (Pelco et al., 2014; Stebleton & Soria, 2017). The achievement gap between Latinx FGS and non-FGS has remained constant. The achievement gap between Latinx FGS with Whites and Asians has had a difference of over 14% regardless if the postsecondary institution was: public, private, nonsectarian, or religious (DeAngelo et al., 2011). Institutions struggling to

graduate Latinx FGS have been problematic because colleges serve as a gateway for FGS to gain social mobility and life opportunities (Phillips et al., 2016). But, access has not and is not enough to help Latinx FGS reap the same academic and social benefits that non-FGS experience as they lack the cultural capital needed to navigate higher education successfully (Phillips et al., 2016; Stephens et al., 2015).

According to Hernandez et al. (2017), the majority of Latinx FGS who have enrolled in college begin their postsecondary education at a community college. Community colleges have had an open-door policy for applicants since 1901 (Hernandez et al., 2017). Even though the open-door admissions policy has created more access for working individuals and minorities such as Latinx FGS, it is still not sufficient to help this population graduate with an associates degree (Hernandez et al., 2017). Access has not and is not sufficient for helping Latinx FGS graduate because they may face additional challenges compared to their White and nonresident alien counterparts - who are less likely to enroll in a community college (Hernandez et al., 2017; Phillips et al., 2016; Stephens et al., 2015).

Nonacademic Factors

Latinx FGS might face nonacademic factors involving: delayed college entry, low income, familial support, self-efficacy, immigration, gender roles, language barrier, mental health, and adaptation to college (Bryan et al., 2015; Desai, 2012; Falcon, 2015; Phillippe, 2016; Phillips et al., 2016; Tate et al., 2015). As a result, research shows that Latinx FGS have had a greater risk of delayed college entry, low income, and lack of familial support due to their parents having a high school education or less. Parental

education is the building block that has impacted the intergenerational transmission of education within the family unit (Hirudayarag, 2011). Moreover, parental education could provide access to cultural capital such as knowledge, values, and culture of the dominant social group like higher education (Hirudayarag, 2011).

Research showed that by a parent having an only high school education, a FGS had decreased: levels of academic preparedness, educational aspirations, and support to pursue college (Jenkins et al., 2013). Additionally, each year of education that a parent received only equated to one-tenth of a year that their child attends higher education (Peck, 2017). This may affect or impact their child's ability to perform in higher education or if their child even makes it to a post-secondary institution (Peck, 2017). Furthermore, research also showed even if Puerto Ricans had parents with or without a college education, they still struggled the most to consistently progress toward college attainment compared to other Latinx FGS (Kasinitz et al., 2008). As a consequence, FGS such as Puerto Ricans may have experienced significant delay entering college in either case compared to non-FGS (Balemian & Feng, 2013). Specifically, 82% of non-FGS who directly enrolled in college after high school versus 54% of FGS, whose parents had a high school education and 36% for those with less (Balemian & Feng, 2013). Also, once enrolled in college, Latinx FGS work full-time while pursuing college part-time (Stebleton et al., 2014). In addition to these factors, Latinx FGS such as Puerto Ricans living in the States, have been financially independent of their parents and may earn $25,000 or less per year (Augustine, 2015; Lopez & Velasco, 2011; Stebleton et al., 2014).

FGS have had a greater risk of having poor self-efficacy, mental health, and adaptation to college because of acculturative stress. Acculturative stress derives from FGS experiencing a cultural mismatch between the norms of their own identity at home and the mainstream norms of their campus (Phillippe, 2016; Phillips et al., 2016). However, Latinx FGS may have experienced additional acculturative stressors such as documentation status, cultural demands, and language difficulties while trying to navigate college (Grigorenko, 2013; Santiago et al., 2014). Two out of five Latinx within the United States have been born abroad (Grigorenko, 2013). Some reasons why Latinx families may have migrated includes poverty, lack of educational opportunities, political and religious prosecution (Grigorenko, 2013).

Despite Latinx families migrating to the United States for opportunities, they may have paid a steep price while migrating and adapting to new surroundings. Some losses for Latinx may have included the loss of social roles, customs, employment, and homes (Grigorenko, 2013). But, the biggest loss Latinx families may have faced includes separation from family and friends because Latinx depend heavily on their nuclear and extended families for support (Grigorenko, 2013). Generally, Latinx immigrant youth have experienced separation from one or both of their parents as they usually cross the border first (Grigorenko, 2013). In addition, Latinx without legal status may have experienced more stress as they faced isolation or perceived discrimination due to their inability to speak English, speaking English with an accent, or how they are portrayed in the media (Grigorenko, 2013).

In either case, Latinx FGS may have experienced family-related stressors due to acculturation, regardless if the individual is Spanish-speaking or English-speaking. However, Grigorenko (2013) stated Spanish-speaking youth reported more accounts of stress related to having to care for elderly family members. While English-speaking youth reported more accounts of stress having to take care of younger siblings (Grigorenko, 2013). Another stark difference between Spanish-speaking and English-speaking Latinx FGS is the acculturation conflict that has existed amongst youth and adults.

Socioeconomic Factors

There has been little research on how Latinx, especially immigrant parents, are actively encouraged by the K-12 system to participate in their children's education (Hernandez, 2017). Because of this, Latinx FGS may have developed low academic success resulting in about half of this population graduating from high school, 10% graduating from college, and even fewer finishing a graduate or professional degree (Hernandez, 2017). Ten percent of Latinx FGS have originated from immigrant families, while 25% may live with an undocumented adult (Hernandez, 2017). Correspondingly, those Latinx FGS who have originated from an undocumented household face the physical and emotional stress associated with building a new life in America, the inability to qualify for public programs due to legal status, and fear of deportation causing families to keep a low profile throughout their children's educational journey (Hernandez, 2017).

Additionally, parental involvement with Latinx FGS may be low due to parents who do not speak English, being forced to depend on their child for matters such as

requesting a teacher's conference. This dynamic could cause parents to lose authority and their ability to guide their children's education (Hernandez,2017). Other factors for the lack of parental involvement may include social and cultural factors such as socioeconomic status, parents' education, lack of transportation, childcare, and low-paying or hard employment (Hernandez, 2017). Those Latinx FGS who could enroll in college may have experienced survivor guilt, which, in this case, is guilt for succeeding academically at what they perceived to be at the expense of their family (Wallace, 2018). This population's guilt stemmed from their perceived insecurity of being a burden due to being unable: to support their family financially, as well as contributing financially or having their schooling being another financial obligation (Wallace, 2018). Latinx FGS have lacked the necessary information about college persistence and success because information prior to their enrollment has not been readily accessible to them as their racial and non-FGS counterparts (Wallace, 2018).

The majority of Latinx FGS have enrolled in community colleges, whereas their White and Asian counterparts mostly enroll in 4-year institutes ([redacted], 2017; Iniguez, 2018). Even though the number of Latinx FGS enrolled in college has increased, the number of those who have graduated with a college degree does not correspond. Stemming from American society, educational institutions such as K-12 and higher education have developed internal prejudices as it relates to a curriculum that has created a dominant and oppressive dynamic that does not favor marginalized student groups (Iniguez, 2018). Low-income, FGS, or minorities have not been most likely to be beneficiaries of America's educational system due to demographical segregation, lack of

college preparation, and the lack of qualified teachers during K-12 (Iniguez, 2018). Past research placed the responsibility of FGS dropping out of college on them versus looking at institutions to see if they were equipped to address their needs or wants (Bradley, 2017). Whereas institutions have been failing to consider their shortcomings, higher education has maintained a dominant and oppressive environment that separates FGS from non-FGS and disregards their cultural identity, while expecting them to assimilate (Bradley, 2017).

Cultural Identity

Amongst Spanish-speaking youth, families have wanted Latinx FGS to keep their cultural customs or traditions without becoming too American (Grigorenko, 2013). Traditionally, families have assigned roles to Latinx FGS relating to familial, work, religious, and communal obligations to preserve intergenerational continuity (Banks-Santilli, 2015), Some families may have viewed Latinx FGS enrolling into college as a disruption to the family system rather than a continuation in their learning (Banks-Santilli, 2015). Some reasons may include parents not being familiar with American norms or wanting their old country customs and values to be preserved (Grigorenko, 2013). These reasons may have caused Latinx FGS to experience breakaway guilt or guilt of success as they struggle to put their needs of obtaining an education over the needs of their families (Banks-Santilli, 2015; Moreno, 2019). A final difference between both groups has involved parental monitoring. Parental monitoring has been enrooted into traditional cultural values as it has involved protective parents (Santiago et al., 2014). Parental monitoring consistently has correlated with better academic achievement

amongst Latinx. As a result, immigrant Latinx have performed academically better than U.S. Latinx and have had lower rates of mental health disorders (Santiago et al., 2014).

Of these traditional customs and values, Latinx families have specific expectations for females and males. The role of Latinx females and males has revolved around the concepts of marianisma and machismo. Marianisma has referred to the female's role stemming from the Virgin Mary (Perez, 2012). In Catholicism, the Virgin Mary has been observed as the ideal female who is a mother, nurturer, endurer of pain, and content with willing to serve (Perez, 2012). To be considered a good woman, females are also expected to be submissive, rely on males for protection, and to remain a virgin until marriage (Perez, 2012). As a result, females may have experienced mixed messages as Latinx families encourage them to be self-reliant but are expected to become housewives and place their families above all (Perez, 2012). Consequently, females often had to sacrifice their futures (education and career) for the sake of their family's present.

On the other hand, the role of males stems from the concept of machismo. Machismo has referred to the ideal macho (Knapp et al., 2012). Males have been expected to exert control over every area in their lives, including people and events (Knapp et al., 2009; Perez, 2012). Traditionally, males have been expected to be a supreme master at home and work (Perez, 2012). Moreover, his authority and judgment are never to be questioned by his wife, children, or others, while compromising with others is more frowned upon as it implies weakness (Perez, 2012). In addition, males may have been prohibited from sharing their feelings, pleasures, or fears (Perez, 2012). The stereotype of an ideal macho has the excluded traits such as courage and loyalty and

instead has highlighted traits of a provider and protector (Knapp et al., 2009; Perez, 2012). Overall, masculinity has been expounded by the social interaction with peers, parents, and school, whereas femininity has been expounded by her submissiveness to males and her role as a housewife. However, these traditional roles for females and males have not and do not encompass the other roles of Latinx FGS.

The non-traditional roles that are not encouraged by Latinx families include females being malinchisma and males being homosexual, according to Perez (2012). Malinchisma is a term that has been referred to La Malinche. She was the translator turned mistress of Hernan Cortez, who helped to conquer the Aztec Empire (Perez, 2012). Moreover, malinchisma has referred to the bad qualities of females, such as the more liberating and tempting nature found in American culture versus Latinx culture that is sheltered and family-centered (Perez, 2012). Females who have assimilated into American culture may be rejected by their Latinx peers if they dress differently, are too social with the opposite sex, or do activities that are traditionally labeled as masculine (Knapp et al., 2009; Perez, 2012). Similarly, males may be rejected if they have done activities traditionally done by females such as staying home too much or doing housework as Latinx view this as a deficiency of power that leads to homosexual tendencies (Knapp et al., 2009; Perez, 2012).

Outside of these roles, Latinx have viewed themselves differently versus how their Latinx peers view them. Gender is not biologically determined, but rather learned in society through manmade concepts (Knapp et al., 2009). As a result, modern research has used the term Latinx to include the nontraditional ways that Latinx may view themselves

versus how their peers may view them traditionally as female or male. The inclusive term Latinx has been described as a gender-neutral alternative to Latina or Latino (de Onis, 2017; Salinas, Jr. & Lozano, 2017). Moreover, the term has extended to people of Latin descent who identify with being a: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or, a non-gender conforming individual, also known as LGBTQ+ (Patterson, 2017; Salinas, Jr. & Lozano, 2017).

Latinx has been a relatively new term and has not been accepted by everyone. Some researchers and activists have defined Latinx as an act of linguistic imperialism as it is mostly used by English speaking individuals living in America and is not recognized by Spanish speaking traditionalists (de Onis, 2017; Salinas, Jr. & Lozano, 2017). Consequently, Latinx FGS have been struggling to balance their family's customs or traditions, their own individuality, and the culture of higher education, which has been resulting in higher high school and college drop-out rates (Perez, 2012). Therefore, according to Chickering and Ressier (1993), this population has experienced identity confusion. However, a key to Latinx FGS maintaining their cultural identity, but staying true to their individual identity might have included the use of language.

Parker, Segovia, and Tap (2015) stated language might help Latinx FGS connect with their cultural identity and serve as a translator for non-English speaking family members. The latter has helped families thrive within society as not every Puerto Rican adult living within the United States and on the island knows English either as a first or second language (Lopez & Patten, 2015). If institutions advocated for Latinx FGS to adopt its cultural identity, this population stands to lose their individual identity and

ability to speak Spanish with others who expect it of them and become alienated from their cultural subgroup (Bandura, 1997; Parker et al., 2015). Moreover, Latinx FGS might lose a strong self-efficacy and a sense of belonging (Parker et al., 2015). Furthermore, institutions have created dominant and oppressed social identities that cause FGS to experience a cultural mismatch, marginalization, and weak self-efficacy that undermines their academic performance (Evans et al., 2016).

Cultural Norms and Sexual Identity

Traditionally, a male Latinx has been expected to be a protector, provider, and an authority figure for his family (Abreu et al., 2019; Knapp et al., 2009). In Latinx culture, the role of family has superseded a male's sexual orientation as long as he can exude dominance and control (Martinez, 2019). Being authoritative in both his familial and intimate relationships, helps him maintain his manhood regardless of him being non-heterosexual (Martinez, 2019). Within the Latinx community, the cultural values of caballerism and familismo have facilitated how members in families, especially parents, accept their children who have not conformed to traditional gender-specific constructs such as machismo and malinchisma (Abreu et al., 2019). The cultural values of caballerismo have referred to a Latinx family preserving loyalty, familial unity, and emotional connections rather than upholding traditional roles defined by colonial Spanish Catholic rule (Abreu et al., 2019; Martinez, 2019).

Colonial Spanish rule was enrooted in a Patriarchal Spain that operated according to the Bible (Abreu et al., 2019; Martinez, 2019). In doing so, Colonial Spanish rule upheld the concept of Adam and Eve. The story of Adam and Eve is mentioned in the

Book of Genesis (Holy Bible, 1984). The Catholic Church sees Adam and Eve as the basis for Creation, and therefore, any non-heterosexual relation or sexual orientation is seen as sinful (Martinez, 2019). Traditional Catholicism has viewed homosexuality as an act against procreation. As a result of colonial Spanish rule, the Latinx culture has been embedded with hypermasculinity, a by-product of what it means for a man to be manly or machismo within society (Martinez, 2019). Specifically, hypermasculinity refers to the exaggerated traits of male behavior, which include: being emotionless, aggressive, straight, and homophobic, either directly or indirectly (Abreu et al., 2019; Martinez, 2019). Consequently, two additional forms of masculinity have developed: fragile masculinity and toxic masculinity.

Fragile masculinity has defined manhood as being a male who constantly expresses masculine qualities to maintain gender superiority (Martinez, 2019). Traditionally, in Latinx culture, effeminated or feminine behaviors have been discouraged (Abreu et al., 2019). Examples have included a male adopting a submissive role rather than a dominant role (Martinez, 2019). By a male not conforming with patriarchal societal norms, they have been associated with a feminine perception and subjected to homophobic discrimination by others, including possibly a dominant closeted sexual partner (Martinez, 2019). Closeted has been a term to describe a person who has not told anyone or many individuals how they identify with something. In this instance, the process of outness has been complicated as there are many factors that can affect if they come out or tell others of their non-traditional, non-heterosexual orientation (Human Rights Campaign, 2019; Martinez, 2019). This included identifying with the

LGBTQ+ or non-binary community. In short, fragile masculinity has been a rigid social construct that associates the male gender with acts of power (Martinez, 2019; Truett, 2018). However, this often has led to toxic masculinity as cultural and societal norms do not take into account non-heterosexual identities as they are based on normative binaries of gender and desire (Martinez, 2019; Truett, 2018).

Toxic masculinity has encouraged males to perpetuate negative behaviors such as violence, heavy drinking, risk-taking, and virility (Martinez, 2019). Some consequences that have developed are higher rates of physical or psychological abuse toward women (Martinez, 2019). Women have been traditionally seen as weak (Perez, 2012). Even in the Spanish language, words have been male-dominated, despite there being the presence of a female (Martinez, 2019). For example, a word that has referred to a female usually ends in an "a" like the Spanish word ninas, which means a group of girls. However, if there have been two females and one male, the word then becomes masculine, despite there being a feminine presence. Inadvertently, the Spanish language has embraced a man's masculinity while denying a woman's feminity (Martinez, 2019). It is because of examples like this that the term Latinx and the concept of feminist masculinity have developed.

Firstly, the term Latinx was introduced in the early 2000s. Latinx has been a gender-neutral term used to be inclusive of all those who identify with a Latin origin or ancestry (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Accordingly, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (n.d.) has officially added the term to its listing in September of 2018. Secondly, feminist masculinity has also been known as inclusive masculinity. It has emphasized individuals:

being an ethical human being, engaging in healthy relationships with males and females, advocating for social justice, and rejecting hegemonic masculinity (Martinez, 2019). For reference, hegemonic masculinity has dictated that women should be sexually objectified by men, whereas men can never be sexually objectified by other men (Martinez, 2019).

The biological truth of what manhood is does not have to be defined by one's gender (Martinez, 2019; Truett, 2018). Moreover, the traditional idea of masculinity and femininity has to be rewritten to include gay men, single mothers, or women who have displayed behaviors typically associated with machismo (Martinez, 2019). Despite there being progress within the twenty-first century, cultural values of caballerismo and familismo have not been enough for a traditional family or community to accept a non-traditional Latinx (Human Rights Campaign, 2019; Martinez, 2019). Acceptance of an individual having a non-traditional role or identity has been interfered with due to the complexities of machismo, respeto, and familial rejection experiences (Abreu et al., 2019).

Machismo has referred to the macho gender expression of a male (Abreu et al., 2019; Knapp et al., 2009; Martinez, 2019). Any effeminate behavior has been rationalized as eccentric within a traditional circle (Abreu et al., 2019). This rationalization has been tied in with the greater need for an individual to be dignified and a dominant force in public (Abreu et al., 2019; Martinez, 2019). In doing so, respeto has been earned based on the individual being manly or having what is deemed as appropriate interpersonal communication (Abreu et al., 2019). But, ultimately, an individual is either accepted or not, based on the rejection experiences others have had prior to interacting

with them (Abreu et al., 2019). As a result, homophobia still exists within the twenty-first century.

Homophobia has been the internalized fear that males of patriarchal, White ahistorical societies such as America (Martinez, 2019; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). This fear has resulted in the oppression of gay males, the LGBTQ+ community, or vulnerable groups such as women or marginalized racial minorities like Latinx FGS (Abreu et al., 2019; Martinez, 2019; Shramko et al., 2018). Within the Latinx community, an individual is not defined by their sexual orientation, but rather the power they have expressed through sexual activities (Martinez, 2019). Therefore, if they are to be dominant, they will have more privilege and a sense of belonging, especially White males (Martinez, 2019; Shramko et al., 2018).

Privilege has been defined as an advantage that one group has over another (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). In this case, White males have had more privilege when compared to gender minorities, male racial minorities, and marginalized groups like Latinx FGS (Martinez, 2019; Perez, 2012; Shramko et al., 2018). A lack of privilege has led to economic insecurity, violence, harassment, health inequity, institutional racism, and little to no support (Human Rights Campaign, 2019; Martinez, 2019). With a lack of acceptance and support, there has been an increased risk for Latinx to have depression, psychological distress, suicidal ideation, and lower self-esteem (Abreu et al., 2019; Shramko et al., 2018). The parents of Latinx LGBTQ+ members also have experienced feelings of grief, loss, shame, denial, guilt, and shock as non-heterosexuality challenges traditional cultural norms (Abreu et al., 2019). Moreover, some things that have helped a

person accept their non-traditional family member includes: making a connection to familismo, being exposed to non-traditional circles such as the LGBTQ+ community, and reading resources for information or support (Abreu et al., 2019; Human Right Campaign, 2019).

Research showed that people believe a person's ethnicity and sexual orientation can coexist, whereas religion and sexual identity cannot due to the larger Latinx culture still embodying the colonial Spanish Catholic rule (Abreu et al., 2019; Martinez, 2019). The impact of the intersectionality between race and the LGBTQ+ community has been unknown fully as little research exists, especially as it relates to Latinx youth (Abreu et al., 2019; BrckaLorenz et al., 2018). But there has been three variables that may affect its impact: belongingness, institutional commitment, and outness. Research shows the LGBTQ+ community, generally find college environments as dominantly heterosexual and unwelcoming (BrckaLorenz et al., 2018). This has led to increased risks of harassment and discrimination to occur (BrckaLorenz et al., 2018). However, the LGBTQ+ community has found college environments welcoming when they have institutional commitment regarding pro messaging about sexuality (BrckaLorenz et al., 2018). This has helped them have a sense of belonging.

Due to a Nepantla complex, Latinx has had a lower possibility of coming out or allowing others to know of their sexual orientation due to cultural norms dictated by tradition and society (BrckLorenz, 2018; Martinez, 2019). A Nepantla complex was coined by Latinx author Gloria Anzaldua, which refers to the double consciousness a Latinx faces when trying to balance their main identity with a White American identity

(Martinez, 2019). Racism has been endemic within America because the social construct of race preserves Whiteness throughout its institutions due to colonialism (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Truett, 2018). As a result, Latinx such as Latinx FGS have struggled with having a double consciousness and experience additional stressors as it relates to their identity. Consequently, American society has forced Latinx to assimilate. This often has led society to label Latinx as Brown and further subdivide the Latinx community with labels such as Afro-Brown, White-Brown, and Mestizo-Brown (Truett, 2018). Latinx have been reported to engage in more physical fights while in school compared to their White counterparts (Shramko et al., 2018). Some reasoning has included fearing physical harm or racial-ethnic discrimination (Shramko et al., 2018). LGBTW+ youth have been especially at a higher risk for peer victimization, especially males compared to male White heterosexuals (Shramko et al., 2018). However, with the Latinx identity evolving, 1.4 million Latinx LGBTQ+ have been challenging how tradition and society dictate how race and gender are precursors to define one's role and sexuality (Human Rights Campaign, 2019; Truett, 2018).

Institutional Identity

Latinx FGS have had lower self-efficacy compared to non-FGS as it relates to the unique experiences that impact their sense of belonging, self-confidence, and perceived capability (Davino, 2013; Marsden, 2014; Pelco et al., 2014; Zajacova et al., 2005). According to Bandura (1997), Latinxs such as Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Cubans, amongst others, have experienced devalued ethnicity in higher education, and this is linked to economic hardship. As a result, Latinx FGS have had difficulty separating the

consequences of poverty and being a non-Asian minority student (Bandura, 1997). Without a student's ethnicity being valued, a student may find it more difficult to identify strongly with their ethnicity or develop a bicultural orientation (Bandura, 1997).

Institutions within the United States mostly have used mainstream, independent cultural norms, and exclude diverse cultural norms (Stephens & Townsend, 2015). When institutions have forced FGS to adopt their cultural identity, FGS experience a cultural mismatch. Moreover, a mismatch has created barriers for Latinx FGS to achieve academic success as they develop decreased comfort, increased psychological stress, and high levels of threat (Stephens & Townsend, 2015). Latinx FGS have had less positive campus experiences compared to non-FGS due to stereotype threats, fear of being perceived as stupid, and feelings of marginalization (Augustine, 2015). Racial discrimination and stereotype threats concerning academic competencies have been enrooted in the cultural mismatch that occurs between FGS and non-FGS.

Latinx FGS have internalized an oppressed identity, and consequently alienate themselves from mainstream students, faculty, and staff, in fear of being perceived as incapable of achieving success (Augustine, 2015). The greater sense of belonging or mattering has been important for Latinx FGS to have a greater likelihood of persisting toward graduation and developing positive mental health (Choi, 2005; Stebleton et al., 2014; Tinto, 2016; Tinto, 2017; Vuong et al., 2010). Mattering has allowed this population to feel valued and develop a strong self-efficacy (Choi, 2005; Stebleton et al., 2014; Vuong et al., 2010). Self-efficacy has been defined as the levels of confidence individuals have regarding their ability to complete specific tasks successfully (Arbona,

2016; Tinto, 2016; Tinto, 2017). For Latinx FGS to develop strong self-efficacy, they will have to depend on environmental sources and have a need to be affirmed and incorporated into college more than their counterparts (Tierney, 2000; Tinto, 2017). Reasons include: not having a parent to guide them throughout college, discrimination, intra-group stress, and achievement stress (Arbona, 2016).

These unique experiences may have served as a source of challenge for Latinx FGS because they must also cope with the experiences that non-FGS face. Some experiences may have included: adjusting to college, having a different living arrangement (i.e. dorming versus living home), and developing general academic anxieties (Jenkins et al., 2013). Academic stress and negative emotional reactions have occurred naturally for non-FGS (Jenkins et al., 2013). However, FGS have experienced these symptoms more severe such as having more difficulty in 2nd-year science reasoning, critical thinking, and overall academic success (Jenkins et al., 2013).

Latinx FGS have needed more tutoring and mental health services compared to their counterparts. But, these services get underutilized because FGS: find the locations and times as inconvenient, never hear of the services, or, do not have time (Stebleton et al., 2014). As a result, Latinx FGS have not been successfully navigating college as a system. Therefore, research has suggested that the primary responsibility of institutions is to gain an understanding of how privilege and oppression affect those within the non-dominant culture (Evans et al., 2016). Access to college has not and is not enough for Latinx FGS to gain academic success and marketable skills for a career.

The Power of Words: The Concept of Self and Multiple Identities

Words matter. Words have had the distinct power of shaping an individual's experience, especially as it relates to one's identity (Peck, 2017). By an individual being told, who they are and being viewed outside what one chooses for themselves, is dangerous to one's concept of self (Peck, 2017). Therefore, Latinx FGS have a need to be actively taught they have a place in higher education as a means of helping students foster an authentic identity and thus achieve academic success. Educators can reinforce this messaging by reminding students that the classroom belongs to them, just like anyone else (Reyes, 2018). Furthermore, institutions and its agents have a responsibility to see Latinx FGS for who they are individually (Reyes, 2018; 2019).

It is not enough to recognize that Latinx FGS have a distinctive status as a marginalized group with unique challenges (Hooks, 1994; Reyes, 2018). Moreover, institutions and educators need to not only use alternative curriculums that are inclusive and challenge dominant ways of thinking, but rather educators should practice what they preach (Hooks, 1994). For example, students' names should not be mispronounced or shortened for convenience (Reyes, 2018). Also, preferred gender pronouns should be respected (Reyes, 2018). The mispronunciation of a Latinx FGS name and the disacknowledgement of one's preferred gender pronoun equates to racial microaggressions (Reyes, 2018).

These acts of microaggressions uphold a patriarchal White ahistorical narrative that paints Latinx FGS as racially and culturally inferior (Reyes, 2018). Specifically, these microaggressions propel the oppressed history of Latinx FGS and celebration of

their American colonizer, choosing their identity for them (Peck, 2017). Historically, Latinx were labeled as Hispanic by the United States of America, which is a term devoid of a group's choice and the enriched Latin diversity represented not only as Spain, but also of Latin America and the Caribbean (Peck, 2017). Hence, the term Hispanic or the often-interchangeable term Latino has been problematic because it does not give choice of identity or gender variation to individuals of Latin descent (Peck, 2017).

For example, the o/a ending for the term Latin has denoted a power differential as the culture places male representation first (Peck, 2017). Additionally, just as gender identities, preferred pronouns are not recognized outside traditional he/she pronouns or dominant male or oppressed female identities (Peck, 2017; Reyes, 2018). Therefore, in alignment with the critical race theory, the newly coined term Latinx has placed emphasis on the multiple identities one can have and thus illuminate the need for society to change to ensure the inclusion of nontraditional identities. By doing this, these social identities have intersected and influenced one's sense of belonging and relate to one mattering (Peck, 2017; Reyes, 2018).

Mattering is knowing one is important or has value to another person or entity (Peck, 2017; Reyes, 2018). Positive consequences include marginalized groups like Latinx FGS having a heightened: sense of belonging to campus, intention to remain at a campus, and value for being appreciated for who one is (Peck, 2017; Reyes, 2018; Stephens & Townsend, 2015). The more bicultural or celebrated a Latinx FGS becomes, they develop a greater sense of belonging and stronger identities (Bandura, 1997; Peck, 2017). They not only learn new cultural capital but gain reassurance and gain value of

their own culture (Rutar, 2014). Consequently, students who can speak multiple languages can have a developed sense of pride and confidence in their abilities as language expression is a form of identity and contributes to a sense of belonging within a community (Peck, 2014). By Latinx FGS being welcomed and recognized, institutions help message that their own cultural capital is valued thus establishing postsecondary institutions as safe learning spaces filled with trustworthy professionals (Hooks, 1994; Peck, 2017).

Trust is essential for learning to happen within the classroom and enable an engaged pedagogy to take place (Hooks, 1994; Reyes, 2018). Engaged pedagogy is the application of critical thinking based on a mutual relationship between educators and students that creates an environment conducive to trust and commitment to genuine learning (Hooks, 1994). Genuine learning happens when there is a willingness from educators or students to critically work beyond a concept's surface (Hooks, 1994). In doing so, the classroom becomes a cultivated community that shares experiential knowledge and embrace education as the practice of freedom (Hooks, 1994).

Engaged pedagogy allows the transgressions of boundaries that usually separate or reinforce dominant ways of thinking to challenge a White ahistorical society that has been anti-intellectual and anti-critical thinking (Hooks, 1994). This pedagogy is important because individuals have a need to think critically about themselves and life processes to grow and move forward. Otherwise, educators traditionally hold a position of knowledge and have the privilege of denying a student's presence (Hooks, 1994). In engaged pedagogy, an educator is not depositing knowledge, but rather challenging the

mind and body split method. Challenging the mind and body split method makes the educator aware of a marginalized groups' presence as a body within the classroom (Hooks, 1994).

In doing this, educators are including the voices of those not traditionally listened to (Hooks, 1994; Reyes, 2018; Rutar, 2014). This creates learning opportunities for everyone and helps promote a dialectal exchange consisting of everyone, even traditionally uncomfortable topics (Hooks, 1994). Welcoming and valuing everyone in the classroom allows educators and students to communicate and collaborate intellectually and creatively thus creating future opportunities for greater mobility, networking, and socialization (Rutar, 2014). A greater sense of belonging includes marginalized groups being heard and being able to control the narrative of who they are within a White ahistorical society (Hooks, 1994; Reyes, 2018; Rutar, 2014; Tierney, 2000; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

If groups such as Latinx FGS are deemed inferior, the messaging is supported by a larger racially charged society and familial network that teaches them to prioritize others over themselves (Reyes, 2018; Reyes, 2019). Consequently, their identity, culture, and origins lie outside society's dominant culture and do not belong, as a downward side effect (Reyes, 2018). Postsecondary institutions are structures of a racially embedded society, hence causing institutional racism along with sexism and classism to shape every aspect of higher education down to the classrooms (Reyes, 2019). As a result, marginalized groups such as Latinx FGS feel as if they do not have anything of value to contribute to class, doubt themselves, and are neither heard nor welcomed (Reyes, 2019).

Thus, predetermined insider versus outsider identities develop ahead of classroom discussions or educator and student engagement (Reyes, 2019). Instead, what educators can do is be aware of academic jargon or professor speak they use, decolonize their syllabi, be aware of their audience, and be intentional of how they lecture students (Reyes, 2018; Reyes, 2019). Educators can try to teach students in various ways as a means to help challenging concepts become more accessible to students while trying to have a better connection with students (Reyes, 2018). Some ways include using synonyms, comics, fill-in study guides, and examples of test questions (Reyes, 2018).

Challenges and What is Recommended

Overall, Latinx FGS have been twice as likely to leave college without earning a degree compared to non-FGS (Pelco et al., 2014; Velez, 2014). Only 18% of Latinx FGS have finished their bachelor's degrees compared to 31% of White and 42% of Asian non-FGS, who have parents with a college education (McCarron & Inkelas, 2006). Furthermore, FGS have had a 50% higher probability of dropping out of high school, a 35% lesser chance of enrolling in college, and a 51% lesser chance of graduating college within 4 years compared to their non-FGS (Phillips et al., 2015). Furthermore, about 80% of Latinx FGS have not earned a bachelor's degree after 8 years out of high school (Peck, 2017).

This low college graduation rate is due to interventions not being taken before college enrollment such as: "participation in high school and college preparation programs, college assimilation, familial support, and positive personal characteristics" (Falcon, 2015, p. 1). Correspondingly, Latinx FGS have not performed up to their

potential because a one-size-fits-all standard measures their readiness for college. The one-size-fits-all standard does not appreciate the social and cultural identities or family expectations and emphases that they come into college with (Mayes et al., 2016; O'Shea, 2015; Parkinson, 2015; Tierney, 2000). Consequently, by Latinx having a first generation status, they have faced considerable stigma. Latinx FGS may have had their academic ability, accomplishments, and performance underestimated by others as their background may be seen as a deficiency, especially if low income (Banks-Santilli, 2015). As a result, Latinx FGS may have been less likely to acknowledge they have academic, emotional, or mental challenges, thus causing them to undermine their self-esteem and ability to seek or receive help from others (Talebi et al., 2013).

According to research, FGS have unique academic and nonacademic experiences. However, these same experiences may have played a part in whether FGS are well self-regulated learners versus poor self-regulated learners, when compared to their counterparts. Self-regulation refers to the iterative process of forethought, performance, and self-awareness needed for persons to make corrective actions toward an objective or goal (Zimmerman, 2002). But, with the increasing number of FGS enrolling into college directly after high school, so has the number of Millennials with a "Hustle-Culture" mentality. A "Hustle-Culture" mentality is also an iterative process that promotes a 'round-the-clock' grind mentality without allowing a person time to reflect on their goals and actions intrinsically (Griffith, 2019; Toomey, 2019). Hence, this mentality has created a lack of self-awareness needed for a person to refine their processes of accomplishing a goal, and rather promotes their need to be accepted by the world versus

being in alignment with religion or self-purpose (Griffith, 2019; Toomey, 2019; Zimmerman, 2002). As a result, the "Hustle-Culture" mentality has attributed to poor self-regulation.

Moreover, FGS require extensive support to learn the cultural capital of an institution while gaining confidence in their academic and social skills when lacking familial support and life experiences (Parkinson, 2015). Therefore, before college leadership can help FGS achieve academic and social success, it must first identify them as a unique group. By college leadership, learning about the unique needs of FGS, it will create an inclusive curriculum (Hirudayaraj, 2011; Wiles, 2008). Research has recommended colleges to be open in modifying traditional academic support services to include targeted counseling advising, mentoring, and high impact educational practices. In doing so, colleges can begin to assess the interactions between their academic and social systems with students, especially Latinx FGS (Tinto, 1975; 2016; 2017). Furthermore, interactions such as communication and teambuilding between faculty, staff, and students are important because it demonstrates a college's agility as an organization to adapt and respond in real-time to the ever-changing culture of unique groups entering higher education (Chaudhary et al., 2017; Tinto, 1975; 2016; 2017).

However, before these recommendations can start, research further has suggested that colleges begin discussions with an inventory of the support services being offered to FGS such as Latinx FGS (Hernandez et al., 2017). An analysis of the support services offered by an institution can serve as an impetus for determining whether or not the needs of FGS are being addressed effectively, thus helping to bring the programs and services

within an institution up to scale (Evans et al., 2016; Hernandez et al., 2017; O'Neil, 2013; Perna, 2015; Perna, 2016; Stebleton & Soria, 2017). The Targeted Advising Model can allow counselors and advisors to assist Latinx FGS transition into college by helping them understand the importance of personal exploration, declaring a major, and connecting with others within their major (Evans et al., 2016). Likewise, through mentoring and high impact educational practices such as learning communities and summer bridge programs, FGS may gain perspective and exposure to the social capital needed to navigate an institution's identity from role models and non-FGS (Evans et al., 2016; Parkinson, 2015). Furthermore, these initiatives may help FGS become involved, develop critical thinking, and gain soft skills needed for lifelong learning (Evans et al., 2016).

According to research, a more interactive campus community can be created if institutions become inclusive and accessible counselors, faculty, staff, and administration (Evans et al., 2016; Hirudayarag, 2011; Parkinson, 2015). With accessibility, FGS can develop strategies to positively cope with anxiety, depression, weak self-efficacy, academic, socioeconomic, and family stressors (Jenkins, 2013; Parkinson, 2015; Stebleton & Soria, 2014; Tate et al., 2015). Possible strategies have included fostering parental participation, group counseling, psycho-educational workshops, and partnering with programs such as TRIO that have high concentrations of FGS to develop academic and social experiences needed for this population to gain a sense of belonging and involvement on campus (Moreno, 2019; Stebleton & Soria, 2014; Wallingford, 2009).

As FGS transition into college, research has recommended that colleges help FGS maintain their identity while adapting to the institution's cultural identity. According to Whannell and Whanell (2015), it is the duty of institutions to increase educational opportunities for FGS by catering to their differences. However, there are other researchers who have challenged this position. Originally, Tinto (1975; 1993) defined drop-outs as students who failed to academically and socially acclimate to an institution because of pre-entry attributes such as skills, finances, prior schooling, and integration with others.

Tinto (2016; 2017) later recanted his theory as he replaced the onus of a student's academic success on the institution. In the past, the responsibility of a student succeeding in college was placed on the student versus the institution (Tierney, 2000). By turning Tinto's (1993) theory on its head, the school of thought changed that students must adopt the institution's culture while abandoning their own culture. According to Tierney (2000), Tinto's (1975; 1993) original theory denied the real concept of culture and as a result, gave the façade that individuals are free to make life what they want regardless of their history, culture, or social status. Moreover, Tinto's (2016; 2017) revised theory calls for institutions to adopt the student perspective to understand how their experiences influence their motivation to persist toward graduation.

Unlike Tinto's (1975; 1993) original theory, Tinto (2016; 2017) acknowledged that the pre-entry attributes that a student comes into college with does not exclusively shape their academic success. Instead, their self-efficacy, sense of belonging, and value of the curriculum are influenced greatly by the institution, as Tinto (2016; 2017) later

calls for the institution to adopt an inclusive design. According to Tierney (2000), inclusive designs did not address the implicit interpretations higher education has of an individual's or group's culture. To redesign post-secondary institutions, institutions must redesign their institutions to not set aside individuals who do not meet predetermined criteria (Tierney, 2000). Consequently, FGS will be motivated to develop a leadership identity defined by self-purpose, which is important in navigating college as a system and gaining independence (Chickering & Ressier, 1993). Furthermore, according to Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), institutions should not adopt inclusive or color-blind policies because these policies still force FGS to assimilate, but through the reduction of prejudice.

Racial division has been correlated with the evolution of power (also known as capital). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) stated that oppression is embedded within the fabric of America as Whiteness is naturalized, and power is associated with the opportunity to learn. But, as previous researchers stated, access is not enough for oppressed students to achieve academic success as they do not know what to do or have the resources to support their learning such as state-of-the-art technology or certified teachers (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Phillips et al., 1995). Moreover, Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995) cited that color-blind policies support ethnocentrism and help oppressors demoralize marginalized groups by constructing a story that maintains their power. Consequently, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) defined color-blind policies as facades that preserve the self-interest of institutions.

Therefore, Croom and Marsh (2016) stated Ladson-Billings and Tate's critical race theory is a valuable tool for making sense of persistent racial inequities within American institutions of learning. Furthermore, Croom and Marsh (2016) stated critical race theory provides tangible narratives that show how racism and oppression present itself in higher education while providing concrete examples of how institutions can employ critical race praxis. The goal of critical race praxis, according to Croom and Marsh (2016), has been to eliminate racial oppression in societal institutions such as higher education by applying critical race theory as a framework. In particular, a critical race theory framework would help institutions analyze and challenge the relationship dynamics between race, racism, and power across educational structures, policies, and practices (Croom & Marsh, 2016). The core of critical race praxis has centered around the five tenets of critical race theory.

In summary, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) stated racism is endemic within America because racism is embedded within its societal structures due to colonialism. Consequently, complacency has developed, causing dominant and oppressive identities to exist. Therefore, any interest to eradicate racism between these identities will only derive if dominant groups find an interest convergence in recognizing and embracing the differences of their oppressed counterparts (Croom & Marsh, 2016; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). But, to do so requires stereotypes and a White-ahistoric narrative to be addressed and challenged. Accordingly, every individual is not monolithic or essentialist in nature due to the intersectionalities within their identity (Croom & Marsh, 2016; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Hence, the experiential knowledge or capital a

marginalized individual may have is valuable, valid, and crucial in eradicating a social injustice such as inequality and inequity in higher education (Croom & Marsh, 2016; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). This knowledge allows oppressed groups such as Latinx FGS to become empowered by using counter-storytelling as a means of survival and liberation while creating a critical race praxis (Croom & Marsh, 2016; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). According to Garcia and Natividad (2018), a critical race praxis has been important in decolonizing leadership practices to promote equity within higher education for historically oppressed groups such as Latinx FGS.

Specifically, Garcia and Natividad (2018) stated transformative leadership within colleges is key in disrupting colonial power that promotes and maintains the racist nature of postsecondary institutions within America. Garcia and Natividad (2018) further stated through transformative leadership, colleges will begin to better serve their growing Latinx population. In 1989, there were 189 Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), then 492 HSIs in 2016, accompanied by 333 emerging HSIs (eHSIs) in 2016 (Garcia & Natividad, 2018). With HSIs expanding, the issue for institutions is not of enrollment but rather becomes an issue of how they serve Latinx FGS responsively. Some issues present HSIs have include a low representation of Latinx faculty, staff, and low completion rates of Latinx FGS earning undergraduate and graduate degrees compared to their counterparts (Garcia & Natividad, 2018). Presently, there has been a lack of leadership frameworks specifically designed for educators working with Latinx, especially Latinx FGS (Garcia & Natividad, 2018). This population may have faced unique challenges, be multicultural, bilingual, or in constant perpetual transition as they try to balance their identity with the

identity of their postsecondary institution. Decolonizing leadership practices have helped institutions to recognize that their experiences are intersectional and valid while recognizing inequities exist due to the systemic effects of racism (Garcia & Natividad, 2018; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2016). By doing so, postsecondary institutions could begin to dismantle their dominant and oppressive identities while unlinking the coloniality of power with racial hierarchy and power (Garcia & Natividad, 2018). Moreso, decolonizing leadership practices could allow open-access community colleges to become a better gateway and gatekeeper for historically oppressed groups who are underrepresented by 4-year institutions (Dowd, 2007; Garcia & Natividad, 2018).

Similarly, Decuir and Dixson (2004) found that institutions perpetuate whiteness as property and disregard the cultural knowledge that non-Whites enter college with. Institutions use colorblindness policies to downplay racism as non-Whites are viewed as raceless and have no outward display of pride and culture within the institution (Decuir & Dixson, 2004). Specifically, the experiential knowledge of non-Whites such as Latinx FGS has been significant, according to Solórzano and Bernal (2001), because their knowledge is legitimate and critical to comprehending racial subjugation within the discipline of education. Additionally, the centrality of non-Whites' experiential knowledge has served as a strength as they draw from lived experiences to: use counter storytelling to challenge the White narrative preserved by society and how educational structures operate in contradiction of eliminating racism and the marginalization of non-Whites (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

The consequences of racism has produced, preserved, and justified the need for a master narrative to be used in maintaining the ahistorical storytelling of American institutions (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). With Whiteness being naturalized, White privilege becomes the norm because majoritarian stories stem from a legacy of racial privilege belonging to the dominant culture. Majoritarian stories has caused non-Whites to make curricular choices that result in them not recognizing themselves (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Therefore, counter storytelling is an autobiographical reflection that serves as a significant tool in juxtaposing racial stereotypes (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Furthermore, if the status-quo within higher education is to be challenged, race must first be theorized, and minorities must be allowed to use their experiential knowledge as a resource when transitioning into college (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Summary and Conclusions

Latinx FGS, such as Puerto Ricans have not been graduating college at the same rate as their counterparts across the board (DeAngelo et al., 2011; Garcia & Natividad, 2018; Maietta, 2016; Reyes, 2017; Velez, 2014; Zinshteyn, 2016). According to research there have been two general reasons that include: this population facing unique academic and nonacademic experiences compared to their counterparts; and, post-secondary institutions creating dominant and oppressive identities that weaken their academic success (Augustine, 2015; Balemian & Feng, 2014; Desai, 2012; Evans et al., 2015; Falcon, 2015; Garcia & Natividad, 2018; Pelco et al., 2014; Phillippe, 2016; Phillips et al., 2016; Stebleton et al., 2014; Stebleton & Soria, 2017; Stephens et al., 2015; Tate et

al., 2015). By institutions forcing Latinx FGS to adopt their cultural identity, this population has become vulnerable in completing college within 4 years like their counterparts because their experiential knowledge is treated as an irrelevant resource in helping them transition into and navigate college (Croom & Marsh, 2016; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Even though research has been very limited, most of the research has advocated for post-secondary institutions to adopt an inclusive and color-blind design to help this population develop a sense of belonging and high self-efficacy, which are needed to promote academic success. However, according to researchers Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), inclusivity is not the answer as this design has called for post-secondary institutions to ignore the fact that oppression is embedded within the education system of America. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) stated that a real solution begins with higher education challenging the status quo by allowing minorities to primarily use their experiential knowledge as a resource to transition into and navigate college. Furthermore, access to higher education by itself is not enough for Latinx FGS to reap the same benefits of their counterparts.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Because research on this topic is limited, the purpose of this study was to obtain the perceptions of what Latinx first generation students (FGS) believe to be the academic and nonacademic experiences affecting them when trying to graduate college within 2 years, so that leadership in community colleges and universities can gain an understanding and meet their actual needs. This study used a qualitative methodology with the theory of critical race in education applied as a critical lens to explore the phenomenon (see Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Patton, 2015). Specifically, this study used a phenomenological approach because I gained an understanding of the actual academic and nonacademic experiences of Latinx FGS by interviewing actual Latinx FGS (see Creswell, 2007). Furthermore, this approach permitted me as a researcher to abstain from applying my own thoughts or beliefs and instead look at this phenomenon objectively with new eyes to learn of what Latinx FGS perceive as barriers while pursuing a college degree in 4 years (see Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994; Shenton, 2004). In Chapter 3 I explore the research method that was used in this study. In doing so, I address the study's research design and rationale, my role as a researcher, the role of the participants, the methodology, trustworthiness, and ethical procedures involved.

Research Design and Rationale

There has been a gap in degree attainment between Latinx FGS with their racial and non-FGS counterparts. Hence, my aim for this study was to examine how Latinx FGS described the academic and nonacademic experiences affecting them trying to graduate from college within 2 years, so leadership in community colleges and

universities can gain an understanding and meet their actual needs. The guiding theory for this study was Ladson-Billings and Tate's (1995) theory of critical race in education. According to the critical race theory in education, American society has been composed of racially stratified structures that appear to be normal, but instead maintain Whiteness as the standard that systematically marginalizes minorities such as Latinx FGS (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2010; Gillborn & Rollock, 2011). For example, postsecondary institutions may have marginalized non-Whites by excluding their community cultural wealth (experiential knowledge) in the curriculum, pedagogy, and culture (Bourdieu, 1997; Yosso, 2005). As a result, higher education has developed a dominant cultural identity that promotes deficit thinking and reinforces racial stereotypes to be true by leadership and students (Barnett, 2007; Dowd & Bensimon, 2015).

According to Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), storytelling is the tool to use when a marginalized group such as Latinx FGS want to challenge the status quo of a racially stratified society. Specifically, storytelling has allowed marginalized groups to speak against racism and begin to control the ahistorical narrative told by a White dominated society. Therefore, phenomenology was the design selected to conduct this qualitative study. Using a phenomenological design permitted me to understand the unique experiences that are hindering Latinx FGS from graduating college within 4 years by interviewing a sample of this population directly to gain knowledge of their actual experiences, which is not present in the literature (Creswell, 2007). Their voices have been excluded from the literature, and without first-hand knowledge of their academic and nonacademic experiences, educational policies will continue to be created without

their needs in mind, and a gap in degree attainment between Latinx FGS, non-FGS, and their racial counterparts will remain (Ladson-Billing & Tate, 1995).

As a result, a phenomenological design was best to use because it allows participants to use storytelling to share their actual experiences regarding a common phenomenon but also serves as a counter-narrative needed to dismantle a system of bias within higher education (Ladson-Billing & Tate, 1995). Moreover, a phenomenological design was fitting because it allowed me to gain an understanding of a phenomenon experienced by a group of participants, whereas ethnographical design only focuses on culture; narrative design focuses on individual experience, grounded theory design focuses on developing a theory based on field data, and case study design focuses on gaining an understanding through various data sources (Creswell, 2007).

Role of the Researcher

Specifically, because I am an Afro-Latinx college graduate and administrator of an urban senior college in a public university, I was susceptible to experiencing confirmation and culture bias as a researcher. I work for a senior college in the public university, but I aimed to do this study in a community college. Eliminating bias is never 100% assured, but as a researcher, I reduced confirmation bias by consistently reevaluating the answers of participants myself and having an independent coder serve during the peer debriefing process to challenge inconsistencies (see Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000). Also, to reduce culture bias, as a researcher, I utilized cultural relativism by applying unconditional positive regard and being aware of my own cultural assumptions (see Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000). For example, because I may

have identified racially or ethnically with my participants, I may have wanted their interviews to go extra well. Therefore, for me, the researcher, to reduce manipulation of the data, I used techniques such as transcript review and member checking to reduce my bias and maintain transparency (see Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Methodology

The methodology I used was a qualitative approach with a phenomenological research design that uses respondent validity (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2011). This design was ideal for this study because it allowed me to look at what Latinx FGS perceive to be as barriers in graduating from a community college. These shared experiences may have helped to lessen the widening gap in degree attainment between them, non-FGS, and their racial counterparts. A phenomenological design allowed me to gain an understanding by examining the commonality of subjective, lived experiences through interviewing Latinx FGS (see Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2015; Shenton, 2004). In using a phenomenological design, I employed member checking as I invited the participants to review the interview transcripts to establish respondent validity and welcome participant involvement (see Shenton, 2004; Yin, 2011). Other designs, such as ethnographical or case studies, would have limited the voice of participants because these designs use techniques that are more objective in nature, like using observations or reports to gain an understanding (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2015). Specifically, qualitative research does not begin with a hypothesis, but using a qualitative approach afforded me the most open and flexible method compared to quantitative research.

Quantitative research has a fixed position and makes inferences based on numerical datasets, while qualitative research uses thematic analysis to make inferences regarding an experience shared by a group of individuals (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2015). A qualitative approach allows individuals to explain their choices and perceptions of experience, whereas a quantitative approach does not. A qualitative approach provides an open and flexible approach, and a phenomenological design afforded me the ability to define exactly how open and flexible my approach would be. Therefore, I conducted a series of interviews to develop an enriched dataset based on emerging themes that were validated by the storytelling of the study's participants (Creswell, 2007).

However, because the research design process began with philosophical assumptions, I had to consider what they were before beginning this study (Creswell, 2007). This included considering my own worldviews and plan to limit those biases and applying a theoretical framework to shape my study (Creswell, 2007). Being explicit with these three variables was what made my study good research. I used member checking throughout the data process (see Shenton, 2004). To check my biases that I stated before, I had a second reader be present during the interviews of the participants and check my notes from these interviews (Shenton, 2004). To give my study shape, I applied a critical theory perspective (Creswell, 2007).

Critical theory, specifically the critical race theory, helped me as a researcher look at how Latinx FGS can become empowered and transcend the limitations that hinder their academic success stemming from the dominant or oppressive identities within the social institution of education (Creswell, 2007). To do this, I conducted intensive open-ended

interviews to obtain an in-depth analysis of the academic and nonacademic challenges Latinx FGS perceive as barriers in earning an associate's degree. These in-depth interviews were facilitated with the participant, myself, and another individual to check my biases to produce trustworthiness of the data throughout the process (see Shenton, 2004). The storytelling interviews helped me as a researcher to see if there are any consistencies in the academic and nonacademic Latinx FGS experience. By having consistent stories, the master narrative that controlled the dominant or oppressive identities within higher education could be countered through the eradication of racial oppression, understand race as a social construct, and challenge the status quo of how academic success looks and for whom it is meant (Creswell, 2007). Moreover, this method allowed me to gain insight into what Latinx FGS experience while pursuing an associate's degree based on their perceptions and understandings of the phenomenon (see Creswell, 2007; Shenton, 2004).

Participant Selection

For this study, individuals who attended a community college within an urban public university were recruited. Specifically, the intended community college was a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) that serves over 27,000 students, which 41% were reported as Latinx ([redacted], 2017; [redacted] OIR, 2018; Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Analytics, 2017b; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The community college and neighborhood did not specify the regions or countries represented by its Latinx population. Therefore, this study aimed to look at participants from the three largest Latinx groups within New York State and City: Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and

Mexicans (Center for Puerto Rican Studies, 2016; The Department of City Planning, 2017; The Hispanic Federation, 2017).

Participants for this study were selected based on three criteria. Students had to be sophomores attending the community college where the study took place, self-identify as a first generation student, and identify as Latinx. Specifically, having students who were sophomores allowed me to examine the challenges experienced by FGS trying to graduate with an associate's degree. Moreover, interviewing these students helped this study examine how leaders within a community college can specifically help Latinx FGS graduate successfully and holistically. Additionally, by having the participants self-identify their race and status as a first generation student (FGS), it allowed me to minimize bias. The goal of this study was to have 10 to 15 students who identified as a Latinx FGS. Specifically, I would have liked to have 4-5 Puerto Ricans, 4-5 Dominicans, and 4-5 Mexicans because these three groups represent the largest Latinx groups living within New York State and New York City. Due to the intended college having more females than males, I aimed to have a representative number of participants because it was to be a small snapshot of the college at large (Creswell,2007).

Having 10 to 15 students allowed me to mitigate bias and validity threats by maintaining a close relationship with the data (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). This target sample size increased the probability of data saturation. However, according to Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006), a saturation of a homogeneous sample size happens between 10 and 15. To find potential participants, I visited a Student Cohort Program, its equivalent, student clubs, or organizations on-campus. A Student Program Cohort is a

group of students that belong to a certain program or organization such as Higher Education Opportunity Programs, TRIO, or Student Clubs on campus. In this instance, I located the Office of Student Life on the respective campus to get a list of possible eligible participants enrolled in student clubs or organizations to get a list of student clubs or organizations, which I randomly chose to visit.

To provide sufficient time for prospective participants to consider participation or privacy, I emailed invitation letters to those who may be eligible based on the list provided to me by the research site. For those who contacted me expressing interest, I sent out an invitation email (Appendix A) and a consent form (Appendix B). Should they have no issue with the documentation, they were provided with a scheduled face-to-face meeting, so I could conduct an interview with them. The justification for sending emails: an invitation email (Appendix A) and consent form (Appendix B), is to provide context for the potential participant so they could choose whether or not to participate. Furthermore, participation in this study was voluntary and was carried in a manner that was non-coercive.

Instrumentation

The key instrumentation that I used with participants is called the Interview Instrument (Appendix C). Appendix C outlines the protocol I used as I entered and exited the one-on-one interviews when I conducted with participants within this study. This instrumentation afforded me the opportunity to ask participants 9 questions based on predetermined themes gathered from the existing literature review. In return, these 9 questions addressed two overarching questions I sought to explore within this study.

Specifically, the first 8 questions asked participants about the perceived academic and non-academic barriers that hindered them from graduating community college. Whereas, the last question asked participants about what kind of support could college leadership offer to support Latinx FGS to graduate from a community college.

The interview questions in Appendix C also connect to the conceptual framework of the critical race theory (1995). According to critical race theory (1995), racism is endemic in the fabric of societal institutions within America and therefore these questions afforded participants the opportunity to use storytelling to counter any negative beliefs, stereotypes, dominant or oppressive identities that society perpetuates as true. Data gained from the one-on-one interviews was gathered with the assistance of recorded audio and video along with me and an independent coder scribing notes. The one-on-one interviews were then transcribed per participant and later categorized according to themes and patterns. Moreover, it was best for an additional person to review any instruments I created, my notes from interviews, and reports to minimize bias and validate the legitimacy of this study. Therefore, the interviews referred to the Interview Protocol Refinement Model. The model consisted of four phases: making sure that the interview questions are aligned with the research questions, creating an inquiry-based conversation, welcoming feedback regarding interview protocols, and lastly, conducting the interview protocol (Castillo-Montoya, 2016).

This study aimed to gather and understand the academic and nonacademic experiences faced by Latinx FGS, as told by themselves. According to Creswell (2007), a phenomenological tradition permitted me to understand the true nature of the academic

and nonacademic experiences that are unique to this population when I served as an active learner, set aside prejudgments, and use systematic procedures to analyze their lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Furthermore, a phenomenological tradition helped me gain an understanding of this study's phenomenon by interviewees providing a subjective, detailed description of the what and how of their experiences (Moustakas, 1994). This tradition helped interviewees share their experiences versus an outsider generalizing their experiences. By interviewees sharing their experiences, they were also able to challenge the status quo of a racially stratified society. Specifically, the interview questions that were used allowed the study to provide context for me to answer the main research and sub questions. This process is important because it allowed the participants to serve in a story-teller capacity in which he or she challenges the ahistorical narrative maintained by American society (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

To provide this study with the needed data, I recruited 10 to 15 Latinx first generation (FGS) students who are sophomores. Specifically, I recruited these individuals by visiting the Office of Student Life on the respective campus to get a list of possible eligible participants who are enrolled in student clubs or organizations. To provide sufficient time for prospective participants to consider participation or privacy, I emailed invitation letters to those who may be eligible based on the list provided to me by the research site. For those who contacted and expressed interest to me, I then sent out an invitation email (Appendix A) and consent form (Appendix B) with a scheduled face-to-face meeting so I could conduct an interview with them.

However, before conducting an interview with participants, I reviewed the informed consent form (Appendix B), which included the study's purpose and their rights such as the right to withdraw from this study at any time (Creswell, 2007). The consent had the following elements: identification of the researcher, sponsoring institution, clarity of how the participants are chosen, the study's purpose, benefits of participating, level of participation required, any possible risks, confidentiality clause, assurance that participants can withdraw at any point, and contact people to answer concerns (Creswell, 2007). Candidates interested in this study were asked to sign the informed consent form.

Next, I served as an interviewer or active learner, while participants used storytelling to share their experiences of trying to pursue a college degree within 2 years (Creswell, 2007). The way I commenced the "entering dialogue" of an interview was important in setting the tone for me having an interpersonal substantive conversation with the participant (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Yin, 2011). In doing so, I commenced the interview by doing a formal introduction that consisted of my name, role, the study's purpose, and informed consent for the record. Besides being an active learner, my goal during the interviews was to harness my ego and be an active listener (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Yin, 2011). Upon concluding an interview, I allowed the participant to have the last word and be vigilant of the time allotted for the interview (Yin, 2011). Hence, interviews ideally lasted for a minimum of 60 minutes and were conducted on the home campus. After the participant was done speaking, I said polite, thank you, and wished them best regards (Yin, 2011).

In conformance with the Interview Protocol Refinement Model, I recorded, transcribed, and coded the one-on-one interviews. Specifically, I used an audio recorder for participants to share their experiences. Next, I transcribed their interviews with the help of an independent coder. Copies of the participant's interview were then sent to them for review no later than one week from their scheduled face-to-face meeting. As a result, participants were asked to review their interviews and provide feedback. After this process, I assigned an identifying number or code to each participant, such as 'participant 1' followed by coding the data into categories, themes, and overlapping concepts central to this study.

Accordingly, all data was stored securely by me at home instead of at the study's home campus. Please note all audio records, handwritten or typed written records were kept in locked filing cabinets at an off-site location, and I used a password-protected laptop. Only I have access to the study data. All data is kept in storage for five years minimally as mandated by Walden University.

To minimize bias, I incorporated an intercoding approach for reliability. Intercoder reliability permits all notes from the interviews with participants to be objective and valid because I am using an independent coder to verify my findings (Creswell, 2007). Other ways to minimize bias included following procedures that deal with ethical issues that may or may not arise. Therefore, as a researcher, I ensured that all research plans were reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at my home college and the intended site of research, so participants are not put at risk (Creswell, 2007).

Data Analysis

All data gathered during the interviews was transcribed with the assistance of an audio recorder and written notes. Therefore, to organize these transcriptions, I mainly used a Modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of analysis for phenomenological data. The Modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method allowed me as a researcher to gain insight by having Latinx FGS use storytelling to share the academic and nonacademic challenges they perceive as barriers in earning an associates degree (Moustakas, 1994).

To provide structure and reflection of these narratives, I coded the data by reading the transcripts and seeing what storyline develops, followed by categorizing the data into codes and using memos to identify data that needs clarification or further analysis (Moustakas, 1994; Stuckey, 2015). The storyline that developed across the testimonies of 10 to 15 interviewees reflected the research questions being studied (Stuckey, 2015). Moreover, I used both predetermined and emergent codes along with a data dictionary to successfully code the data and maintain transparency (Stuckey, 2015). Overall, to help me keep track of relevant codes and minimize bias, I included an independent coder to help me stay objective.

Trustworthiness

Avoiding bias has always been a prerequisite for a study having trustworthiness, but eliminating it is never 100%. Because I am an Afro-Latinx college graduate of a public university, I was susceptible to experiencing confirmation and culture bias as a researcher. Specifically, a way I reduced confirmation bias was by consistently reevaluating the answers of participants to challenge my preexisting assumptions and

hypotheses (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000). Additionally, I reduced culture bias by utilizing cultural relativism through the application of unconditional positive regard and being aware of my cultural assumptions (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Moreover, to establish trustworthiness within my study, there were four variables that had to be present: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Shenton, 2004). The first variable of credibility ensured internal validity, whereas the second variable of transferability ensured external validity (Shenton, 2004). Credibility was important to establish because, without credibility, this study would have not had trustworthiness or be respected. Therefore, this study used 10 to 15 students who identified as Latinx FGS to create saturation of the homogenous sample size (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006; Gjuest et al., 2006).

Additionally, I used the following strategies to establish credibility: progressive subjectivity checks, emic or folk perspectives of the participants, and transcript review. (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Shenton, 2004). These strategies produce trustworthiness of the data so member checks can bolster the study's credibility (Shenton, 2004). Progressive subjectivity checks allowed me to archive my changing expectations based on predetermined and emerging interpretations of what is learned (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The emic or folk perspectives of the participants allowed me to learn further of any viewpoints told by the interviewees (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000). After the interview was transcribed, interviewees played a significant part in establishing the credibility of this study's research question as participants reviewed all

reports and served as natives telling their actual story (Creswell, 2007). Specifically, these strategies together, to produce trustworthiness of the data by compensating individual limitations of each interviewee's narrative, while also verifying certain details provided by individuals and as a group (Shenton, 2004). Therefore, verification of the interviewees' narrative is important in capturing their words to match their lived experiences and member checking a researcher's ability to develop an unbiased formative analysis (Shenton, 2004).

Transferability, on the other hand, refers to strategies used to establish a study's transferability of data for external validity (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Shenton, 2004). To establish transferability in this study, I used the strategy of thick description of the phenomenon under scrutiny (Shenton, 2004). A thick description helps readers decide if the results of the research question were transferable. By doing so, I provided readers with a description that was thorough, comprehensive, and shaped by the participants' storytelling versus my biases, so they can decide if the "overall findings ring true" (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Shenton, 2004).

The third variable of dependability evaluated the qualitative counterpart to reliability (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Shenton, 2004). To preserve the study's dependability, I used audit trails (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000). Dependability refers to strategies used to establish a study's dependability and the study's ability to be repeated (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Shenton, 2004). Specifically, audit trails were field notes that provided detailed descriptions, analyses, and synthesis of what I do, think and see (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Additionally, I used

open-ended interviews and an independent coder to allow me to check for biases or inconsistencies in notes, transcripts, or audio (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000). The last variable of confirmability evaluated the qualitative counterpart to objectivity (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Confirmability referred to strategies used to verify that findings are shaped by the participants and not by the researcher to uphold objectivity (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Shenton, 2004). To establish confirmability, I used the intercoder reliability approach, which involved participants and an independent coder. To minimize bias, I first invited interviewees to participate in the review of all reports (Creswell & Miller, 2000). They were encouraged to find and share errors, react to the data, and voice any concern. Also, I invited an independent coder to provide quality data based on an individual evaluation of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Ethical Procedures

I worked in advance with the IRB of my home college Walden University and the intended site of research to ensure I effectively applied the proper ethical protocol while addressing ethical concerns in this study. Firstly, my IRB approval number was # 07-01-19-0629110. Then, the proper ethical protocol that followed included the comprehensive design, facilitation, and ethical arrangements of the interview process, whereas some ethical concerns that may arise range from risks of harm, anonymity, and confidentiality issues for the participant. Working with Walden University allowed me to familiarize myself with the proper protocols that are needed to get my study approved as well as the guidelines for safeguarding the dignity, rights, and safety of participants from this study

(Creswell, 2007; Ritchie, 2003). Therefore, I ensured that my qualitative research includes informed consent and responds to ethical concerns (Yilmaz, 2013).

This study was designed and facilitated to ensure the research was carried out ethically with validation, reliability, and legitimacy (Creswell, 2007; Ritchie, 2003). In particular, applying the proper ethical protocols helped me to be more: objective, open to new ideas, and sensitive to the research data and experiences of the participants (Yilmaz, 2013). For example, interviewees needed delicate, framed, responsive questioning and time to examine the issue as they share their experiences through the form of storytelling (Seidman, 2006; Ritchie, 2003). At the same time, I practiced sensitive facilitation to assist them in sharing their emotions (Ritchie, 2003). Sensitive facilitation required carefully crafted predetermined questions that are responsive to an interviewee's experience. (Ritchie, 2003). However, having carefully crafted predetermined questions does not guarantee that the phenomenon being discussed would not impact participants, such as being distressed (Ritchie, 2003).

The study design also incorporated an interviewing approach that was in alignment with proper ethical protocols. By using an interviewing approach, I was able to affirm the participant as an individual without disparaging a community, collaborators, or the experiences of others (Seidman, 2006). Individual interviews allowed the interviewee to tell their lived story that is undiluted, authentic, and expressive of their thoughts and feelings (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Ritchie, 2003; Seidman, 2006). These narratives served as a consciousness for these participants and provided access to complex social and educational issues of America (Seidman, 2006). These abstract issues were defined by

concrete experiences faced by Latinx FGS trying to graduate college within 4 years (Seidman, 2006). Because research has been limited to this study's topic, the interviewees provided their perceptions and detailed understanding of their experiences as it relates to a societal system known as higher education.

In addition to having a comprehensive design and facilitation in place, ethical arrangements were also implemented to maintain proper ethical protocol. Ethical arrangements define the nature of research relationships. In essence, I applied the following ethical arrangements: obtaining informed consent for each participant, explaining clearly to participants the anonymity and confidentiality clause, and considering carefully how to protect participants and myself from harm (Creswell, 2007; Ritchie, 2003).

While conducting this study, I provided participants with important information about informed consent to maintain proper ethical protocol. To carry this out, I presented the information in a clear, balanced manner, so interviewees can have a full understanding and are not deterred from participating (Creswell, 2007). Also, I provided participants with information regarding the study's purpose, sponsorship, research team components, data usage, volunteer requirements, the assurance of withdrawing at any time, anonymity, and confidentiality (Creswell, 2007; Ritchie, 2003). As a researcher, some ethical concerns that may arise related to the anonymity and confidentiality clause and risks of harm. Anonymity and confidentiality had to be assessed throughout the study to ensure proper ethical protocol. As a result, I employed the following three steps. First, I ensured the identities of the participants are not known outside of the researchers or

third parties (Creswell, 2007; Ritchie, 2003). Secondly, I avoided using direct and indirect attribution of comments in reports or presentations (Creswell, 2007; Ritchie, 2003). And, lastly, I maintained the proper data storage of anonymized product (Creswell, 2007; Ritchie, 2003). Furthermore, to ensure participants and myself are protected from harm, I used sound judgment in deciding which details are irrelevant to the study, ask direct questions, and recognize when a participant is uncomfortable (Ritchie, 2003).

As a participant, some ethical concerns that may arise related to the disclosure and confidentiality clause and risks of harm. Disclosure and confidentiality were equally important for this study to ensure proper ethical protocol. Therefore, in alignment with proper ethical protocol, I did not disclose any information as it would be a breach of confidentiality unless given consent by the participant (Creswell, 2007; Ritchie, 2003). Outside of mandated reporting, if participant disclosed an issue, I encouraged them to self-report the issue to the appropriate parties or offer to speak to someone on their behalf (Ritchie, 2003). For all intent and purposes, I conducted all interviews in a closed conference room at the participant's home college with the participant and myself as the researcher. Furthermore, by participants being involved in this type of study, there were minimal or unlikely risks they faced no greater than what one would experience in daily life. Therefore, as a researcher, I informed participants upfront of the legal risks associated with their participation in this study, including the potential consequences of “self-incriminating” disclosures.

Summary

Chapter 3 explored the research method that was used in this study and how it was carried out. In doing so, this chapter addressed the study's research design and rationale, my role as a researcher, the role of the participant, the methodology, trustworthiness, and ethical procedures involved. Moreover, any successful qualitative study entails following proper ethical protocols to ensure that participants are respected, and ethical concerns are handled with care. Therefore, my study enlisted the proper care to ensure that participants are respected as well as their anxieties, concerns, or objections throughout the process. This study involved the participants throughout the process. This helped the study gain an authentic, first-hand account of the academic and nonacademic experiences faced by Latinx FGS who are trying to graduate college within 4 years.

Chapter 4: Results

As a reminder, the purpose of this qualitative study was to gain an understanding of the actual academic and nonacademic experiences that prevent Latinx first generation students (FGS) from graduating from a community college. These findings are meant to assist college leadership by increasing their awareness of the unique needs facing Latinx FGS to support them through to graduation while dismantling the inherent racism within its institution. Therefore, this study addressed two overarching questions that explored what Latinx FGS identify as barriers in graduating from a community college while providing feedback on how college leadership can support them in graduating.

Therefore, participants within this study used storytelling to narrate their perceived barriers of graduating from a community college. In doing so, the participants within this study also shared their perceptions of resources being offered at their community colleges related to supporting their ability to graduate. Within this chapter, the following areas will be reviewed: the setting, the data collection, the data analysis, results, evidence of trustworthiness, and an overall summary.

Setting

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic causing the United States to largely shut down, the only organizational condition that influenced this study and its participants was the pandemic itself. As a result, because the partnering organization was located within [redacted], accessibility to the campus was not an option. It affected how swiftly I could recruit and interview eligible participants as they too were adapting to the shutdown. I had to file for an extension to collect data as a consequence.

Regarding participant demographics and characteristics relevant to this study, there were key findings. For this study I aimed to recruit 4-5 participants per Puerto Rican, Mexican, or Dominican ethnicity. However, during the active recruitment of participants for this study, I was faced with an unexpected challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, the partnering organization and I worked together to advertise and identify eligible participants. In the end, I was able to recruit and interview 10 participants. Of the 10 participants, two were of Puerto Rican descent, one was of Mexican descent, four were of Dominican descent, two were of Puerto Rican and Dominican descent, and one was of Puerto Rican and Mexican descent (see Appendix F).

Besides being a Latinx of Puerto Rican, Mexican, or Dominican descent, all study participants were sophomores attending or graduating from a community college when they were first recruited, along with self-identifying as an FGS. Regarding their identified gender, the two genders represented within this study were: 8 out of 10 participants were female and 2 out of 10 participants were male (see Appendix F). Lastly, as regards demographics, 5 out of 10 participants were identified as nontraditional students, whereas 5 out of 10 participants were identified as traditional students (see Appendix F). The term 'nontraditional student' in this study was deemed to be a student who enrolled in college within 4 or fewer years of finishing high school. On the other hand, the term *nontraditional student* in this study was deemed to be a student who attended college 5 or more years after finishing high school. Each participant was given a series number or code to protect their confidentiality. For example, the first participant was labeled as Participant 1, and the rest followed a chronological order.

Data Collection

All interviews took place remotely over Zoom and took between 60 to 90 minutes to conduct. It took up to 5 hours for the independent coder to transcribe each interview, whereas it took me up to 2 hours to review the transcript based on my notes and the video recordings. After each interview was successfully transcribed, participants were emailed a copy to review before I proceeded. Participants typically took a week or two to review the interview transcriptions. It is worthy to note that all participants reviewed the interview transcriptions and did not request any revisions. Furthermore, it took a week and a half to organize the data gathered from the interviews. Overall, interviews took place over 6 months.

Due to this study happening during the COVID-19 pandemic, the only variations or unusual circumstances encountered throughout the data collection revolved around this study being conducted remotely versus in person. As a result, I was able to recruit 10 participants instead of my goal of having 12-15, and the internet connection was sometimes unstable. However, all parties involved in this study simply signed back onto Zoom and repeated an answer if necessary. Other than these unusual circumstances, no other circumstance was encountered in data collection.

Data Analysis

In organizing the raw data gathered during the data collection process, I constructed templates to organize the responses provided by the participants in this study. The names of these templates were:

- categorized challenges via raw data

- summarized categorized challenges
- predetermined themes
- emerging themes
- recommendations
- demographics

Each one-on-one interview that I conducted per participant was done by myself as the researcher and an independent coder. The role of the independent coder was to serve as an impartial agent who ensured that my questioning and following up was not biased. Accordingly, the independent coder transcribed the recorded interview, followed by both of us reviewing it against the recording. After each interview occurred, it was transcribed. Then, I sent the interview transcriptions to the participant for review. The participants okayed all interview transcriptions, and this was the raw data organized using the six templates mentioned above.

When organizing the raw data into these tables, I moved inductively from the coded units to larger representations. The first set of coded units used in this study were predetermined themes defined as a) general academic and nonacademic experiences, (b) academic preparedness, (c) language, (d) support system, (e) sense of belonging, (f) cultural identity, (g) gender, (h) general challenges, and (i) college leadership (see Tables 1 and 2). These nine predetermined themes represented the broad challenges that the literature review stated that Latinx FGS face academically and nonacademically. As the researcher alongside an independent coder, I read the interview transcriptions in

chronological order and wrote down the emerging themes or underlying reasons in the order we identified them.

Table 1

Type of Challenges Experienced per Participant Summarized

A, NA or, Both	P #1	P #2	P #3	P #4	P #5	P #6	P #7	P #8	P #9	P #10	# of Ps	Percentage
Both (general academic and nonacademic experiences)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	10	100%
A (academic preparedness)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	10	100%
Both (language)	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	7	70%
Both (support system)	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	9	90%
NA (sense of belonging)	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	8	80%
NA (cultural identity)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	9	90%
NA (gender)	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	8	80%
Both (general challenge)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	10	100%
A (college leadership)	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	9	90%

Note. Academic, Non-Academic, or Both Challenges were abbreviated as A, NA, Both. Additionally, the word participants were abbreviated as P.

Table 2

Responses for Predetermined Themes per Participant

Series Number	Question	Themes	Example Quotes
1	How do you, as a Latinx first generation student, describe your academic and nonacademic experiences of trying to graduate from a community college?	General academic and nonacademic experiences	"They didn't think I was smart enough to pass the test to get into [redacted] and it was really disappointing" (Participant #3).
2	As a Latinx first generation student, how did you feel academically prepared to attend a community college?	Academic preparedness	"I dropped out of high school in the ninth grade and I obtained a GED at the same time that all of my friends graduated from high school. [There was a time gap between dropping out and getting a GED of] about four years. Because I got my GED, I was not prepared for community college. I had to take remedial classes. I had to start from the bottom. I had no regents diploma" (Participant #6).
3	How do you feel language has played a role in you trying to graduate from a community college?	Language	"[Her vice principal in high school] was like "what are you doing speaking Spanish in this class--you should be able to speak English by now …That made me feel so bad...I literally stayed quiet"." (Participant #5)
4	While enrolled in a community college, who or what, does your support system consist of?	Support system	"Its like: what's going on...it's just you and one other Spanish boy or girl there. But it's okay, I just...I was explaining to my partner that this is amazing-- I'm about to graduate but I wish I had other Hispanics to share this experience with" (Participant #4).
5	As a Latinx first generation student, how do you describe your sense of belonging at your community college?	Sense of belonging	"Towards the end of my semester...I just finished my last semester in Fall of 2019. I didn't get much guidance from them. My last semester I applied for graduation...I did my part, but I hit a wall when it came to: 'how do I transition; how do I transfer to another college?' I asked and I asked and I saw two

			different advisers in two different departments and they told me the same thing. They thought it was a joke" (Participant #1).
6	How do you define your cultural identity?	Cultural identity	"It's very awkward for my family members when I tell them I'm Black… My community is very difficult because they find a way to whiten your identity for you. They say things like you're a 'refinada Negra' or 'refined Black girl'" (Participant #9)
7	How do you feel gender has played a role in you enrolling or trying to graduate from your community college?	Gender	"For me, I was the first guy that said 'I'm going to do something different...I want to school.' The girls usually get more education. The guys didn't finish high school" (Participant #8).
8	What do you, as a Latinx first generation student, describe as your biggest challenge in graduating from a community college?	General challenge	"I feel older and I don't have as much energy, so it's just trying to adapt and to see what I can and know what I can't do … I was googling how to read your textbooks correctly" (Participant #10)
9	What can your college leadership do to help you, as a Latinx first generation student, graduate from your community college?	College leadership	"My reason for graduating later involves economics. We live in poor areas, gotta work to pay for necessities. Other kids don't gotta worry about paying bills and just graduate" (Participant #2) "If I can have someone there that can explain to me the step-by-step and help me along the way towards graduation I feel that would really help me out" (Participant #7)

As I organized the participants' answers, their answers initially produced 123 emerging themes or underlying reasons they perceived as why they experienced the nine broad challenges mentioned above (see Appendix G). As a means of organizing these initial emerging themes, I created a color-coded response tier and ended up with most participants identifying only ten themes as the main underlying reasons they experienced these nine broad challenges (see Appendix H).

Specifically, between 5 and 7 participants identified the following as being the ten most prevalent emerging themes defined within this study:

1. Informal versus formal colloquialism: Writing and Speech organization is different from their everyday lives
2. Generational academic under-preparedness: There is an education gap between generations
3. Nontraditional student: Having a 5 or more year gap between finishing high school and enrolling into college.
4. Balance of complex priorities: Balance of More Complex Priorities
5. Immigration: Parents or individual traveling to America.
6. Individual adaptation or resilience during a pandemic: Adapting to the demand and technologies during pandemic (Individual Response)
7. Representation matters: An individual is able to connect and feel empowered by seeing persons similar to them concerning ethnicities, genders, struggles, goals, and credentials
8. On campus support via persons: Has support on campus (persons)

9. Peer support (informal not in clubs on campus): Having peer support in an informal setting outside clubs
10. Self-ambition: Self ambitions, goals, and desires

By creating a color-coded response tier, I critically analyzed which issues were most versus least prevalent for participants (see Appendix H). I reviewed and organized their answers as an individual and as a group per question I asked. In doing so, I established patterns by me using the research-developed instruments to quantify the responses and the types of responses that participants gave. Moreover, as a means for this study to contribute a purposeful approach to thematic analysis, I implemented the Modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of analysis for phenomenological data (Moustakas, 1994).

For reference, the Modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method allowed me to use storytelling in this study to have Latinx FGS share the academic and nonacademic challenges they perceive as barriers in graduating from a community college (Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, I coded the data by reading the transcripts and seeing what storyline developed, followed by categorizing the data into codes and using memos to identify data that needs clarification or further analysis (Moustakas, 1994; Stuckey, 2015). Moreover, the storyline that developed across the 10 interviews conducted included both predetermined and emergent themes later turned into codes (Stuckey, 2015). Specifically, the predetermined themes were based on the broad challenges listed within the existing literature. In contrast, the emerging themes were based on the underlying issues identified per broad challenge by the participants of this study. Thus, I created a color-coded

response tier to assist me in identifying the 123 emerging themes that I should focus on. The color-coded response tier consisted of three colors. Emerging themes that were highlighted in white indicated only 1 person of 10 participants identified those themes. Whereas emerging themes highlighted in pink indicated 2 to 4 people of 10 participants identified those themes. And, emerging themes highlighted in orange were identified by 5 to 7 people of 10 participants identified those themes. Because the emerging themes highlighted in orange had the most participants who identified the same themes, I reduced and focused on those 10 emerging themes. To keep track of relevant codes and minimize bias, I included an independent coder to help me stay objective.

Furthermore, to minimize discrepant cases, I applied the Modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method to permit me as a researcher to critically review and analyze the participants' responses by allowing Latinx FGS to use storytelling to share the academic and nonacademic challenges they perceive as barriers in earning an associate's degree (Moustakas, 1994). Specifically, by using this method, I organized the patterns according to a color-coded response tier. This study did not have discrepant cases. However, the closest to there being a discrepancy is that were some emerging themes only identified by one participant. Therefore, I did factor them into the analysis because I still referred to them briefly throughout this study while choosing to provide a detailed exploration of the themes classified as most prevalent and secondary prevalent emerging themes because they had more than one participant identifying the same theme. By applying the Modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method and having the one-on-one interviews facilitated with the participant, myself, and another individual, I was able to check my biases and produce

trustworthiness of the data throughout the process, thus increasing the study's credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Moustakas, 1994; Shenton, 2004).

Results

As can be recalled, between 8 and 10 participants identified the broad challenges represented by the predetermined themes mentioned in this study. However, in this section, I had the participants in their voice state why they were experiencing each broad challenge. This study aimed to answer the overarching question: What were the experiences of Latinx FGS trying to graduate from a community college?. More specifically, through the examined research questions I explored what Latinx FGS identify as barriers in graduating from a community college while providing feedback on how college leadership can support them in graduating.

To answer these overarching research questions, I first reviewed the participants' answers for each predetermined theme while addressing the most prevalent and secondary prevalent themes that emerged as underlying reasons why they experienced specific broad challenges.

Therefore, participants used storytelling to narrate their perceived barriers of graduating from a community college and their perceptions of resources being offered at their community colleges related to supporting their ability to graduate. Moreover, I listed the participants' perceptions per broad challenge or predetermined theme listed in this study. As I listed the participants' perceptions, I generally summarized the largely identified challenges mentioned per broad challenge before the participants' narratives were listed, followed by collective analysis of the perceived challenges expressed per

broad challenge. As the largely identified challenges were listed per broad challenge, some challenges developed a repeated pattern, thus lending the reader to recall the most prevalent and secondary emerging themes mentioned in this section. As a reminder, the most prevalent emerging themes had between 5 and 7 participants, and secondary emerging themes had between 2 and 4 participants who identified perceived underlying reasons for why they experienced challenges defined as the predetermined themes within this study.

General Academic and Nonacademic Experiences–10 Participants

The participants—both traditional and non-traditional FGS—within this study identified various academic and nonacademic experiences that served as challenges they faced while in college. A nontraditional student has more complex priorities compared to a traditional student. The additional responsibilities of nontraditional students often include balancing their family, work, and school with their self-ambition that may or may not conflict with their family's expectations of religious or traditional norms. Nevertheless, traditional and nontraditional Latinx FGS enter college with a lack of knowledge and the fear of the unknown due to generational under-preparedness. This barrier causes a misalignment of understanding, comprehension, and true relatability between Latinx FGS and their college. Thus, a Latinx FGS may enter college feeling alone, lost, or seeking specific, relevant support.

Even if Latinx FGS have support, it is often not aligned with what they want or need to navigate their college journey. For example, Participant 1 stated, "toward the end of my Fall 2019 semester, I felt abandoned by [redacted] ". Participant 1 had to serve as her

own support system while caring for an ill family member. Although she had initial institutional support, it quickly dissipated and failed to give her specific, relevant information and guidance to transition to a senior college. Participant 1 specified that support dissipated because when she visited college officials to seek knowledge of how to transfer, they viewed her visits as “a joke”. As a result, she was “left in limbo” of what to expect. Throughout this study, participants described the transition process as a stressor for Latinx FGS regardless of their degree of established knowledge capitals. For example, Participant 8 acquired some higher education in his homeland but found the lack of communication and competency from his current 2-year institution to be costly and traumatic. “The first thing they did was they did the wrong transfer… They gave me some credits for some classes, but those classes I didn’t need them for my undergrad and then I made a complaint and they continue to do it wrong over and over”. His experience at his 2-year institution was not because of a lack of knowledge on his part, but the institution's inability to transfer credits from his previous institution.

The transition period also brings fear of the unknown. Latinx FGS often come into college underprepared, both academically and non-academically. Therefore, the period between gaining pre-college preparedness, entering college, and transitioning into a 4 - year institution is critical to their ability to make and maintain connections with their learning institutions. More so, this is significant because Latinx FGS may not have a blueprint of what is or what is not considered a normal college experience. These circumstances, coupled with dominant and oppressive identities described in critical race

theory, make a Latinx FGS feel further marginalized despite the diversity within the institution.

For example, Participant 3 is a nontraditional student who was in an inpatient substance abuse program. Part of her being released from jail required that she participate in a program before applying to [redacted]. She was judged because of her past and deemed not smart enough. Participant 3 stated, "They didn't think I was smart enough to pass the test to get into [redacted] and it was really disappointing." Participant 5 is a traditional student who was in high school that did not demystify biases or expose her to opportunities. Specifically, she left high school believing that being a Latinx was a disadvantage and did not know how to network within diverse circles. She stated, "I'll say my time from high school leading up to College, I learned that being Hispanic wasn't necessarily going to be at my advantage.

Participant 9 is also a traditional student who started college at a 4-year institution, but later transferred to a 2-year institution. Without guidance from her family due to generational preparedness, she ended up in a college that was not a good fit for her. She stated, "It was a predominantly white college ... I had to fit one mold or another … It was very hard for me academically … I wasn't used to the workload and the time management and just the transfer process." As Participant 9 alludes back to the transition period of her transferring from a 4-year institution to a 2-year institution, it can be demonstrated that a lack of guidance has consequences.

A lack of guidance and support may affect a student's confidence and cause them to internalize trauma and biases. These feelings may be perpetuated by the dominant and

oppressive identities within institutions as mentioned within the critical race theory framework. These consequences can cause students to become silent at worst or become their advocates at best. However, either scenario may have fallacies. For example, Participant 2 stated that the societal stigma surrounding a Latinx FGS attending a 2-year institution versus a 4-year institution caused her to question her merit. She stated, “At first, when I went to community college, it was bad. I was like, Oh my God” because I am not going to a 4-year college.” Additionally, her confidence was tested as her English fluency was questioned once she was enrolled in a 2-year institution. Participant 2 recalled a professor saying, “When I got to my first college credit class, my professor … not saying he was racist, … I was told by the professor, ‘you need to go back to an ESL class’… I did not feel as if I was going to make it".

Moreover, Latinx FGS needs both on and off-campus accessibility and communication of opportunities delivered in real-time. Latinx FGS needs guidance from professional culturally competent, sensitive, and responsive individuals. Latinx FGS have various general academic and nonacademic challenges coexisting with compounding factors such as learning necessary knowledge capitals needed to navigate college. They also lack resources to respond to unexpected situations like remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, a dedicated safe space or platform where they can ask questions, advocate or learn of opportunities is needed. For example, Participant 6 stated, he went where the resources were located because resources such as scholarships or internships for individuals of Latinx dissent are not as readily available versus those of African dissent. He stated, “opportunities are hidden. It’s there, but as a Latino, you have

to jump through more loopholes.” Furthermore, Latinx FGS may lack capitals of knowledge. However, they have a desire to socialize. But responsibilities outside of school, often compete with their ability to partake in on-campus life.

For example, Participants 4, 7, and 10 had complex priorities trying to balance regardless of whether they are traditional or nontraditional students. For example, Participant 4 stated, "I am a mother so I couldn’t participate as much with the clubs and just being a part of the school only because I had other priorities I had to attend to like my family and my son." Whereas Participant 7 secondly stated,

> I wanted to scream from the top of my lungs sometimes because I’m young, I’m a kid . . . I’m supposed to just be in school . . . why do I have to work, why do I have to do all of this? But, it was always put in my head that it’s either you help contribute or we’re not going to have anything; we’re going to be homeless.

Participant 7 stated, “I’m a kid . . . I’m supposed to just be in school . . . But it’s . . . either you help contribute . . . [or] be homeless.” Participant 10 stated similarly to both Participants 4 and 7, "I think it’s more time management . . . trying to fit it all in and get it all done." Latinx FGS have various general academic and nonacademic challenges coexisting with compounding factors such as learning necessary capitals of knowledge needed to navigate college while using time management to respond to expected and unexpected situations like learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. These variables will help Latinx FGS be aware of specific and relevant opportunities without marginalizing them or making them feel unsupported.

Academic Preparedness–10 Participants

All participants identified they experienced academic preparedness challenges. Generally speaking, Latinx FGS lack quality pre-college knowledge for various reasons. Reasons include students: lacking generational under-preparedness, nontraditional transition [not enrolling in college within five years of finishing high school], lacking guidance, stigma, receptive bilingualism, and informal versus formal colloquialism. Other challenges include: pre-college preparation programs valuing aesthetics versus performance, needing specific relevant support, social progression, lack of communication, lack of support, relatability, plus culturally competent, sensitive, and responsive individuals. Five of the participants are all nontraditional students, but they have different starting points that impacted their academic preparedness for entering a 2-year institution.

For example, Participant 1's starting point was attending a high school that offered college courses, trades, and had a 10-year gap in education. She stated, "I picked up a college prep classes and prepped myself because I knew that from being in high school and I'm also older (I'm in my 30s), so it was a huge gap there." Secondly, Participant 3 was in an inpatient substance abuse program. She did not mention any other pre-college preparedness. However, she described her lack of academic preparedness as having "no experience with computers" and technological illiteracy. Thirdly, Participant 6 earned a high school equivalency (GED) and consequently stated, "I was not prepared for community college. I had to take remedial classes. I had to start from the bottom." Participant 8 completed a Master's program back in his homeland, yet faced similar

hardships at his 2-year college in the U.S. because of his receptive bilingualism. Specifically, he immigrated to New York, had to restart his education, and as a result, faced systematic challenges with his 2-year institution. He stated, "I transitioned here to the US and got a job in the department of Homeland Security and going to school full-time. For me, it was a little challenging ." Lastly, Participant 10, similar to participant #8, transitioned to New York within the United States. However, the time gap that she immigrated to New York and entered college was a big-time gap. Participant 10 stated, "Things have changed from when I used to go to school, so strategies and everything . . . I was not prepared." Regardless of these nontraditional students having different starting points of how they entered college, they share similar academic preparedness challenges with the participants who are traditional students.

Much like the nontraditional students, traditional students experienced academic preparedness challenges, even though they enrolled in a 2-year institution after high school. Of the five traditional participants, one student (Participant 2) started college by taking remedial classes; however, she attributed language as her reason. Expressly, she referred to speaking Spanish as a first language and addressed the topic of subjective language. Participant 2 stated,

> When I went to the ESL department, I was told by them, "I don't know why you were sent to us. You only have a few errors in your writing. Go back to your professor and say we okayed you to be in the class."

Moreover, Participant 2 addressed the importance of having professionals who have cultural competency, sensitivity, and responsiveness as she had no such support.

Without these elements, Latinx FGS can feel silenced, marginalized, and internalize preferentialism if stakeholders are not careful how they communicate. They can directly or indirectly respond to students with bias or perpetuate the dominant and oppressive identities within societal institutions as per the critical race theory framework. Participant 4 is a traditional student, and she addressed how better prepared her brother is for college than she was. “In his freshman year they were already talking about college … I didn’t know about college until I was in my junior year.”

Participant 4 also touched upon generational under-preparedness and its effect on her personally related to preparing for college. She stated, "I wish they had a program where our parents could be educated as well." These challenges further speak to her desire to end generational under-preparedness Similarly, two other participants addressed family expectations, pressures, and the stigma of becoming a stereotype. Participant 5's family immigrated to the United States, and she spoke of her awareness of how her actions directly impact her family and their sacrifices. Moreover, even though her family supports her, there is a limitation of their knowledge, comprehension, and relatability. However, Participant 5 is determined to end generational under-preparedness by being aware and making individual sacrifices to ensure her siblings can go to college as well. Interestingly, Participant 5 is the second oldest of their siblings but understands her contribution within the family unit relates to acknowledging there are financial pressures. Participant 5 spoke of her individual sacrifice as, "I'll be graduating, and then the following year my younger sister would be graduating, so … I know the moment we increase any of our expenses, we're not going to have any room to breathe."

Participant 7 attended a College Board high school where they offered AP and College Now classes. Despite her being exposed to college classes as a high school student, she experienced social promotion. She stated, “I was terrible in math and they knew it but they still let me go through even though I wasn’t prepared. I took remedial classes when I got to community college and I still couldn’t pass it.” Her high school academically promoted her, even though she could not pass math courses. The idea that her high school valued the aesthetic of promoting students and getting them placed into college is detrimental in providing quality precollege preparation. Additionally, this is also echoed by Participant 9. Participant 9 addressed how the generational under-preparedness of her household contributed to her feeling less than and making her question the perception of what and who is smart. Specifically, due to participant #9's parents' inability to comprehend what college entailed, they could not deliver the specific relevant support she needed. Therefore, she stated,

> A lot of the information I know I’ve had to learn for myself. My parents didn’t go to college . . . they barely graduated high school … they couldn’t relate to a lot of the struggles that I was going through.

Regarding needing support, her parents' coping mechanism to respond to trauma or offering Participant 9 advice was prayer or avoidance behaviors.

Participant 9, similarly to the other participants, expressed a desire to share their college experiences with their family and are unable to because of the educational gap between them is inequitable. Even if families want to offer support, their support is limited as they do not have a proper understanding of a process they never experienced.

Therefore, they cannot offer other forms of support that Latinx FGS may or may not want or need more of.

Language–Seven Participants

Latinx FGS may or may not face language challenges when trying to graduate from college. Some challenges may involve informal versus formal colloquialism, receptive bilingualism, internalizing biases, subjective language, the stigma surrounding a Latinx FGS asking for help, and general adaptations to learning. Of the participants who identified having a language challenge related to their academics, there seems to be an overarching theme of informal versus formal colloquialism and insecurities based on the perceptions of others in society. Moreover, it is important for Latinx FGS to have culturally competent, sensitive professionals who know how to respond to this population. Also, first impressions are important to Latinx FGS as they may sour or hinder their desire to forge relationships, especially within their colleges, thus causing them to internalize biases. These aspects above do not eliminate the effects of generational under-preparedness. Therefore, I will address the first overarching theme of informal versus formal colloquialism to understand what it entails.

In this study, we must acknowledge the different facets of this concept. Informal versus formal colloquialism refers to a disconnect or difference in how one organizes their speech and writing when operating in one language or applying a language standard outside of one's native language. To be clear, language in this study is defined, through its participants, to mean speech and writing that does not align with what is considered mainstream or standard English. Another variance of informal versus formal

colloquialism is receptive bilingualism. Receptive bilingualism is when one can comprehend what another is saying but cannot fluently or does not know how to respond verbally or in writing. Receptive bilingualism is the precursor to informal versus formal colloquialism, but it does not equate to a student not achieving academic success.

For example, Participant 3 was advised to work on her speaking and communicating standard English actively. She stated,

> That is the one area that I've been told that people in high places at the college that they just really want me to work on standard English. If I can just work on that it would be a good investment.

Participant #3 did not interpret this advice negatively as she thought working on her standard English was a good investment in her education. However, not all Latinx FGS interpret society's opinion or others as positive depending on the context. For example, Latinx FGS can internalize biases and carry these insecurities within themselves, affecting their desire to socialize or make healthy relationships. Three of the participants said their first language is Spanish, while their second language is English. All three participants expressed how even though they knew English, they did not feel confident communicating in public in fear of what others thought of their accent. They felt as though they did not measure up to their classmates, whom they considered smarter because of their English proficiency.

Expressly, Participant 5 stated in college that she has days when she wants "to speak in English but just can't" because she is unable to or is embarrassed due to her accent. She also alluded to an experience of when she spoke Spanish openly in high

school and was chastised by a culturally insensitive professional. She stated, her vice principal was like “what are you doing speaking Spanish in this class--you should be able to speak English by now …That made me feel so bad . . . I literally stayed quiet.” That experience resulted in trauma that caused her to view her bilingualism as shameful. He perpetuated the dominant and oppressive identities within societal institutions as per the critical race theory framework. Similarly, Participant 7 stated she did not participate in class because "a lot of people would tell me straight up that I have an accent and I would … always try to fight that." In addition to her insecurity about what others thought of her based on her accent, she also shared how her insecurity affected her comprehension and writing capabilities. When she writes, she must recheck her work because she writes the ways she speaks broken English.

A lack of confidence in speaking English affects a Latinx FGS's ability to speak and write and their willingness to ask for help. For example, participant #10 stated that she gets stuck between the English and Spanish languages when she gets nervous. She stated, “If I get nervous, my accent would jump in and it will get stuck between the Spanish in English. You don’t know which one to speak.” Rather than asking for help or clarity of something discussed in class, she developed a general adaptation to her learning. She utilized Google to research on her own. Along with these insecurities are the consequences of Latinx FGS feeling silenced, marginalized, and internalizing the stigma of generational unpreparedness, and thus not advocating for specific, relevant support one wants or needs.

Moreover, trauma may develop and affect a Latinx FGS's ability to network and graduate. For example, per Participant 6, "language is very important when it comes to being able to communicate necessities or [ask for] assistance that you may need along the journey … I feel like we were all socialized differently." This point is echoed by Participant 8. When he started at his 2-year institution, he was offered an ESL satellite program that taught him the basics of English as he struggled with receptive bilingualism. However, he stated language became a problem, "when you arrive to the school. That program was a satellite program and when you actually take the English [college level] classes you feel like this is easy. It was more difficult in the ESL program." Specifically, he addressed how his 2-year institution offered him a great ESL satellite program, but it failed to replicate the exact expectations of what his college classes would require. He was affected by the romanticism or the idea of what his college experience would look like for him at a 2-year institution. This lack of communication leads to anxiety and avoidance due to fear of the unknown and lack of support. Depending on the Latinx FGS, they may or may not know how to respond or advocate for specific and relevant support they need because of generational under-preparedness and a lack of guidance.

Support system–Nine Participants

Latinx FGS may or may not have support systems. Nine of the 10 participants claimed they experienced support system challenges. As per the participants within this study, Latinx FGS seek specific relative support, true relatability, dedicated cultural spaces to express themselves culturally competent professionals who provide consistent access to resources. For Latinx FGS without any familial support, they need the most

consistent support and guidance from the institution they attend. These elements are required as the institution serves as a community creating a sense of belonging as well as providing a safe space. Latinx FGS, especially those without a support system, seek specific relevant support, even If they cannot fully experience on-campus life.

For example, Participants 1 and 10 are nontraditional students who appreciated the resources offered at their colleges and expressed their desire to socialize. However, they were unable to balance their complex priorities. Participant 1 shared a multilayered response to her challenges. She stated, “I am my own support … Besides school, I also have other priorities to juggle so I didn’t get to experience more relationships on campus.” By her going to college, she has challenged the traditional norms of what is expected of Latinx females. Isolated or being “a loner,” she sacrificed familial traditions and relationships with the men in her life. She further revealed that she did not have an opportunity to interact with her college because she balanced other priorities, including childcare and financial hardship during the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, Participant 1 was candid to share that she felt abandoned by her community college at the end of her Fall 2019 semester due to college officials thinking her search for knowledge to be “a joke.”

Latinx FGS need to have consistent guidance and communication of information as they come into college with deficit knowledge capitals. Participant 10, for example, had direct support from her husband and from her sister. However, she could not take full advantage of all the resources her college had to offer, affirming she had to balance her job and family with school. She stated that "In school, now because it is an online

platform, it is more accessible. [Before], I had to go to school... to work, and I did not have much time to go [seek on-campus resources]". However, by the college offering classes and supplemental support online due to the pandemic, she could participate more as a student. She wished this option existed before the pandemic, so she would have had flexibility and accessibility to be a more interactive student.

Latinx FGS need knowledge and guidance to inform them of the unknown—campus culture. For example, Participant 9 wished she had guidance and context, especially when she started college. Although she mentioned she was given a peer mentor, it was not enough. She stated, "The peer mentor I had . . . she was cool, but she had her own things and I didn't wanna overwhelm her with my issues." Her lack of experiences affected her ability to respond to various situations due to generational under-preparedness. She further stated, "I have enough experience, so now, even if things are new to me, I know how to react better to them." One of the challenges she also addressed was having clinical depression, and through therapy and research, she is now better equipped to deal with unexpected situations. Furthermore, she stated, "Besides guidance and the accessibility and communication of opportunities on or off campus, Latinx FGS need to find a safe space filled with a culturally competent and sensitive professionals who listens and can understand them." Participant 9 alluded to a recurring recommendation offered by the participants of this study as she stated that Latinx FGS need a safe space filled with culturally sensitive professionals who understand their unique challenges and cultural dynamics.

Cultural responsiveness and competency help Latinx FGS feel supported regardless of where they receive support from within their institutions. However, it is worthwhile to note that because the participants of this study did not have a dedicated cultural platform, some participants found support in various places. However, that support came from persons and programs within the institution rather than the institution itself. For example, six participants all identified some sort of program they belonged to that providing holistic support.

Two participants cited Project IMPACT as their main support system. For example, Participant 5 stated when a person wants, “to come by and talk to someone, sit around for a bit and have a conversation with someone, that is the place that you can go to. You can reach out to them for anything.” Other participants cited the Success program and the Urban Male Leadership Academy (UMLA) at their institution as their source of support. An example why participants cited the Success program for support was highlighted by Participants 7 and 9 . Participant 7 stated her advisors "have good communication and they’re on me.” Whereas Participant 9 stated her academic counselors became her support system “after taking a break.” An example why participants went to ULMA for support was highlighted by Participant 3. She stated the ULMA director “has actually sat down with me because in the learning center … there were times when no one was available.” Other sources of support include on-campus Counseling Centers and the Small Business Services.

An example why participants cited on-campus Counseling Centers for support was highlighted by Participant 6. Participant 6 stated, “I developed a relationship with

somebody that I really liked in the counseling center I was able to go into people's offices and they were able to give me a hand and support me." An example why participants cited the Small Business Services for support was highlighted by Participant 8. Participant 8 stated the coordinator "sat me down and spoke to me about what I needed to learn. The participants all received some support from a program where they collectively felt listened to and understood". Participants 3, 5, 7, and 9 identified as females and cited both females and males as contacts of support. Whereas, Participants 6 and 8 identified as males, but cited males as being contacts of support in building mentoring relationships with whom they shared a cultural commonality. Differing from this pattern is Participant 4. She was part of the Women's Center and a program called PEPS. Even though she was part of these support programs, she still felt like a loner similar to Participant 1. Despite these participants receiving support from different programs, it is important to recognize that their identified support largely does not come from the institution itself.

It is important to recognize why the participants felt comfortable going to these programs for support. For example, participants went to IMPACT for support because they could reach out to personnel for anything. Whereas participants went to UMLA for support because the staff, including the director, provide personalized academic support services. Moreover, participant #8 stated, he was able to develop a relationship with the coordinator due to him being in the business field he was studying. Generally, these participants above all received some support from a program where they collectively felt listened to and understood. Participants in this study identified these programs because they offered accessibility, knowledge, true relatability, and guidance. Therefore, the

institution at large needs to emulate the holistic support offered by specialized programs such as UMLA, IMPACT, or the Success program.

Sense of Belonging–Eight Participants

Latinx FGS face unique challenges related to having a sense of belonging within and outside their institution. Eight of 10 participants said they experienced a sense of belonging challenges. The participants within a study attributed their sense of belonging challenges to culturally incompetent and insensitive staff. Knowledge of what is to come and guidance on navigating the unknown is critical for Latinx FGS college success. Without context, Latinx FGS may develop feelings of abandonment, anxiety, insecurity, doubt, and impostor syndrome. Anecdotally, Participant 1 experienced a disconnect with the institution due to the culturally insensitive staff who minimized her attempts at self-advocacy. Experiences such as this may lead Latinx FGS to develop insecurities. This reality may conclude that many other Latinx FGS were treated the same but did not report the mistreatment. Regarding insecurities, they can affect a Latinx FGS's ability to have a sense of belonging and influence how one's self-perception.

Participants 1 and 3 experienced different transitional periods along with fear of the unknown. During the last semester of Participant 1, she lost her sense of belonging at her college versus Participant 3 entering college with anxiety but was met with support. For example, Participant 1 stated,

> My last semester I applied for graduation...I did my part, but I hit a wall when it came to … how do I transfer to another college? I asked … different advisers … [and] they thought it was a joke.

Whereas, Participant 3 stated, “When I first started I was afraid. I felt intimidated … I felt anxiety and I wanted to quit.” Unlike Participant 3, Participant 1 experienced a disconnect with the institution due to the unprofessionalism of staff as they viewed her attempts to seek knowledge as a "joke." Experiences lead Latinx FGS to develop insecurities. This reality begs this study to ask how many other Latinx FGS were treated the same or, as Participant 1 stated, "If I experienced it how many more people experience this and didn't speak up." Regarding insecurities, they can affect a Latinx FGS's ability to have a sense of belonging and influence how one's confidence and comfortability in them being their authentic self.

Secondly, Participants 4, 6, and 7 experienced issues that affected their confidence, thus making them question if they belonged to any particular circle. For example, Participant 4 stated,

> I came to the school very uncertain. I wasn’t confident at all and now that this is my last semester I am leaving with this sense of confidence and I know it if I had any questions I can come back.

Whereas, Participant 6 stated, “Before, I would ask someone to ask someone. I’m not scared to be incorrect anymore if they need to redirect me somewhere else I won’t be discouraged as opposed to before.” And, Participant 7 stated, "I think of the sentence in my brain before I say it because I don’t want to sound stupid". Participants 4, 6, and 7 shared how they initially felt insecure or hesitant to ask for help or how to communicate without fear of others judging. However, they shared further how they overcame these

insecurities through holistic support, accessibility, communication of knowledge, and guidance.

Unlike these participants, Participants 8, 9, and 10 showed a deep desire to socialize but doing it so terms of their comfortability. For example, Participant 8 stated, "I don't have time to go to the clubs but I say to them let's go out a little bit and have a beer. We share how our college experiences such as which professors to take for which classes." He found more reassurance in gaining informal knowledge from his peers because his advisors lacked professional knowledge. Similarly, Participant 9 described her belonging to an informal group of classmates who may need guidance and formally is part of an organization off-campus. She stated,

> [Informally] I like helping people so if I see a classmate struggling … I try to help them out ... Formally I am a part of #degreesNYC which is a collective action group which focuses on creating student ready campuses.

And, lastly, Participant 10 described her sense of belonging as being entuned with her priorities outside of college. She stated, "I wouldn't say [there was not a need to network]...maybe it would have been nice, but honestly because of my schedule, I did not have the time." All three of these participants showed the desire to socialize or doing it on their terms of comfortability.

Latinx FGS have many challenges as it relates to them establishing a sense of belonging for themselves. Therefore, they develop informal groups of students who share common cultural elements. Three shared their sense of belonging as being tied to outside sources for socialization. For example, Participant 8 described him as an informal group

of males off-campus who share the commonality of business. Similarly, Participant 9 described her as an informal group of classmates who may need guidance and formally is part of an organization off-campus. Lastly, Participant 10 described her sense of belonging as being able to balance her priorities outside of college. She stated she had interests in a club, workshop, and meeting offers but could not partake due to familial responsibilities. Overall, these participants demonstrated that their sense of belonging could be influenced by their priorities, having professional, culturally responsive staff, accessibility, and consistent communication of opportunities to come.

Cultural Identity–Nine Participants

Latinx FGS has a plethora of challenges as it pertains to their cultural identity. Nine of ten participants identified they experienced cultural identity challenges. The participants of this study identified challenges chiefly centralized around changing traditional roles and the evolution of their cultural identity. For example, four participants who identified as female challenged what is traditionally expected of them. By these participants challenging what others believe should be their role as a woman, their contributions within their family, and their position within a patriarchal society, they actualize their self-ambition, experience self-sacrifice and familial isolation.

For example, Participant 1 stated, “Being a first generation . . . I’m doing everything opposite the traditional role of typical Hispanic person. I’m not really at home where I’m able to cook three meals a day the way my mom did, or clean.” Participant 1 highlighted her difficulties in challenging her family tradition. As she stated earlier, attending college meant facing opposition from her brother, father, and romantic partners.

In challenging her male familial members, she experienced familial isolation as they were unable to understand and relate to her self-ambition. Similarly, three other participants faced familial isolation but varying levels. For example, Participant 2 shared how she is encouraged by her family to go to college, but that support does not encompass her extended family. Participant 2 stated,

> Education is not going to make me famous, but it is what my parents refer to as the tool that will make me the star I am meant to be. But, it's different with others … I am a Latina fighting statistics.

Moreover, participant #2 affirmed that her education is a vehicle for her immediate family to achieve upward social mobility regardless of the extended family's support. The results should yield progression and thus validate her family's sacrifices.

On the other hand, Participant 7 expressed that even though she has some support from her mother, and also shared the pressure, she has from her mother to start a family. She stated,

> My mom looks at me and it's like when are you gonna give me grandchildren. It's like expected from us like we're supposed to build a family; we're supposed to know how to cook … [or] you'll never get married.

This pressure shows the complexity of their relationship as mother and daughter. It also shows the generational expectations surrounding a woman's role and identity as existing around finding a husband. Both the pressure coming from her mother and society stems from the same system or institution other participants have also been challenging. The aforementioned creates familial isolation for Latinx FGS as they establish self-ambition

and redefine their self-identity. Participant 9 mentioned she had “spiritual support” from her mother when she referred to the challenges she faced within her support system earlier. However, the challenge concerning her mother and others within her ethnic group is her identification with Blackness which traditionally is not positively accepted. She stated,

> It's very awkward for my family members when I tell them I'm Black.… My community is very difficult because they find a way to whiten your identity for you. They say things like you're a “refinada Negra” or “refined Black girl".

By advocating for her Blackness, she is helping to end generational bigotry. She introduced new knowledge that challenged what her family holds to be true concerning their culture and identity. Her advocacy would help dismantle the perpetuation of dominant and oppression identities identified within the critical race theory framework and stereotyping within the family unit. This action is especially significant as she is helping her family address insecurities about their aesthetics. For example, Participant 9 stated how her father's self-hatred of his dark skin spilled into her not being allowed to date or marry a Black person. By challenging what her family believes, she has established her identity as she sees fit regardless of others not yet understood. Similarly, participant #8 proudly identified as Black.

Unlike Participants 5 and 7, Participant 8 did not define his cultural identity based on gender or Christian beliefs, but rather around his Jewish faith. Therefore, his cultural identity is defined not primarily by his Blackness or traditional norms but also by his

religious norms. He stated, "I am Latino and Jewish—actually, Sephardim [name of a Jewish person comes from Spain] … the whole Latin culture is Catholic".

Participant 10, just like Participants 2, 7, and 9 is a female who had support to attend college, but chose to follow tradition related to prioritizing her family and household while balancing college. she stated that her Dominican culture centralizes around customs, organizing, and being family-oriented. Participants 3 and 4 define their cultural identity as discovering and reconnecting with missing aspects of their culture. These very aspects relate to the traditional characteristics that are traditional. Specifically, Participant 3 stated, “My father passed when I was very young. I never had an opportunity to meet anyone from his family [but Dominicans] stick together … they would welcome me in with open arms.” She wished to connect with her deceased paternal family as she finds Dominicans to be tightly knitted and welcoming. Participant 4 further stated, “I wish I met more [Latinx] people [who] I can identify with at school [and] … I want [my son] to preserve a little bit of everything mainly food, culture, spending time with family and the language”. She wished she had more Latinx to connect with at her school, while she also wished for her son to preserve his Latinx culture by learning how to speak Spanish fluently.

By these participants shaping their identity based on their terms, it becomes apparent that there is not just one definition to describe what a Latinx FGS's cultural identity is without acknowledging the complexities of self-ambition and tradition dictated by society. Participants 9 and 3 described one complexity related to how Blackness is seen within the Latinx community. Participant 9 described her “Latinadad” (Latinx

culture) is at odds with the Latinx community because her ethnic group rejects Blackness as a part of their culture and history and instead perpetuates the dominant oppressive identities created by society having a Whiteness standard as per critical race theory.

It is worthy to note that Participant 9 sees similarities to her blackness and other black Americans. However, the opposite of what Participant 9 describes as her ethnic group rejecting blackness can be observed Participant 3 was more accepting of her Latinx roots that she did not know of rather than her African-American blackness. For example, Participant 9 stated, "Dominicans would look at you and say 'why do you need to say you're black' and black people will sometimes be like 'Why, you're Black . . . I can't really understand how your Latinidad plays a role in your Blackness.'"

Whereas Participant 3 stated,

> If you ask my daughter her nationality she's going to say Dominican, she's not going to recognize herself as African American … if I go someplace that's the first thing people ask me: am I Dominican? [I identify] as Afro-Latina.

Latinx FGS has many challenges as it pertains to having a clear-cut answer. Many variables consider, including them trying to adapt to new countries while maintaining their authenticity.

For example, Participant 5 stated, "Growing up half of my life in the Dominican Republic and then here, I do identify as Dominican but there's the other side where you're also American. Even though here there are people who would say you're not American." She is a daughter of immigrants and a Latinx FGS. Moreover, she addressed the biculturalism challenges of preserving one's cultural tradition while learning to

engage within the mainstream, even if mainstream society questions one's belonging. Therefore, Latinx FGS do not have one definition of what makes up their cultural identity, but it is safe to say it is more than religion and tradition.

Gender–Eight Participants

Similar to the cultural identity expressed by the participants within the study, the concept of gender is changing within the Latinx community. Eight of the 10 participants identified they experienced gender challenges. Moreover, gender looks different for Latinx FGS who identified as female versus those who identified as male. For example, six participants identified as female Latinx FGS versus two who identified as a male Latinx FGS. Moreover, Participants 1, 4, 5, 7 9, and 10 described their challenges of being a female, resulting from them wanting to create their own identity while coexisting within spaces with expectations of what they should do based on their gender within society. However, this looks different for each participant.

For example, Participant 1 firstly stated, “I’m raising daughters, and if I’m going to do it I have to do it well … I’ve over-powered someone trying to lower my self-esteem. educating myself this power in itself.” She chose to attend college because gender roles have changed, and she has daughters. Thus, she found educating herself as power in itself as a weapon against oppression. Secondly, Participant 4 stated, "Being a woman alone is a lot … not only do we have to take care of children, but we have to take care of the home … and [try] to earn your degree." Similarly, to Participant 1, she chose to attend college so her son can have a brighter future. Thirdly, Participant 5 stated she sometimes think, “Maybe I’m not cut out for that [job opportunity],” but sometimes I just

think that way because I see it being predominantly men … I think being a woman does push you a lot more." Further, she stated when applying for employment within her intended career can be challenging as it is predominantly men, and sometimes she questions if she is worthy even to apply. Fourthly, Participant 7 stated,

> When I walk to Wall Street … These people live a whole different lifestyle … I didn't just want to be the typical Latina that lives with her Puerto Rican boyfriend in an apartment in the Bronx with two kids".

She was adamant of not being a stereotype, who is unwed with children, when there are more opportunities in life.

Additionally, Participant 9 stated that her grandmother said she should stay home instead of college. She "had to tell her no this is [not] the 1940s, I need to go to college." Whereas her mother stated, the role of a female is to stand by her husband even if she was abused. She specified, "If somebody is your husband even if he verbally or physically abuses you married him, that's your husband." On the other hand, her institution has a shock when she pushes back on policies or asks questions. She made clear, "If I'm asking for something, even if it's clarification, I shouldn't be having to jump through all of these hoop.". Lastly, Participant 10 stated that the challenge resides within herself. She said, "When I can't [cook or clean], he [my husband] cooks and cleans, but to me . . . I guess because of the way I was brought up I feel it's more my responsibility than his." She has support from her husband, but she feels as she should be the dominant person taking care of the household as a female because of tradition. Through these narratives, it can be observed that female Latinx FGS are not trying to

compete with their male counterparts but instead better themselves and their family. In bettering themselves, they are discovering how accessibility and the procurement of knowledge are robust. Instead, these female participants indicated they wanted knowledge and wanted to be respected as individuals with a strong voice to express themselves.

As it relates to male Latinx FGS, two male participants had similar goals in pursuing a college degree. Specifically, these male participants sought to finish college to be on par with the females in their circles. However, this looks different for each participant. For example, Participant 6 stated, "I always felt that women are smarter than men … But I just felt like I wanted something to prove. I'm in a room full of women, and I didn't want to be emasculated." Similarly, Participant 8 stated, “I want to [go to] school.” The girls [in my family] usually get more education. The guys didn’t finish high school". Participant 8 wanted to be the first male to go to college as the girls in his family receive more education. He specified that the males in his family did not complete high school. Both participants looked to the females in their circles for motivation to better themselves than their families or others. Their self-ambition directs the female and male participants in this study to challenge the traditions within their culture, family, or society that dictates a female's role is to be a housewife and a male's role is to be a provider. Furthermore, in doing so, these Latinx FGS or using their voices to challenge the perpetuating dominant and oppressive identities of critical race theory can be seen within various societal institutions, not just within their colleges.

General Challenges–10 Participants

Latinx FGS have many general challenges as it pertains to them trying to graduate from college. All participants identified they experienced general challenges. Besides them entering college with deficit knowledge capitals or experiences, they face needing a multitude of resources to assist them in graduating. Specifically, the four main challenges surrounded: transitions, financial pressures, adaptability to learn, and relatability. These main challenges were present before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For example, four participants (Participants 1, 3, 7, and 8) addressed their challenges concerning different points of transitioning. Participants 1 and 7 addressed their challenge of gaining information from the college concerning how to transfer into a 4-year institution. These participants alluded as to why transitioning is so challenging, and it is because of fear associated with the unknown or starting again. First, Participant 1 stated, "The transition . . . just transferring and being kind of left in limbo not knowing what's next." She stated that the transition from community college into a 4-year college left her in limbo. Participant 7 similarly stated that "it's graduating and getting into a 4-year school." She stated, transitioning into a 4-year school is like starting over." These participants eluded as to why transitioning is so challenging, and it is because of fear associated with the unknown or starting again.

On the other hand, Participants 3 and 8 addressed a different transition period. This transition period was going from in-person learning to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, Participant 3 stated, "The hardest challenge that I've had in [redacted] that's far: I was doing the math online and not having anyone that you can

contact." Thus, her most difficult challenge at her community college was completing a Math course remotely during the pandemic and not having access to tutors. Participant 8 heightened added layer to the hardships when he stated, “I borrowed a tablet from [redacted] and they called me and I have to return the tablet. Well, [it was] the middle of the semester … It’s supposed to be for the semester.” He borrowed a tablet from his community college but was told to return it by a specific due date, which was weeks before the end of the semester.

Both participants highlighted the need for the institution to ensure accessibility and clear communication of information. Latinx FGS face a great deal of hegemonic barriers and are less likely to quickly adjust to unexpected situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic. In these cases, Participant 3 paid for a private tutor, and Participant 8 had to pay for a tablet with funds earmarked for other expenses. Those independent actions allowed them to successfully complete the semester. The topic of financial pressures is further purported by Participant 2, stating, "during the first 2 years, I felt economic stress … Dad couldn't support me economically halfway into college anymore." These participant testimonials validate that Latinx FGS need additional and consistent resources to graduate college.

Four participants (Participants 4, 5, 8, and 10) addressed how they did not know how to read textbooks correctly, establish time management strategies and conduct research both before and during the pandemic. Even though they tried their best to adapt to learning, they still faced challenges. For example, Participant 4 stated her challenge as being "finding the time to studying " and "online classes" versus Participant 8 stated his

challenge was the institution not teaching "how to do research well online." Participant #10, on the other hand, stated her challenge revolves around her being a nontraditional student, "I feel older and I don't have as much energy, so it's just trying to adapt and to see what I can and know what I can't do … I was googling how to read your textbooks correctly." These participants shared their challenges, but their narratives highlight their tenacity to be resilient and remain committed to their goal of graduating college even if they lack knowledge or guidance.

For Latinx FGS, having a culturally dedicated safe space or culturally competent and sensitive individuals is significant for them to: use their voice, socialize and feel empowered. Participants 6 and 9 addressed how and why representation matters. For Latinx FGS representation matters because it helps students feel comfortable. For example, Participant 6 who identified as a male stated, "I felt kind of like my guard was up speaking to people who weren't of Latin dissent that were trying to help me … they weren't able to 100% identify with me...it was just empathy [like a savior complex]." On the other hand, Participant 9 who identified as a female stated, further purported that representation matters in college because Latinx FGS may not have people back home who can relate to their challenges or wins. She stated, "When there're small wins, you want somebody to celebrate it with you and I feel like for me it's harder to get that when your family doesn't understand college." The participants invoked the message of how important it is for Latinx FGS to be in an environment that understands and offers true relatability. Having true relatability or representation matters to Latinx FGS because they lack familial circles with knowledge, comprehension, and relatability of what college

entails. Therefore, Latinx FGS need guidance, knowledge, and an institution that is culturally competent and sensitive to the various general challenges they face while attempting to be pioneers in their own right.

College Leadership–Nine Participants

The participants within this study identified different challenges that they have experienced with college leadership. Nine of the 10 participants identified they experienced college leadership challenges. These challenges involve the transition, communicating information in real-time, lacking a culturally dedicated platform, representation, guidance, culturally competent professionals who are responsive and more accessible. These challenges can be categorized into four main topics: communications in real-time, a culturally dedicated platform, culturally responsive training, and more accessibility.

Regarding communications not happening in real-time, four participants (Participants 1, 4, 7, and #) addressed this in different contexts. For example, participants #1 and #7 addressed how communication happening in real-time is significant as it minimizes fear of the unknown. Participant 1 firstly stated, "Having a first-year welcoming session, they need to do that for college transfers [to 4-year schools]. Don't expect us to know everything just because there are pamphlets... Things need to be clarified, and communication needs to be intact." She specified that clear communication is critical. Secondly, Participant 7 stated, “If I can have someone there that can explain to me the step-by-step and help me along the way towards graduation I feel that would really help me out.” She specified that college leadership should offer step-by-step

guidance in real-time to explain the different benchmarks towards graduation to combat the fear of the unknown. Both of these participants addressed how having information explained to them in real-time, not via pamphlets, enabled them to be informed and clear about expectations. Participants 4 and 8 addressed a different aspect as they shared the need for Latinx FGS to have the information explained to them in real-time related to being a part of support programs, obtaining an internship, or networking strategies. Specifically, these participants addressed their need for relevant information, guidance, and supplemental services to gain skills not necessarily taught in the classroom.

For example, Participant 4 firstly stated, "I didn't know about BLA until my last semester at [redacted]. I didn't know about them until I received an email about them in my last semester." She wished specific programs and opportunities were known to students earlier on in their academic journey versus their last semester. Similarly, Participant 8 stated, "If you're a student over there as a new generation, you don't know where you're going because your family is not a professional. You're searching, what am I supposed to do. . . you have a bunch of questions." He wished to know of specific opportunities such as internships to assist him as a first generation student who has many questions about navigating college successfully. Collectively, these four participants addressed the importance for institutions to serve as advocates that rehabilitates and educates Latinx FGS in how to develop transferable skills needed for academic success and gainful employment.

Equally important are the other issues raised by the participants within this study, including having a dedicated cultural platform, cultural sensitivity, responsive training,

and more access to opportunities. Specifically, Participants 6 and 9 addressed how representation matters but shared how important it is for Latinx FGS to be surrounded by culturally sensitive individuals as they are aware of their unique challenges. For example, Participant 6 stated, “Have more Latinx people … directing the programs or at least have an assistant director that’s of Latinx dissent. When it comes to resources and programs, a lot of the people who head these programs are Black.” He said that it is important to have more Latinx persons spearheading programs to serve as motivation for Latinx FGS to achieve success. Whereas Participant 9 stated, "A big thing is being culturally responsive … They [college officials] don't mean to be micro aggressive it but it's a microaggression." These participants affirmed that although representation matters, the solutions need to be more nuanced.

As institutions interact and serve Latinx FGS, there needs to be a standardized awareness of this population's actual needs and create meaningful and relevant interactions meant to help them persist academically and graduate. Without institutions becoming aware of whom they are serving, they risk oppressing or silencing this historically marginalized population by directly or indirectly applying bias or perpetuating the dominant or oppressive identities present within societal institutions as per critical race theory. For example, participants #2 and #5 addressed the financial pressures of being a Latinx FGS. For example, Participant 2 firstly stated, “My reason for graduating later involves economics. We live in poor areas, gotta work to pay for necessities. Other kids don’t gotta worry about paying bills and just graduate." Her reason for not graduating on time was because of financial hardships which many of her white

counterparts do not have to worry about. Similarly, Participant 5 stated, finances are a challenge because once a person attends college, they cannot work as much or care for their family.

However, besides financial pressure and the direct effect on her family, Participant 5 also echoes what other participants referred to. Participant #5 agreed that representation matters but found having a culturally dedicated space is equally important. She stated, “The more space you give to students to share their voice the better … [allow] students to speak up whenever they feel like they need to.” These participants are specifying that Latinx FGS need more accessibility to financial resources and a culturally dedicated platform. However, Participant 10 further identified Latinx FGS as needing more accessibility to institutional processes being online to offer this population, especially nontraditional students, flexibility, and opportunity to partake in on-campus life even if it is online. She stated also, “Have the programs they offer and a lot of the resources … on an online platform.” Moreover, the participants of this study identified challenges that affect their experience of attending and trying to graduate from college and suggested recommendations of how college leadership can help address these challenges. However, as college leadership reviews these recommendations, it is worth noting that these participants championed holistic support, guidance, and communication in real-time, regardless of whether a student's experience is in person, online, or hybrid. This study demonstrates how adaptive and resilient Latinx FGS are, but as they articulated, they ultimately need guidance to navigate the fear of the unknown during any point of transition they may face attending a 2-year institution.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

As an Afro-Latinx college graduate of a public university, this study implemented processes to reduce confirmation and culture bias. Accordingly, the one-on-one interviews were facilitated by the participant, myself as the researcher, and another individual. As the researcher, I facilitated the interview with unconditional positive regard, awareness of my cultural assumptions, and cultural relativism. Additionally, I recorded the interviews with the consent of all parties present. I used Zoom as the platform where we conducted the interviews. The other individual present within the interview acted as a means to reduce my confirmation and culture bias while maintaining the overall organization of the interview. Two individuals alternated as being the other person in the interview. However, only one of these individuals transcribed all of the interviews and served as an independent coder who worked with me to review and code the data to limit my subjectiveness via a phone conference while reviewing the interview transcripts. Within and outside the actual interviews, participants were encouraged to be candid with their answers, ask questions, and amend their interview transcriptions as they saw fit.

Moreover, to establish trustworthiness within my study, I allowed the literature review to create the predetermined themes. In contrast, I applied the Modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method to provide structure for the emerging themes that developed when reviewing the interview transcriptions. As I did this, I found some predetermined themes based on the literature review to be affirmed, but more were incomplete or lacking. As I applied the Modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method, I coded the data by reading each of

the transcripts individually and then as a group to see what storyline develops, followed by categorizing the data into codes (Moustakas, 1994; Stuckey, 2015). The storyline developed across the testimonies of 10 participants reflected the two overarching research questions being studied within this study (Stuckey, 2015). Using both predetermined and emergent themes, I created a data dictionary to successfully code the data and maintain transparency (Stuckey, 2015). Lastly, as stated before, I had the help of an independent coder to help me stay objective to help me keep track of relevant codes, and minimize bias.

Specifically, this study has 4 components of trustworthiness. The 4 components present within this study is credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Shenton, 2004). Moreover, this study used ten students who identified as a Latinx FGS to create saturation of the homogenous sample size (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006; Guest et al., 2006).

Credibility

Hence, this study applied the following strategies to establish credibility: progressive subjectivity checks, emic or folk perspectives of the participants, and transcript review. (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Shenton, 2004). These strategies worked together to produce trustworthiness of the data so member checks can bolster the study's credibility (Shenton, 2004). In comparison, progressive subjectivity checks allowed me to record my changing expectations as evidenced by my predetermined themes versus the emerging themes or perceptions of the participants (Creswell & Miller, 2000). On the other hand, the emic or folk perspectives of the

participants allowed me to become aware of any viewpoints as told by the participants (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000). Lastly, participants played a significant part in establishing the credibility of this study's overarching research questions as participants reviewed all reports and served as natives telling their actual story (Creswell, 2007). These strategies mentioned above worked together to produce trustworthiness of the data by compensating individual limitations of each interviewee's narrative to verify specificities provided to each individual and the group collectively (Shenton, 2004). Therefore, the verification of these participants' storytelling narratives was crucial in capturing their words to match their lived experiences and member checking my ability as a researcher to develop an unbiased formative analysis (Shenton, 2004).

Transferability

In establishing transferability, this study applied strategies to establish its ability to have transferability of data for external validity (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Shenton, 2004). Specifically, to establish transferability within this study, I used the thick description of the phenomenon under scrutiny (Shenton, 2004). To do so, I provided readers with a description that gave context while being thorough, comprehensive, and shaped by the participants' storytelling versus my biases, so they can decide if the "overall findings ring true" (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Shenton, 2004).

Dependability

Next, to establish dependability, this study applied strategies to evaluate its qualitative counterpart to reliability (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Shenton, 2004). Therefore, this study used audit trials to preserve the study's dependability and

permit a study's ability to be repeated by others (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000). Specifically, I used field notes to provide detailed descriptions, analyses, and synthesis of what I do, think, and see (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Also, I used open-ended interviews and an independent coder to check my biases or inconsistencies in notes, transcripts, or audio (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Confirmability

Lastly, this study established confirmability by applying strategies to verify that any findings are shaped by the participants and not by me as the researcher to maintain objectivity within this study (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Shenton, 2004). Specifically, I used the intercoder reliability approach, which involved participants and an independent coder. To minimize bias, I first invited interviewees to participate in the review of all reports (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Moreover, they were encouraged to find and share errors, react to the data, and voice any concerns. It is worthy to note that none of the participants voiced that they wanted any changes done to the interview transcriptions but shared enthusiasm to hear the overall results and asked how they could help further. Besides the participants, I had an independent coder provide quality data based on an individual evaluation of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Creswell & Miller, 2000). The independent coder reviewed each transcript in real-time with me as the researcher via phone. Furthermore, the independent coder provided quality data for each interview transcription per participant and collectively as a group via a phone call with me. We reviewed the interview transcriptions electronically, and I wrote notes based on our conferencing.

Accordingly, this study used different strategies to apply the 4 components needed to create trustworthiness. The 4 components present within this study are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, as per Shenton (2004).

Summary

This study explored what Latinx FGS identify as barriers in graduating from a community college while providing feedback on how college leadership can support them in graduating. Their responses produced ten most prevalent emerging themes or underlying reasons as to why they experienced the following broad challenges: 1) general academics; 2) academic preparedness; 3) language; 4) support system; 5) sense of belonging; 6) cultural identity; 7) gender; 8) general challenges; and, 9) college leadership. These broad challenges were based on areas that the literature review stated were challenges faced by Latinx FGS. However, it is worthy to note that the literature reviewed revealed limited emphasis on challenges experienced by Latinx FGS, and thus, the data produced by this study's participants will enrich the literature that currently exists. In examining the study's overarching research questions, participants used storytelling to narrate their perceived barriers of graduating from a community college and their perceptions of resources being offered at their community colleges related to supporting their ability to graduate.

As a result, this study used the participant's narratives as a tool to use counter-storytelling as a means to speak against inherently racist institutions or persons who use the socially constructed concept of race to perpetuate Whiteness as a standard at the expense of Latinx FGS, either directly or indirectly. This study found that because the

literature review was limited, there were responses from participants regarding the nature of the nine broad challenges we asked them based on the literature. Specifically, most participants identified ten emerging themes as being prevalent in them trying to graduate from college.

The most prevalent emerging themes had between 5 and 7 participants identifying concerns based on the following:

1. Informal versus formal colloquialism
2. Generational academic under-preparedness
3. Nontraditional student
4. Balance of complex priorities
5. Immigration
6. Individual adaptation or resilience during a pandemic
7. Representation matters
8. On-campus support via persons
9. Peer support (informal not in clubs on campus)
10. Self-ambition

The 10 most prevalent emerging themes listed above lend themselves to answering the first overarching research question within this study. Therefore, the participants of this study identified the following as the perceived barriers of Latinx FGS trying to graduate community college: informal versus formal colloquialism, generational academic under-preparedness, being a nontraditional student, having a balance of complex priorities, immigration (indirectly or directly), adaptation or resilience

(especially during a pandemic), having representation, on-campus support, peer support, and self-ambition.

Accordingly, these perceived barriers led to the answer of the second overarching research within this study. Therefore, the participants of this study identified the following as the perceived resources that can be provided at community colleges to support the ability of Latinx FGS to graduate: give specific relevant information, provide more accessibility to financial opportunities, create or maintain online services to mirror in-person campus activities, supply step-by-step guidance to navigate benchmarks or different transitional periods involved with being in college, offers a culturally dedicated platform, have professionals who are culturally competent, sensitive, and responsive, and deliver holistic institutional support similar to the support given by small programs such as the programs mentioned above of ULMA and IMPACT.

In the following and last chapter, I summarized the key findings found in the two overarching research questions while interpreting the findings. Moreover, Chapter 5 listed the limitations, recommendations, implications, and conclusions of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain an understanding of the actual academic and nonacademic experiences that Latinx first generation students (FGS) perceive as barriers to graduating from a community college. Along with these perceived barriers, the participants in this study shared resources they perceived to be helpful for college leadership to support Latinx FGS graduate from a community college. In this study, I explored the two overarching research questions mentioned throughout this study because Latinx FGS have not been earning college degrees at the same rate as their ethnic or non-FGS counterparts. Moreover, for this study I used phenomenology and an inductive approach to gain insight into Latinx FGS actual academic and nonacademic experiences that affect this population graduating college (Creswell, 2007).

Accordingly, I viewed the participants' narratives individually and collectively to create a consensus of views shared between all the participants (see Saunders et al., 2017). Therefore, the participants' narratives produced recommendations designed to assist increasing awareness of college leadership regarding the unique needs facing Latinx FGS so they could holistically support them to graduate while dismantling the inherent racism that exists in its institution. Therefore, Latinx FGS may lack knowledge capital as they enroll in college, but with specific relevant information, communications in real-time opportunities, more accessibility to online services to mirror in-person on-campus activities, a culturally dedicated safe space, and guidance from culturally competent, sensitive, and responsive professionals, they can persist academically and graduate from a community college as evidenced by the participants in this study.

Interpretation of the Findings

As shown in Chapter 4, the participants in this study identified various challenges that were not identified in the literature review, which extends knowledge. However, the most established patterns were the 10 most prevalent emerging themes as they were the most identified by the participants of this study. These 10 emerging themes represent new results to be added to the literature. Many of the identified challenges deal with Latinx FGS needing specific, relevant information, more accessibility to financial opportunities and online services to mirror in-person campus activities, and guidance to navigate the different transitional periods involved in college. These transitional periods can be before enrolling in college, during college, and when transitioning into another college such as a 4-year institution. This is due to Latinx FGS fearing the unknown. Additionally, Latinx FGS may come into college with deficit knowledge capital, but it does not mean this population does not have a desire or ability to socialize or coexist within the college's culture. Some factors include Latinx FGS having to balance complex priorities such as managing employment, school, and a family, regardless of whether they are traditional or nontraditional students.

The literature review stated that Latinx FGS need to feel as if they matter, and they will depend on environmental sources to build the confidence needed to persist toward graduation and develop positive mental health (Choi, 2005; Stebleton et al., 2014; Tierney, 2000; Tinto, 2016, 2017; Vuong et al., 2010). However, feeling that they matter is not the sole driver of students to develop their confidence. Via the participants of this study, it can be observed that Latinx FGS do not want more tutoring or mental health

services, as stated by the literature review, as these services get underutilized because the students find the offerings inconvenient, don't hear about the offerings, or do not have the time (Stebleton et al., 2014). However, it is worthy to note that the participants of this study did identify as having a learning disability, mental illness, or disability, or expressed they benefitted from tutoring; however, tutoring or mental services was not the most expressed need. The participants expressed needing a culturally dedicated safe space and step-by-step guidance from culturally competent, sensitive, and responsive professionals.

As per the literature review, parental education affects how much access Latinx FGS have of cultural capital such as knowledge, values, and culture of the dominant social group like higher education (Hirudayarag, 2011). The literature review mentioned that Latinx FGS are often academically underprepared, have limited knowledge of a college-going culture, and lack familial or social support (Balemian & Feng, 2013; Falcon, 2015; Stebleton & Soria, 2017; Stephens et al., 2015). However, the participants of this study extend knowledge of this claim. The participants of this study did make it clear that, due to generational underpreparedness, they don't only lack knowledge upon enrolling into college, but also a support system that can understand, comprehend, and thus relate to their journey of being an FGS. Therefore, Latinx FGS do not want inclusivity within the institution or the curriculum similar to critical race theory advocating against the other researchers mentioned in the literature review.

Specifically, the literature review stated an inclusive design and colorblind policies is helpful in Latinx FGS developing an increased sense of belonging and self-

efficacy (Arbona, 2016; Choi, 2005; Hirudayarag, 2011; Parkinson, 2015; Phillips et al., 2016; Stephens et al., 2015; Vuong et al., 2010). However, seminal theorists Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) claims inclusivity is detrimental in Latinx FGS developing a sense of belonging and self-efficacy as it ignores the fact that oppression is embedded within the education system of the United States. The claims of Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) are supported and extended by this study's findings. Participants recognized curriculums and campuses with representation matters, but it is not enough without a culturally dedicated platform as this population seeks familiarity and a safe space to express themselves without judgment.

Moreover, the literature review states the names of Latinx FGS should not be intentionally mispronounced or abbreviated along with preferred gender pronouns as these actions link to racial microaggressions (Reyes, 2018). Intentional or unintentional acts of racial microaggressions are enrooted in the oppressed history of Latinx FGS and their identity defined by their colonizers (Peck, 2017). Therefore, by professionals mispronouncing student names, they create microaggressions; however, this study identified that microaggressions can also happen if they cannot listen, understand, and respond with cultural competency and sensitivity. Furthermore, in support of the literature review, by Latinx FGS feeling welcomed and recognized, institutions help message that their own cultural capital is valued, thus promoting their institution as a safe learning space filled with trustworthy professionals (Hooks, 1994; Peck, 2017). Without this, a lack of guidance and support may negatively affect a Latinx FGS's confidence and thus internalize trauma and biases.

Moreover, many researchers in the literature review agree that Latinx FGS have their own academic, social, and cultural capitals (Decuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Their capital is valid and serves as a tool of empowerment as they can use counter-storytelling to create a critical race praxis and decolonize leadership practices that support the oppression of marginalized groups (Croom & Marsh, 2016; Garcia & Natividad, 2018; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). However, some researchers claim Latinx FGS cannot reap the same academic and social benefits as their counterparts due to them lacking the necessary capital to navigate higher education (Phillips et al., 2016; Stephens et al., 2015). The participants in this study recognized they lacked certain knowledge capital enrolling in college, but they do have other knowledge capital related to their individual experiences and identity that is useful in helping them navigate higher education. Nonetheless, Latinx FGS may be academically underprepared for college, but they do come into college with their own knowledge capital.

The literature review stated that Latinx FGS need to feel as if they matter to develop self-efficacy to persist to graduation (Choi, 2005; Stebleton et al., 2014; Tierney, 2000; Tinto, 2016; Tinto, 2017; Vuong et al., 2010). However, some of the participants who identify as female stated they needed to have a dedicated safe space to voice their opinion or concern as a means to challenge the status-quo through the use counter-storytelling as per the literature review. Counter-storytelling is an autobiographical tool that juxtaposes the racial dominant and oppressive stereotypes of critical race theory (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Thus, counter storytelling allows

them to challenge the status-quo in their institution through the use of their experiential knowledge (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). This is important because they are already challenging their docile role by their culture, family, or society by them attending college.

As per the literature review, a good woman is traditionally expected to be submissive, rely on males for protection, and to remain a virgin until marriage, thus often sacrificing or delaying their education or career for the sake of the family's present. In contrast, to be a good man, tradition expects them to be a provider and protector (Perez, 2012). Nevertheless, the role of Latinx FGS who identify as male is also changing as females as they are seeking college to be on par with the women in their lives versus being a provider as dictated by culture, family, or society.

This is important to recognize because this study demonstrated that the concept of what the term Latinx means extends itself beyond gender and sexuality. The literature review stated the term Latinx is applied as a gender-neutral alternative to Latina or Latino (de Onis, 2017; Salinas, Jr. & Lozano, 2017). However, with the term Latinx in this study referring to any individual of Latin descent who does not conform to the gender or cultural identity labeling dictated by society, the participants of this study have extended this term to include more aspects. Therefore, the term Latinx should be redefined to describe any individual of Latin descent who uses resilience to fulfill their self-ambition as they see fit. Using this version of the term Latinx helps institutions have a clearer picture of who a Latinx FGS is. Additionally, this enriched definition allows them to understand that the term refers to more than gender and sexuality. It celebrates individualism and choice.

The literature review states that the term Latinx also includes LGBTQ+ members of Latin descent (Patterson, 2017; Salinas, Jr. & Lozano, 2017). However, participants in this study did not mention sexuality at all. If gender was mentioned, it was used in the context of both males and females using college as a means to better their future versus competing with their counterpart. The literature review further stated Latinx FGS could not achieve successful academic performance if they did not speak Spanish or felt marginalized (Bandura, 1997; Evans et al., 2016; Parker et al., 2015). However, not all participants in this study knew Spanish or had other Latinx to socialize with at their institution. Moreover, some participants felt marginalized or as if they did not belong; however, they either graduated or were within their last year of community college. Hence, the participants were more focused on challenging their families and society to fulfill their self-ambitions while dispelling the dominant and oppressive identities present within these circles. In fulfilling their self-ambitions, the participants of this study made it clear that they want to do it on their own terms, thus having the power to create their identities or authenticity as they want versus being silenced by others or institutions.

In support of the literature review, the participants in this study used their interviews as a means to counter-storytell the dominant and oppressive identities perpetuated by the education system as per critical race theory (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ritchie, 2003; Seidman, 2006). Specifically, participants were able to narrate their lived stories in an undiluted and authentic consciousness that gives insight into the complex racial issues that are endemic to America's fabric (Alshenqeeti, 2014; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ritchie, 2003; Seidman, 2006). As an

extension of knowledge, Latinx FGS want a culturally dedicated platform, and want to interact and be guided by culturally competent and sensitive professionals, who know how to be responsive when listening and understanding them. The institution and its agents also need to provide and communicate in real-time regarding more accessibility of opportunities and online services that mirror in-person on-campus activities to provide transparency, support, and flexibility needed for students to attend a community college regardless if in-person, online, or hybrid. Moreover, the institution and its persons need to know the actual wants and needs of this population they are serving as per the literature review states (Evans et al., 2016). However, without knowledge, the institution also runs the risk of being culturally incompetent, insensitive, and unprofessional when interacting with Latinx FGS as demonstrated by the participants of this study. The consequences include the institution perpetuating the dominant and oppressive identities that inherently exist within societal institutions, including persons of authority and institutions of higher learning as per Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995). The participants of this study were candid in sharing that some of them came into college with unresolved trauma caused by other social institutions that made them question their worth and capabilities, thus causing them to be silenced or difficult to make relationships.

According to the literature review, Latinx FGS have low graduation rates due to the lack of intervention before entering college, including a lack of college preparedness, assimilation, and familial support (Balemian & Feng, 2013; Falcon, 2015; Stebleton & Soria, 2017; Stephens et al., 2015). However, as it can be seen in this study, Latinx FGS may come into college with a lack of experience and knowledge, but it is incorrect to

achieve graduation if they did not do any of the interventions before enrolling into college as stated by the current literature review. The participants within this study stated they have a desire to learn and socialize within college as an institution, but they need information and guidance given to them in real-time to help them deal with the fear of the unknown. Moreover, they identified that they may lack familial support because they need specific relevant support that their families may or may not be able to give due to an inability for them to understand, comprehend, and relate to their journey. This is worthy to note because the participants within this story are finishing up at a college or graduated with an associate's degree, regardless of facing various barriers, including the COVID-19 pandemic. However, as long as the institution offers similar support as the smaller programs such as ULMA and IMPACT, a dedicated cultural platform, and culturally competent and sensitive professionals, they will be empowered and equipped to persist academically and graduate from a community college.

This study further purports that Latinx FGS need colleges that serve as a rehabilitation and education platform. It represents a safe space where this population can unlearn to learn both soft and hard skills that they may or may not have. Therefore, by institutions or persons offering the same holistic support that programs such as ULMA and IMPACT offer, Latinx FGS will feel supported not just by the programs but instead from the institution itself as participants of this study indicated challenges with the college leadership.

Limitations of the Study

As demonstrated by this study, the definition of what characterizes a Latinx and FGS were not exclusive to race, income, a lack of familial or social support, poor mental health, lack of academic preparation, or low self-efficacy. Therefore, the generalizability of the findings may not apply to all FGS or Latinx FGS. The participants for this study were selected based on three criteria. They had to be: sophomores attending the community college where the study took place, self-identify as first generation student, and identify as Latinx. The goal of this study was to have 10 to 15 students who identified as a Latinx FGS. Specifically, I wanted to have 4-5 Puerto Ricans, 4-5 Dominicans, and 4-5 Mexicans because these three groups represent the largest Latinx groups living within New York State and New York City.

However, I did not recruit the desired participants and had to modify the number of participants per ethnicity and gender-based on who I was able to recruit, especially as this study occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study specifically focused on Latinx FGS. Because I identify as an Afro-Latinx FGS, I tried to limit bias within this study by inviting participants to review their own interview transcripts to ensure I did not misquote them.

Moreover, this study acquired the actual academic and nonacademic experiences that are needed for college leadership to gain an increased understanding. by utilizing storytelling Furthermore, with increased awareness of the needs of Latinx FGS, college leadership was able to keep the unique experiences and cultural identity of Latinx FGS in

mind when creating or facilitating all processes involved when interacting with this population, such as designing curriculums or providing holistic support.

Recommendations

This qualitative study used phenomenology and inductive approaches to understand the actual academic and nonacademic experiences that Latinx FGS perceive as barriers from graduating from a community college. In doing so, the 10 participants within this study shared resources they found to be helpful in college leadership supporting Latinx FGS to graduate from a community college. Examples of perceived academic and nonacademic experiences include: informal vs. formal colloquialism, being a nontraditional student, individual adaptation or resilience during a pandemic, and self-ambition. Simultaneously, some shared resources the study's participants found to be helpful in college leadership supporting Latinx FGS to graduate from a community college include: communications in real-time, a culturally dedicated platform, culturally responsive training, and more accessibility.

This data are significant because it serves as reasons and suggestions for how Latinx FGS can earn college degrees at the same rate as their ethnic or non-FGS counterparts. Results from this study were used to develop an action plan for college leadership to understand and meet the specific needs of this population. Specifically, the action plan created for college leadership consists of twenty-two recommendations.

Furthermore, the following twenty-two recommendations derived from the participants' storytelling when addressing their perceived barriers when trying to graduate

from a community college. Accordingly, the recommendations of this study are as follows:

1. Build and/or maintain holistic support to contend with the complexities of student lives.
2. Create a systematic way of sharing knowledge between departments and throughout the institution as information has been expressed as being delayed.
3. Create and maintain a consistent offering of support so all students can experience the same standard of support systems, financial support, tutoring, etc.
4. Create and maintain a consistent standard of what makes the ideal [redacted] experience. Specifically, this will create sufficiency and quality of any engagement happening with students, whether remote or in person.
5. Create or expand partnerships within [redacted] and the surrounding community so there is ongoing culturally responsive training for all stakeholders.
6. Cultural Competency, Cultural Sensitivity, & Cultural Responsive Training for all stakeholders who interact with students starting from the presummer experience Latinx FGS attend. Stakeholders include top-head administration, programs/departments, and the institution as a whole before trickling down to front-line stakeholders such as administration, faculty, and staff. Regardless of whether racism or bias is not intended, Cultural Competency, Cultural Sensitivity, & Cultural Responsive Training can act as a buffer to understand better the specific needs of Latinx FGS and stressors, so specific support can

be provided population on both a macro and micro level. However, the key is ensuring training begins with those front line stakeholders who interact with students. Specific interventions can start from the presummer and can include the student's family.

7. Have a platform or pathway dedicated for professors and students to network, thus promoting and forging strong alumni relationships with [redacted] .
8. If feasible, maintain the remote tutoring and workshop services offered as it provides more flexibility for students.
9. If feasible, programs such as BLA, UMLA, & IMPACT should expand services to include more Latinx FGS or serve as a holistic, student-centered program.
10. Latinx FGS are coming in with deficit capitals including academic preparedness, financial literacy, and unresolved trauma. Therefore, a standard of pre-college preparation addressing academic and nonacademic needs to be established with high schools or programs serving as a pipeline where [redacted] receives their students from. There is a need for the person or program liaising with [redacted] to have quality, efficient, and dedicated resources to prevent unbiased actions or perceptions which can cause students to feel marginalized and less prepared for the transition into [redacted] .
11. Maintain a community standard of students being able to belong, ask for information, and feeling comfortable to express themselves.

12. Maintain diverse spaces and provide a culturally competent safe space or platform for students to express themselves and not feel silenced. Latinx FGS are seeking spaces where they share similar ethnicities, experiences, struggles, and goals because familiarity is where they feel comfortability, less judged, and their authentic selves.
13. Professional Competency Training for all stakeholders who interact with students starting from the presummer experience Latinx FGS attend. Stakeholders include top-head administration, programs/departments, and the institution as a whole before trickling down to front line stakeholders such as administration, faculty, and staff. First impressions matter to Latinx FGS and can create trauma, thus affecting their ability to make connections with the institution during and after.
14. Provide a peer mentor with similar challenges, first generation status, or gender so students can begin to relate with their peers.
15. Provide clear, communicated benchmarks explaining the benchmarks and what a student can expect from their first semester until graduation, along with what to expect if they choose to transition into a 4 - year college. This information can be communicated in workshops similar to freshman orientation.
16. Provide ongoing workshops from their presummer until graduation to bridge the gap of which capitals FGS may not have compared to their counterparts and to help address the effects of generational academic under-preparedness.

Topics may include financial literacy, time management, academic success, career planning, etc.

17. Regardless if a Latinx FGS is a traditional or nontraditional student, their past life experiences have influenced their decision to attend [redacted] . Latinx FGS comes into [redacted] with unique, compounded experiences, and the question becomes can [redacted] rehabilitate these students while educating all stakeholders? Specifically, to holistically interact and prepare Latinx FGS for academic success, [redacted] needs to rehabilitate how the students view their past life experiences to improve the quality of their lives while educating them on how they can be their authentic selves within a diverse space. Due to Latinx FGS coming into [redacted] with deficit capitals and unresolved traumas centering around insecurities surrounding language and not being at par with their counterparts, all stakeholders need to be trained to gain awareness and cultural competency and sensitivity.
18. Starting from the presummer at [redacted], provide a campaign that encourages students to attend on campus counseling (if needed) and promote the benefits of attending. Culturally, there is a stigma attending counseling, so if [redacted] can start early, it can help students demystify the stigma behind counseling and help students gain self realization and gain a level of emotional, verbal, and critical thinking maturity.
19. Starting from the presummer, include or inform a student's family in their native language, the college process, and the benchmarks expected for the

individual to succeed. The purpose would be to provide context of what to expect and understand the pressure involved in a FGS being a student.

20. The institution needs to mirror the meaningful change that is resonating with students within programs because students are caused to feel lost, abandoned, and frustrated by the lack of institutional support.
21. The transition period before students enter college and leave college is a stressor, thus there needs to be a liaison to facilitate the process and communicate benchmarks and expectations of the transition period
22. The transition period is critical in a Latinx FGS academic journey and therefore the initial onboarding is the most significant. The on-boarding process needs to be facilitated holistically. If the process is not facilitated well, Latinx FGS may become traumatized, have increased anxiety, fear of the unknown; and feel silenced, thus accepting a poor experience as normal the college process entails (generational under-preparedness).

Moreover, as per the agreement of the participants of this study and the partnering organization, there will be separate meetings to share the results and recommendations of this study with participants and college leadership as a means to maintain the confidentiality of the participants.

Implications

By applying storytelling within this study, I was able to help college leadership and society to identifying the actual wants and needs of Latinx FGS. Latinx FGS are a historically marginalized group within society, and thus are further oppressed within

societal institutions and its agents. Consequently, this happens intentionally, unintentionally, directly, and indirectly. Therefore, by college leadership gaining an increased awareness of the actual needs and wants of a population they interact with, they will support Latinx FGS achieve academic success by persisting and graduating from a community college. Furthermore, because Latinx FGS are not present at the decision-making table as it pertains to their college experience, college leadership will keep their actual needs and wants in mind when designing and delivering processes or policies throughout the institution through their storytelling.

In doing so, college leadership through their institutions can transform its institution as a pillar that rehabilitates, besides educating so Latinx FGS can unlearn to relearn and gain new capitals of knowledge and experience. More so, college leadership has the opportunity to offer meaningful and relevant holistic support to Latinx FGS throughout the institution and also an opportunity to possibly bridge the gap of generational academic preparedness by involving the familial support systems to help this population and their families establish a mutual understanding and comprehension of what college entails to promote true relatability and lessen familial isolation.

Moreover, the interviews of the study's participants allowed them to use counter-storytelling to confirm, disconfirm, or extend knowledge as it pertains to their actual wants and needs. Therefore, this study can help societal institutions, including colleges, be aware of the actual needs and wants, so they can also be aware of their bias even if it is not intentional. Therefore, this study found that when Latinx FGS have culturally competent, sensitive, and responsive individuals who provide step-by-step guidance, they

are able to navigate the unknown with confidence, regardless of having a lack of knowledge or experience.

On the other hand, when Latinx FGS have culturally incompetent and insensitive individuals interact with them in any societal institution, they experience microaggressions and adversely internalize the negativity displayed by the institution or its agents. Hence, this hinders their confidence and ability to persist and thus graduate college as the internalized negativity becomes their voice and their belief, they are what these societal institutions dictate them to be. Additionally, this study will help college leadership, not just of the partnering organization, dismantle the perpetuating dominant and oppressive identities of critical race theory as they gain awareness of the actual needs and wants as stated by Latinx FGS is limited in the current literature review.

Conclusion

I acquired knowledge of the actual wants and needs of Latinx FGS trying to graduate from a community college through participant interviews. In doing so, participants were able to share recommendations with college leadership so they can better support this population graduate. By college leadership having an increased awareness of Latinx FGS's actual wants and needs, they will be able to see this population for who they are and thus meet them where they are at, both academically and nonacademically. The current literature review states that the number of Latinx FGS students is enrolling in great numbers but are not graduating on time as their ethnic and non-FGS counterparts.

The participants of this study stated that Latinx FGS could achieve academic success. It is worthy to note the participants are within their last year of community college or recently graduated. Therefore, the literature review must be updated to include that a Latinx FGS can persist academically and graduate, even if they lack knowledge or a lack of intervention before high school. In conclusion, Latinx FGS can succeed if institutions and its agents provide: flexibility, specific relevant information that is communicated to them step-by-step, a culturally dedicated safe space, and guidance from culturally competent, sensitive, and responsive professionals.

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Appendix A: Invitation Email

Dear Student:

My name is Jessica C. Rivera. I am a doctoral student who is in the process of conducting research for Walden University. This email is meant to serve as an invitation for you to take part in a voluntary study. My study is to investigate the experiences of Latinx first generation students (FGS) trying to graduate from a community college.

This study is not mandated by your community college. But, I would like to gather the data from students within their final year of attending an associate degree program via a face-to-face interview. If you are interested in participating in this study, you must minimally be:

- a sophomore;
- self-identify as a first generation student;
- and, identify as a Latinx of Puerto Rican, Mexican, or Dominican descent

Your involvement in this study is voluntary and means that you do not have to participate if you do not want to. Additionally, should you decide not to participate, your affiliation with the college or myself will not be affected. Your name or any identifying markers will not be shared throughout this study. Similarly, should you participate, note that you may withdraw from the study at any time without an explanation or experience negative consequences.

Furthermore, I am attaching a invitation letter and consent form for your review. In deciding whether or not to participate in this study, please review the attached documents. Should you wish to participate, kindly contact me for a day and time for a face-to-face interview.

Thank you for your time.

Best Regards,

Jessica C. Rivera

Appendix B: Invitation Letter to Students with Consent Form

Dear Student:

You are invited to participate in a research study of the academic and nonacademic experiences of Latinx first generation students (FGS) trying to graduate from a community college. As a researcher, I am inviting participants who are sophomores within an associate degree program and identify as a Latinx first generation student. Please note that first generation students are defined as the first in their immediate family to attend college. This document is part of a procedure called informed consent and is intended to help you gain an understanding of this study before deciding to participate or not.

My name is Jessica C. Rivera, and I am a researcher. I am a doctoral student attending Walden University, and I do not have any affiliation with your college.

Your decision to participate or not participate in this study will not cause any possible harms or negative consequences. Furthermore, you will not be denied services by your college.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to explore the academic and nonacademic experiences described by Latinx first generation students as being their biggest challenge of trying to graduate from a community college. Academic experiences may include being academically underprepared, whereas nonacademic experiences may include having low income or a language barrier. Experiences such as these may affect students trying to graduate from college or in this instance, a community college. Through this study, the experiences of Latinx first generation students will become crucial in helping community college leadership gain an increased understanding of the challenges that hinder this population from graduating. As a result, community college leadership may be able to meet their actual needs.

Procedures:

Should you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

a. participate in an hour face-to-face interview as a means of gathering data.
b. give clarity of the data by reviewing transcriptions of the interview
    - transcriptions of your interview will be provided, to you by me, no later than two weeks from when your face-to-face interview took place
    - you will be provided the option of providing feedback about the transcript

The interview will be conducted on the campus of your community college in a private space where no one will know of your participation in this study. Below are two sample questions:

1. How do you, as a Latinx first generation student, describe your academic and nonacademic experiences of trying to graduate from a community college?

2. What can your college leadership do to help you, as a Latinx first generation student, graduate from your community college?

Voluntary Participation of this Study:

This study is not mandated. All individuals involved in the process of the study will respect your decision to participate or not. Specifically, no person at your community college will mistreat or treat you differently should you choose not to take part in this study. Similarly, you may withdraw your participation at any moment in time. Should you decide to withdraw your participation, you will not endure any possible harms or negative consequences. Likewise, should you terminate your participation once the study begins, your relationship with your college or myself will not be affected. Additionally, you will not be denied any of the services associated with your campus. Lastly, this consent document preserves your legal rights as a participant to voluntarily participate or withdraw from the study without prejudice.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being involved in this type of study has some minimal or unlikely risks, no greater than what one would experience in daily life.

There are no direct benefits to participants. However, because of your participation, there will be benefits to the larger population. Through this study, the experiences of Latinx first generation students will become crucial in helping community college leadership gain an increased understanding of the challenges that hinder this population from graduating. As a result, community college leadership may be able to meet their actual needs.

Mandated Reporting Obligations:

My role as a researcher is to inform participants upfront of the legal risks associated with their participation in this study, including the potential consequences of "self-incriminating" disclosures. Therefore, there is one exception to confidentiality I need to make participants aware of. It is my ethical responsibility to report situations of abuse, neglect, or any life-threatening situation to appropriate authorities. However, this study is not seeking this type of information in our study, nor will you be asked questions about these issues.

Payment:

There will be no compensation dispersed, neither in the form of monetary nor nonmonetary gifts. Also, there will not be any reimbursement given to participants in this study.

Privacy:

All information that you provide as a participant will be kept confidential.

Firstly, I will not disclose or use any part of your personal information for purposes outside of this research project. Specifically, the researcher will not include your name or any identifying markers in study reports. Secondly, I will collect data via an audio recorder and handwritten or typed records. Lastly, all collected data will be kept in locked filing cabinets. Also, if records are stored on a personal laptop, it will be kept safe with a password. Moreover, all data will be kept in storage for five years minimally as mandated by Walden University.

Contacts and Questions:

You are entitled to ask any questions you may have now. However, should you have any questions later, please feel free to contact the researcher at [redacted] or [redacted]. If you prefer to speak about your rights as a participant, you can contact a representative from Walden University at [redacted]. Lastly, the approval number for this study is 07-01-19-0629110 and it is set to expire on 07-01-2019.

The researcher will provide you with a copy of this document to be kept for your records.

Thank you for your time.

Best Regards,

Jessica C. Rivera
Researcher

Statement of Consent: I have read the aforementioned, and I comprehend the study in detail enough to determine my participation. By signing and dating below, I fully understand that I agree according to the terms mentioned before.

Check off if the researcher may or may not use an audio recorder during the interview:

___Yes **OR** ___No

_____ _____

Name of Participant (Printed) Date

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Signature of Researcher

Appendix C: Interview Instrument

Entering the Interview General Script

"To officially start or enter this interview, I will briefly go over today's format. I will introduce myself, this study, its purpose, and informed consent that you have already signed and submitted to me yesterday. After this, I will start asking you questions as my colleague takes notes. Before I proceed, please let me know if you have any questions, thus far.

With that being said, my name is Jessica Caridad Rivera. I am a doctoral student attending Walden University who is investigating the experiences of Latinx first generation students (FGS) trying to graduate from a community college. Through this study, the experiences of Latinx first generation students will become crucial in helping community college leadership gain an increased understanding of the challenges that hinder this population from graduating. As a result, community college leadership may be able to meet their actual needs. Specifically, the Latinx first generation students being interviewed for this study are sophomores; self-identify as a first generation student; and identify as being of Puerto Rican, Mexican, or Dominican Latinx descent. This study is not mandated by your community college nor will there be any compensation for your participation. Your involvement in this study is voluntary and means that you do not have to participate if you do not want to. Additionally, should you decide not to participate, your affiliation with the college or myself will not be affected. Your name or any identifying markers will not be shared throughout this study. Similarly, note that you may withdraw from the study at any time without an explanation or experience negative consequences.

Being involved in this type of study has some minimal or unlikely risks, no greater than what one would experience in daily life.

There are no direct benefits to participants. However, because of your participation, there will be benefits to the larger population. Through this study, the experiences of Latinx first generation students will become crucial in helping community college leadership gain an increased understanding of the challenges that hinder this population from graduating. As a result, community college leadership may be able to meet their actual needs.

My role as a researcher is to inform participants in front of the legal risks associated with their participation in this study, including the potential consequences of "self-incriminating" disclosures. Therefore, there is one exception to confidentiality I need to make participants aware of. It is my ethical responsibility to report situations of abuse, neglect, or any life-threatening situation to appropriate authorities. However, this study is not seeking this type of information in our study, nor will you be asked questions about these issues.

All information that you provide as a participant will be kept confidential. Lastly, you are entitled to ask any questions you may have throughout any part of this whole process.

After your one-on-one interview is completed, a transcription of your interview will be sent to you within one week. In doing so, you will be empowered to make any edits you feel is necessary so that your story is captured authentically. If I do not receive any email back from you, I will assume that you found no errors in the transcript.

Lastly, I am accompanied by [redacted] or [redacted], who will be taking notes and serve as an independent coder to minimize my notes becoming biased. Please let me know if you have any questions of any of the information above."

Interview questions asked during the one-on-one interview, but organized per research question

RQ1: What do Latinx FGS perceive as barriers to graduating from a community college?

1. How do you, as a Latinx first generation student, describe your academic and nonacademic experiences of trying to graduate from a community college?
2. As a Latinx first generation student, how did you feel academically prepared to attend a community college?
3. How do you feel language has played a role in you trying to graduate from a community college?
4. While enrolled in a community college, who or what, does your support system consist of?
5. As a Latinx first generation student, how do you describe your sense of belonging at your community college?
6. How do you define your cultural identity?
7. How do you feel gender has played a role in you enrolling or trying to graduate from your community college?
8. What do you, as a Latinx first generation student, describe as your biggest challenge in graduating from a community college?

RQ2: What are the perceptions of FGS regarding resources that can be provided at community colleges to support their ability to graduate?

9. What can your college leadership do to help you, as a Latinx first generation student, graduate from your community college?

Exiting the Interview General Script

"I would like to thank you for participating in today's interview. As a reminder, I will send you a copy of this interview before next Tuesday (which is seven days from today's interview). Please review the transcript and edit it. Use it as an opportunity to revise or add anything to the text to ensure this interview is your authentic truth - your story telling. Do you have any questions?

By participating in this interview, you will be helping to add to the limited research that exists on this topic. This is a big help already. I am grateful and look forward to sharing the results of this study with all participants and the college in the end. Until then, please feel free to email me any questions or concerns you may have throughout this process. Based on that, I am now officially ending today's interview. Have a good day everyone."

Appendix D: Confidentiality Agreement

Name of Signer: _____

During the course of my activity in collecting data for this research: "The Experiences of Latinx First Generation Students within a Community College". I will have access to information, which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement, I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.
2. I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter, or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.
3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information, even if the participant's name is not used.
4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification, or purging of confidential information.
5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after the termination of this assignment.
6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.
7. I will only access or use systems or devices that I am officially authorized to access. Also, I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement, and I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix E: Resource List for Counseling Services

Center for Health Equity – is a center dedicated to ensuring individuals, regardless of race, color, or circumstance, is given a chance to lead a healthy, fair life.

- Website
  https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/neighborhood-health/center-for-health-equity.page

Crisis Services/Mental Health - Mobile Crisis Teams – are teams of health professionals, including medical practitioners and social workers who come to people's homes to offer medical attention or support.

- Phone
  1-888-692-9355

- Website
  https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/crisis-emergency-services-mobile-crisis-teams.page

NYC Well – offers free, confidential crisis counseling, mental health, and substance support, information and referrals within New York City. Services are available via phone, text, or an online chat.

- Phone
  1-888-692-9355 (English)
  1-888-692-9355 (Español)

- Website
  https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/nyc-well.page

Appendix F: Demographics of Study Participants

Demographics of Study Participants					
Series Number	Is a Sophomore of BMCC? (Y/N)	Is a First Generation College Student? (Y/N)	Which Latinx Descent is Participant: Puerto Rican (PR), Mexican (M), or Dominican (D)?	Identified Gender Female/Male /Other	Traditional (enrolling into college directly after high school) or Nontraditional Student (5 years or more between high school and enrolling into college)?
1	Y	Y	PR	Female	Nontraditional
2	Y	Y	M	Female	Traditional
3	Y	Y	D	Female	Nontraditional
4	Y	Y	PR & M	Female	Traditional
5	Y	Y	D	Female	Traditional
6	Y	Y	PR	Male	Nontraditional
7	Y	Y	PR & D	Female	Traditional
8	Y	Y	PR & D	Male	Nontraditional
9	Y	Y	D	Female	Traditional
10	Y	Y	D	Female	Nontraditional
Total #	10 Sophomores	10 FGS	2 Puerto Rican, 1 Mexican, 4 Dominicans, 2 Puerto Rican & Dominican, 1 Puerto Rican & Mexican	8 Females, 2 Males	5 Traditional, 5 Nontraditional

Appendix G: Emerging Themes Per and Amongst Participants

Emerging Themes Per and Amongst Participants

Series Number	Emerging Theme	Codes	Theme Present in Participant #1 (Y/N)	Theme Present in Participant #2 (Y/N)	Theme Present in Participant #3 (Y/N)	Theme Present in Participant #4 (Y/N)	Theme Present in Participant #5 (Y/N)	Theme Present in Participant #6 (Y/N)	Theme Present in Participant #7 (Y/N)	Theme Present in Participant #8 (Y/N)	Theme Present in Participant #9 (Y/N)	Theme Present in Participant #10 (Y/N)	IS CRT APPLICABLE INDIRECTLY OR DIRECTLY (Y/N)	# of Participants Identifying Same Theme	Percentage of Participants Identifying Same Theme
1	Able to make a connection between school or an aspect and themself	**Ability to Connect**		Y									Y	1	10%
2	Accessibility and availability of opportunities are not the same for all Persons of Color.	**Lack of Access and Availability of Opps. for Persons of Color**						Y					Y	1	10%
3	Active on campus.	**On Campus Activity**	Y										Y	1	10%
4	Actively on a journey of self discovery	**Self Discovery**						Y					Y	1	10%
5	Actively seeking support and graduation assistance, but help is limited or without a dedicated cultural or male platform compared to non-Latinx and women	**Limited Help and Dedicated Platform**						Y					Y	1	10%
6	Adapt to demand and technologies during pandemic (Institution Response)	**Adaptation or Resilience during a pandemic (Institution Response)**			Y	Y						Y	Y	3	30%
7	Adapt to demand and technologies during pandemic (Individual Response)	**Individual Adaptation or Resilience during a pandemic**			Y	Y			Y	Y		Y	Y	5	50%
8	Addressing anxiety and depression increases an individual's confidence and persistence	**Addressing Anxiety & Depression = Confidence & Persistence**			Y								Y	1	10%
9	Aesthetics of a learning institution is more important than developing deeper support and pre-college preparation	**Aesthetics are more important**							Y				Y	1	10%
10	An active effort made to bridge any educational gaps between generations	**Ending Generational academic underprepared ness**				Y	Y			Y			Y	3	30%
11	An individual being stubborn	**Pride**						Y					Y	1	10%
12	An individual being affected by another's trauma	**Others' Trauma**									Y		Y	1	10%
13	An individual believing in a higher power or following a religion other than Roman Catholicism	**Beliefs**						Y		Y			Y	2	20%
14	An individual developing new motivations	**New motivations**						Y					Y	1	10%
15	An individual entering college with unresolved trauma	**unresolved trauma - shows need rehab besides acad**									Y		Y	1	10%
16	An individual feeling obligated to perform a role	**Obligation to Perform**						Y		Y			Y	2	20%
17	An individual feeling others of an unsimilar ethnic group or person does not have genuine concern, but instead feels empathy and the need to fix their situation insteading of believing he/she can fix it themself	**Savior Complex**						Y					Y	1	10%

18	An individual identifying with their blackness and finding beauty in it even - if others agree or not	**Black is Beautiful**									Y		Y	1	10%
19	An individual is able to connect and feel empowered by seeing persons similar to them concerning ethnicities, genders, struggles, goals, and credentials	**Representation matters**				Y	Y	Y	Y		Y		Y	5	50%
20	An individual lacking similar experiences as others	**Lack of similar experiences**						Y					Y	1	10%
21	An individual lacking the ability to successfully meet the demands of two cultures including knowledge, a positive attitude toward both groups, bicultural efficacy, ability to communicate, and being grounded	**Lack of Biculturalism Competence**					Y						Y	1	10%
22	An individual practicing different coping mechanisms compared to tradition	**Individual coping mechanisms**									Y		Y	1	10%
23	An individual progressing in school regardless of academic success	**Social Promotion**							Y				Y	1	10%
24	An individual recognizing inequities in the education FGS have compared to counterparts	**Inequitable intellectual property**		Y							Y		Y	2	20%
25	Balance of More Complex Priorities	**Balance of Complex Priorities**	Y		Y	Y		Y		Y		Y	Y	6	60%
26	Being hesitant or insecured to tap into an opportunity because of an inability to truly relate with others not of one's ethnicity	**True relatibility**						Y			Y		Y	2	20%
27	Campus offering individuals customized services to address needs and wants	**HOLISTIC SUPPORT BY CAMPUS**					Y				Y		Y	2	20%
28	Cared what others think	**Lack of confidence (insecurity of what others think)**			Y							Y	Y	2	20%
29	Carried burdens	**Burdens**					Y						Y	1	10%
30	Comfortability to speak up and ask for a service or express needs/wants	**Self-advocacy**			Y			Y					Y	2	20%
31	Common ground for interacting with others	**Respect**						Y		Y			Y	2	20%
32	Consistently tries different methods to achieve time management	**Time management**				Y							Y	1	10%
33	Coping mechansims per generation	**Generational coping mechanisms**									Y		Y	1	10%
34	Cultural competency and knowledge of FGS via persons	**Cult Comp & Knowledge via Persons**	Y										Y	1	10%
35	Desire to develop strong alumni ties or find ways to be socially apart of the institution	**Desire to socialize**						Y		Y			Y	2	20%
36	Desire to fit in and participate socially, but doesn't want to assimilate and lose one's authencity	**Desire to socialize mainstream, but remain authentic**					Y		Y		Y		Y	3	30%
37	Desire to make a connection between school or aspect and themself	**Desire to Connect**			Y								Y	1	10%

38	Desire to reconnect or maintain cultural language	**Reconnect and maintain with cultural language**		Y		Y							Y	2	20%
39	Experienced a lack of guidance	**Lack of Guidance**	Y										Y	1	10%
40	Experiencing a realization that changes a change in attitude and outlook	**Change of mindset**						Y	Y		Y		Y	3	30%
41	Family members making biased comments	**Perpetuating Stereotypes within Family**		Y	Y								Y	2	20%
42	FGS need context and guidance to assist their generation under preparedness	**insecurities due to generation under preparedness; need context for proper expectations of college vs. romanticism**								Y	Y		Y	2	20%
43	First impressions matter to individuals	**First impressions matter**							Y		Y		Y	2	20%
44	Generally lacking knowledge	**General lack of knowledge**							Y		Y		Y	2	20%
45	Generational effect - FGS want for more specific, relevant support, but support system is limited and cannot provide due to lack of knowledge and systemic inequities	**Specific, Relevant Support**									Y		Y	1	10%
46	Generational under academic preparedness and knowledge thus causing generations to have an inability to relate and understand	**generational under preparedness & inability to relate**				Y					Y		Y	2	20%
47	Graduating, doing academically well, going against tradtional, gender norms to help reeducate others and confront Patriachial Whiteness of what is acceptable thus highlighting the power behind a FGS doing well and helping their communities	**Knowledge is Power**	Y	Y			Y				Y		Y	4	40%
48	Has a private identity they enter college with & try to preserve	**public vs. private identity**	Y						Y			Y	Y	3	30%
49	Has familial support	**Has Familial Support**				Y			Y		Y	Y	Y	4	40%
50	Has institutional support (college as a whole)	**On Campus Support via Institution**							Y				Y	1	10%
51	Has non-familial support	**Lack of Non-Familial Support**							Y				Y	1	10%
52	Has support on campus (persons)	**On Campus Support via Persons**	Y	Y	Y		Y		Y				Y	5	50%
53	Has support on campus (programs)	**On Campus Support via Programs**				Y			Y				Y	2	20%
54	Have support and positive relationship	**Immediate household support**				Y							Y	1	10%
55	Having a 5 or more year gap between finishing high school and enrolling into college.	**Nontraditional Student**	Y		Y	Y		Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	7	70%
56	Having a fear of becoming a stereotype	**fear of becoming a stereotype**					Y		Y				Y	2	20%

57	Having a lack of quality pre-college knowledge	**Lack of Pre-College Knowledge**							Y		Y		Y	2	20%
58	Having distrust and fear of an unsimilar ethnic group or person	**Distrust & Fear of Unsimilar Groups/Persons**						Y					Y	1	10%
59	Having peer support in an informal setting outside clubs	**peer support (informal not in club)**		Y			Y		Y	Y	Y		Y	5	50%
60	Having significant financial pressures even with some support	**Financial Pressures**		Y			Y				Y		Y	3	30%
61	Hesitancy or being insecured to ask for help	**Stigma asking for help**						Y	Y				Y	2	20%
62	Indirectly or directly feeling shame or being embarassed about one's socioeconomic status	**insecurities of Socieconomic Status**		Y					Y		Y		Y	3	30%
63	Indirectly or directly rejected by their circle based on traditional norms	**Rejection due to Traditional Norms**							Y				Y	1	10%
64	Indirectly or directly, family expects FGS to serve as family's liaison	**Family Liaison**				Y					Y		Y	2	20%
65	Individual acquiring diverse experiences over time	**Life experience**						Y					Y	1	10%
66	INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS/CONTRIBUTIONS AFFECT FAMILY	**Individual Actions Affect Others**					Y		Y		Y		Y	3	30%
67	Individual can understand a language, but struggles to speak the language	**Receptive bilingualism**					Y			Y			Y	2	20%
68	Individual desire for others to be culturally competent and sensitive toward them so they can feel comfortable expressing their voice and not fear being misunderstood or judged	**HAVING CULTURALLY COMPETENT & SENSITIVE INDIVIDUALS LISTEN & UNDERSTAND THEM**							Y		Y		Y	2	20%
69	Individual desires a safe space or platform that is culturally competent and sensitive for them to express their voice	**HAVING A CULTURALLY COMPETENT SAFE SPACE OR PLATFORM TO EXPRESS ONESELF**					Y				Y		Y	2	20%
70	Individual experiencing a delay of information	**Delayed Info**				Y							Y	1	10%
71	Individual experiencing a welcoming experience into college thus causing inequitable experiences	**Different Welcoming Standards = Inequitable Experiences**							Y		Y		Y	2	20%
72	Individual experiencing isolation from family	**Familial Isolation**										Y	Y	1	10%
73	Individual growing in a single parent household	**One Parent Household**							Y				Y	1	10%
74	Individual having an awareness of other like-peers and realization other peers are in worst situations	**Heightened awareness**									Y		Y	1	10%
75	Individual identifies one's culture rooted with religious customs and not color or traditional cousttoms	**Individual identifies one's culture rooted with religious customs and not color or traditional customs**								Y			Y	1	10%
76	Individual identifying as being clinically diagnosed of having a learning disability	**Learning Disability**						Y					Y	1	10%

77	Individual identifying with their country of birth and the place they immigrate to	**Individual identifying with their country of birth and the place they immigrate to (Adoption of Biculturalism)**					Y						Y	1	10%
78	Individual identifying with three aspects	**triple identity**									Y		Y	1	10%
79	Individual is conscientious of how oneself performs in social settings	**Insecurity of fitting in**					Y						Y	1	10%
80	Individuals actively trying to discover a part of their cultural identity	**Connect with Missing Cultural Identity**			Y								Y	1	10%
81	Individuals experiencing pressures from family, but trying to maintain boundaries	**FAMILY PRESSURES & BOUNDARIES**					Y						Y	1	10%
82	Individuals feel motivated by networking with contacts with similar ethnicities or goals, even though they appreciate diversity	**Empowering to network with a relative connection**				Y				Y			Y	2	20%
83	Individuals sacrificing everything to attend college	**Individual sacrifice**	Y		Y		Y						Y	3	30%
84	Individuals wanting and actively advocating for others	**Advocacy of Others**			Y			Y				Y	Y	3	30%
85	Internalizing Negative Emotions because of institutions	**Internalized Negativity via Institutions**	Y										Y	1	10%
86	Internalizing Negative Emotions because of programs	**Internalized Negativity via Programs**	Y										Y	1	10%
87	Lack of communication is costly & emotionally draining causing a trauma	**Lack of Communicatio n can be costly & Traumatic**								Y			Y	1	10%
88	Lack of cultural competency and knowledge of FGS via institution	**Lack of Cult Comp & Knowledge via Institutions**								Y			Y	1	10%
89	Lack of cultural competency and knowledge of FGS via persons	**Lack of Cult Comp & Knowledge via Persons**								Y			Y	1	10%
90	Lack of cultural competency and knowledge of FGS via programs	**Lack of Cult Comp & Knowledge via Programs**								Y			Y	1	10%
91	Lack of familial support	**Lack of Familial Support**	Y		Y								Y	2	20%
92	Lack of institutional support (college as a whole)	**Lack of on Campus Support via Instiitution**	Y							Y	Y		Y	3	30%
93	Lack of knowledge and therefore lack of comprehension or inability to truly understand, be interested, or relate	**Lack of knowledge & comprehensio n**							Y		Y		Y	2	20%
94	Lack of knowledge of what to expect	**transition period is a stressor and fear of unknown (lack of knowledge)**				Y			Y	Y	Y		Y	4	40%
95	Lack of on or off campus accessibility and communication of opportunities via engaging institutions	**Lack of on/off campus access and commun. of opportunities via institutions**								Y			Y	1	10%

96	Lack of on or off campus accessibility and communication of opportunities via engaging programs	**Lack of on/off campus access and commun. of opportunities via programs**	Y					Y					Y	2	20%
97	Lack of support on campus (persons)	**Lack of on Campus Support via Persons**	Y							Y			Y	2	20%
98	Lack of support on campus (programs)	**Lack of on Campus Support via Programs**	Y							Y			Y	2	20%
99	Logistical challenges involved in completing goals	**Logistical challenges**				Y							Y	1	10%
100	Mental illness/disability - generational illness; experiences and counseling helps respond to life events; reconditioning on how to respond- communicate	**Mental illness/disability**									Y		Y	1	10%
101	Not having an environment conducive to learning	**LACK OF CONDUCIVE ENVIRONMENT**					Y	Y		Y			Y	3	30%
102	On campus celebration of diversity	**Campus celebrating diversity**					Y						Y	1	10%
103	On campus support coming from faculty	**Faculty Support**							Y	Y			Y	2	20%
104	On or off campus accessibility and communication of opportunities via engaging persons	**On/off campus access and commun. of opportunities via persons**		Y			Y						Y	2	20%
105	On or off campus accessibility and communication of opportunities via engaging programs	**On/off campus access and commun. of opportunities via programs**			Y		Y						Y	2	20%
106	Others judging and weaponizing one's past against them	**Past trauma - being judged by it**			Y								Y	1	10%
107	Parents or individual traveling to America	**Immigration**	Y	Y			Y			Y	Y	Y	Y	6	60%
108	Parents sacrificing everything for FGS to attend college	**Family sacrifice**		Y		Y	Y						Y	3	30%
109	Self ambitions, goals, and desires	**Self-ambition**	Y		Y		Y		Y		Y		Y	5	50%
110	Self preservation	**Survival Instinct**			Y	Y					Y		Y	3	30%
111	Socializing and having support from friends	**Peer Support**		Y			Y		Y		Y		Y	4	40%
112	Societal Stakeholder making biased comments	**Perpetuating Dominant and Oppressive Identities of CRT (societal institution)**			Y		Y				Y		Y	3	30%
113	Stakeholder making biased comments	**Perpetuating Dominant and Oppressive Identities of CRT within Institution**		Y									Y	1	10%
114	Stigma of attending a 2 year institution vs a 4 year institution	**Stigma**		Y							Y		Y	2	20%
115	Subjective concept of standards for language - efficient according to whom?	**Subjective Language**		Y				Y			Y		Y	3	30%
116	Subjective definition of what quantifies and qualifies as smart	**perception of what is smart - insecurity**				Y	Y		Y				Y	3	30%

117	There is an education gap between generations	**Generational academic underprepared ness**				Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	6	60%
118	Traditional roles or roles dictated by genders are changing	**Changing Roles**	Y	Y		Y			Y	Y			Y	4	40%
119	Two - year institution can be a buffer to prepare FGS for a four - year institution	**2 year is a buffer for 4 year**					Y						Y	1	10%
120	Unable to make a connection between school or an aspect and themself thus unable to feel a sense of belonging	**Unable to Connect**	Y										Y	1	10%
121	Understanding of what depression is and the severity of it between generations	**Depression understanding between generations**									Y		Y	1	10%
122	Using tools to adapt to learn	**General Adaptation to Learning**			Y	Y						Y	Y	3	30%
123	Writing and Speech organization is different from their everyday lives	**Informal vs. Formal Colloquialism**	Y	Y	Y		Y		Y	Y		Y	Y	7	70%

Appendix H: Color-Coded Emerging Themes Per and Amongst Participants

Color-Coded Emerging Themes Per and Amongst Participants

Series Number	Emerging Theme	Codes	# of Participants Identifying Same Theme	Percentage of Participants Identifying Same Theme
1	Writing and Speech organization is different from their everyday lives	**Informal vs. Formal Colloquialism**	7	70%
2	There is an education gap between generations	**Generational academic underprepared ness**	6	60%
3	Traditional roles or roles dictated by genders are changing	**Changing Roles**	4	40%
4	Using tools to adapt to learn	**General Adaptation to Learning**	3	30%
5	Two - year institution can be a buffer to prepare FGS for a four - year institution	**2 year is a buffer for 4 year**	1	10%
6	Unable to make a connection between school or an aspect and themself thus unable to feel a sense of belonging	**Unable to Connect**	1	10%
7	Understanding of what depression is and the severity of it between generations	**Depression understanding between generations**	1	10%
8	Having a 5 or more year gap between finishing high school and enrolling into college.	**Nontraditional Student**	7	70%

Legend of Color-Coded Percentages

Percentage Tile	Highlighted Color	# of Themes Within Percentage Tile
10%	White	56
20-40%	Pink	57
50-70%	Orange	10

Note: Significance defined for this study is focusing on emerging themes with 20% or more participants identifying the same theme.

9	Balance of More Complex Priorities	**Balance of Complex Priorities**	6	60%						
10	Parents or individual traveling to America.	**Immigration**	6	60%						
11	Adapt to demand and technologies during pandemic (Individual Response)	**Individual Adaptation or Resilience during a pandemic**	5	50%						
12	An individual is able to connect and feel empowered by seeing persons similar to them concerning ethnicities, genders, struggles, goals, and credentials	**Representation matters**	5	50%						
13	Has support on campus (persons)	**On Campus Support via Persons**	5	50%						
14	Having peer support in an informal setting outside clubs	**peer support (informal not in club)**	5	50%						
15	Self ambitions, goals, and desires	**Self-ambition**	5	50%						

16	Graduating, doing academically well, going against traditional, gender norms to help reeducate others and confront Patriachial Whiteness of what is acceptable thus highlighting the power behind a FGS doing well and helping their communities	**Knowledge is Power**	4	40%						
17	Has familial support	**Has Familial Support**	4	40%						
18	Lack of knowledge of what to expect	**transition period is a stressor and fear of unknown (lack of knowledge)**	4	40%						
19	Socializing and having support from friends	**Peer Support**	4	40%						
20	Adapt to demand and technologies during pandemic (Institution Response)	**Adaptation or Resilience during a pandemic (Institution Response)**	3	30%						
21	An active effort made to bridge any educational gaps between generations	**Ending Generational academic underprepared ness**	3	30%						
22	Desire to fit in and participate socially, but doesn't want to assimilate and lose one's authenticity	**Desire to socialize mainstream, but remain authentic**	3	30%						

23	Experiencing a realization that changes a change in attitude and outlook	**Change of mindset**	3	30%						
24	Has a private identity they enter college with & try to preserve	**public vs. private identity**	3	30%						
25	Having significant financial pressures even with some support	**Financial Pressures**	3	30%						
26	Indirectly or directly feeling shame or being embarassed about one's socioeconomic status	**insecurities of Socioeconomic Status**	3	30%						
27	INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS/CONTRIBUTIONS AFFECT FAMILY	**Individual Actions Affect Others**	3	30%						
28	Individuals sacrificing everything to attend college	**Individual sacrifice**	3	30%						
29	Individuals wanting and actively advocating for others	**Advocacy of Others**	3	30%						
30	Lack of institutional support (college as a whole)	**Lack of on Campus Support via Instiitution**	3	30%						
31	Not having an environment conducive to learning	**LACK OF CONDUCIVE ENVIRONMENT**	3	30%						

32	Parents sacrificing everything for Latinx FGS to attend college	**Family sacrifice**	3	30%						
33	Self preservation	**Survival Instinct**	3	30%						
34	Societal Stakeholder making biased comments	**Perpetuating Dominant and Oppressive Identities of CRT (societal institution)**	3	30%						
35	Subjective concept of standards for language - efficient according to whom?	**Subjective Language**	3	30%						
36	Subjective definition of what quantifies and qualifies as smart	**perception of what is smart - insecurity**	3	30%						
37	An individual believing in a higher power or following a religion other than Roman Catholicism	**Beliefs**	2	20%						
38	An individual feeling obligated to perform a role	**Obligation to Perform**	2	20%						
39	An individual recognizing inequities in the education FGS have compared to counterparts	**Inequitable intellectual property**	2	20%						

40	Being hesitant or insecured to tap into an opportunity because of an inability to truly relate with others not of one's ethnicity	**True relatability**	2	20%						
41	Campus offering individuals customized services to address needs and wants	**HOLISTIC SUPPORT BY CAMPUS**	2	20%						
42	Cared what others think	**Lack of confidence (insecurity of what others think)**	2	20%						
43	Comfortability to speak up and ask for a service or express needs/wants	**Self-advocacy**	2	20%						
44	Common ground for interacting with others	**Respect**	2	20%						
45	Desire to develop strong alumni ties or find ways to be socially apart of the institution	**Desire to socialize**	2	20%						
46	Desire to reconnect or maintain cultural language	**Reconnect and maintain with cultural language**	2	20%						
47	Family members making biased comments	**Perpetuating Stereotypes within Family**	2	20%						

48	FGS need context and guidance to assist their generation under preparedness	**insecurities due to generation under preparedness; need context for proper expectations of college vs. romanticism**	2	20%						
49	First impressions matter to individuals	**First impressions matter**	2	20%						
50	Generally lacking knowledge	**General lack of knowledge**	2	20%						
51	Generational under academic preparedness and knowledge thus causing generations to have an inability to relate and understand	**generational under preparedness & inability to relate**	2	20%						
52	Has support on campus (programs)	**On Campus Support via Programs**	2	20%						
53	Having a fear of becoming a stereotype	**fear of becoming a stereotype**	2	20%						
54	Having a lack of quality pre-college knowledge	**Lack of Pre-College Knowledge**	2	20%						
55	Hesitancy or being insecured to ask for help	**Stigma asking for help**	2	20%						
56	Indirectly or directly, family expects FGS to serve as family's liaison	**Family Liaison**	2	20%						
57	Individual can understand a language, but struggles to speak the language	**Receptive bilingualism**	2	20%						

58	Individual desire for others to be culturally competent and sensitive toward them so they can feel comfortable expressing their voice and not fear being misunderstood or judged	**HAVING CULTURALLY COMPETENT & SENSITIVE INDIVIDUALS LISTEN & UNDERSTAND THEM**	2	20%						
59	Individual desires a safe space or platform that is culturally competent and sensitive for them to express their voice	**HAVING A CULTURALLY COMPETENT SAFE SPACE OR PLATFORM TO EXPRESS ONESELF**	2	20%						
60	Individual experiencing a welcoming experience into college thus causing inequitable experiences	**Different Welcoming Standards Equates to Inequitable Experiences**	2	20%						
61	Individuals feel motivated by networking with contacts with similar ethnicities or goals, even though they appreciate diversity	**Empowering to network with a relative connection**	2	20%						
62	Lack of familial support	**Lack of Familial Support**	2	20%						
63	Lack of knowledge and therefore lack of comprehension or inability to truly understand, be interested, or relate	**Lack of knowledge & comprehensio n**	2	20%						

64	Lack of on or off campus accessibility and communication of opportunities via engaging programs	**Lack of on/off campus access and commun. of opportunities via programs**	2	20%						
65	Lack of support on campus (persons)	**Lack of on Campus Support via Persons**	2	20%						
66	Lack of support on campus (programs)	**Lack of on Campus Support via Programs**	2	20%						
67	On campus support coming from faculty	**Faculty Support**	2	20%						
68	On or off campus accessibility and communication of opportunities via engaging persons	**On/off campus access and commun. of opportunities via persons**	2	20%						
69	On or off campus accessibility and communication of opportunities via engaging programs	**On/off campus access and commun. of opportunities via programs**	2	20%						
70	Stigma of attending a 2 year institution vs a 4 year institution	**Stigma**	2	20%						
71	Able to make a connection between school or an aspect and themself	**Ability to Connect**	1	10%						

72	Accessibility and availability of opportunities are not the same for all Persons of Color.	**Lack of Access and Availabiliy of Opps. for all Persons of Color**	1	10%						
73	Active on campus.	**On Campus Activity**	1	10%						
74	Actively on a journey of self discovery	**Self Discovery**	1	10%						
75	Actively seeking support and graduation assistance, but help is limited or without a dedicated cultural or male platform compared to non-Latinx and women	**Limited Help and Dedicated Platform**	1	10%						
76	Addressing anxiety and depression increases an individual's confidence and persistence	**Addressing Anxiety & Depression Leads to Confidence & Persistence**	1	10%						
77	Aesthetics of a learning institution is more important than developing deeper support and pre-college preparation	**Aesthetics are more important for a learning institution**	1	10%						
78	An individual being stubborn	**Pride**	1	10%						
79	An individual being affected by another's trauma	**Others' Trauma**	1	10%						
80	An individual developing new motivations	**New motivations**	1	10%						

81	An individual entering college with unresolved trauma	**unresolved trauma - shows need rehab besides acad**	1	10%						
82	An individual feeling others of an unsimilar ethnic group or person does not have genuine concern, but instead feels empathy and the need to fix their situation insteading of believing he/she can fix it themself	**Savior Complex**	1	10%						
83	An individual identifying with their blackness and finding beauty in it even - if others agree or not	**Black is Beautiful**	1	10%						
84	An individual lacking similar experiences as others	**Lack of similar experiences**	1	10%						
85	An individual lacking the ability to successfully meet the demands of two cultures including knowledge, a positive attitude toward both groups, bicultural efficacy, ability to communicate, and being grounded	**Lack of Biculturalism Competence**	1	10%						

86	An individual practicing different coping mechanisms compared to tradition	**Individual coping mechanisms**	1	10%						
87	An individual progressing in school regardless of academic success	**Social Promotion**	1	10%						
88	Carried burdens	**Burdens**	1	10%						
89	Consistently tries different methods to achieve time management	**Time management**	1	10%						
90	Coping mechansims per generation	**Generational coping mechanisms**	1	10%						
91	Cultural competency and knowledge of FGS via persons	**Cult Comp & Knowledge via Persons**	1	10%						
92	Desire to make a connection between school or aspect and themself	**Desire to Connect**	1	10%						
93	Experienced a lack of guidance	**Lack of Guidance**	1	10%						
94	Generational effect - FGS want for more specific, relevant support, but support system is limited and cannot provide due to lack of knowledge and systemic inequities	**Specific, Relevant Support**	1	10%						
95	Has institutional support (college as a whole)	**On Campus Support via Institution**	1	10%						

96	Has non-familial support	**Lack of Non-Familial Support**	1	10%							
97	Have support and positive relationship of immediate household	**Immediate household support**	1	10%							
98	Having distrust and fear of an unsimilar ethnic group or person	**Distrust & Fear of Unsimilar Groups/Persons**	1	10%							
99	Indirectly or directly rejected by their circle based on traditional norms	**Rejection due to Traditional Norms**	1	10%							
100	Individual acquiring diverse experiences over time	**Life experience**	1	10%							
101	Individual experiencing a delay of information	**Delayed Info**	1	10%							
102	Individual experiencing isolation from family	**Familial Isolation**	1	10%							
103	Individual growing in a single parent household	**One Parent Household**	1	10%							
104	Individual having an awareness of other like-peers and realization other peers are in worst situations	**Heightened awareness**	1	10%							

105	Individual identifies one's culture rooted with religious customs and not color or traditional ccustoms	**Individual identifies one's culture rooted with religious customs and not color or traditional customs**	1	10%						
106	Individual identifying as being clinically diagnosed of having a learning disability	**Learning Disability**	1	10%						
107	Individual identifying with their country of birth and the place they immigrate to	**Individual identifying with their country of birth and the place they immigrate to (Adoption of Biculturalism)**	1	10%						
108	Individual identifying with three aspects	**triple identity**	1	10%						
109	Individual is conscientious of how oneself performs in social setttings	**Insecurity of fitting in**	1	10%						
110	Individuals actively trying to discover a part of their cultural identity	**Connect with Missing Cultural Identity**	1	10%						
111	Individuals experiencing pressures from family, but trying to maintain boundaries	**FAMILY PRESSURES & BOUNDARIES**	1	10%						
112	Internalizing Negative Emotions because of institutions	**Internalized Negativity via Institutions**	1	10%						

113	Internalizing Negative Emotions because of programs	**Internalized Negativity via Programs**	1	10%						
114	Lack of communication is costly & emotionally draining causing a trauma	**Lack of Communication can be costly & Traumatic**	1	10%						
115	Lack of cultural competency and knowledge of FGS via institution	**Lack of Cult Comp & Knowledge via Institutions**	1	10%						
116	Lack of cultural competency and knowledge of FGS via persons	**Lack of Cult Comp & Knowledge via Persons**	1	10%						
117	Lack of cultural competency and knowledge of FGS via programs	**Lack of Cult Comp & Knowledge via Programs**	1	10%						
118	Lack of on or off campus accessibility and communication of opportunities via engaging institutions	**Lack of on/off campus access and commun. of opportunities via institutions**	1	10%						
119	Logistical challenges involved in completing goals	**Logistical challenges**	1	10%						

120	Mental illness/disability - generational illness; experiences and counseling helps respond to life events; reconditioning on how to respond- communicate	**Mental illness/disability**	1	10%						
121	On campus celebration of diversity	**Campus celebrating diversity**	1	10%						
122	Others judging and weaponizing one's past against them	**Past trauma - being judged by it**	1	10%						
123	Stakeholder making biased comments	**Perpetuating Dominant and Oppressive Identities of CRT within Institution**	1	10%						