8-23-2024

# Las Voces Poderosas: Valuing Latine Undergraduate Perspectives When Re-Assessing Holistic Student Supports at Predominantly white Institutions

Cassaundra Victoria Guzman
*Syracuse University*

## Recommended Citation

**Abstract**

Within the last decade, scholars of color have researched and advocated for better support for first-generation, Latine students, in particular through the critical analysis of the impact of the campus racial climate (Franklin et al., 2014; Huerta & Fishman, 2014; Hurtado & Alvarado, 2015; Kouyoumdijan et al., 2017). These reimagined supports include but are not limited to: increase in faculty and staff of color, increase funding for spaces designated for these students, easier access to mental health resources, and an overall emphasis on nurturing the well-being of Latine students. This study, in part, addresses how educators at Predominantly white Institutions can better serve underrepresented students through becoming more knowledgeable of the systemic obstacles they face.

The methodologies that anchor this qualitative study stem from critical race methodology as defined by Solórzano & Yosso (2023); Critical Race Theory and Latine Critical Race Theory. This study involved interviewing and collecting the testimonios of 13 undergraduate students who self-identified as Latine and first-generation. By relying on students as knowledge producers in this study, they are granted a voice in a way that is typically not seen in higher education research, further extending this research method (Haber-Curran & Tapia-Fuselier, 2020). Not only does this method grant them autonomy over their own lived experiences, but it also allows them to have power over what is communicated to these institutions. For Latine students who are commonly viewed through a deficit-based lens, this study aimed to change the narrative around what these students are capable of to one that is strength-based. This study concludes with institutional recommendations such as reassessing financial aid resources, counseling and psychological services and disability services, expanding first-generation-specific resources, creating an on-campus cultural center, and raising institutional support for student organizations.

Las Voces Poderosas: Valuing Latine Undergraduate Perspectives When Re-Assessing Holistic Student Supports at Predominantly white Institutions

Cassaundra Victoria Guzman

B.A., Humboldt State University, 2020
M.S., Syracuse University, 2021
C.A.S., Syracuse University, 2024

Dissertation
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Cultural Foundations of Education

Syracuse University
August 2024

**Dedication**

To all of the other first-generation, Latine students who step onto a college campus feeling like you have no answers: you have *all* of the answers. You are more than capable of doing this. It's scary because it's unfamiliar, not because you are incapable. In the moments you find it difficult to believe this I'm here to believe in you. Será imposible, hasta que lo consigas.

**Acknowledgments**

*You are the family I got to choose, and I chose well.*

I have an extensive list of people to thank, bear with me, I have a lot of roses to give out.

I am grateful for my chosen family on the west coast who were patient with me as we navigated scheduling phone calls in different time zones. These phone calls felt like hugs on the days I needed it the most. In no particular order, thank you: Alyssa Avalos, Kyle Mendiola, Jobel Hernandez, Maria Garcia, Danny Rivera. *I am because we are.*

I am grateful for my chosen family on the east coast who reminded me what love should feel/look/sound like. In no particular order, thank you: Autumn Figueora, August Grinage, Orlando Grinage, Joshua Gyamfi. *I am because we are.*

I am grateful for the women who have paved the way for me. To have been mentored by some of the wisest women is a blessing I count twice. In no particular order, thank you: Dr. Cheryl Johnson, Dr. Edelmira Reynoso, Dr. Deidre Pike. *I am because we are.*

I am grateful for the Holmes Scholars program where I found lifelong friends. Being surrounded by scholars of color along this journey was pure magic. In no particular order, thank you: Hema Yuvaraja, Linzy Andre, Etije Walker, Azaria Cunningham, Paris Pruitt, Charles Barnes, Amelia Rivera, Dr. Leslie Ekpe, Kim Lawson, Dr. Ashley Grays, Jennifer Amador, Simonie Moore, Tempestt Johnson. *I am because we are.*

I am grateful for the School of Education (SOE) at Syracuse University. SOE has been my home away from home for four years, filled with people who made graduate school feel more feasible. In no particular order, thank you: Dr. Kelly Chandler-Olcott, Dr. Beth Ferri, Dr. Cathy McHugh-Engstrom, Dr. Courtney Mauldin, John Beecher, Lucianna Juston, Crystal Ross, Speranza Migliore, Maryann Barker, Carol Burns, Allison DeVoe, Martin Walls, Sara Jo Solodovieri,

I am grateful for my dissertation committee. From the many rounds of revisions to your patience in answering my never-ending questions, this quite literally could not have been done without every single one of you. In no particular order, thank you: Dr. Gretchen Lopez, Dr. Mario Perez, Dr. Michael Gill, Dr. George Theoharis. *I am because we are.*

I am grateful for my students both at Syracuse University and at Cornell University. I hope I have made a fraction of the impact on your lives as you've made on mine.

A special thank you to:

Dr. Barbara Applebaum — thank you for the banana bread, hugs, and being a safe space. Thank you for everything, Dr. A.

ParKer Bryant, Dr. Dominique C. Hill — thank you for loving all versions of me. Thank you for being my people.

Dr. Kristin Dade, Lani Karsh, Journey Dade — thank you for the game nights, family dinners, and new holiday traditions. Thank you for giving me a family when I needed one.

# Table of Contents

**Chapter 1 – La Introducción**

*Background*

 Nearly a decade ago I entered college as an 18-year-old, first-generation, Latina who didn't know the first thing about college. I struggled to make friends. I struggled to find resources to help me succeed. I struggled to understand what success was supposed to look like. My undergraduate experience was far from ideal and one that I reflected on greatly as I wrote this dissertation. This graduate school journey was born from my experiences during my "senior" year of undergrad. The spring semester I was poised to graduate, my Abuela had passed away after a short battle with cancer. Over my senior year spring break, I traveled back home to help with her funeral arrangements and mourn her loss with my family. When spring break ended, I returned to campus to finish my final semester of undergrad. A few weeks later I became the first in my family to complete a four-year college degree. As I crossed that graduation stage, I looked out to the crowd of families cheering on their student to find my family cheering just as loudly for me. Their smiles that day are forever etched into my brain. That first degree did not belong solely to me, it belonged to all of us. I spent that summer celebrating with loved ones and preparing to enter a master's program in the fall. About a month after graduation, I received an email from the registrar's office notifying me that I had not completed all my requirements and was missing 13 credits. I read over that email a million times hoping that the words on the screen would magically change.

 When reality finally sunk in, I withdrew from the master's program and enrolled in another year of undergrad. I didn't know how to explain to my family a situation that I didn't fully understand myself, so I didn't. Instead, I sought guidance and support from faculty that unfortunately didn't quite meet my needs. They weren't able to provide the holistic support I was

seeking as I balanced the grief of losing my Abuela and having not actually graduated. To say I felt alone and lost that fall semester is an understatement. When it came time to apply to graduate school a second time, I knew I wanted to pursue a degree in education to support students like myself in ways I wish I had been supported.

From that complicated experience I slowly realized that I was not the only student who had those experiences. Specifically, I was not the only first-generation, Latina who was struggling to remind myself why I decided to pursue higher education. It was through various support systems at the university that not only affirmed my belonging in higher education, but also provided me with holistic support needed to continue my education. Through my personal lived experiences, I advocate for the betterment of current support systems as well as the investment in new supports for this student population.

The faculty and staff of color whom I connected with towards the tail end of my undergraduate degree were reasons why I was able to complete my degree and continue on in graduate school. I can count on one hand the number of professors of color I had in undergrad and can count on the other hand the number of professors of color I have had in graduate school. The same can be said for most college students in 2023 (Griffin, 2020; NCES, 2021; Settles et al., 2019). Griffin reminds us that although the number of faculty of color higher education have increased, it's important that we critically analyze those numbers. "While Black scholars are 5.7% of all full-time faculty, a large proportion teach at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)… Underrepresented minority faculty more generally make up a larger proportion of faculty at 2-year (15%) as compared to 4-year (9.5%) institutions," (Griffin, 2020, p. 285). Griffin also points out that faculty of color are less represented in science, technology, math, and engineering (STEM) fields as well as holding more part-time, non-tenure-track

positions as opposed to their white counterparts largely holding tenure-track roles. Attaining these tenure-track positions is made that much more difficult when an inordinate amount of obstacles are put in the way to become full professors (Griffin, 2020; Turner et al., 2008).

Alongside the help that professors of color provide, culturally-sensitive mental health professionals also play a similar role to students like me. Unfortunately, these mental health spaces are over inundated (Benton et al., 2003; Smith et al., 2011; Xiao et al., 2017). When I was finally able to stop internalizing negative messages around seeking help, I waited over a month before I met with a mental health counselor for an in-take appointment. This is on the lower end of the waiting timeline. Thankfully I sought help proactively before I hit a point where I was in dire need of attention, but for some students this is not the case. For Latine students who come from cultures that typically frown upon seeking out mental health support, it can be an additional deterrent for us to do so when we are told we have to wait weeks to meet with a counselor (DeFreitas et al., 2018). Thankfully universities are now offering 24-hour hotlines for those who are in crisis or in need of immediate support, however this does not exactly replace the support received when meeting with a counselor one-on-one.

The student support programs and offices that currently exist, these spaces have been my safe havens. They've been spaces where I've often felt the safest and found the deepest connections. Yet these are the spaces that are simultaneously underfunded and under appreciated by the institution. Lozano discusses the value that Latine cultural centers have on students and the unfortunate position these spaces find themselves in within the current political climate. "Recent federal and state budget cuts to higher education threaten equity efforts and programs for students of color, including the funding of cultural centers" (Lozano, 2019, p. 20). Having

utilized these spaces as a student and worked in these spaces as a professional[1], I've experienced

the hardships staff feel knowing they serve a greater purpose on college campuses but can only

do so much due to the limited resources they have. Securing stable funding to maintain full-time

staff members and resources within these cultural centers is typically one of the bigger hurdles

for these centers (Cisneros & Valdivia, 2020; Hefner, 2022; Pedota, 2024). As educators, it is

heart-breaking when we cannot support our students in the best ways possible because our hands

are tied. When looking at the budget breakdowns at PwIs, we wonder what it means for these

institutions to have mission statements with diversity, equity and inclusion in them, but the

allocation of funds is not reflective of these statements.

*Statement of the Problem*

The demographic landscape of all ethnicities, cultures, and genders in higher education

has vastly changed in the past few decades. According to the U.S. National Center for Education

Statistics (NCES), this shift can be seen across different populations of people, from the overall

enrollment decline of students who are 18 to 24 years old to the overall increase of students of

color attaining four-year degrees (NCES, 2020; Page, 2013). In the 2021-2022 academic year,

NCES reported that 41.2% of bachelor's degrees were awarded to students of color. In 2000-

2001, 23% of bachelor's degrees were awarded to students of color. This decline and rises among

marginalized groups have been felt not only among their respective communities, but also among

the already existing, predominantly white community as well. The overall rise in Black,

Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) attending higher education institutions can be

attributed to a handful of factors, some of which include the growth of these communities within

---

[1] In the past 5 years I have worked as a higher education professional in offices for multicultural affairs, academic diversity initiatives, and federally funded programs specifically for underrepresented students.

the U.S. population, the addition of community-specific federally funded opportunities, and the implementation of student support services for these marginalized communities such as the McNair Scholars Post-Baccalaureate program or the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), both of which are TRIO programs. All these factors, and more, shape how we as a nation have diversified the portfolio of students in colleges and universities. Albeit it's worth mentioning that this growth is not reflected evenly across the country. There are some states that are advancing more in this regard than others due to a long-standing history of racism, xenophobia, classism, and other -ism's (Franklin, 2013). For instance, the state of Florida has seemed to take quite a few steps back in supporting marginalized college students with the recent passing, "of education-related laws intended to silence and intimidate educators and extricate or severely restrict the teaching of accurate U.S. racial history and related diversity, equity, and inclusion programs," (Thornhill, 2023, p. 441). Despite these attempts, there has been a gradual rise in students of color working towards their college degrees, and specifically a substantial increase among the Latine population.

According to Pew Research (2022), in the last two decades the United States has seen a monumental growth of Latine students enrolling in college. As of 2020 one in five college students identified as Latine. However, of the millions of bachelor's degrees that were awarded in 2023 in the United States, less than 13% were obtained by Latine students. Fifty percent of those who earn their degree typically take an extra year or two to complete their degree in comparison to white students. Retention plays a key role in understanding the lower graduation rates of Latine students. Retaining students going into their second year proves to be difficult for most colleges, including Hispanic-Serving Institutions (Benítez, 1998). In accordance with the data summarized by Pew Research, Latine students are the least likely to complete their degree

in four years, if at all. Returning to the question of why this population is difficult to retain, a solution that comes to mind pertains to student support. The support offered is abundant to students on the surface. Students may have access to tutoring, writing centers, recitation sessions, and office hours, however the non-academic supports are few and far between. Non-academic supports are spaces such as cultural centers or mindfulness spaces on campuses. Even then some of these supports are rooted in academics. For example peer mentoring programs that are aimed at helping students build their sense of community focus on how they can excel academically. This dissertation explores what non-academic support services can be developed that are not tied to success where it seems as though everything is intrinsically tied to academic achievement.

The shift in postsecondary enrollment of Latine students can be seen but not fully understood through the quantitative numbers collected by institutional data offices, and also through the growth in support services developed and provided to specific student populations. The creation of Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) in 1995, for example, created more support services for Latine students. The term HSI was first coined by the Hispanic Association for Colleges and Universities (HACU) in 1986, however it wasn't until 1995 that federal funding was first appropriated towards the development of HSIs (Santiago, 2006, p. 3). Being an HSI is a distinction[2] given to higher education institutions when 25% or more of their undergraduate student population identifies as Latine. Once an institution is classified as an HIS, it is eligible to receive additional federal funding to support Latine students. There has also been the inclusion of cultural centers in higher education in general, hubs where students of a specific population can come together in a safe environment. These centers have gone through a few iterations in the last

---

[2] Hispanic Serving Institutions is one of eight Minority Serving Institution (MSI) programs federally funded in the United States. The other designations include but are not limited to: Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), Asian American and Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AAPISIs).

couple of decades, changing the specificity or broadness of the populations they serve, undergoing mission and value statement changes due to new oversight, and working against political forces that threaten their very existence (Meyer, 2022). There are also student-led support efforts in the form of clubs, Greek life, student protests, and other extracurricular activities that have grown as the numbers do in universities across the nation. Such student-led supports allow students to be authorities over what these spaces can be, who can be involved, and what role the institution plays. These forms of support have grown in size and popularity (Bell et al., 2022; Parrish et al., 2022; Porter et al., 2023), becoming more recognized among students and staff alike, however the question around retention rates for Latine students.

The supports mentioned tend to be underfunded, under-supported, and under-utilized (Brock, 2010; Goodman, 2017; Hefner & Eisenberg, 2009; Lozano, 2011). What is being offered to students is hypothesized to either not be enough, be overwhelmingly too much, or students simply are not aware of everything there is that institutions have to offer. At a four-year land grant public PwI on the West Coast, each cultural center is expected to, "present their case for additional or consistent funds every year to the Student Fees Council," despite these cultural centers aims to promote student success (Pedota, 2023, p. 4). Alongside that note is the reality that students seek academic support as a prerequisite to being a college student, but as educators we forget the importance of holistic support. For our communities of color, holistic support is what raised us (Stephens et al., 2012). As Yosso (2006) notes and my experience confirms, we were raised among villages that provided us academic support just as much as they did emotional, mental, and physical support. It was well-rounded and all-encompassing. And first-generation, Latine students step foot on campus and realize that that isn't the case in higher education.

Grace-Odeleye and Santiago (2019) write in their review of the efficacy of summer bridge programs for incoming first-year students, that the "main reason for discontinuation is attributable to personal lack of use, or inadequate, college internal supportive programs and policies" (p. 36). They show in their literature review how low self-esteem, expectations, and academic self-concept are non-academic factors that impact a student's likelihood of being retained such as low self-esteem, expectations, and academic self-concept. Grace-Odeleye and Santiago also found that students' determination to complete their degree grows after they've connected with someone in a meaningful way, such as close-knit relationships and mentorships with faculty and staff. Such close-knit relationships with faculty and staff are an aspect of holistic support. Although these relationships provide students social-emotional support that does not come from academic supports like tutoring or office hours, they do not guarantee persistence, retainment, or graduation. Even after students experience social and intellectual integration, they do not singlehandedly indicate integration in university settings (Tinto, 1993). As Lozano argues, "[I]t is possible that because of historic, structural, and institutional racism, [marginalized students] may not feel a sense of belonging or integration in the life of the institution," (Lozano, 2011, p. 7). Despite being a review of summer bridge programs, the qualitative data collected by Grace-Odeleye and Santiago demonstrates there is a need for more holistic approaches when supporting students from underrepresented, first-generation backgrounds. There is a need for research that specifically focuses on Latine undergraduate students because as stated in the limitations of their study, Grace-Odeleye & Santiago are interested in seeing correlations in relation to ethnicity or how the efficacy of summer bridge programs may differ based on ethnic background.

Summary of Statement of the Problem

As evidenced by the NCES, Pew Research Center, and existing literature, there is an understanding that Latine undergraduate students are growing in population across the country however their enrollment numbers aren't reflective of that population growth. The stagnant enrollment numbers are in part due to the lower retention rates for Latine students. The solution proposed to aid in the retention and graduation rates of this population is to reassess the current support systems in place. Based on other universities successful initiatives, a holistic student support approach seems to be one of the more effective models to utilize with Latine undergraduate students. The following section will introduce the research questions which will frame this doctoral study.

Overview of the Study

*Research Questions*

1. What does it look like to situate Latine undergraduate students as the knowledge producers when asking them how Predominantly white Institutions can better serve them in holistic ways?

2. In what ways are first-generation, Latine students receiving, or not receiving, meaningful holistic support in higher education?

3. What does/should holistic support in higher education look like according to Latine undergraduate students?

*Delimitations*

In answering the aforementioned research questions, there are some delimitations which are boundaries I set as the researcher conducting this study in order to best address the research questions.

1.  All participants had to self-identify as first-generation, Latine undergraduate students.

2.  All participants had to attend a specific university.

3.  All participants were between the ages of 18-21 years old.

4.  Data collection occurred via one-on-one, semi-structured interviews.

5.  The interviews were conducted in-person on a university campus.

*Purpose of the Study*

To answer the research questions above I have conducted a qualitative study grounded in Latine Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) so as to address the need for more inclusive, holistic supports for first-generation, Latine college students. Although having a disability was not a criteria for this study, I recognize that for far too long students who identify both as Latine *and* disabled have not received the support needed due to the separation of identities by university support and resources.

A study conducted by Rodriguez et al. (2020) focuses on the self-acceptance of the intersection of culture and disability among Latine adolescents, which can be translatable to college students seeing as how they are not too far removed from adolescence. This study found that students who accepted the multiplicity of their identities had a more positive self-perception. "Social identity is foundational to understanding (a) who we are in terms of similarities and differences with others, (b) how shared identity leads to shared social action, and (c) how shared identity is a product of a collective history and present experiences," (Byrd, 2014, p. 516). A

wide array of educational, qualitative studies have been conducted in the past decade that center K-12 Latine students, not college-aged students (Fraser et al., 2022; Gage et al., 2021; Tefera, 2019). As the enrollment numbers grow for Latine undergraduate students, there is no better time than the present to put energy towards adding to this literature and studying the ways we can best support Latine college students. As we exit the era of virtual learning, a partial side effect of the global pandemic, educators and administrators alike are in a position to re-evaluate the systems in place that do not adequately serve our students before the pandemic (Cole et al., 2021; Hartzell et al., 2021). Moreover, with the ever-evolving political climate of the country these students need institutions that are willing to grow with them. There is an ongoing philosophical debate that universities are a space where students come to learn, yet we forget that in turn we are also here to learn from them.

By relying on students as knowledge producers in this study through interviews and testimonios, I am foregrounding and centering their experiences, interpretations, analysis, and recommendations in ways not typically done. Not only does this grant them more agency over how they narrate their lived experiences, but it also provides them more power over what is communicated to the institutions they attend. For Latine students who are not generally looked to for answers and are seen in a deficit-based lens, this study aims to change the narrative around how they struggle, thrive, and make the best of the experiences in higher education. "Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection" (Freire, 1970, p. 69).

*Definition of Key Terms*

To ensure that there is a common understanding of the terminology used throughout this study, below are the definitions and rationale behind key terms frequently used in this dissertation.

*First-Generation*

Initially *first-generation* was coined in 1980 by the Council for Opportunity in Education, creating a new category of students for the purpose of being able to offer them specific supports. First-generation is now a term that is met with its own resistance, particularly around the financial and institutional implications of it. This identity marker was born for the sole purpose of finding new ways to support students of marginalized backgrounds who wish to attend college. The original definition grouped together students who did not have both parents graduate from a four-year college in the United States (Higher Education Act of 1965). In the 58 years since the coining of this term, it has evolved. Some iterations of it become more specific, defining it as those whose biological parents did not attend and/or graduate from a four-year institution in the U.S., to more broad definitions, defining it as those whose legal guardians did not attend and/or graduate from a college or university in the U.S. (Peralta & Klonowski, 2017; Toutkoushian et al., 2018). All iterations of this term include the same language of a guardian, their level of education, and their geographic location yet vary between how much education their guardians had access to prior to their entry into higher education. This term now asks that educators take into consideration the complex educational backgrounds students may come from. Examples of more complex backgrounds may include students who had a parent that graduated from a four-year university but passed away before the student entered college or a student who has a parent that's completed a four-year college degree but in a different country, therein having different experiences and understandings of higher education systems.

Regardless of the various versions this term has gone through, it is important that a definition exists to allow students the opportunity to find common ground with other students with similar backgrounds. It allows first-generation students to enter college knowing they are

not alone in being new to the college experience. This term is more than just for the purposes of funding a student's ability to attend college, it also gives them a sense of belonging. For the purpose of this paper, it will be defined as:

> *First-generation (n.): a student who has one or more legal guardians that did not graduate from a four-year institution in the United States*

### Latine

The use of 'Latinx' stems from the on-going movement to use terms that are gender inclusive. Latinx was first used over social media in 2004, picked up speed, and has since made its way through academia and society at large. Aside from the 'x' defying gender binaries, it also actively pushes against static languages that do not leave space for others such as AfroLatinx or indigenous languages (Garcia, 2017). The 'x' has only recently been adopted, previously having been replaced with the use of 'Latina/o', 'Latin@', and 'Latine.' Through all of its iterations the one that seems to have remained the longest is the 'x.' The use of the 'Latinx' breaks away from the gender norms of Spanish words defaulting to the masculine form, leaves room for those who don't identify themselves among the gender binary, and does not make assumptions about one's identity. The use of this word may just be a, "temporary buzzword… [but] the term is proof positive that language is alive, evolving, and is a tool and reflection of our human-ness," (Garcia, 2017, p. 211).

This term does not exist without its own contention. Some of the critique this term receives is largely around three key points: gender neutrality, lack of awareness outside of academia, and its inability to be translated to the Spanish language. This term has been accused of being neutral rather than inclusive, rendering gender irrelevant through the use of the 'x'. "Bundling those who have had to fight for their right to define their own gender identity into a

13

genderless category is a microaggression," (Río-González, 2021). This goes hand in hand with the lack of awareness that folks have of this term outside of academia. For those who are coming across this word for the first time in a social media post or magazine article, they may not have access to the full explanation for why it is that we have made the shift from 'Latina/o' to 'Latinx'. Lastly and arguably most importantly, in using the 'x' it is difficult to translate this term in the Spanish language (de Onis, 2017). Additionally, the use of the 'x' has received backlash because of its close-knit relationship with academia, being accused of elitism and imposition (Rodriguez, 2017; Salinas et al., 2020; Salinas & Lozano, 2018; Salinas, 2020; de Onis, 2017). Therefore, in choosing to use 'Latine', I am choosing to use a term that is not only representative of those in this community but it is also more inclusive of the Spanish language. In using 'Latine' over other iterations of this term, it is a choice that actively pushes back against colonial ways of being. Rather than opting to use the word that has been largely publicized by American scholars and mass media, I am choosing to use the word that is just as representative and can be used in both languages that these community members speak.

For the purpose of this study, I will be using 'Latine', intentionally in alignment with the guidelines provided by Río-González (2021):

1. Provide a definition of Latine

2. Use when acknowledging gender diversity; use it to address *all* genders

3. Provide alternatives[3] in empirical studies

*Latine (n): a person who identifies as being from Latin American descent; the 'e' being an inclusive addition to appeal to those who identify as agender, gender non-conforming, genderqueer, and genderfluid while still being translatable to the Spanish language*

---

[3] Students who participated in the study were provided the definitions of Latine and first-generation to be used as a guide rather than as strict parameters. Students were given autonomy over how they self-identified.

***Holistic***

When (re)imagining support for first-generation, Latine students, there is research that supports a holistic approach which will be explored and demonstrated in later chapters. However, our collective understanding of what holistic support is, is nuanced. Berge and Huang (2004) designed a holistic retention model that although was created for e-learning, is applicable beyond that scope. Their model not only took into consideration the personal, institutional, and circumstantial variables that may impact a student's ability to be retained, it also is a less prescriptive model that can be customized, "to different institutional environments and cultures and diverse student populations" (Silva, 2005, p. 37). Through further analysis of existing literature, Silva calls attention to Beatty-Guenter's (1994) work on identifying the interconnected nature of holistic retention strategies, noting that all models can be connected through four categories: sorting, supporting, connecting, and transforming. These four types of retention strategies include sorting students by homogenous subgroups to bolster sense of belonging, supporting students outside of the classroom, connecting students with one another, and supporting the transformational growth of students. Beatty-Guenter introduces these categories not as separate from one another but categories that work in tandem with one another. That is, holistic support is relational to other forms of support through commonalities they share. Silva goes on to define a holistic retention model as one that, "takes into consideration the physical, social, emotional needs of students *along* with the academic needs of students, and provides an environment in which these needs can be considered and fostered to help students achieve their goals" (Silva, 2005, p. 39). Although Silva's work focuses on retention models which is not the premise of this dissertation, their definition and understanding of the term holistic heavily influenced the way I view what these supports can look like for first-generation, Latine students.

*Holistic student support (n): a student support approach that is informed by a student's mental, physical, and emotional well-being in order to provide them with well-rounded support to help them thrive academically and beyond*

Table 1. Brief Definitions of Key Terms

| Key term | Definition |
| --- | --- |
| First-Generation | A student who has one or more legal guardians that did not graduate from a four-year institution in the United States |
| Latine | A person who identifies as being from Latin America and/or Hispanic descent; the 'e' being a gender inclusive addition that allows for a more seamless translation into Spanish |
| Predominantly white Institution | Higher education institutions with a student population greater than 50% that self-identifies as white; 'white' is intentionally not capitalized so as to decenter whiteness in this study which aims to uplift voices of color |
| Holistic | A student support approach that is informed by a student's mental, physical, and emotional well-being in order to provide them with well-rounded support to help them thrive academically and beyond |

## Summary

This first chapter laid the foundation for understanding the context that surrounds this study followed by an overview of the study itself then the key terminology that will be utilized throughout this dissertation. The following chapters will go into further detail on the existing literature that foregrounds this research, the methodology used to answer the research questions, a presentation of the data, then an analysis of the data that eventually leads to a presentation of recommendations.

**Chapter 2 – La Literatura**

Much of the literature on first-generation, Latine undergraduate students centers the systemic obstacles they face such as racism, classism, and lack of belonging. Although the systemic barriers they experience are captured in the literature, the recommendations they provide to increase support in higher education are less likely to make it into research studies. In this dissertation, the recommendations from the participants come from their lived experiences rather than quantitative data. This study places high value on qualitative data, a method that compliments and enriches the surveys and other quantitative measures typically used to capture information in higher education institutions. In emphasizing the importance of qualitative measures, I communicate to the audience how the addition of such measures expands our understanding of research studies conducted with underrepresented populations whereas purely quantitative measures may be limiting. Although quantitative measures hold value, by solely relying on those measures researchers may become ignorant to the truths that lie within the grey space that qualitative data fills in. Qualitative data helps us as researchers understand the story not being told within the numbers. In emphasizing the importance of qualitative data, I argue that the addition of students' narratives expands our understanding of underrepresented students who have been overwhelmingly understood through quantitative measures. The literature reviewed below exemplifies the current struggles Latine students face, the theoretical frameworks that will be used to answer the research questions introduced in chapters 1 and 2, and the gaps I aim to fill in the existing literature that will support the knowledge shared by the student participants.

Review of Existing Literature

*Existing Literature on PwI's*

The long-standing history of *Predominantly white Institutions* (PwI) is replete with bigotry, racism, sexism, and the outright exclusion of BIPOC students (Arias, 2020; Havlik, et al., 2020; Robertson, et al., 2016) and the outright exclusion of BIPOC students. In a study conducted at a PwI, 52% of Latine students reported experiences of racism in the form of microaggressions and stereotypes (Von Robertson et al., 2016). Another study at a different PwI concluded that Latine students struggle significantly with psychological or emotional distress as well as discrimination (Burkham, 2019). Within this section we will be looking at the role PwI's play in higher education, the stereotypes they uphold, and why the existence of these institutions make it necessary to create supports for students of color.

PwI's are defined here as higher education institutions with a greater than 50% student population that self-identifies as white. With the growing number of BIPOC students enrolling in higher education institutions, one would be led to believe that the percentage of white students would be lower. As of 2021 the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported that there were 99 Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCU) and 559 HSI's out of nearly 4,000 four-year institutions. That leaves over 3,000 colleges that have a student population that is over 50% white. In 2023 the majority of institutions in the U.S. are PwI's despite the growing number of college-aged BIPOC students.

Looking past the enrollment numbers, being labeled as a PwI also has to do with the culture that has been created at these institutions. In Bourke's analysis of this term and its implications, he explains that this label, "signifies the extent to which whiteness is embedded throughout interconnected organizational practices," (2016, p. 20). It is not enough to say that an institution is a PwI purely based on its demographics, it is also a PwI because of the marginalized experiences students of color have. If the number of non-white students enrolled shifted an institution from quantitatively identifying as a PwI, the systemic racism does not instantaneously

resolve. Diamond and Lewis (2022) ask educators and researchers alike to reassess how we view institutional spaces, expanding how we define what white spaces look like. White spaces as understood by Diamond and Lewis are beyond the demographic composition but encapsulate, "how an organization, school, and/or "space" might be racialized beyond demographics – to consider dimensions of power, resources, climate, culture, etc" (Diamond & Lewis, 2022, p. 1471). These scholars provide the example of Indian boarding schools that demographically were not white but had whiteness deeply embedded in their organizational practices. For those heavily focused on enrollment management, Bourke (2016) calls for them to reassess the ways diverse perspectives, campus engagement, and traditions can be shifted to better support the diverse students that they worked so hard to attain.

At PwIs there is this on-going issue of students of color not receiving the support they need to be retained (Duran, 2016; McClain & Perry, 2017). At Central Valley Community College, the Summer Bridge Academy was created in part to bridge the gap of support that first-generation students don't receive from this PwI (Duran, 2016). Such programs are crucial in supporting marginalized students so long as they are rooted in educating, "the whole student; colleges must hire and reinforce staff members who understand what student development looks like and how to foster it," (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 44). McClain and Perry (2017) explore in their literature review how Hurtado's (1999) campus racial climate theory continues to inform PwI's in how to better retain students of color based off of Hurtado's five components, with the fifth component later being added by Milem, Dey, and White (2004):

1. Institutional historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion

2. Compositional diversity

3. Psychological climate

4. Behavioral climate

19

5.  Structural diversity

In utilizing these components to assess campus racial climate, PwI's can be more reflective on the ways they are or are not supporting students of color.  Retention is an issue across the board for institutions in the U.S. The problem that lies here is that institutions focus too much on retention on the surface level and do not take the time to delve deeper into minutiae that leads to lower retention rates. Tinto reminds us that what we should be striving for is a raise in students' persistence rather than retention. Although both terms are typically used as synonyms for one another, Tinto explains that, "institutions have to adopt the student perspective and ask not only how they should act to retain their students but also how they should act so that more of their students want to persist," (2016). As a nation we saw a dip in retention rates since 2020 due in part to the global pandemic. Recent studies at individual higher education institutions have supported this statement, citing that, "at Arizona State University 13% of students were delaying their graduation, and 11% of students had withdrawn from classes since the start of the pandemic". (Hartzell et al., 2021, p. 144). Additionally, George Washington University has reported through the Annual Core Indicators Report that the institution is finally seeing the, "first-year student retention rate bounc[e] back this academic year after dropping following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic," (Salvosa, 2022). As Hartzell et al. have said, there is still much more research that needs to be done to fully understand the impact the global pandemic has had on underrepresented students. However there is wariness when saying that COVID-19 is the root cause of this dip because it alleviates educators and administrators from being held accountable.

Montelongo (2019) provides a literature review on scholars' work that highlights specific cultural factors on socialization that directly impact Latine students at PwI's, citing prior scholars' (Conrad & Gasman, 2015; Saenz et al., 2015) in stating the importance of providing

proactive support rather than reactive. Montelongo goes on to argue that educational agents should reframe their question when wondering how to best support students. Rather than asking, "what contributes to a student's failure?" educators should be asking what can aid, "students of color who decide to attend a [PwI] to operate on an optimum level," (Montelongo, 2019, p. 20).

*Existing Literature on Holistic Student Support*

*Holistic* in this dissertation is being described as a student support approach that attends to a student's needs outside of academia. "It emphasizes well-being… empowers students," (hooks, 1994, p. 15). A holistic approach to student support stems from a pedagogy of love as introduced by Paulo Freire. As a scholar of color, it is almost second nature to me to lead with my heart, in large part due to the fact that this was not an approach I experienced yet yearned for. When working with students who look like me, speak like me, think like me, it is impossible to not lead with love. Freire reminds us that, "Education is an act of love, thus an act of courage," (1973, p. 38). This love is what's brought me to this holistic approach that is centered around the student as a human being rather than a tool of productivity. At PwIs, and frankly most educational institutions, we equate a student's worth to their level of productivity. bell hook's engages with Freire's work in *Teaching to Transgress (1994)*, reminding us that education is an active effort from all parties involved. This active participation only occurs when educators practice self-actualization, which is difficult to do when we are located in institutions that value our production over everything else. In doing so, institutions communicate to students that their other needs are not nearly as important as their academic ones. So we fill it by offering all of these academic support services and not nearly enough holistic ones. Museus & Ravello explore in their report the impact academic advisors can have on students and highlight why it's important that they have, "a better understanding of the characteristics of advisors and advising that foster or hinder success among racial and ethnic minority college students," (2010, p. 48).

21

Through their qualitative study, they conducted 60-90-minute-long one-on-one interviews with academic advisors and underrepresented students from private, public, and community colleges. With a final sample size of 45 participants, they were able to conclude that the role academic advisors play can significantly impact a student's ability to succeed, citing again the value of proactive and holistic student support. Such characteristics may include an advisor's approachability, availability, communication, organization, and nurturing nature. Although advisors are inherently tied to the academic side of student life, there is a need for all faculty and staff to take a more holistic approach to advising if they wish to better serve BIPOC students (e.g., Guiffrida, 2005).

In 2023 students can more readily access a fully renovated athletic building than make an appointment to see an on-campus mental health counselor. At PwIs with a history of having a predominantly white student population, there are questions around how we can better serve our students without making active efforts to actually get to know what are the systemic obstacles they face. Just as students of color are the minority within higher education, so are faculty of color; meaning that those who our students of color are around a majority of the time tend to be white faculty and staff who commonly do not understand firsthand how differently they navigate the world around them (Anaya & Cole, 2001; Bañuelos & Flores, 2021; Llamas et al., 2021; McCoy et al., 2105; Turner et al., 2008). According to the most recent data pulled by the NCES, of the 1.5 million faculty at universities in the U.S. in fall 2021, 73% of faculty were white. As a result of these demographics, faculty of color have stated that the, "lack of campus student/faculty diversity and being the *token* person of color coupled with a perceived lack of departmental/institutional effort to recruit, hire, and retain faculty of color contribute negatively to [their experiences]," (Turner et al., 2008, p. 144). Although this is not a shared experience between faculty and students, students becoming more aware of the ways faculty of color are

experience micro/macroaggressions can better prime them to understand the ways their experiences do and do not align. We as educators cannot serve our students better if we do not take the first steps towards understanding them, where they're coming from, and what they have to offer. Fonseca-Bolorin (2022) explores in her dissertation the benefits of approaching supporting BIPOC students from a strength-based framework instead. She expands on the conversations around what students of color bring to the table in terms of social psychological strengths such as sense of belonging, persistence and racial ethnic identity. This recognition of the social and cultural capital students bring with them to college was shown to have a direct correlation to the students' persistence at PwI's. The reinforcement of a deficit-based mindset will continue to be a hindrance to our students because it prevents us from being able to celebrate and recognize all of the knowledge these students already have when entering college such as their interpersonal skills and ways to navigate finding a sense of belonging.

Of all of the lessons that PwIs need to learn from the pandemic it is that what was made clear to educators and students alike over the last three years cannot go unnoticed or untreated. These gaps in support that were made evident need to be addressed sooner rather than later. In the wake of the global pandemic, it became apparent that our students had been suffering and it had merely been exacerbated by the state of the world (Molock & Parchem, 2021). "As others have said, 'we are not all in this together'... Expecting students to maintain the same level of academic performance in a less ideal environment is an oppressive approach that will disproportionately impact students of color," (Molock & Parchem, 2021, pp. 2403-2404). Through the quantitative study conducted by Rodríguez-Planas (2022) on the impact of COVID-19 on students' academics in the U.S., there seemed to have not been a drop in academic performance overall. However, Rodríguez-Planas asks us to pay attention to the higher use of the flexible grading policy by lower-income students. Evidence proves that if flexible grading hadn't

been available, lower-income students would have had more of a negative impact on their grades during the pandemic. Lower-income students also reported a higher use of incompletes as opposed to their higher-income classmates. The researcher further explained that, "the flexible grading policy was able to counteract negative shocks, especially among the most disadvantaged students," (Rodrìguez-Planas, 2022, p. 10). As institutions return to in-person teaching, now is the perfect time to re-imagine what student support can look like in this new era of higher education. Ladson-Billings writes in *I'm Here for the Hard Re-Set* (2021), a partial response to Arundhait Roy's article *The Pandemic is a Portal* (2020), that post-pandemic institutions should take this time as an opportunity to grow. Ladson-Billings pushes back against this idea that we should return to normalcy. Wherein normalcy means we would return to a system of being that continues to marginalize certain students, "I want to suggest that 'going back' is the wrong thing for [students] who were unsuccessful and oppressed in our schools before the pandemic. Normal is where the problems reside," (Ladson-Billings, 2021, p. 68). From the moment coronavirus cases started to rise across the globe, the dominant narrative was to "return to normal". There was this pressing need for the familiar. Yet, as we disentangle ourselves from the pandemic scholars throughout education are urging us to use this as a launching pad for systematic change (Blankstein et al., 2020; Ladson-Billings, 2021; Roy, 2020).

There is no doubt that this worldly event wreaked havoc on the field of education. There is also no doubt that the havoc we experienced has been experienced by BIPOC students long before the pandemic began (Ladson-Billings, 2021). From COVID-19 there is much to take away, such as recognizing the holes in the ways PwI's support our marginalized students such as having lower academic achievement than white peers, lesser access to qualified educators, and higher rates of disability diagnosis' (Ladson-Billings, 2021).

*Existing Literature on Latine Students' College Experiences*

In discussing PwIs broadly and their relationship with students of color, we are now brought to the specific experiences of Latine students in these spaces. For this population of students, the aforementioned obstacles are amplified. Latine students are in a unique position for us to learn from given their growing numbers across the nation as well as their growing enrollment in colleges. In the last decades scholars have spent considerable time researching and then advocating for new ways we can better support our first-generation, Latine students, in particular through the critical analysis of the impact of the campus racial climate (Hurtado, 1992). These supports include but are not limited to more faculty and staff of color, more and better funded spaces designated for these students, easier access to mental health resources, and an overall emphasis on nurturing the well-being of this population.

This shift to a more holistic approach of student support slowly started in the late 90's and early 2000's as documented by earlier scholars in the field, but has been picking up speed in more recent years (Abes et al., 2007; Kegan, 1982; Magolda, 2009). Although unfortunate that it seems as though the shift forced institutions to make this change rather than them choosing to change, at the end of the day what matters most is that we have been making strides towards this progress. Similar to programs such as the one discussed by Marx et al. (2024), Avanzando was a student mentoring program born from a succession of unjust events that occurred at the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) that supported the overall success of Latine students. This campus mentoring program involved faculty, staff, and community members across the UMKC campus that also identified as Latine in order to intentionally build a community that reflected the students it served. More than ten years later and this program still functions to explicitly serve Latine students, successfully providing holistic support in the form of socioemotional mentoring and a sense of community and belonging. Despite the societal and political implications that pushed the hands of administrators and educators alike, our students

are now getting the attention and energy they deserved all along. This energy is being funneled towards holistic supports that students have been asking for nearly 30 years now.

In 2023 we now are cognizant of the important factor it is to have faculty and staff that accurately represent the growing national demographic (NCES, 2021). In diversifying the campus staff, we are communicating to our student population that we value not only a diversity in voice and scholarship, but a diversity in people as well. This communication also leads students to know that we want our campuses to be representative of the greater society in which we live. If our campuses were to remain staffed by predominantly white folks, then we are inadequately preparing our students. By having diverse faculty and staff, we are giving our students the opportunity to connect with people who share similar backgrounds as them. This ability to connect not only strengthens students' sense of belonging, but it connects them with folks who they can go to when experiencing the unsavory side of higher education (Turner et al., 2008). As Hurtado has written about since the 90's, students' racialized experiences on college campuses greatly impacts their ability to succeed (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hurtado, 1998). In Harper & Hurtado's *Nine Themes in Campus Racial Climates and Implications for Institutional Transformation*, they explore the existing literature around campus racial climates and then share themes from a qualitative study they conducted. Within this study faculty and staff of color have shared that they are not immune to these racialized interactions that students report. A Latino academic advisor shared, "I feel bad for what the young brothers and sisters go through here, but there is only so much I can do," (2007, p. 19). These interactions are amplified at PwIs given the demographics of the population. All people feel an inherent sense of closeness to those who are like us and in that closeness we find that it is possible to create community despite attending a PwI. Community for students is not solely one that is created

26

among classmates, but one that includes staff and faculty as well. Having elders on campus that can share the ways they navigated these institutional spaces once upon a time help us visualize a future where we complete these degrees and come out on the other side whole.

Theoretical Frameworks

*Introduction*

As Critical Race Theory (CRT) informs Latine Critical Race Theory's (LatCrit) tenets, this qualitative study is grounded in a braiding, or trenzas y mestizaje, of these two theories to provide a framework that best supports the use of student voice and further foregrounds the use of students as knowledge producers. The next part of this chapter will provide an outline of each theoretical framework as well as an explanation on how these will work together in this study.

*Critical Race Theory (CRT) & Latine Critical Race Theory (LatCrit)*

Born as an extension from CRT, LatCrit was originally coined to refer to the ways race, ethnicity, and other identities affect one's' access to civil rights (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Trucios-Haynes, 2000; Valdes, 1997). Originating from legal journals, foundational scholars cited that the rationale behind creating a new stem of CRT boiled down to CRT's predominant focus on Black experiences (Delgado, 1997). The creation of LatCrit was never to undermine the value of a theoretical framework that centered the lived experiences of Black people. Through this new framework, Latine scholars now had a space to interrogate systems of oppression that specifically targeted us such as immigration policies, inter-group relations, and other social and legal injustices. The seven guideposts that steer LatCrit are as follows (Valdes, 2005, p. 158):

1. Recognize and accept the political nature of legal "scholarship" despite contrary pressures

2. Conceive ourselves as activist scholars committed to praxis to maximize social relevance

3. Build intra-Latina/o communities and inter-group coalitions to promote justice struggles

4. **Find commonalities while respecting differences to chart social transformation**

5. Learn from outsider jurisprudence to orient and develop LatCrit theory and praxis

6. **Ensure a continual engagement of self-critique to stay principled and grounded**

7. **Balance specificity and generality in LatCritical analysis to ensure multidimensionality**

From the seven guideposts, this dissertation will build off on 4, 6, and 7. To strengthen the argument for the use of LatCrit in this qualitative study, I will be utilizing Solórzano's (1998) breakdown of CRT's tenets as they connect to educational research:

1. *The importance of transdisciplinary approaches.*

2. *An emphasis on experiential knowledge.*

3. *A challenge to dominant ideologies.*

4. *The centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination.*

5. *A commitment to social justice.*

The melding of CRT and LatCrit can be seen as early as Solorzano & Yosso's (2001) study that uses LatCrit as an educational framework to, "examine the ways in which *race and racism* explicitly and implicitly impact the educational structures… Utilizing the *experiences* of Latinas/os, a LatCrit theory in education also theorizes and examines that place where racism intersects with other forms of subordination such as sexism and classism," (p. 479). Through Solorzano & Yosso's qualitative study that centers the relationship between a Latine student and Latine professor, they demonstrate the benefit of utilizing these two theories in conjunction with narrative to better understand experiences specific to Latine students that involve imposter syndrome, familial ties, and self-doubt; all of which are concepts that will be explored in this

dissertation through the use of students' personal narratives. It's important to recognize the racialized history of epistemologies that Solorzano (1998) calls attention to and reminding ourselves as educators that, "it is our responsibility to acknowledge these epistemologies and, where appropriate, use them for transformational purposes," (p. 133).

Delgado Bernal reminds us that these aforementioned tenets support an approach to educational research that affirms and uplifts the voices of Latine students through an intersectional lens that blends theoretical frameworks, lived experiences, and altogether pushes against the normative views of what is constituted as research. "The 'gift' of CRT is that it unapologetically challenges the scholarship that would dehumanize and depersonalize us," (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 272).

*Trenzas y Mestizaje*

> *"A braiding of different ways of knowing, teaching, and learning brings cultural knowledge to the fore of discourses on human rights, social justice, and educational equity as well as to inform the formulations of holistic educational policies and practices," (F. González, 2001, p. 643).*

F. González introduces a methodological approach called trenzas y mestizaje that in essence is the "braiding of theory, qualitative research strategies, and a sociopolitical consciousness," (Delgado Bernal, 2002, p. 116). In utilizing this approach in this dissertation study, it affirms the use and value of the students who lent their voices for this piece. It affirms the use of various theoretical and methodological approaches to expand our understanding of the knowledge Latine students offer. Moreover this also affirms the students' personal lived experiences and further validates their stories as data. F. González reminds us that in pushing against Eurocentric epistemologies, we make room for *nueva teorías* that are situated, "among

29

groups of people traditionally unheard and spaces continually unexplored," (Trinidad Galván, 2001, p. 607).

Expanding on Existing Literature

As the existing literature lays out, there is a demonstrated need to utilize CRT and LatCrit when conducting research on Latine students as it allows researchers and educators to better understand their unique experiences. In utilizing trenzas y mestizaje, it allows for this body of research to be supported by the braiding of various methodological approaches that affirm the intersecting identities of students. Furthermore the existing literature supports the need for more resources, however the focus has primarily been on academic resources rather than holistic ones that take into account external factors in the students' lives. The resources currently available target how to help students excel in the classroom, however what needs to be considered more is the external obstacles students, especially underrepresented students, face when they're not in classes that impact their ability to succeed academically. In prioritizing their voices when re-assessing and/or creating new resources, institutions may gain a better understanding of how to best support first-generation, Latine students.

Summary of Literature Review

Through the braiding of CRT and LatCrit, these theoretical frameworks will pave the way for the students' voices to shine through in the following chapters which synthesizes themes and highlight excerpts from their interviews. Building off of past qualitative studies that have centered the Latine voices (Yosso, 2001), this dissertation will add to the body of literature in education that affirms and validates the knowledge produced by students. The narrative around whose knowledge we value and what we deem as data continues to evolve and this study adds to that narrative shift that decolonizes education.

**Chapter 3 – La Metodología**

As it stands right now, ethnography is a practice for researchers to better understand a particular culture by immersing themselves in said culture. This is the definition I am choosing to use because of its centering on culture and cultural immersion (Gullion, 2016). In an attempt to be as morally sound as possible, the immersion piece reminds me as a researcher that the population I am studying is made up of real-life human beings. This immersion will vary from population to population and the focus on a specific culture can also have a variety of meanings. Historically ethnography focused on ethnic cultural subgroups, oftentimes researching 'exotic' groups.

**Research Design**

*Critical Ethnography*

Jones' (2010) historical re-telling of the timeline of ethnographic research includes its early beginnings stemming from, "both a 'scientific' curiosity about such cultures but also an ideological agenda. In order to reinforce the imperial mindset one must construct stereotypes of the colonized that serve to justify their colonization," (Jones, 2010, p. 15). In the late 1800's the dominant reasoning for conducting ethnographic research was to collect and present findings that confirmed their pre-determined beliefs on certain cultures' 'primitive', 'barbaric', and 'uncivilized' practices. The term ethnography itself had first been used to refer to, "descriptive accounts of non-literate peoples," (Kuper, 1996, p. 2) and did not follow a formal methodological approach. It wasn't until a social anthropologist's work, Bronislaw Malinowski, had become more widely dispersed and accepted. Malinowski's ethnographic work created a systematic approach that included aspects that centered the lived experiences of his participants rather than attempting to prove pre-determined assumptions (Young, 1979). In the late 80's is

when accounts of educational ethnography begin to emerge quickly followed by the emerging of critical ethnography. Critical ethnographers are introduced as researchers who attempt to ensure that their participants, "are not naively enthroned, but systematically and critically unveiled," (Thompson, 1981, p. 143).

Since the early 2000's we have moved away from that line of thinking, recognizing that that is an unethical approach to research to go about it in an extractive manner. As someone who uses this methodology within my dissertation, it is important that we call attention to the sordid history of this ethnography and how we are moving towards a more just way of research by way of critical ethnography. Through the use of critical ethnography, I am positioning myself as a researcher who wants to be in conversation and community with the participants rather than disconnected from them and the work.

I'm positioning myself in community with the participants to avoid utilizing the aforementioned definition of critical ethnography that has treated people as vessels for data rather individuals with lives in which researchers are intervening (Russel & Rodriguez, 2007). This is a necessary reminder for myself in hopes of being an ethical researcher that moves with intention. Participants should be regarded with the utmost respect and care (Calderon et al., 2012; Cruz, 2001; Monzo, 2014). Pacheco-Vega & Parizeau (2018) go in-depth in bringing to researchers' attention the tension held when we begin ethnographic research. They remind us that, "research can be inherently exploitative due to the power differentials between researchers and their research communities," (Pacheco-Vega & Parizeau, 2018, p. 3). However, the authors offer us a slew of questions to ponder on ourselves in preparation for studies, as well as questions we should continue to reflect on throughout the data collection process. Questions around positionality, power, exploitation, and representation aid us in taking the greatest care of the

communities we engage with. Therein lies part of the solution to this ethical quandary; researchers should aim to engage with their participants rather than simply extracting information from them.

*Critical Race Methodology*

The methodologies that anchor this study, starting with critical race methodology as defined by Solórzano & Yosso (2023) as an approach that is inclusive of race and racism in research while simultaneously challenging the scholarship around race, gender, and class as it relates to the experiences of BIPOC students. "[W]hat is noticeably missing from the discussion of race is a substantive discussion of racism. We further this claim to assert that substantive discussions of racism are missing from critical discourse in education," (Solórzano & Yosso, 2023, p. 23). This methodology is cited by Solórzano & Yosso as partially stemming from Matsuda's literature on critical race theory (1991), further grounding our understanding of race and racism within education. Matsuda's work examines the ways racism is embedded within educational principles through what is deemed as "normative". Matsuda's view on critical race theory is rooted in this understanding that the work of scholars of color is towards the, "elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating all forms of subordination," (p. 1331). In introducing the methodologies being used for this study by beginning with critical race methodology, it sets the stage for why such methods are needed when studying Latine students. Solórzano & Yosso's piece starts with an epigraph from Anzaldúa (1990) reminding us that, "Necesitamos teorías [we need theories] that will rewrite history, using race, class, gender, and ethnicity as categories of analysis, theories that cross borders, that blur boundaries," (p. 159). Through the use of critical race methodology this dissertation welcomes the multifaceted nature

of the participants' lived experiences as we work towards dismantling systemic racism in the educational system.

*Testimonio*

Testimonio is the second methodology being used for this study, being defined as stories of our lives, specifically oral accounts of oppression. We're reminded that testimonio is unlike in-depth interviews or other forms of oral research collection; it is a, "unique expression of the methodological use of spoken accounts of oppression," (Reyes & Curry Rodriguez, 2012, p. 526). Testimonio is a form of storytelling with great intention behind it that empowers those who you are speaking with. These can come in many forms such as song lyrics, poetry, or interviews. "Testimonio moves us into the realm of knowledge creation that is grounded in lived experience, bearing witness to issues of oppression," (Espino et al., 2017, 84). To begin with, testimonio successfully does what I aim to do and that is centering the voices of those who have been rendered voiceless or have been censored in the past. It goes beyond an in-depth interview because of the intention behind it. Interviews seek to garner any and all information the participant is willing to share for the sake of collecting data. Testimonios are conducted to give way to a voice that isn't heard from often. This methodology is inherently politicized due to the fact that it's intended to, "name oppression and to arrest its actions," (Reyes & Rodriguez, 2012, p. 527).

Pérez Huber & Aguilar-Tinajero (2024) conducted a literature review of peer-reviewed articles in education journals that utilized testimonio as a method between the years 2010 and 2022. Within the 48 articles that were populated were research studies that looked specifically at Latine in higher education such as Treviño et al.'s (2017) study on the impact of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) on higher education. Through the use of testimonio, Treviño et

al. created a co-collaborative space between the participants and the researchers that yielded a more relational research project. This project, "emphasized the potential for testimonio methodology to create a coexistence among and between researchers and *testimonialistas* through a sense of *cariño*," (Pérez Huber & Aguilar-Tinajero, 2024, p. 7). In the same vein as Treviño et al., I will also be including my own testimonio throughout this dissertation to be in conversation with the students and not solely talking at/about them. Throughout this dissertation there will be references to "us, we, our" which refers to myself and all other first-generation, Latine students; doing this continues the relational nature of this study. Allowing myself as a researcher to be in constant conversation and community with my participants has allowed for a more intentionally designed study that has more depth. It also continues this use of testimonio as I have braided together my testimonio with those of my participants.

Through Pérez Huber & Aguilar-Tinajero's literature review also emerged this central theme of healing through testimonio work in educational spaces, "because academic spaces are openly hostile towards Communities of Color, *testimoniando* can serve as a grounding practice in healing fractured minds, bodies, and spirits," (Pérez Huber & Aguilar-Tinajero, 2024, p. 7). In Pérez Huber & Cueva's (2012) study with Chicana/Latina students, they described how testimonio led to conocimiento; a healing of racialized trauma that moves us towards holistic well-being. In conducting a study a qualitative study on Latine college students, I wanted to be mindful in choosing to use methodologies that are rooted in Latine work as well as work that aids in the collective healing of this community.

In providing the historical context of critical ethnography earlier on, I remind you that it is an approach, "in which the researcher advocates for the emancipation of marginalized groups… speaks out… against inequality and oppression," (Castrejon, 2017, p. 65). Testimonio

is then used in this study as a way to further advocate for this marginalized group and using the students' voices to speak out against the systemic oppression in higher education.

*Research Questions*

Below are the research questions presented in chapter 1 that are guiding this study:

1. What does it look like to situate Latine undergraduate students as the knowledge producers when asking them how Predominantly white Institutions can better serve them in holistic ways?

2. In what ways are first-generation, Latine students receiving, or not receiving, meaningful holistic support in higher education?

3. What does/should holistic support in higher education look like according to Latine undergraduate students?

**Method**

**Participants**

*Study Setting*

This study took place at a four-year, private, nonprofit university located in the northeast in the United States that identifies as a PwI. For confidentiality purposes a pseudonym will be used in place of the university's real name: Blizzard University (BU). This university at the time of this study in spring 2024 had roughly 22,000 students enrolled; 15,000 of those were undergraduate students. Of the undergraduate population, 11.4% identified as Hispanic/Latino based on their applications and online student profiles[4]. Retention rates at this university were

---

[4] All quantitative data presented on Blizzard University (BU) was collected and publicly dispersed through the university's research office.

relatively high in comparison to other universities of similar size and status in the country. The National Center for Education Statistics (2022) reported that among other four-year, private, nonprofit universities, the national average retention rate for first-time, first-year undergraduate students was 81%. This university reports their retention and graduation rates every fall and for the last cohort of undergraduate students, 91% were retained; 91% of students who started in fall 2022 returned to campus in fall 2023. The university did not at the time provide a breakdown of what percentage of each ethnic group was retained. Blizzard University's research office did provide a breakdown of graduation rates for the spring 2023 undergraduate students; 7% of undergraduate students who graduated were Hispanic/Latino. The data that was not provided was a breakdown of how long it took students to graduate nor an average length of time it takes undergraduate students to complete their degree.

*Selection of Participants*

Students were recruited through the use of flyers sent out via emails and listservs[5]. The eligibility criteria outlined on these flyers stated that students had to be 18-21 years old, be an undergraduate student at the university this took place at and self-identify as first-generation and Latine. There were broad definitions provided for first-generation and Latine to aid in students' understanding of their eligibility for this study that was not strictly enforced; these definitions were the same ones provided in chapter 1. Identifying as a first-generation student myself, I am cognizant of the fact that it is common for first-generation students to be unaware of this distinction let alone if they fit the description. Just as the aim is to provide participants with plenty of autonomy during the interview, they should also have autonomy over how they identify. Taking into consideration that students may have interpreted first-generation and Latine

---

[5] This study received approval from the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

differently despite having access to a broad definition on the recruitment materials, this study includes a wide variety of first-generation, Latine college students. Allowing students to self-identify within both of these terms is one of the ways I hoped to empower the students in their journey with me through this study. The age range chosen was reflective of the typical age of a traditional undergraduate student if they entered college right out of high school. The focus of this study was traditional undergraduate students which is why I did not expand this age range to include post-traditional students such as transfer, returning, or veteran students.

These flyers were emailed to offices that I had pre-existing working relationships with that worked directly with first-generation and/or Latine students. On top of reaching out to campus offices I also reached out to all of the Latine sororities and fraternities and any other Latine, student-led organizations. My approach to recruiting participants relied heavily on the level of engagement students had with on-campus resources whether it be offices, Greek life, or other organizations.

*Protection of Participants*

Once students indicated their interest in this study, I reached out to them individually and scheduled their interviews in locations only disclosed between myself and the student. Following the interviews, their email exchanges, interview audio recordings, and any other documentation that had their names were depersonalized and made confidential. All student names were switched to pseudonyms and any traceable characteristics were removed and/or modified, with original copies of all documentation stored in a password-protected external hard drive. Given the sensitive nature of the stories shared, the protection of the students' privacy was of the utmost importance.

**Data Collection**

This study initially aimed to garner 10-12 participants. The rationale behind the sample size being between 10-12 was that in keeping it a smaller group size, I would be able to spend more time individually on each transcribed interview for analysis. Following participant recruitment, I ended up with 13 student participants who ranged from sophomores to seniors. Due to the method of recruitment being heavily dependent on students' interactions with on-campus offices and resources, nearly all of the students' served as a student leader in some capacity. Student leaders were more inclined to more regularly use these resources since their leadership position(s) on campus required that they be more familiar with campus resources than students not in a leadership position. As for the ethnic breakdown, of the 13 participants, 8 self-identified as Mexican, 2 self-identified as Dominican, and 3 self-identified as multi-ethnic respectively. Below is a table that presents this data in a pie chart by percentages of each ethnicity that was represented by the participants in this study.

Table 2. Participants' Ethnicities[6]

Ethnicities of Participants
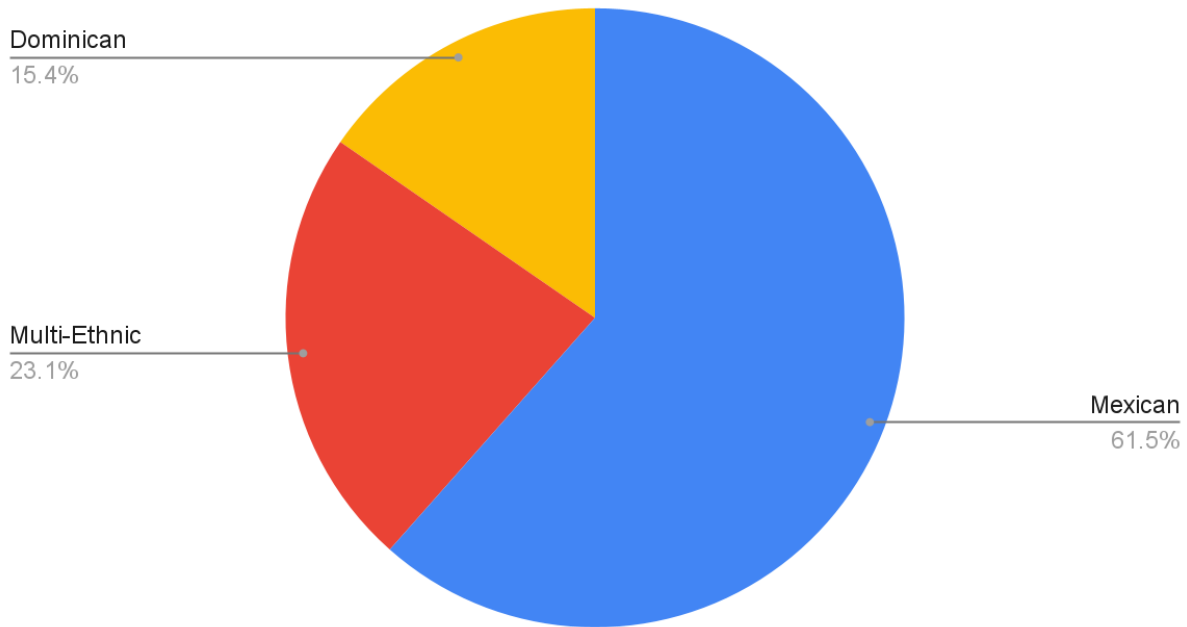


By keeping the pool of participants low it helped in keeping with my aim of not becoming oversaturated with data where one then becomes limited in time and resources. The guiding question was, "what is the fewest number of interviews needed to have a solid understanding of a given phenomenon" (Marshall et al., 2013, p.12)? One-on-one interviews was the method of choice because of its ability to, "provide the opportunity for more interaction and discussion between the interviewer and interviewee" (Winwood, 2019, p. 14), whereas focus groups or sister circles shift that focus away from one sole participant. The sample group consisted of traditional undergraduate students as this study did not focus on post-traditional students.

---

[6]Multi-ethnic in this study included participants who self-identified as two or more ethnicities. These multi-ethnicities included: Colombian/Ecuadorian, Colombian/Uruguayan, Guatemalan/Salvadoran.

The participants took part in one, 60-90 minute-long semi-structured interview that was conducted in-person on the university campus. Each interview's audio was recorded to aid in the transcription and data analysis. These interviews were capped at 90 minutes in duration to respect the boundaries of these students who have a variety of other responsibilities to attend to outside of participating in this study. Similar to Gagnon Crowell's (2023) dissertation study that centered the lived experiences of first-generation college students in where they also conducted 60-90 minute-long interviews, which granted them more than enough data to analyze within a qualitative study. Gagnon Crowell's study reported that setting the length of the interviews between 60 to 90 minutes allowed for flexibility both for the researcher and the participant. I recognized that asking a student to dedicate any amount of time to partake in a research study can already be a burden, therefore in offering a flexible window of time I hoped to convey to the students that I attempted to be mindful of their capacity. The rationale behind it being offered solely in-person was to ensure that the atmosphere created in this short hour-long block of time was comfortable enough for students to respond to the interview questions as authentically as possible; this type of atmosphere is difficult to replicate over the phone or video conferencing.

*Interview Protocol*

Below are the exact questions the students were asked, not denoting follow-up questions that were naturally asked on a case-by-case basis. These questions were created with the intention in mind to co-create a safe space with the student where they felt comfortable enough to share their responses to these questions honestly. These questions sought information on their personal lived experiences within the classroom, with staff, with peers, and their own perceptions of the university they attended. The students had the freedom to not answer any question they did not feel comfortable answering.

1. What brought you to choosing Blizzard University over other institutions? Has it lived up to your expectations, if you had any?

2. As a first-generation, Latine student, do you feel your college experience has been different than other students? If so, in what ways?

3. How important has it been for you to find and build community? Have you found a community?

4. What have been your experiences so far at Blizzard University with different student supports and resources on campus? Are you aware of any resources available specifically for first-generation and/or Latine students? What resources have you utilized? Are there resources you know of but have not utilized yet? If so, why?

5. During your time at Blizzard University, have you had any Latine professors? Is this important for you? What are your interactions like with faculty members within your department? What about your interactions with faculty outside of your department?

6. Do you feel as though your professors are understanding or flexible when you're experiencing difficulties outside of the classroom? What has been your experience in asking for accommodations, if any?

7. How would you like to be (better) supported as a first-generation, Latine student while attending this institution?

8. Did you ever consider dropping out or transferring out of Blizzard University? What/who keeps you at Blizzard University? How did you find this person or resource?

9. What does success look like to you as a college student?

The rationale behind semi-structured interviews was to ensure a comfortable rapport was established. "Although this makes the process subjective, it often leads to rich data which can be

missing from more structured approaches" (Winwood, 2019, p. 14). Throughout the interviews I was intentional in practicing vulnerability and humility, sharing small anecdotes of my own experiences in higher education when appropriate and natural. I wanted to make sure that the students never felt as though I was only there to extract information from them; it was a two-way street. From the way the questions were worded to the relaxed approach I took to the conversations I had, the students should have felt comfortable enough to confide in me. Whether that actually happened was up to the student and was not pressured onto them.

**Data Analysis**

After data collection was completed a total of 13 students had participated in this study. The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed electronically using transcription software, followed by a thorough combing through for accuracy. Most transcription software requires an additional review due to inaccuracies from the technology; these inaccuracies were more common in these transcriptions due to the students' use of Spanish throughout their interviews. Followed by that transcription and depersonalization process of assigning pseudonyms[7], the interviews were analyzed multiple times, each time allowing for a deeper understanding of what the participants shared; axial coding. Eventually this process led to the creation of codes and overall themes of the collected data which helped to organize and summarize the information as related to the primary themes.

Data analysis initially began with an initial read of the transcripts by hand, taking note of any common themes that emerged. Once the initial read through was completed I uploaded the transcripts to coding software, Dedoose, for further qualitative analysis. From the first round of

---

[7] Participants did not get to choose their pseudonym. The pseudonyms used are based on names of loved ones in my life to add to the feeling that this dissertation is a conversation between me and my community.

coding through the software emerged 25 codes. These codes were then narrowed down based on similarities between codes and which emerging codes were best addressing the research questions. After two rounds of condensing codes, 8 remained and those turned into the themes that have been used in this dissertation to answer the research questions, as well as address some unexpected but relevant patterns.

# Table 3. Coding Process

**Original codes:**                                                                                                                    **Themes:**

1. ~~Being the Only One~~
   *\*was absorbed by Cultural Implications*

2. ~~Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Experiences~~
   *\*was absorbed by Positive and Negative Encounters within Campus Climate*

3. Cultural Implications on Success

4. Cultural Pressure to Succeed — Cultural Implications — 1. On Success / 2. On College Experiences / 3. On Socioeconomic Status

5. Difference in Wealth

6. ~~FG Experiences~~
   *\*was absorbed by Cultural Implications*

7. ~~Impacts of COVID~~
   *\*not enough data was collected*

8. Importance of Community — *1. Friendships* / 2. Students with Siblings
   *\*was renamed Value of Comunidad*

9. Importance of Diverse Faculty & Staff

10. Limiting Information Told to Families — Motivators — 1. Self-Motivation / 2. Family-Motivated

11. Motivation for Continuing Studies

12. Need for First-Generation Resources — Need for Resources — 1. FG Resources / 2. Latine Resources

13. Need for Latine/Cultural Resources

14. Negative Experiences with Supports
    *\*was renamed Negative Encounters*

15. PwI's Missing the Cultural Mark — Negative Experiences — 1. With Student Services / 2. With Faculty / 3. With Students / 4. Disabled students

16. Racially Charged/Informed Encounters

---

17. Supporting Students with Disabilities

18. ~~Rationale for Enrollment~~
    *\*was absorbed by Motivators*

19. Students Becoming Student Leaders ——→ Self-Empowered Supports

20. ~~Students Creating Supports~~
    *\*was absorbed by Self-Empowered Supports*

21. ~~Students with Siblings~~
    *\*was absorbed by Value of Comunidad*

22. Positive Experiences with Supports
    *\*was renamed Negative Encounters*

23. ~~Value of Holistic Support/Approach~~
    *\*was absorbed by Value of Diverse Faculty & Staff and Self-Empowered Supports*

24. Pull Quotable
    *\*please note these are in a different color to denote they were for the researcher's personal use*

25. Gratitude for Study
    *\*please note these are in a different color to denote they were for the researcher's personal use*

**Themes:**

1. Cultural Implications

2. Value of Communidad

3. Value of Diverse Faculty & Staff

4. Motivating Forces for Students

5. The Need for Resources

6. Negative Encounters within Campus Climate

7. Student-Empowered Supports

8. Positive Encounters within Campus Climate

Table 4. Theme Descriptions

| Code Name & Subcodes | Description |
|---|---|
| Cultural Implications<br>    On Success<br>    On College Experiences<br>    On Socioeconomic Status | This code included the ways students college experiences were impacted/influenced by their cultural identities |
| Value of Comunidad<br>    Friendships<br>    Students with Siblings | This code included students sharing who makes up their comunidad and what value they see in having a comunidad |
| Value of Diverse Faculty & Staff | This code included students highlighting specific faculty or staff members of color who have been influential in their college career |
| Motivating Factors for Students<br>    Self-Motivation<br>    Family-Motivation | This code included the various reasons that motivate students to complete their four-year college degree |
| The Need for Resources<br>    First-Generation Resources<br>    Latine Resources | This code included students seeking out resources that do not currently exist or suggesting certain resources be reimagined |
| Negative Encounters within Campus Climate<br>    With Student Services<br>    With Faculty<br>    With Students<br>    For Disabled Students | This code included stories shared by students recounting negative encounters they've had during their time in college with various campus community members |
| Student-Empowered Supports | This code included students experiences in creating support systems for fellow first-generation and/or Latine students |
| Positive Encounters within Campus Climate<br>    With Student Services<br>    With Faculty<br>    With Students<br>    For Disabled Students | This code included stories shared by students recounting positive encounters they've had during their time in college with various campus community members |

        It was admittedly difficult to decide which data would be included in the dissertation. After all, this data isn't just numbers but people's stories and raw emotions and therefore I felt as a fellow member of this community that all pieces of their stories were important. There was an added layer of difficulty as a researcher who is so closely connected to the participants, sharing

various identities with them and therein experiences. The data chosen to be highlighted in this dissertation best answered the overarching research question of what holistic support looked like through the lens of these students. What gave me comfort in not using all of the data was knowing that the data not used for this dissertation would be used in future iterations of this project. The stories told here will not stay here.

**Summary**

The participants of this study were garnered through fliers that were emailed to various on-campus offices, Latine sororities, fraternities, and student-led organizations. Through 13, one-on-one, semi-structured interviews, students shared their personal lived experiences in answering 3 overarching research questions. The stories collected during these interviews aimed to answer the 3 research questions presented in chapters 1 and 3. Within the interviews more information was shared than expected which led to making the difficult decision as a researcher of picking what was and wasn't included in this dissertation. Regardless of their inclusion in this project, their stories will be told one way or another in future iterations and expansions of this study.

**Chapter 4 – Los Testimonios**

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce each participant through individual testimonios. The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the ways PwI's current support systems are and are not fulfilling the needs of first-generation, Latine students by way of centering the voices of this student population. The study included 13 participants, all of whom self-identified as first-generation and Latine; self-identification being a key factor in recruitment so as to grant the students as much autonomy in this study as possible. These students participated in 60-90 minute long semi-structured interviews that primarily took place in person. These interviews were then transcribed using transcription software and underwent multiple rounds of axial coding through qualitative research software. Of these multiple rounds of coding 25 initial codes emerged that were then whittled down to 8 themes. The themes and data collected through these codes will be analyzed in the following sections using a critical race methodology approach coupled with testimonio. Utilizing a combination of these methods, trenzas y mestizaje, will allow me to humanize my participants and be in conversation with their stories. I did not want to solely talk about these students, but *with* them. To humanize the students is to include key characteristics in the following chapter that serve as a reminder to the reader the humanity behind the stories they're engaging with. In this chapter I introduce the students through testimonios, further demonstrating the pushback against Eurocentric schools of thought that historically do not validate narrative as a form of data. The following findings chapters will aim to answer the following research questions:

1. What does it look like to situate Latine undergraduate students as the knowledge producers when asking them how Predominantly white Institutions can better serve them in holistic ways?

2. In what ways are first-generation, Latine students receiving, or not receiving, meaningful holistic support in higher education?

3. What does/should holistic support in higher education look like according to Latine undergraduate students?

The presentation of these findings will take the form of testimonios so as to fully engage with the participants. Prior to answering the research questions you will get to know our participants; who they are, where they come from, and what matters the most to them. Rather than simply viewing the students as study subjects, I choose to humanize them through their stories. In sitting with their stories we're reminded that before they are students, they are siblings, friends, lovers. To participate in an interview is completely voluntary, therefore we owe it to them to get to know who they fully are, not just pieces of them.

*Researcher's Testimonio*

In utilizing testimonio as a methodological framework, I will be including my positionality statement in the form of a testimonio that will follow a similar format to that of my participants' testimonios in this chapter. In embedding my own testimonio I place myself in conversation with the students who I share identities with. I am not disconnected from this study. I am intimately connected to the study and the student population which was a big motivator for me in completing this work.

*Cassie*

Originally from Los Angeles, CA, Cassie comes from a big family with 30+ first cousins, 3 siblings, and multiple parent figures. She was raised in a household that had weekly family dinners with tías y tíos whose houses would feel like her home just as much as her actual home. Like many Latine students, family was a constant for her throughout her childhood.

Unfortunately when she moved across the country for graduate school, they severed ties with one another. 3,000 miles away from home, she was in a new state, at a new school, and no family to fall back on.

Over the last four years she's found a chosen family made up of friends and mentors. This is the family she spends holidays with, goes grocery shopping with, calls when she has good/bad news, cries with, celebrates with. They are the reason she survived graduate school. They will be there when the time comes to defend her dissertation as she becomes part of the 6%[8] of Latinas who hold a PhD in the U.S. She will be embraced by the other doctors in her chosen family who've shown her unconditional love and support that's been integral to her continuing her education. It is because of them that she is here.

*Esther*

A senior in STEM, Esther calls a few different places home due to her family moving around a bit when she was younger. Home is currently Texas where she lives with her two parents; immigrants from Mexico who have tried to attain that *American Dream* and have fallen short due to external factors that at times have left the family in financial distress. Home is also the tight knit friends she's made during her time here. These friends have filled in the gaps of support that her family has inevitably left with her being first-generation. Home is not necessarily this institution. It is a means to an end. Yet it is a space she has made a mission to engage with in every possible way.

A piece of home was waiting for her when she started college. Esther is in the unique position of attending this institution alongside her older brother. She has the biggest smile as she

---

[8] According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), ~6% of non-professional doctorates (e.g. Doctor of Medicine, Doctor of Dental Surgery, Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, Juris Doctor) were conferred to Latine students in the 2021-22 academic year in the U.S.

shares how fortunate she is to have had him here these past few years, and that smile quickly turns into a frown as she reflects on what it's meant for both of them to attend the same university.

> *Since he's the first child, he's been experiencing a lot of pressure so he just worries about me more, because he knows that I'm a very different kind of person than him. I'm very emotional and he just wants to know that I'm okay. Whenever I leave the house my parents tell him 'take care of your sister', but there's some times that I don't want to put pressure on him. I want to have my own life. Plus, I don't want to worry him too much.*

*Nicholas*

The counterpart to Esther; Nicholas is also a senior in STEM who at the time of this interview was waiting to hear back from graduate programs he'd applied to. If you were to read his applications you would find countless student leadership positions, such positions that he undoubtedly prepared for through his role as an older brother. For him getting involved on campus seemed obvious. From the very beginning he understood that students who were well connected would get farther. Unfortunately for him, finding his community didn't come as easily as it did to his sister. It wasn't until the end of his time at this institution that he was able to confidently say he'd found his people; part of the reason was his never-ending workload.

Both Nicholas and Esther come from a low-income family and for both of them, the leading cause to their enrollment at this university was the generous financial aid offered. However, that financial aid only stretched so far, so from an early point both took it upon themselves to get part-time jobs to help alleviate some of the financial pressure from their

parents. It's difficult for him to prioritize building interpersonal relationships with other students when there are bigger worries on his mind.

> *All I'm thinking about is money, money, money and I understand it sounds bad, but it's just the way I grew up… Thank goodness that [other students] don't have to think how I think. They can enjoy life. They can do whatever they want. They can rely on their parents… No, to answer your question, I don't think they think about money the way we do, but it's not their fault.*

*Jennifer*

Nearly 3,000 miles from her hometown, Jennifer found herself at this university by way of her older sister who is a year older than her and graduating from her respective institution in a few months. When she was first applying to college three years ago, her sister had shared with her that private universities typically offered better financial aid and the east coast had more privates than their home state of California. Months later Jennifer found herself making the move to the other side of the country away from her family. The transition was made easier when she learned that her sister's school was roughly an hour away from her.

It has now become a routine that about once a month either of them will make the trek to see each other. Neither have a car so this monthly trek includes taking a bus that has a limited schedule due to the rural and smaller-sized city locations of each university. This bus ride is worth it in her eyes though, because community was not easy to come across which was a stark contrast for someone who had come from a predominantly Latine hometown.

*It makes it so much easier because I was really struggling. Now that I see her more often*

*I feel grounded in a way… back home everyone is Latine and here it's not like that. It was*

*a huge change, especially because I'm so far away from home.*

*Kevin*

For Kevin, home is split between two spaces. After his parents separated early on in his childhood, home was California and Mexico. Throughout the years he has spent considerable time in both places, feeling as though both are home in different ways regardless of the litany of questions he's received over the years making him feel as though he's forced to pick one or the other to claim as home. He reminds us that home is less of a physical space and more about who inhabits that space.

Being an only child, his parents were a large part of his support system. Since starting college he's had to restructure what that support system looks like due to their limited knowledge of higher education. Regardless of these limitations, he regularly checks in with his parents, making sure that they're still a part of this journey as much as possible. Due to the frequency in moving between spaces, going away for college was an easier decision. What wasn't as easy for him was realizing how little his parents could support him once he started college.

*I think people sometimes don't understand what goes on in the first-generation college*

*experience. A lot of people here are either legacy students or their parents have already*

*gone to college… My dad didn't finish middle school because he had to drop out to work*

*in Mexico… My mom just finished high school. My parents couldn't really help me with a*

*lot of questions I had. So my experience has been different in the sense that I have had to*

*figure out how to navigate higher education on my own.*

*Delia*

Delia can count on one hand the number of classmates that chose to go to college out-of-state from her high school. When it came time to split ways, most chose to stay close to home for a few reasons; some didn't have the financial means to go too far from home, others didn't feel it was possible for them to go to a four-year college and opted for the local community college. Delia looked conflicted as she told me about having left some of her friends behind, knowing deep inside that they too could leave if they were courageous enough to. She couldn't stick around to wait for them though.

Early on she knew that she wanted to go to a university outside of Texas; a state that has become known for the numerous educational policies implemented during the four years she was in high school. Such educational policies implemented in universities in Texas include Senate Bill 17 that banned diversity, equity, and inclusion offices and Senate Bill 18 that fundamentally changed the tenure process. Coming from a predominantly Latine neighborhood, she saw the negative impacts of these policy changes firsthand and had a yearning to be in a position that allowed her to educate her community on what was happening. That's what led to Delia triple majoring in hopes that she can curate a foundation of knowledge that is well-rounded, something she feels she did not fully receive in her home state.

*I knew, since I had a conscience, that I wanted to leave Texas. I knew that I was very*

*educationally suppressed. And I knew that I could do a lot more in other places and just*

*feel safer as a person.*

*Christopher*

Some families make the decision for you in where you go to college. In Christopher's case they heavily influenced his decision. Coming from a Latine household, it's common knowledge that within our culture families want to keep you close for as long as possible. They want us around. Luckily for Christopher, he found a university that was within driving distance that still met all of the criteria he was looking for. Keeping in line with some common truths of our culture is that our families want us to be kept at arm's reach *while* simultaneously achieving the impossible.

Christopher entered college as pre-med, a dream his parents had more than he did for himself. That was short-lived once the realization struck that he didn't see himself going through an extra ten years of schooling. When it came time to have the conversation with his parents it was hard and uncomfortable, but necessary. He understands the sacrifices his family has made to make college possible for him. As a first-generation student, telling your parents that their dream isn't yours is filled with a mix of emotions; heartbreak in knowing that you won't become their idealized version of you, as well as freedom in knowing that you have released yourself from the stresses of this idealized future. As he's navigated his four years at this university, he's been able to do a lot of self-exploration that's helped him see what he wants for himself in the future. Within this self-exploration comes the realization that some emotions are at war with themselves.

*It felt like there was definitely a lot more responsibility because of the fact that my family always had that pressure where they wanted to see me succeed. So it was more stressful and kind of a more isolated experience where it's like you had to figure it out and because*

56

*you have this image to live up to… My culture plays a big role in why I'm here. I'm very*

*proud to be Latino, but at the same time, it also has provided me with a lot of challenges.*

*Max*

Home for some is as close as a 10-minute walk across campus to where your brother's

dorm is. Max started college with his twin brother by his side, having made the drive with his

parents and older brother following closely behind. As a unit they moved into campus four years

ago and are now nearing the end of their time at this institution. With four years of undergrad

nearly under his belt, Max reflects on what his time has looked like. A part of his reflection

involves looking back at the community he's built for himself and the journey it took to getting

to a point where he can say he has a community here.

Max comes from a beautifully diverse neighborhood where he went to school with a lot

of students who looked just like him and had experiences similar to him. He knew coming in that

he was entering a PwI, but he didn't anticipate how much of a culture shock it would be. He also

knew coming in that doing college with his twin right beside him would make things easier, but

he also didn't anticipate just how helpful it would be.

> *It's been such a blessing. I know college in general would have been a lot more of a scary*
>
> *experience without him… I'm honestly eternally grateful to have him. I think a lot about*
>
> *how different my university experience would have been without him… I don't know how*
>
> *I would have done college without him.*

*Leo*

Born a few minutes later is Leo, the other half to Max. Growing up these two were a packaged deal. From similar haircuts to clothes to shared friend groups, when people thought of Max they also thought of Leo. It felt natural to most that they would choose the same university when the time came, but if you were to ask both they would tell you that that wasn't the main factor. The university they ended up at had offered them a financial aid package that was too generous to pass up, plus it was close to home. Being at the same university was simply an added bonus.

Leo didn't have to start college completely from scratch. He had his older brother to guide him before he arrived for move-in week four years ago. Although both are considered first-generation because their parents did not graduate from college, they are second to their older brother in completing a college degree. Having an older sibling who'd gone through the process before has been more helpful than Leo had imagined when he first started.

> *Since coming here I had my older brother, who was first in my family to go to college. He was a huge help because he emphasized that he didn't want me and Max to struggle in the same ways he did because he felt like he was really lost… If it wasn't for him I probably wouldn't have gotten through these four years and found what I wanted to do.*

*Alyssa*

Alyssa is one of five daughters from Southern California. Being the youngest she grew up watching her older sisters achieve these lofty dreams their parents set out for them. These dreams were tethered to home though. Although college was something their parents dreamed for

them, they wanted that dream to be within driving distance. The first three sisters did just that and attended universities close to home. The fourth sister broke the mold though. She showed Alyssa and the rest of them that it was possible to step outside of their comfort zone and chase their own dreams.

Alyssa was in a way the one who broke the mold for others at her high school. She was one of a few who went to a school out-of-state. Unfortunately when you have siblings you can become a player in the comparison game whether you want to or not. It has continued during her time away at college, making Alyssa hesitant to share certain accomplishments for fear of not being fully celebrated. As grateful as she is for having the support and guidance from her older sisters, having older siblings can be a mixed bag that only those of us with siblings can fully understand.

> *It was hard because my sister above me, she's the superstar of the family, she achieved so much. When it comes to parent support it's something that from a young age I kind of learned to let go of because of my sister. She achieved so much and I was always compared to her… In high school I would tell them about something I'd be doing and they'd say, 'your sister did that too' … So that's kind of how support is with them and I don't really seek it anymore in the same ways.*

*Angel*

Home is comprised of baconeggancheese sandwiches, weekly commutes on the train, and boroughs filled with people that represent nearly every corner of the world. Home is filled with the sounds of Celia Cruz, Elvis Costelo, and Vincente Fernandez wafting through the streets.

When picking a college, Angel wanted to stay close to home but far enough that he'd be able to expand what his world entailed. That, coupled with a generous financial aid package, made this university the perfect fit for him.

In the three years since he's been here his expectations of certain aspects of college have been met, such as the prestige and rigor of his department. However there are some things we can't foresee that we learn through firsthand experience.

*[I knew] going to a different university outside of the place I grew up would give me a larger exposure to different communities and different people… It's just the right distance away from home and close enough where I could definitely make it back in a shorter period of time… I do feel like there's a gap in how much resources different groups have. I see it in white students, where they have more access to more funds from their family. In my case, my family doesn't have that much money and so I always make sure that I never overspend. I can only really buy what I need.*

*Susanna*

When making big life decisions like choosing where to go to school, sometimes some of us need as many options as possible. For Susanna that looked like applying to 20 schools. Out of all of them there was one college that had a unique pro on the pro/con list that the others didn't: her boyfriend was a student there.

They met in high school as teenagers. Their love is the stuff made for fairytales. With a year between them, he went off to college first, choosing one that was a perfect match for his interests. That college happened to be over 600 miles away from Chicago and from her. This

story usually ends with our love birds parting ways, hoping to cross paths once again sometime down the road. That wasn't the plot of this love story. They made long distance work and when it came time for Susanna to apply to colleges she had heard enough about this university through her boyfriend that she figured she should apply.

> *I didn't know for sure if [this university] was meant for me, but that was why I chose to apply. And I didn't get in at first. I was waitlisted for a while. So I did plan on going to another school, but my heart wasn't really in it. I realized I did want [this university] and I waited. Eventually they told me that I was accepted… when I almost wasn't let in, that was when I knew that my heart was here.*

*Maria*

Some people get all the luck. They get paired with the perfect roommate. They know exactly what they want to major in from day one. They have the Hollywood version of their first year of college. Maria wasn't so lucky. The week her acceptance letter came in, she was recovering from COVID. Her first-year roommate was far from becoming her best friend. The first year of college did not look like what the movies show. But Maria had her mom. Being an only child, Maria and her mother became tethered to one another. The world could be on fire and so long as her mom was there she knew all would be right with the world.

So when that acceptance letter came during her isolation period, her mom was the first person she called to celebrate. As Maria navigated the tense situation with her roommate, her mom was on the other end of the phone supporting her from Maryland. College is hard for

everyone, whether they admit it or not. What makes it easier is knowing you have those loved ones back home to lean on when things get tough, because they inevitably will get tough.

*My mom is the strongest person that I've ever known. She came to this country by herself with nothing… it's bittersweet in a way because nothing feels better than her telling me she's proud of me. This stuff sucks sometimes but it's all worth it when my mom says, 'you're doing great'.*

*Lizbeth*

Then there are some who left home and don't have a home to come back to. Home was New Jersey, with her younger brothers and parents. Home was just a short drive from college. Home is now the family Lizbeth has created in the three years she's been here. Her chosen family consists of friends, her boyfriend, and herself. Her new normal has taken some getting used to and just when she thinks she's overcome the emotions attached with losing your family, she gets hit with little reminders. Little reminders that come around FAFSA season when you're asked to submit your parents tax records but you're reminded you can't because you haven't spoken to your parents since you were 18. You're now in your 20's and have learned how to get around those questions while still being eligible for financial aid.

Lizbeth understands arguably more than most young adults the importance of having a support system around you while in college. She's had to experience what it's been like to go without the traditional support system, wincing whenever she's asked 'are you going home for [insert academic break here]?'.

62

*I had a falling out with my parents. From the very beginning they told me straight away when I was applying to colleges that they were not going to support me in any way, shape, or form, which really broke my heart because as parents you're supposed to be supportive of your children. Right? … Your parents are supposed to be supportive of you.*

What Lizbeth and all of the students have made abundantly clear is the important role support plays as a college student, specifically a first-generation, Latine student attending a PwI. For first-generation, Latine students, going to college does not mean you're leaving behind your family. On the contrary, you are traveling with your family both metaphorically and literally. For those of us fortunate enough to have our families drop us off at college or those of us who made the trek here solo, you do not arrive here alone. With you comes generations of first-generation, Latine scholars who also walked these halls timidly, who also struggled with having difficult conversations with their families, who also worried endlessly about finances. This is not said to normalize these experiences. There are some things that we simply do not need to experience in order to understand. What these stories do for me, a fellow first-generation, Latina is they give me comfort. Every time I returned to these stories I held them with such care. It felt like returning to an old friend who was waiting for me with open arms. These stories validated my own lived experiences and reminded me that I am not alone in some of the things I've witnessed during my time as a college student. Regardless of how long you have been in college or graduated from college, it's easy for us to slip back into the mindset that we are the only ones who struggle in these specific ways. The hope is that you find one or multiple students whose story resonates with you which you can hold onto as you venture through the next chapter.

**Chapter 5 – Los Temas**

Among the stories the students shared, much of their information shared commonalities that led to the creation of themes. This chapter will explore the ways the themes address the research questions through the knowledge shared by the students and existing literature embedded to support their knowledge. The addition of existing literature is not meant to invalidate the students' stories but more so affirm them. The themes explored here will be introduced by relevant, short excerpts from the students followed by the name of the themes found on table 2 in chapter 3 for sake of consistency. In this chapter I aim to answer the following research questions through the knowledge graciously shared by the students and my own testimonios:

1. What does it look like to situate Latine undergraduate students as the knowledge producers when asking them how Predominantly white Institutions can better serve them in holistic ways?

2. In what ways are first-generation, Latine students receiving, or not receiving, meaningful holistic support in higher education?

3. What does/should holistic support in higher education look like according to Latine undergraduate students?

The following findings have been categorized through the final eight codes presented in the prior chapter and organized into overall themes:

1. Cultural Implications for Success, College Experiences, Socioeconomic Status

2. Value of Comunidad through Friendships and Sibling Relationships

3. Value of Diverse Faculty and Staff

4. Self-Motivation and Family Motivation

5. The Need for First-Generation and Latine Resources

6. Negative Encounters within Campus Climate with Student Services, Faculty, Students, and for Disabled Students

7. Student-Empowered Supports

8. Positive Encounters within Campus Climate with Student Services, Faculty, Students, and for Disabled Students

The findings presented below will be organized by research questions so as to address each question through the eight themes. Research question 1 will be addressed in the following chapter.

## Research Question 2: In what ways are first-generation, Latine students receiving, or not receiving, meaningful holistic support in higher education?

**Negative Encounters within Campus Climate**

*"Communicating to the Office of Financial Aid is Always Stressful" – Kevin*

Of the 13 students interviewed for this study, all identified as low income despite it not being a part of the eligibility criteria. For low income students it's much more common for them to be familiar with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and their institutions Bursar's Office or Office of Financial Aid than wealthier students. Unfortunately for the students in this study, a majority of them shared negative encounters they had with these offices and resources during their time at their institution.

> *My second year I had a death in my family… and my mom had to send money to them.*
> *The school saw that when they were doing financial aid and were like, 'that money didn't*

*go to us, so we have to take away your entire [financial aid] package'. So I was supposed*

*to figure that all out. – Maria*

Maria was eventually able to recover part of her financial aid package, but not the entirety of what had been initially offered. Being first-generation, it was that much more difficult for her to explain to her mom what had happened while she was trying to wrap her head around it too. It took Maria weeks of phone calls and emails to the Office of Financial Aid to get this rectified and even more phone calls between her mom to translate what had exactly happened. As a first-generation, Latine student you are not only learning these processes for yourself but for your family as well. We are put in the position of translating the institutional jargon to our loved ones as we're simultaneously learning it ourselves. Maria shared that when she talked to financial aid staff, they would make little effort to explain things in easy to understand terms. For students who are not familiar with how financial aid works, it's that much harder to learn when the resources on campus don't make it easily accessible. After she became more familiar with these processes she then had to go through the mental gymnastics of explaining it to her family. In this case, students are actively seeking the support they need from the institution, but aren't receiving it in ways that are accessible to them as first-generation, Latine students.

*[Communicating to the Office of Financial Aid] is always stressful. I hate it because*

*everyone's trying to contact them through the phone… whenever something came up, I'd*

*have to call the Office of Financial Aid and it would be a 20-30 minute wait, or if I'm*

*unlucky, an hour wait on the line. And I would be stressed the whole time… sometimes*

*they'd add more stress because they just want to answer you as fast as possible and get*

*through it. So if you don't know about the terms or what they're talking about, it's extra*

*research that you have to do. – Kevin*

Being from a divorced household, Kevin often plays the role of translator *and* mediator between his parents. Neither speak fluent English nor have the time to go through the process of calling so he finds himself being on the phone quite a bit; whether it's with the Office of Financial Aid or his parents. Unfortunately for him and many other students, a bulk of the time spent on the phone is in a queue waiting to be helped. That help is seldom when the answers you're seeking aren't broken down for you. Students in this population are already having to play a game of telephone every time they have aid-related questions; that game goes into overtime when they're put on hold for extended periods of time. As first-generation students they rely heavily on receiving support from these offices since they don't have access to this type of support through their families.

*My parents didn't know what FAFSA was. So a lot of that I had to figure out how to fill*

*out on my own where I think a lot of people's parents can help them out or guide them in*

*the right direction. – Susanna*

Susanna is one of many students who take on this added responsibility because of their position as a first-generation student. Being the first in your family to go to college can be as much of an accomplishment as it is a burden. For some this burden is shouldered alone. For Lizbeth when it comes time to complete the FAFSA form, she not only experiences stress but retraumatization.

*There's this question on FAFSA that always asks if you're at risk of homelessness, and*

*this year it's no different… I don't live with my parents. I don't live with any family*

*members. I have been supporting myself and my education. So every year when I apply*

*for FAFSA, I check off that box because when I go home for winter, I don't have a home. I*

*live in my boyfriend's car, per say. And I had to prove to [this university] that I am in*

*these conditions, that I am not lying, and it just tears away at me. I have to go out of my*

*way to ask people to write me letters to prove that this situation is very much real. But*

*you have to do what you have to do in the end… - Lizbeth*

Lizbeth has been experiencing this retraumatization every year for the past four years. There is already the emotional toll it takes on her to complete this form and reckon with the fact that she receives no familial support, but to then be put in the position to prove her situation is less than ideal. She tried to seek support retroactively from the Office of Financial Aid from her financial aid advisor but there she hit a wall as well. As she retold her story for the umpteenth time to her white, male advisor in hopes of receiving additional help and empathy, he said that her family situation would rectify itself in a short matter of time. After all, he'd had arguments with his parents during undergrad and they'd made up days or weeks later.

*I remember him telling me over Zoom to give it a month or two because sometimes these*

*issues resolve themselves. He tried to relate to me in that aspect and said he'd had a fight*

*with his dad and a day later they spoke again. He was like 'maybe this is one of those*

*situations'. I was like, 'it's not, but okay, thank you for trying'. – Lizbeth*

Multiple students mentioned that they felt a disconnect with white faculty and staff as well as their white classmates, in particular when it came to the ways they thought about finances. Nicholas spoke about how often money is on his mind as a low income student and wondered if they ever thought about it as much as he did.

> *I mean, they don't have to think about what I think you know… I think that's really how you should live life as in no worries and just have fun. – Nicholas*

Nicholas isn't alone in feeling as though they're alone in this outlook on finances.

> *I feel like when I've spoken to peers, I was the only one communicating with my financial aid counselor, and I would always hear, 'I don't even know who mine is' … And I think that for me, that has been the biggest difference in my experience with other students because of the emotional toll that the Office of Financial Aid has created for me these past three years. It's just something that I feel only first-generation and Latine students really deal with – knowing who your financial aid counselor is, having the financial aid number saved on my phone, etc. – Alyssa*

Alyssa echoes much of what all participants feel. First-generation, Latine students' college experiences are heavily impacted by their lower socioeconomic status as apparent by finances constantly being at the forefront of their mind as well as regularly being in contact with the Office of Financial Aid and the Bursar's Office. There is an alienation felt for those who are

constantly thinking about finances when attending a private PwI with classmates who don't have to think twice about working a part-time job(s).

> *I am working every day. I have to be a [Resident Advisor], not because I want to but because that's how I pay for college. And it's frustrating when you can tell that a lot of people haven't had to experience that in order to get to where they are today… [I'm] working multiple campus jobs to make ends meet and I just have a lot of other responsibilities that I have to take care of outside of the classroom. – Max*

Max is just one of the students in this study who works a part-time job while being a full-time student. These jobs range from 10-20 hours a week; this is the weekly cap at this institution for on-campus jobs. Many shared that they worked multiple jobs at one point during their undergraduate degree in order to help ease the financial weight off of their families' shoulders. However what these students earn typically goes straight to rent, utility bills or other costs of living. They don't have the financial stability to put money away and sometimes that impacts their interactions with friends.

> *My friends will go out to eat a couple times a week and it's just like, I can't do that and they'll be like 'oh, why can't you come?'. They don't get it. I don't have that ease. It's different things like this that make me feel alienated sometimes. – Delia*

Delia reminds us that these interactions that may seem insignificant to some, tend to stick with those of us who hold marginalized identities. For her friends this conversation may not have

stood out, but it's one that serves as a stark reminder of the difference in financial stability. Whether intentional or not, it caused a sense of othering, making it apparent that there is a clear divide between those who worry about money and those who are fortunate enough to not have those worries, at least to the same extent. These experiences are not unique to first-generation, Latine students but they are amplified for students who hold these intersecting identities. Finances are only part of the struggles these students deal with on a regular basis.

*"There Are Hidden Struggles" – Angel*

> *I would say there are hidden struggles that a lot of Latine and first-gen and low income students face. - Angel*

Current literature in education divides students by their varying identities rather than viewing them as the sum of their intersectional identities. There is existing literature that looks at students who are first-generation and Latine, but scarce literature on first-generation, Latine *and* disabled students. Existing literature that does study students found at this intersection has typically been done in K-12 settings, not higher education (Fraser et al., 2022; Gage et al., 2020; Rodríguez et al., 2020; Tefera, 2019). Despite the lack of literature, this study shows that not only are there students found at this intersection, they are aware of the ways their identities influence one another. Angel is one of four students who shared they have a disability, being found at the intersection of first-gen, Latine and disabled.

> *I think I just didn't know how to really seek out the proper avenues to get support with my ADHD. Like it was very clear to me that I had it, but it was very unfortunate that many*

71

*times when I did present characteristics of ADHD, the common advice that I would get*

*would be, 'try to go to the [Health Center] and see what they can offer'. – Angel*

Angel was recently diagnosed with ADHD from a doctor back home. In waiting for a diagnosis he sought support through the university but kept coming up against roadblocks. At the university-level, support for disabled students often has to be accompanied with a diagnosis from a physician. Obtaining a diagnosis is not a simple task and can be costly. Without one students may find it more difficult to get the help they seek. Seeking help for some students is a roadblock within itself.

*I have ADHD. I have bipolar disorder, but I haven't been able to get myself to actually*

*[seek help] because I don't know – it's just that extra step that I haven't been able to take*

*of actually being able to seek out help. – Delia*

Delia has struggled with various mental disabilities for much of her young adult life and had an official diagnosis prior to coming to college. In theory this should have made it easier for her to get the help she needed, but another factor to take into consideration when supporting first-generation, Latine students are the cultural stigmas around disability. When these students come to college, it might be the first time that they can actively explore their intersectionality.

*We were talking about invisible and visible [disabilities] and I was just like wow, these*

*things have names for it. And it's not only something that I have to push to the side. This*

*is my life. – Maria*

Maria became physically disabled during her first year in college. With her new disability she began to quickly realize a number of things she hadn't been privy to before. Her university is nearly 1,000 acres, meaning that to get from one class to another can sometimes be a trek, even for ablebodied students. Her disability made it harder for her to get around campus without pain or discomfort so she reached out to the campus medical transport services to get her from building to building for classes that were far from each other and was met with an unexpected response.

> *I will say this university has so much money it's sitting on and it needs to focus a lot of it on the medical transport system… You're only allowed to and from your classes, so you can't go to the library, they can't pick you up there. You have to walk home if you are at the library [for them to pick you up]… I was on crutches… I felt isolated for so long. – Maria*

She continued to have similar experiences with medical transport, feeling as though her experiences were exacerbated by her Latinidad. Whenever she communicated to the office staff about these concerns, she was met with hostility that she felt was amplified by her marginalized identity as a woman of color; specifically from the white staff members. Maria struggles with mental health issues as well and has recognized since being away at college the ways in which her cultural background has influenced the way she views these invisible disabilities.

*In Latine communities it's kind of hard to grasp mental disability sometimes…I think*

*there's a stigma around it and it's really problematic. – Maria*

When any student steps onto a college campus, they are also stepping away from cultural norms, including stigmas around mental health. "Asian and Latinx students generally report greater stigma about mental illness and mental health help-seeking behaviors compared with non-Latinx white students," (Zhou et al., 2022, p. 1327). Going to college gives students the opportunity to expand their perspectives and challenge notions they'd grown up to accept unwillingly.

*"If She Can't Get Help Then I Can't Either" – Alyssa*

The Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors (AUCCCD) releases every year a comprehensive survey detailing the use, range of services, and demographics of all counseling centers across the globe. Their most recent survey for the 2021-2022 academic year reported that there are about 400 counseling centers out of the nearly 2,500 four-year, degree-granting[9] universities. The institution this study took place at has an entire building dedicated to a health center that includes counseling and psychological services (CAPS). This space is available to all current undergraduate and graduate students who have physical and mental health needs. These services come at virtually no charge to the students, paid through annual student fees, unless there is prescribed medication or certain health tests conducted. This has been a big selling point of this university, found promoted on their website,

---

[9] The focus for this study is degree-granting institutions since the study took place at a degree-granting institution in the U.S.

campus tours, and other prospective student materials. However the experiences students have had with the mental health counselors[10] have not exactly been positive.

> *I think the first therapy session that I went to I really felt like they're kind of lying to me… and that kind of really hurts me. I feel like sometimes it's the institution's fault because not a lot of the staff at these different resources know what they're doing. – Esther*

Esther reflects on her first (and last) experience with CAPS, sharing how uncomfortable it had been for her. The first session[11] you typically have with a mental health counselor is an in-take appointment meaning you spend time sharing a broad overview of what you are seeking guidance on. During this in-take appointment you can anticipate talking a majority of the time as opposed to volleying back and forth with the therapist as you might in a follow-up session. During Esther's in-take she recounts receiving guidance from her therapist that felt insulting towards her culture rather than affirming of her experiences. She left the session feeling upset with no intention of returning for a follow-up session. This session may have gone differently if she had seen a therapist of color, someone who better understood her lived experiences or had had someone who was more culturally aware. Having more therapists of color has been one of the complaints from students all across BU and was a recent demand from campus protests in the past five years. BU has a long-standing history with student activism that sometimes leads to immediate institutional change and other times change seems to be stagnant, like the lack of therapists of color continuing to be an issue five years after the last student protest. For her

---

[10] Throughout this piece I will be using mental health counselor and therapist interchangeably.
[11] Throughout this piece I will be using session and appointment interchangeably.

brother, Nicholas, he's had slightly better experiences with CAPS and has gone so far as to not only seek one-on-one counseling but couples counseling as well.

*In my couples counseling experience we did have some person of color. [My girlfriend] was more related to the counselor because they were both Asian. That did help in having some similarity in backgrounds, obviously. – Nicholas*

Both Nicholas and Esther have had the opportunity to experience what campus counseling is like, but not all students have the flexibility in their schedule to do so. The campus counseling center follows similar business hours as the rest of the university, so they're limited to offering appointments between the hours of 8-5 pm on most weekdays. Although in theory this may make logical sense, it limits students who work or simply have packed days that interferes with these hours.

*I've attempted a few times to get mental health support… but it would occur when I'm deep in coursework, so either I don't have the time, I forget about it, or I'm already drained throughout the week to set up a time to seek extra support. – Angel*

Angel has yet to find an appointment time that works with his schedule. He is one of the students who yearns to utilize this resource. Others aren't as eager due to negative experiences their friends or peers have had. Alyssa has yet to make an appointment because of stories she's been told by her friends.

*I had two or three of my friends who've said that they had gone and had sought out help and they were turned away after one or two meetings. They said 'oh, we'll help you find a therapist, but we can't help you after that'. I feel like that would be my last straw if I was trying to seek help… My friend was really struggling, sometimes worse than me, and I thought if she can't get help then I can't either. – Alyssa*

Talk travels fast among students and if one has had a bad experience, it can quickly deter a number of other students. This is fast-tracked among students who rely so heavily on their community of friends. Then there's students who serve in leadership positions who hear similar stories from peers, such as Christopher who has been a Resident Advisor (RA) for the past three years.

*What I have heard from residents who have tried to reach out is that there's long wait lines and that they're not always available when they need them. I know there's a crisis hotline but unless it's an emergency, like something's going on right now, it's kind of like you got to wait. – Christopher*

But what if students can't afford to wait? Some participants reported waiting as long as a few months to be seen for their in-take appointment at this institution. For others, they decided not to wait and seek counseling off-campus or not at all. The long wait times, lack of staff therapists of color, and secondhand negative experiences shared with peers has led to a predominantly negative outlook on counseling and psychological services on-campus. Waiting

for the resources these students were in need of wasn't an option any longer, so they took it upon themselves to create resources for themselves and other first-generation, Latine students.

## Research Question 3: What does/should holistic support in higher education look like according to Latine undergraduate students?

### Student-Empowered Supports

*"I Was Raised That Way" – Delia*

Community is not a noun for us, first-generation, Latine students. Community is a verb. Community is something we are actively striving towards and co-creating. It becomes of even greater importance when we find ourselves in spaces that are not as welcoming or are stark contrasts from what we're used to such as PwI's. For many of us with a Latine background, it's been ingrained in us from an early age. Delia echoes the sentiments of most of the participants in saying that the need to create and contribute to community came naturally to her.

> *I already have this privilege of being here and I feel like I can foster a place that's going to be welcoming. I'm going to try to do that. I was raised that way. – Delia*

For Christopher, part of his motivation stemmed from wanting to create a community that had not previously existed before him. He realized early on that he didn't want that to be the case for incoming first-generation, Latine students.

> *I wanted to create something where I felt like I could leave this community better than when I found it… I thought 'this is what the situation is since I've been here, so how do I*

*try to improve it' for the person that comes after me so they don't feel as overwhelmed or*

*isolated as I did. – Christopher*

And then there are students who not only lacked a sense of community entering college, but had negative experiences that exacerbated feelings of isolation. This is part of what drives Kevin's motivation to co-create these spaces.

*Now I've taken it up a bit as my mission to keep building this Mexican community as much as possible. So the next student that's first-gen that comes in doesn't have an experience similar to mine where it's like 'I can't find my community' because there's already a set community… I had a pretty bad experience my first two years and now I want to help other students to make sure they don't go through what I went through. – Kevin*

These students didn't wait around for the institution to create the resources they needed, they took it upon themselves to do the work.

*"I Needed A Place I Loved Being In" – Delia*

This group of students isn't the first to create resources they were in need of and realistically they won't be the last. Three years ago a number of these students saw a gap in the resources their university provided and decided that with help from friends they could fill in those gaps.

*I created the [organization[12]] with some of my friends because I needed a place that I loved being in… it's a space for Latine students to celebrate our culture and just take a step back from school and just be a Latine student and dance and talk chisme. – Delia*

Delia astutely points out that some students are genuinely surprised when they learn that their university doesn't have certain resources offered already. When she stepped onto this campus three years ago, she was shocked to find out that there were little to no resources specifically for first-generation and/or Latine students.

*It took me a while to find community; it wasn't until senior year and that was more so because I kind of started a community through [this organization]… There's not many people here that share the same background as me… so I'm going to make this platform so that we can bring people together. – Christopher*

The organization Christopher founded was not a solo mission. With help from friends who are also Latine, they created a space that felt like home because he realized that he wasn't the only one who was yearning for these kinds of spaces. Alyssa had a similar realization after talking with her friends one day during their freshman year.

*We all started to vent to each other about everything that had been happening to us. That was my comfort group. I wasn't necessarily alone because I got to complain, well not complain, but vent to them about what was happening… we realized that there was no*

---

[12] For the sake of anonymity, all names of the organizations the students started will not be used so as to preserve the identities of the participants.

*group here for [Latine] students… so that's when we were like 'why don't we start*

*[one]?'. There was this anticipation of creating this community, not just for me, but for*

*other people. – Alyssa*

As Alyssa talks about the process of creating this student organization, she wavers

between a half smile and a frown because as she remembers what it took to get here, she

remembers that she was only a freshman. Her and her friends were about 18 years old at the time

of the founding of this student organization. That is when most of these students started their

own organizations. They were fresh out of high school, learning the ropes of college as first-

generation students, and had taken up the torch to do this work.

*"You Can't Do It All" – Max*

> *I'm the first to do a lot of different things and it's not things out of the ordinary. When I*
>
> *got here I thought there was already going to be [this kind of organization]. I was a*
>
> *freshman when I created this club. Once I took a leadership position I kind of understood*
>
> *that this institution isn't made for people like me. - Delia*

Delia is now a junior, a year away from graduating, and this realization from her first

year has shifted the way she engages with the university. She and other participants view their

leadership involvement as less of an extracurricular activity and more of an obligation.

> *Success as a college student is someone who can juggle successfully. You are not only*
>
> *living an academic life of keeping track of your grades and making sure you have a*
>
> *relationship with your professors and looking for internships, but at the same time you're*

*supposed to be very involved in your community. You have to have clubs and*

*organizations under your belt, not only just be in them but be leading them. – Nicholas*

With this mindset, it's no wonder Nicholas is known across campus by various faculty and staff. From the very beginning he took it upon himself to be heavily involved in a number of organizations because that's what he's been led to believe he's had to do. It's more than just the pressure to succeed by institutional standards, it's also the pressure he feels from his peers. This pressure is similarly felt by Max.

*It is a lot at times, because you feel as though you have to put on a mask… I am a rock*

*for my peers. For the people that look up to me on campus I have to uphold this image,*

*but you also realize you're human and you can't do it all. – Max*

Max serves as a student leader in a variety of ways ever since his first year. Through culturally relevant programs, peer mentoring programs, student organizations, and on-campus part-time jobs, he has carried this burden on his shoulders to be everything for everyone and in that it meant losing part of himself. While working 10+ hours a week on top of being a Resident Advisor (RA), Max found himself struggling to find time for himself where he could just be. He sought a space where he could exist as himself and not as a student leader, RA, or peer mentor. As a Latine student, these burdens aren't presented to you when you first start college, they begin long before you ever step foot on a campus. For as long as Christopher remembers, he'd been told how much of his family's success was riding on his success.

*[My dad] always told me growing up that they've sacrificed a lot to be here, so for me*

*that's what I tried to emulate… I want to succeed in part for myself, but also because I*

*know that the people who came before me to allow me this opportunity went through a lot*

*to get me here. – Christopher*

Christopher isn't the only one who grew up trying to meet the expectations from family. Alyssa's understanding of success is heavily tied to how her family views her.

*I associated success with achieving and not disappointing, or failing. That's the mindset*

*that I was in because that's what my parents have thought. But then coming here that's*

*when I was like, 'no, sometimes failing and getting myself back up is also success'. –*

*Alyssa*

Unfortunately not all students come to that realization as easily or quickly as Alyssa did. Sometimes we need extra help from outside forces, like mass media. One night back home with his family, Nicholas had been watching the movie *Coco* with his grandma.

*Coco is funny. I mean no, it's not funny, but I think it's funny because they talk about*

*generational trauma and it's the first time I've ever seen a movie that talks about that.*

*When my grandma saw it she said, 'oh my', and realized to the extent of how much all*

*that pressure actually affects us first-gen kids. But at the same time, it feels like you have*

*no choice. You don't have a choice to jump out. – Nicholas*

What isn't seen on a daily basis are the internal pressures first-generation, Latine students commonly feel that stem from their cultural upbringing. These pressures translate into feeling responsible for younger generations of students, being cognizant that they most likely are also struggling with similar internal messaging. These internalized ideals of success are evident in the ways students view their (in)ability to talk openly with family. Susanna struggled to share with me that a few semesters ago she was failing multiple classes. As she spoke her voice shook and she began to let out some tears that she had been holding in for far too long.

> *I haven't told them yet. It's not really that big of a deal but I just don't want them to know that I'm struggling. I know they'll still support me and that they know that I can do this but I didn't want them to know that I'm failing. I just don't want them to worry about it or to think that I'm not going to finish. I taught them to think highly of me and that I don't struggle. – Susanna*

Susanna has yet to tell her family about her academic struggles and that's her prerogative[13]. And then there are some students who have confided in their families in the past who regretted it.

> *I don't feel like I always talk to them about my grades and stuff because… maybe it's just a Hispanic thing where they'll talk to other family members and I'm just like, I would want to talk to you about this but I don't want everyone else to know. – Leo*

---

[13] I have yet to tell my family about the class I failed nearly ten years ago when I was an undergraduate student. I suppose there's no time like the present: I failed Intro to Botany!

Leo wanted a safe space to share about his classes, but he couldn't find that among his own family. Even those who had siblings in college, they found they couldn't confide in them in the ways one would hope.

*I'm sure that my sisters all went through some sort of this too, but they just don't speak about it. And part of me wants to ask them… - Alyssa*

With three sisters who all went to college, Alyssa still feels as though she has no family she can go to for support. Among her sisters she has yet to have a conversation where they've shared with one another their honest experiences at PwI's as Latinas. For these students who don't have family they can rely on as trustworthy outlets, they hold all of these emotions inside: fear, overwhelm, anger, loneliness.

**Value of Diverse Faculty & Staff**

*"It Gives Me A Little Hope" – Maria*

When students can't rely on their families for support, they turn to faculty and staff. PwI's are commonly staffed with predominantly white faculty and staff who, although are supportive in their own ways, are limited in the support first-generation, Latine students are seeking. Maria tells us that it's not only about their capabilities to effectively teach, it's also about the level to which they can connect with students on a human level.

*I think that when you [get to be taught by] a person of color, the understanding is way more complex and I think that's really important… It's nice to know that a person of*

*authority can be relatable and understand these things. I also think that, you know, seeing*

*a woman of color in this position, it gives me a little hope. – Maria*

At the time this study was conducted in 2024, this university had over 1,800 full and part-time faculty. Of that total, 392 identified as members of minority groups according to institutional data acquired. The university did not have data that was easily accessible that broke down the demographics of faculty members further, but I was able to access[14] information on staff.

Table 5. Blizzard University Staff & Faculty[15] Demographics

| Ethnicity | Percentage of Staff |
| --- | --- |
| African American/Black | 13.1 |
| Asian American/Asian | 2.7 |
| Hispanic/Latinx | 1.9 |
| Middle Eastern/North African | 0.1 |
| Native American/Alaskan Native | 0.1 |
| Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander | 0.0 |
| White | 79.4 |
| Multiracial/-ethnic: Two or More Selections | 1.9 |
| Preferred Response Not Listed | 0.8 |

---

[14] Demographic data collection from the university was intentionally only attempted through their public-facing website so as to replicate what the public would be able to find if they weren't a student or staff member at the university. This was intentionally done to show how easy and/or difficult obtaining demographic data can be from higher education institutions.

[15] Note that this table displays staff demographics which includes faculty and staff members at the university. This table reports data from Blizzard University's research office from spring 2021.

Unfortunately this leaves little room for Latine students to be taught by Latine professors or have interactions with Latine staff. As Esther prepares to graduate this spring, she realizes that she's only had one Latine professor her entire time here.

> *I feel like if we had more professors that were Hispanic, I think they'd get me… I feel like having a white professor, they might not have a [culturally diverse] background… having that professor who is Hispanic, they go over experiences that nobody ever knew. – Esther*

During our conversation, Esther seemed to have a harder time outright naming uncomfortable experiences with faculty, but her brother Nicholas felt inclined to share more on her behalf.

> *I can tell you a story. My sister did have a problem with a professor… She was taking a [class] and she did the thing I told her to do, which is to email the professor about the costs of textbooks. Unfortunately she got an email from the professor that told her, 'she shouldn't have a problem purchasing a textbook because if she can attend [this university], then she can buy a textbook.' … My sister got offended obviously and the professor didn't know that we were first-gen students, that we can't afford these things. That's definitely something that I bet occurs more often than not; professors might have this mentality that we're just like everyone else and that's simply not the case. – Nicholas*

Having faculty and staff that share this commonality of cultural upbringing or are culturally aware, are able to more easily build rapport with students that provides them support

well beyond the classroom. This holistic support of being cognizant of external factors that may impact a student's ability to succeed is amplified when staff can relate on a personal level.

*They kind of understand the struggles because they've lived through it. Building a connection with a professor in that way because maybe they speak Spanish, I think that's very important because they know where the history is coming from. – Jennifer*

As a junior in her second semester, Jennifer has yet to take a class taught by a Latine professor. However she imagines what that experience would be like if given the opportunity and can see the value in it. She isn't the only one who hasn't had a Latine professor. As Angel wraps up his third year here, he also yearns for more diverse faculty and staff.

*I look around and I try to see if there's someone from my culture or background who has gone through the struggles that I've been through, but they're not around. – Angel*

Maybe they'll be fortunate to have this experience during their senior year like Christopher. He might've had to fly halfway across the world, but while studying abroad he finally got to experience what it was like to be taught by a Latine professor.

*I feel like I do remember those classes the most. I learned a lot because it was another way for me to communicate with my professor. It was also like, there's some shared characteristics and traits within Latine cultures. I could relate to her when talks about certain things, certain foods, certain experiences. I felt a lot more comfortable in those*

*classes. But I don't think I'd be able to know if it was important for me because it wasn't*

*something that I saw during my first three years here. It was also something I had to seek*

*out. I went to Spain[16] myself to meet them. – Christopher*

For some students like Lizbeth, Latine professors seem to be unicorns.

*When I joined [this student organization] and literally became a part of the executive*

*board, I didn't even know Latine professors existed on this campus until I saw [this*

*professor]. I think if I had seen more of them around on campus, it definitely would have*

*been an experience or at least, it would have been more comfortable for me to go and*

*speak to them. – Lizbeth*

Alyssa didn't have to study abroad to find a Latine professor. She was able to find one
right here on her campus at a time where she really needed the support.

*[Dr. X] was the only Latine professor that I ever had here at [this university] and when I*

*took [their] class the timing was right because it was at a time where it was really dark.*

*So [their] class was this ball of sunshine that I really needed at that time. When I was*

*coming into [this university] and then learning that it was a PwI I didn't really expect to*

*have many Latine professors, let alone professors of color… As much as I would love to*

*have more professors of color, more Latine professors, I know that that's something that I*

---

[16] Students had a varying understanding of who was included under the Latine umbrella in terms of ethnicity. Here Christopher demonstrates a more expansive definition of Latine by including a professor who was Spanish from Spain.

*can't really hold onto very much. It's just not the reality of being here at [this university].*

*So when I do get to be taught by a Latine professor, I cherish that class because I think as*

*a student of color at a PwI it's a lot, so I can only imagine how much it is on the professor*

*given that the majority of professors here are white. – Alyssa*

Alyssa is not the only student who recognizes the double-edged sword that it is to be a

faculty or staff member of color at a PwI. Although you are in theory filling a gap, you are also

risking putting yourself in an equally uncomfortable situation as students of color experience.

That is what partially leads to some staff of color internalizing harmful messages and reifying

them when interacting with students of color. Kevin is very invested in researching the political

landscapes of Latin American countries and his advisor had gotten him connected with a Latine

professor on campus that shared similar research interests.

*I was super excited because I was like, 'oh I'm finally going to find someone who's going*

*to understand'. I had all of these big ideas. The meeting came along and it was five*

*minutes. She was super uninterested and didn't seem like she wanted to hear anything*

*about it. She kept saying 'just let me know if you need anything' … It was kind of like a*

*gut punch because I was expecting a one hour meeting where she'd ask me questions but*

*she didn't care… There was an instructor here who's from [a university in Mexico], like*

*she did university there and all of that. So I emailed her because I met her at the [campus*

*event], no response… My perception with most Latine professors has not been positive*

*except for [Dr. X] … Sometimes I think when people become academics they become a*

*little bit elitist at times because academic elitism exists. So I mean, I don't blame them but*

*it really hurts me. – Kevin*

Academic elitism is an issue in higher education that is commonly experienced more by underrepresented students due to their identities that push back against the white norms of academia. Although this professor may have been over inundated with other tasks, what felt like a gut punch for the student was the way in which the professor communicated with them, or rather the lack of. Students not only recognize what they need in terms of support, they're also mindful of the contexts that prevent universities from having more diverse faculty and staff, as well as noting that a similarity in ethnic makeup doesn't always lead to an automatic connection. This is a complex population of students with complex, yet feasible needs that can be met.

**Need for First-Generation and Latine Resources**

Throughout the conversations had with students, each one of them had direct asks of the university for ways they can be better supported or how the university can better support incoming first-generation, Latine students. In the following sections these responses are categorized based on what was most frequently asked of the university.

*"It Comes Down to Getting My Basic Needs Met" – Angel*

*Pushing for more mental health support systems. That'll pull Latine, first-gen, and low income students to address and share their high levels of emotional distress. I think that's something that we carry a lot throughout college and it's like, how much can you handle before it breaks you? … it comes down to getting my basic needs met, which isn't always possible. - Angel*

Although the students recognize that they're fortunate to have counseling services available for free at their institution, they resonate with Angel's recommendation that the services currently provided need to be improved upon. At the time of this study at this institution, there is one staff therapist for every 1,000 students; this includes both undergraduate and graduate students. In hiring more staff therapists the counseling center will be able to serve more students and contribute to them receiving holistic forms of support. Holistic support for underrepresented students via mental health counseling is especially important because of the unique experiences they have.

> *I've come to realize throughout my time here that I've been through some traumatic things that I didn't really think about before I got here. And that impacts how I interact with people, that impacts how I bond with people; just acknowledging that we all come from a place where opportunities aren't always given to us, where we may feel like we have to prove ourselves in this space. And on top of that, dealing with different trauma you went through whether your father wasn't there for you, your mother wasn't there for you. – Christopher*

Christopher reminds us that our underrepresented students not only bring with them a wealth of knowledge, but an inordinate amount of trauma with them as well due to their intersecting identities. While the institution works towards strengthening their CAPS, students have to rely on each other to receive this support.

*No wonder we connect, at that point we were all trauma bonding with each other. 'This*

*was happening to me, oh, that happened to me too'. And we were all laughing, not*

*because it was funny, but because we were going through the same thing when we didn't*

*know it. And if only we told each other, we could have really been there for each other.*

*But we're thankful not because whenever we do go through something that the institution*

*causes us to go through, we immediately go and share with each other. – Alyssa*

Although Alyssa mentions that she has now found a community that she can go to for support in this aspect, truthfully she shouldn't have to. No student should have to create support systems all while juggling being a full-time student, part-time employee, and full-time human being. It's not a sustainable way of being, which is why these supports need to be improved upon. Admittedly there will inevitably still be students that do not utilize these supports, but not because they're not needed.

*They referred me to counseling which was like 'okay, sure I probably do need it', but not*

*at this moment in my life when I'm not even registered for classes. – Lizbeth*

At the time, Lizbeth was having issues finding a way to pay for the semester which had led to a temporary hold on her student account creating a barrier for her to register for courses.

*I've attempted a few times to get mental support from [CAPS], but it would occur when*

*I'm deep into coursework. So it's either I don't have the time, I forget, or I'm already*

*drained throughout the week to set up a time to seek extra support. – Angel*

When Angel isn't in classes, he's working at his part-time job on campus to help alleviate the financial burden from his parents' shoulders. His free time is virtually nonexistent. In Angel and Lizbeth's cases, this is not an indicator that more attention shouldn't be given to CAPS, but that there are multiple factors at play that prevent students from accessing these resources, one of them being financial stress.

*"It's a Constant Battle" – Nicholas*

> *I still don't think I understand tax documents myself. So it was like, 'alright, how do I do it?' And then you have the pressure from knowing that you can't mess it up because my parents can't pay 70K a year. There's this looming threat that if you mess it up it's the difference between you getting 30-40K in grants and scholarships or getting 20K. - Kevin*

Being a first-generation student, Kevin, along with the rest of these students, still struggles to understand the intricacies of completing FAFSA every year. He'd rather turn to the Financial Aid Office, but unfortunately these students have not had the best experiences with them.

> *I guess they're busy and I understand that, but I just kind of wish I knew when things are going to be taken care of. I think that [this university] can do a little bit better… I do expect more from [the university] with that. – Susanna*

Susanna is in her third year and still stresses out every time FAFSA comes around because she doesn't receive the support she would like around this process. It either doesn't

come in time or it causes her more stress than she's already experiencing in trying to navigate this process as a first-generation student.

> *It's a constant battle of having to send information and communicate with both [the Financial Aid Office and the Bursar's Office] because they request a lot of information. And I understand that they need this information in order for us to gain financial support, but sometimes it's just constant. Right now my sister has a balance of $1,000 and that may not seem like a lot to someone else, but to us it's a lot of money and I've been helping her since winter break, having to communicate with financial aid, having to make an appeal, going through all of these processes that I know dang well others don't. Other students don't even know where the Financial Aid Office is. – Nicholas*

Nicholas already had a difficult time navigating financial aid and that only got exacerbated when his sister started attending the same university. Oddly enough, the issues they experience with financial aid are different despite coming from the same household with the same family income. In an ideal world, Nicholas and other students wouldn't have to rely on each other for support on completing FAFSA or navigating financial aid in general, but until then, they do.

> *It's time consuming, to say the least, having to go back and forth. Having to say, 'oh what is it that you needed?' And to be honest, it was more of a live and learn process and I just had to deal with it myself. Once I found out how to do it I made sure that when my sister came I told her exactly what she needed to do… I now do it with my sister and my best friend. We all do it together… I definitely think I'm gonna still have these battles with the*

*Bursar's Office and Financial Aid Office and now that I'm going into grad school, I don't*

*like it. I hate it. Being on the phone, the wait times; this stuff already hurts my head just*

*thinking about it. – Nicholas*

It's evident that some needs first-generation, Latine students have are also needs that all college students have, but there are a myriad of needs that are first-generation-specific that the participants give suggestions for in the following section.

*"Everything is on You to Succeed" – Christopher*

*I think people don't understand sometimes what goes on in the first-generation college*

*experience… As I mentioned, my dad didn't finish middle school in Mexico and my mom*

*just finished high school in the U.S. My support system at that moment, which were my*

*parents, couldn't really help me with a lot of the questions I had. I came here being the*

*first in my family to attend a higher education institution and it became a thing where it*

*was like, okay, I have to navigate this myself which was something I hadn't really done*

*before… I'd have to understand it **and** also transmit it to my parents in a way where they*

*could understand it too… It was like being thrown into being an adult right away. – Kevin*

At 18 years old, Kevin and other first-generation students are forced to mature much faster than other students. Whereas other students may have family members to rely on to receive answers to their questions, these students only have themselves and the community they find when they arrive on campus.

*It really comes down to you making those connections. It's on me to go talk to my classmates and make friends with them. It's on me to go to office hours. It's on me to do what successful students do to achieve success in classes… The thing is that there's barriers to me doing all of that when I also have to worry about other responsibilities such as working a job to sustain myself here… How do I manage working and being a student? How do I manage being a friggin' full blown adult at 18? How do I manage figuring out what I want to do with my life? What's gonna make me the most money, but also, what do I like to do? And these things you put on to an 18 year old? You may give them the tools but how the hell am I gonna get there? I don't have someone to look up to, to talk to, because my family is busy working or they haven't had those same experiences. It's not like they can tell me to do this and that's how I'll succeed. Everything is on you to succeed… It's even more drastic when you come from a background like myself, where historically we've had those kinds of disadvantages. – Christopher*

Christopher is the oldest in his family and with that comes an added level of responsibility that tacks on additional stress. These are external factors that impact his academic performance but are not seen on the surface to those who aren't first-generation and/or Latine. For those who aren't familiar with the unique experiences of this population, it's difficult to create resources and therefore know how to best support these students. What these students are suggesting is a space dedicated to first-generation students to assist in struggles experienced outside of the classroom.

*I genuinely feel like there should be at least a room… It would create a safe space for people. Maybe they would understand our struggles more. – Jennifer*

Whether it's a dedicated physical space or a weekly talking circle, what Jennifer is recommending is simply a space where her and her peers can verbalize what they're carrying on their shoulders so as to relieve themselves of its pressures.

*Having some type of monthly thing where we can see familiar faces, especially in a place where you don't see a lot of familiar faces just really changes everything. It creates a space where you can talk about how shitty classes are, how shitty a professor is, and how you're going through all of these extra things... I need a space that is going to give me comfort. – Delia*

The founder of a student organization, this is precisely why Delia created her club. She wanted a space where she could meet more students like herself and openly talk about all of the things that she carries on a daily basis.

*I feel like even just having this conversation with you is very helpful. It doesn't necessarily have to be someone with a psychology degree trying to tell me what I have and what I don't have. Just someone to hear us, to know that there's students out there struggling. – Lizbeth*

At the end of the day, what these students are yearning for is to be heard according to Lizbeth.

*"The Only Problem is it's Far Away" – Kevin*

*We're all eating food, no one's hiding their slang or how they talk. We're talking about either something pretty important or we're just relaxing. It's laid back. And those are the moments I cherish a lot. - Leo*

What Leo describes here is a program he's had the fortune of being a part of since he started at this university. This program was made specifically for students of color, providing them with professional development opportunities, networking opportunities, as well as a well-established community. However programs like these typically require an application along with a whole process to join.

*I feel like a lot of resources are kind of hidden or it takes a lot of applications to get in and I wish there were less barriers. – Susanna*

Although Susanna sees the value in selective programs, it frustrates her that in the selectivity it excludes students who are very much still in need of those same resources. If it's not an application getting in the way of accessing support, then it's lack of visibility.

*I think this university can do a better job of connecting students of color to readily available resources. I know we obviously have engagement fairs and things of that nature, but there's still a lot of students having to go out and find these resources for themselves… I just hope to see the university implement more ways to get these resources in students' faces rather than having these students have to get lucky or meet the right people. – Max*

This is coming from a student who had help from his older brother in getting into support programs straight out of the gate. Max has been a part of said selective programs his entire college career and sees the fault within offering solely these types of programs. Thankfully at this university there is a cultural center for Latine students, the tricky part is that it's not located on campus.

*I know there's [the cultural center] and I've been there a few times, the only problem is it's far away. So I haven't utilized it as much as I wish I did. – Kevin*

The cultural center Kevin talks about is 2 miles away from the university, not within walking distance and not easily accessible to get to via public transportation past certain hours. The center is used more as a bridge to the broader, local community, leaving the students virtually without a space to call their own. A number of the students have a history of volunteering and attending events at this space, but they don't feel a connection to it in the same ways other underrepresented students do to their on-campus cultural centers. Students yearn for a space that they can stop by in between classes, catch up with friends at, and further strengthen their sense of community.

**Summary**

What students ask for is not unattainable. They are not unrealistic requests. They are not outside of the parameters of what other populations of students seek and/or already receive. From the stories shared by students, it's clear that there has been a need for these resources for quite some time. The issues that have been highlighted in this chapter are not new and pre-date the participants enrollment at this university therefore there's an elevated need for the implementation and re-assessment of these resources. What these students ask for is an

improvement on mental health services, more accessible financial aid resources, first-generation-specific supports that are culturally relevant, and a more accessible physical space to further foster community. The following chapter aims to affirm the students' needs through relevant existing literature, provide recommendations for the institution, and discuss limitations of this study.

## Chapter 6 – La Discusión y Conclusión

The stories the students willingly shared were so that we as researchers and practitioners in the field of education may learn from their lived experiences. Although the initial premise of this study was holistic support, the stories shared ranged in topics from families to intrinsic motivation to their perceptiveness. Arguably the expansion of these topics still falls in line with holistic support approaches as we recognize that students are the sum of their parts and need to be supported as such. Students are at all times a sibling, a friend, a leader, a human being. In keeping that at the forefront of our minds, it allows us as educators/administrators/practitioners to support our students in a holistic manner that attends to the variety of roles they hold and their intersecting identities. Within this chapter I will present overarching themes that emerged from the 13 interviews that were conducted, limitations of this study, and recommendations for Predominantly white Institutions.

## Overarching Themes

*Familia Sobre Todo*

Family was a central theme throughout all of the students' interviews. Their families are a part of some of their first college memories; being there to celebrate their college acceptances, stuffing the car to the brim with moving boxes and suitcases, driving/flying with them to move into their dorm. When the day came to hug and kiss their families for the last time before Thanksgiving break, students, including myself, didn't realize how hard it would be to say goodbye. Which is why it was never a goodbye. Later that day we'd call to ask if they could mail us that one sweater we forgot because we didn't realize how cold it would be here. During that first week of the semester we'd FaceTime them to show them what campus looked like with students all around. Throughout our four years here we'd make weekly, sometimes daily, phone

calls to our mom/dad/sister/brother/tía/tío/primo. Sometimes these phone calls would be us telling them mundane things like what we ate for breakfast. Other times these phone calls would be about everything we felt we couldn't tell them, like that test we failed that we thought we'd for sure pass.

And then there'd come a random weekend where the weather is oddly nice in October and you'd realize home is only a few hours away by car. So you decide to make the drive back home even though Thanksgiving break is a month away because the weather is nice and you'd rather be enjoying the sunshine surrounded by the smells of your mama's cooking instead of dining hall food. For those of us who aren't within driving distance from home, this might look like hopping on the phone with family and staying on the phone for hours as you each do your own thing, but together. During those hours long phone call you're folding laundry as your papa tells you about what's happened throughout his week.

It's within these small moments that we realize how central family has been throughout our time here. Our families might not be able to help us with our class presentations or figure out our calculus homework, but they provide us with a type of support that the university never could. Then there are students who are fortunate enough to have their sibling(s) attend the same university as them or attend college at the same time as them and they're able to provide that academic support too. Their sibling is there to listen to their rant about how stressed they are over their upcoming exam and receive a certain level of understanding that is not accessible by other family members who don't have a higher education background. They understand that it's not "just some class". They are able to empathize with their sibling and provide that empathy back. That added level of understanding creates a sense of support that is integral for first-generation, Latine students who benefit from the reminder that *all* students struggle with classes,

not just us. This is why it's so difficult when we come from torn families. We see the relationships that other students get to have with their families and yearn for those hours long phone calls and homes to drive four hours to. For those of us who don't have those families, we rely on campus resources to fill that void.

*Students Take Initiative (But They Shouldn't Have to)*

This study and researcher were fortunate enough to garner a sample group of nearly all student leaders. Although this was unintentional, seeing as how being a student leader was not a part of the eligibility criteria, it made me realize that I was not alone in the way I approached seeking support as a college student. For first-generation, Latine students, resources feel abundant when it comes to meeting academic needs, but there's a lot left to be desired outside of that scope. We might have access to tutoring services that help bump our grade up from a C to a B, but what we don't have is a space that makes us feel at home. For students who home is such a key tenet to our being, to not have a space that mimics that can make campus feel that much more lonely (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Museus & Chang, 2021; Takimoto et al., 2021). So, we give the university the benefit of the doubt at first. We wait until the clubs fair rolls around to see what they have to offer in terms of cultural support. We walk around campus to hopefully stumble across a cultural center or office. We sit through our first week of classes in hopes of seeing a Latine professor. But none of those things happen. You're wrapping up your first semester in college and have yet to find a space that you can call home. You see classmates around you start to find places to call their own, faculty to lean on, people that have become *their* people. You start to wonder if there's any other first-generation, Latine students here or if you're one of a few.

So you do what you've been raised to do: solve your own problems. You learn about the process of creating a student organization. You talk to the 3-4 other first-generation, Latine students you've been able to find and you all decide it's time to create the spaces you've been looking for. The first club meeting rolls around and you all anxiously wait to see if anyone will show up. It's five minutes past the hour and there's maybe three other students; three is more than you expected so you're already filled with excitement. Then more slowly walk in and soon enough the room is full of 30+ students. For the first time since being at this PwI you look around the room and see nothing but brown skin, curly hair, and the sounds of Spanish filling the air. It might've taken a semester (or more), but you have finally found that sense of home you've been searching for.

Creating that sense of home through student organizations fills you with a sense of fulfillment as much as it does exhaustion. Because as you were completing the paperwork to establish this new club, you were also going to your five classes, working ten hours at your part-time job, and making daily phone calls to your family. You have cultivated this sense of home that you were yearning for, but now you're realizing that you shouldn't have had to do this work in the first place. In an ideal world these resources would have already existed, or at the very least you would have had help from faculty and staff. Therein lies another issue, you didn't get help from staff because there's not much Latine staff to begin with.

*Students Are More Perceptive Than You Think*

We don't give our undergraduate students enough credit for how much they know coming into college. First-generation, Latine students are often viewed through a deficit-based lens (Fonesca-Bolorin, 2022; Leo & Wilcox, 2023; Reyes & Duran, 2021) meaning we focus on all of the things they lack rather than celebrating the different types of knowledge they bring to the

table. However, what this study demonstrated over and over again is that these students are rich in cultural capital (Yosso, 2005) which aids in their critical thinking skills. When these students took it upon themselves to create their own supports, they were aware that receiving support from Latine faculty and staff would alleviate some of the burden on them. What these students were also aware of was the burdens that Latine staff already carry with them. For the participants who did get a chance to be taught by a Latine professor or have positive encounters with Latine staff, the students quickly became aware of how difficult it is to exist at a PwI as a Latine person. Whether you're a student, faculty, or staff member, you are not immune to experiencing micro/macroaggressions, especially at a PwI (Fernandez et al., 2023; Martinez et al., 2017; Zambrana et al., 2016). These experiences are a real possibility for all of us.

For the students, it was difficult for them to fully admit/accept that a need for them was more diverse faculty and staff because they recognized that in some ways it was unfair to ask another marginalized body to exist on a campus that could be violent to them, having personally experienced it themselves. Even when students were given the space to think big and ask for anything at all, they still managed to be mindful of how their imagined requests could impact others. That is the reality of working with first-generation, Latine students, they are never not taking into consideration how their decisions may impact their communities. After all, community is the main factor that pushes them towards completing their degrees.

*Motivation Spans Academic Achievement*

These students attributed many things to their academic success such as tutoring centers, recitation sessions, office hours, but the biggest motivator for them wasn't obtaining a 4.0 GPA or even completing their degree. What keeps these students, and myself, motivated to push through the adversities within higher education is much deeper than a diploma (Ojeda &

Navarro, 2011; Trevino & DeFreitas, 2014). When students shared what success meant for them, not a single one of them equated success with completing their bachelor's degree.

> *I've never really been asked to define what success is to me… I think that to me it's just the journey of it all… sometimes failing and getting myself back up is also success. – Alyssa*

> *I think success is shaped by your gratitude which comes from the ways that my family has struggled. My dad left during the Civil War and he tells me stuff he's seen… they always bring me back down to earth whenever I feel bad about something. They say, look at what you have. – Jennifer*

> *You know those times when you're in your room and you're thinking of your dreams and everything's coming together… I see my dad at my graduation. I'm walking the stage, they're calling my name and I have the same name as him. Just seeing him see me graduate. – Kevin*

> *I think success for me is thriving… Success is not having to worry about things, which has been a big part of my life. – Esther*

> *This is my version of happiness: my family is healthy, I'm healthy, I'm not stressed financially. And I hope to retire my parents. That would be a major success point in my life. – Leo*

*To be happy. I feel like that's all I can do at the end of the day… I hope to have a life with people that I love around me and to be able to sustain that. – Delia*

*I define success as just finding fulfillment and being happy. A lot of time being in these business classes, they define success as making the most money or maintaining the most connections, but I've always viewed business as a means to an end. – Max*

*Success is being happy, more specifically for me, I want to get my degree to have a nice house and be able to help my parents and my sister. – Susanna*

*Oh man, I think it's the fact that being first-gen means you're the only person in your family to go to college and maybe to others you don't have to go to college, you can do something else, but unfortunately that is not the way a first-gen thinks. They think that they need to be here, this needs to be done because you need to help out your family… I can't wait to see my family once they see what my sister and I have done. That's what keeps me here. – Nicholas*

*It used to be holding onto a decent GPA. I was gradually losing that and as the semesters came and went it became more about being able to accomplish smaller hobbies, you know? Outside of engineering, outside of school. – Angel*

*I understand that money's important but at the end of the day I also want to be doing something I like and I think that took a while for me to learn because of what was pushed onto me from so young… I realized that it's not about just having a title but doing something you want to do. – Christopher*

*I think at this point in life, success looks like being alive and graduating… When I go back home, high school classmates tell me that they're proud of me, people that I haven't even talked to since high school… Sometimes it makes me wonder if all that I've been through is worth it. – Lizbeth*

*Success is healing those around me… and healing myself after everything and being in that type of peace… If I can be at peace with myself, and I can help others be at peace, I would say that is success to me. – Maria*

**Limitations**

This study aimed to capture the experiences of first-generation, Latine undergraduate students at a PwI. The study consisted of 13 in-person interviews which contained some limitations. Starting with the recruitment process of participants; fliers were distributed via email to campus offices and student organizations solely. Although this bolstered responses quickly, it meant that students who did not use these resources or were a part of these organizations were less likely to be aware of this study. The campus resources I targeted for recruitment were primarily for Latine students, not considering AfroLatine students that could be found through Black student organizations. Moreover, because I recruited primarily through campus resources, nearly all of the participants were student leaders in said resources or organizations. These

students are then more likely to be familiar with different campus resources because of their role as student leaders. This study is skewed by the perspective of students who are more aware of what's available.

The design of the study was in-person, 60-90-minute-long interviews. The premise behind solely offering these interviews in-person was to create rapport with the students easier, but in doing so this created an unintentional barrier to students who could not participate in an in-person interview. Due to time constraints of this study, the amount and depth of data collected could have been more substantial if multiple interviews were offered and/or longer interviews. The aim of this study was to capture a diverse set of experiences which was successfully done in some ways, but in other ways it was not. Despite recruiting participants from a wide range of Latine student organizations, there still remained an uneven distribution of ethnicities, class standings, and socioeconomic backgrounds. This study did not capture perspectives from any first-year students, perhaps because the recruitment process involved reaching out to resources that first-year students may not be familiar with yet. In regards to the ethnic breakdown, as seen on table 2, the participants largely self-identified as Mexican therefore this study is not representative of all Latine ethnicities.

**Recommendations**

**Research question 1: What does it look like to situate Latine undergraduate students as the knowledge producers when asking them how Predominantly white Institutions can better serve them in holistic ways?**

Research question 1 largely guided this dissertation study. It informed every aspect of this research because I aimed to design a study that consistently centered the students. From the design of interview questions which took into consideration possible retraumatization that could

be caused to intentionally choosing an in-person interview protocol to aid in establishing good rapport. From the recruitment process allowing students full autonomy over whether they self-identified as first-generation and Latine to following a semi-structured interview to allow students to choose which questions they wanted to answer. Then having the last question of the interview protocol be one where they could openly ask me any question they had. From start to finish, in every step of this process, I tried my best to stay true to the premise of this study: how do we center Latine students as the knowledge producers? This dissertation not only provides the answer to this research question, but the dissertation itself is also part of the answer. It provides a sort of roadmap for what research studies can look like when the researcher intentionally centers the participants' voices. I continue to answer this research question by providing recommendations in the following section that stem solely from the students' testimonios on what holistic support can look like.

*For Predominantly white Institution's*

*Reassess and/or Restructure Financial Aid Resources*

Based on the number of negative encounters participants named with the Office of Financial Aid and the Bursar's Office, I recommend to Predominantly white Institutions (PwI's) that they reassess their office practices and ways they interact with students, particularly underrepresented students. Reassessment is recommended to start with asking students what can be improved upon before seeking feedback from staff or administrators. This is not to invalidate their opinions, but more so to center the lived experiences of students who have had countless negative encounters with these institutional spaces. There is a recommendation that current staff perhaps take part in additional training that may aid in making them more culturally aware and sensitive to the needs of underrepresented students; while also recognizing that more diversity,

equity, and inclusion training isn't meant to be a band aid solution but one to build off of. These offices also need to work towards diversifying their staff which is not meant to then shift the responsibility of this work solely onto staff of color but to add to the number of staff that can personally relate to these students' stories.

*Reassess and/or Restructure CAPS & Disability Resources*

Given the number of students who shared negative encounters with Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) and disability resources, there is room for improvement in both of these spaces. The main recommendation given here is the need to hire more staff overall. Considering how uneven the ratio of staff therapists to students is, Blizzard University (BU) is being recommended to prioritize funding these two resources so that they are better equipped to serve all students, not just underrepresented students. In hiring more staff, students ask that more diverse staff therapists are also hired so as, again, to provide students with people that can more easily relate and understand their lived experiences. Students seek disability resources that are just as plentiful and more easily accessible which is not the case currently due to low staff and predominantly white staff members. For the current white staff members in both of these spaces, it's recommended that they become more familiar with the unique obstacles underrepresented students experience in these contexts and ways in which their marginalized identities amplify certain obstacles unlike their white counterparts. Through further professional development for white staff members, they will hopefully be better equipped to support underrepresented students in the ways they need. In better preparing staff, diversifying, and hiring more staff in both spaces this will ideally lead to more use from underrepresented students and better overall experiences for all.

*Create and/or Expand First-Generation-Specific Resources*

These first-generation, Latine students named the need for first-generation-specific resources, calling our attention to already existing programs such as TRIO[17]. For some of our participants, they have had the pleasure of being involved in said state programs, however these programs are federally funded and therefore are limited in how many students they can serve. Students within and outside of these programs ask that the university consider creating similar resources for first-generation students that provides them personalized support in relation to their identity of being first-generation, ideally by staff who also identify as first-generation. Alongside the creation of this potential support, students ask that the university make active efforts to host more first-generation-specific events and programming. Universities across the country already have week-long programming for First-Generation College Celebration[18] which the participants cited as having positive experiences with that programming, but they want events that go beyond just that one week in the fall semester. They want more regularly scheduled opportunities to connect with other first-generation students and staff. They want to see themselves more readily reflected in the campus population.

*Create On-Campus Latine Cultural Center*

At BU a Latine cultural center already exists, however the problem named by the students is that it is located off-campus and is less for students and more for the community. With the cultural center being off-campus and not within walking distance, the students find it difficult to take full advantage of this space as it was originally intended to be. On top of that, students

---

[17] TRIO is a group of 8 federally funded programs that are aimed to support disadvantaged students, specifically targeting low-income, first-generation, and disabled students.

[18] First-Generation College Celebration (FGCC) is a nationally recognized celebration that annually takes place on November 8 in recognition of President Lyndon B. Johnson signing the Higher Education Act in 1965. Through this act federally funded programs were created to support students' education.

view this current center as a bridge between the university and the community rather than a space dedicated to the development of the students' sense of belonging. Many of the participants regularly volunteer at this cultural center, being heavily involved with the youth afterschool programs, and see the benefit of this space existing. What the students ask for is a separate space, located on-campus, that is just for students; similar to the cultural spaces already established for other marginalized groups.

*Raise Institutional Support for Cultural Student Organizations*

A throughline of this study was the unintentional, heavy representation of student leaders. Nearly all of these students who participated in this study were either a founding member or executive board member of one or more cultural student organizations. They named multiple times the sense of responsibility to create these spaces for themselves and their peers, feeling a great sense of fulfillment being in these leadership positions. However, there is a cycle that emerges from these cultural student organizations. The cycle is that students enter their respective university, see a gap in support, create clubs in an attempt to fill that gap, and once they graduate these organizations slowly dismantle. Their founding members are no longer students at the university and more often than not younger students could not be identified to carry on the torch. A final recommendation for BU is to provide institutional support for these cultural student organizations to aid in their sustainability. Institutional support may look like base funding being funneled into these student organizations, perhaps having the organizational faculty/staff liaisons assist more in locating new board members before the current one's graduate, and having administrators engage more the organizations to communicate to the campus the value of cultural student organizations and bring further recognition of them. As already named, these students take on an insurmountable burden when (re)creating these

supports, so to be able to receive institutional support that allows the continuation of these organizations will lessen the burden of these students. It will also communicate to the students that the institution is invested in the success of underrepresented students because of the sustainability of these organizations geared towards supporting them.

These recommendations were easy to conceptualize in large part thanks to the students whose testimonios centered institutional and systemic oppression. Their interviews mainly focused on systemic issues rather than isolated incidents which allowed me to reach these institutional recommendations.

*For Further Study & Research*

Due to the study's limitations and this being the first iteration of this study, there are a few recommendations for those who wish to expand upon this research and for my own future work as well. The goal of this study overall was really to continue a conversation around how to best support underrepresented students, specifically first-generation, Latine students. This conversation will continue to be added to by myself and I imagine other students who feel drawn to advocating for younger generations in hopes that they don't have as many negative experiences as we did during our time in college. In future expansions of this study, I believe it would be worthwhile to expand the number of participants to collect a more diverse set of experiences given that the ethnic groups and age ranges were limited. I imagine that recreating this study with multiple sets of interviews rather than just one would also yield more information. I wonder what a longitudinal study would look like if students were interviewed after their first year of college and then during their final semester of college. In future renditions of this study the researcher would also ideally have a more dynamic recruitment process to

ensure that a more diverse pool was pulled that would provide a better glimpse into Latine undergraduate students.

Although this study was cognizant of the complex history behind the key terminology used (i.e. first-generation, holistic, Latine), there is value in conducting future studies that further analyze these terms individually. Given that these terms carry such different meaning to each person, it would be an interesting project to explore what these terms mean to each person and why it is they self-identify with either or term. Despite this study having focused on undergraduate experiences, this was not intended to assume that similar issues do not persist in graduate studies. In conducting this study with graduate students researchers will be able to add to the growing, existing literature on Latine graduate student experiences (Espino, 2014; Trent et al., 2021; Ramirez, 2017). Through this we as researchers may also be able to assess how student support differs for different levels of study in the U.S. This study did not include any international students, this was not intentional, but if this study were to be replicated that may be another route to take seeing as how there are campus resources available specifically for international students.

Lastly, in my own expansion of this research I aim to continue to do hands-on research with underrepresented undergraduate students to continue to seek ways to better support them at the institutional level. My professional work deals with this population of students therefore I already do this work on a daily basis which is a motivator for me. As I complete this doctoral degree I must remind myself to keep up with current research in order to be the best advocate possible for my students. In continuing to conduct research I will also be able to grow in my communication style with my students to ensure that I am actively listening to them and

implementing their suggestions in the work we do together. This work is done in unison with one another after all.

There is value in this work having been done. This work was not simply done to complete my doctoral degree, it was done because I recognized there was a need for it. This recognition was validated by the students through final remarks they shared.

*It's very nice to hear from someone who's on the other side of this. It's nice to hear that you're now doing this study for students like me. I guess it's nice knowing that there's people out there that care. – Maria*

*It was emotional for sure, like even thinking about it I tear up, but it was nice talking to someone about this. It was oddly therapeutic, a reflection of everything. – Kevin*

*I really wanted to say thank you for allowing me to share this information. I really hope that you find a way to help kids like me because it is very, very stressful. I'm severely underrepresented, without a doubt. I hope you get to make sure that we get our voices heard. – Nicholas*

**Closing Statement**

This study aimed to answer three research questions presented in the beginning chapters of this dissertation:

1. What does it look like to situate Latine undergraduate students as the knowledge producers when asking them how Predominantly white Institutions can better serve them in holistic ways?

2. In what ways are first-generation, Latine students receiving, or not receiving, meaningful holistic support in higher education?

3. What does/should holistic support in higher education look like according to Latine undergraduate students?

At the end of this dissertation, through the voices of 13 first-generation, Latine undergraduate students, I believe we have collectively answered these questions and more. We have provided a plethora of excerpts from our personal lived experiences through testimonios in hopes of communicating to Predominantly white Institutions how to better support us through the already existing resources and ones they should consider implementing. This dissertation was a demonstration of strength, courage, fear, and trauma. Although I do not advocate for the narrative that we should praise and expect underrepresented students to be resilient, these stories that were carefully entrusted to me reminded me how strong our students are. We will never fully know all of the battles they are fighting silently and that is not our goal as educators. The goal as responsible educators is to make ourselves available and provide them with the necessary resources to feel heard and cared for and comfortable enough to share if they so choose.

*Education is an act of love, and thus an act of courage. – Paulo Freire*

## Appendix A – Informed Consent Form

████████████████████████         ███████████

**Protocol Title: Las Voces Poderosas: Valuing Latine Undergraduate Perspectives When Re-Assessing Student Supports at Predominantly White Institutions**

Dr. Gretchen Lopez (she/her/hers) will be the Principal Investigator for this research project in partial completion of Cassaundra Guzman's (she/her/hers) doctoral degree. Dr. Lopez is a faculty member in the Cultural Foundations of Education department, whereas Cassaundra is a doctoral student. To contact Dr. Lopez please email her at ████████████. To contact Cassaundra Guzman please email her at ████████████.

**Introduction:**

The purpose of this form is to provide you with information about participation in a research study and offer you the opportunity to decide whether you wish to participate. You can take as much time as you wish to decide and can ask any questions you may have now, during or after the research is complete. Your participation is voluntary.

**What is the purpose for this research study?**

This proposed research project will inevitably help predominantly white institutions to better comprehend how to holistically support first-generation, Latine undergraduate students attending said institutions. This work will fill in gaps within current academic work that highlights how institutions support this student population. Currently higher education excels in supporting students academically by providing them with academic advisors, faculty members, tutoring centers, and other support systems. However, there is a gap in where students can seek and receive non-academic support within higher education. During the global pandemic specifically, it became apparent how needed these holistic supports were needed. As we return to traditional ways of learning institutions are recognizing that said gap exists, yet there is not enough existing literature on what this may look like. This research will demonstrate that not only is there a gap in support but there is also a great need for this prioritization before and now after this global pandemic.

**What will I be asked to do?**

Participants will be first-generation Latine undergraduate students. They will be taking part in 60 to 90-minute-long interviews that will occur one-on-one between myself and the student. These students will be answering pre-determined questions during these one-on-one interviews which will take place solely in person in a secured, private area to ensure confidentiality.

**What are the possible risks of participation in this research study?**

Some potential risks to the participants may include emotional re-traumatization due to the sensitive subject matter that will be discussed during the interviews. Participants will be revisiting situations and memories that they may not be fond of. As well as possibly negative backlash from the campus community dependent on how they view the premise of this research project.

**What are the possible benefits of participation in this research study?**

████████████████████████

1

The ways participants may benefit are the ability to name and fully understand what they've experienced on a predominantly white campus, the knowledge that they are supported emotionally and otherwise, and that there is work actively being done to ensure better experiences for their peers. The ways society at large may benefit are the addition of this much-needed research and the access to information that supports this student population that will assist in further support within higher education.

**How will my privacy be protected?**

- Data will be stored on an external hard drive that is password protected in a secured home office. Dr. Gretchen Lopez and Cassaundra Guzman will have direct access to said data.

- Because this research will be conducted in a library setting, there are limitations to the protection of your privacy and the confidentiality of the data collected.

**How will my data be maintained to ensure confidentiality?**

- Data collected will be coded and each participant will be given a pseudonym to protect confidentiality. The coding key will be available to Dr. Gretchen Lopez and Cassaundra Guzman.

**Will photographs, audio, video, or film recording be used?**

- I understand the interview will be audio recorded. ☐ Yes ☐ No

**What are my rights as a research participant?**
- Your participation is voluntary.
- You may skip and/or refuse to answer any question for any reason.
- You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time without penalty.

**Whom may I contact with questions now, during, or after the research is complete?**

- For questions, concerns or more information regarding this research you may contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Gretchen Lopez, at ████████████ or Cassaundra Guzman at ████████████.

- If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the ████████████████████████████████

All of my questions have been answered, I am 18 years of age or older, and by signing this consent form, I agree to participate in this research study. I have received a copy of this form for my personal records.

-------------------------------------------------------------  Date: _____
**Printed Name of the Participant**

_____
**Signature of the Participant**


-------------------------------------------------------------  Date: _____
**Printed Name of the Researcher**

_____
**Signature of the Researcher**

2

**Appendix B – Recruitment Email Template**

Good afternoon, [University Office/Student Organization]!

My name is Cassie Guzman and I am a doctoral candidate in Cultural Foundations of Ed. here at Syracuse University. I am reaching out because I am beginning my study and would love your help & participation!

My study aims to look at how [Blizzard] University can better support first-gen, Latine undergraduate students. Through my findings I hope to be to communicate to the university the various ways they can improve in hopes of raising the retention & success rates of Latine students.

If you are interested, **please complete the form linked here**. If you would like to spread the word, please share the attached flyer.

I have CC'd [NAME], your Advisor, to ensure all communication is transparent. Thank you in advance for your participation and/or help in promoting this study.

*Con cariño,*
*CVG*

**Appendix C – Recruitment Flyer**

RESEARCH QUESTION: HOW CAN ███████████████ BETTER
SUPPORT FIRST-GEN, LATINE UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS?

*first-generation: your parents or guardians did
not complete a 4-year college/univ. degree*

# SEEKING FIRST-GEN, LATINE
# STUDENTS BETWEEN 18-22 YEARS OLD
# FOR 60 TO 90-MIN INTERVIEWS

IF INTERESTED CONTACT CASSAUNDRA GUZMAN

███████████████

SCAN THE QR CODE TO FILL OUT INTEREST FORM

I AM A PHD CANDIDATE WHO IDENTIFIES AS A
FIRST-GEN, LATINE STUDENT.
OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL I SPEND TIME FINDING THE
BEST PLACES TO EAT IN CNY!

ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS WILL TAKE PLACE ON CAMPUS
AT ███████████ AND AUDIO WILL BE RECORDED

*INFORMATION WILL BE COLLECTED IN PARTIAL COMPLETION OF A PHD IN
CULTURAL FOUNDATIONS OF EDUCATION*

**Bibliography**

Abes, E. S., Jones, S. R. & McEwen, M. K. (2007). Reconceptualizing the Model of Multiple

    Dimensions of Identity: The Role of Meaning-Making Capacity in the Construction of

    Multiple Identities. *Journal of College Student Development*, 48 (1), pp. 1-22.

Anderson, G. L. (1989). Critical Ethnography in Education: Origins, Current Status, and New

    Directions. *Review of Educational Research,* 59(3), pp. 249-270.

Annamma, S., Ferri, B., & Connor, D. J. (2018). Disability critical race theory: Exploring the

    intersectional lineage, emergence, and potential futures of DisCrit in Education. *Review*

    *of Research in Education,* 42(1), pp. 46-71.

Appiah, K. A. (2020). *The Case for Capitalizing the B in Black*. *The Atlantic*.

    https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/06/time-to-capitalize-blackand-

    white/613159/

Arias, A. (2020). *Ethnic Identity, Stress, and Anxiety in Latinx University Students at*

    *Predominantly White Institutions*. [Doctoral dissertation, Western Michigan University].

Baglieri, S. (2016). Toward unity in school reform: What DisTrict contributes to multicultural

    and inclusive education. In D. Connor, B. Ferri, & S. A. Annamma (Eds.), *DisTrict:*

    *Critical conversations across race, class, & dis/ability* (pp. 167–181). Teachers College

    Press.

Bañuelos, M. & Flores, G. M. (2021). 'I Could See Myself': Professors' Influence in First-

    Generation Latinx College Students' Pathways into Doctoral Programs. *Race Ethnicity*

    *and Education,* 27(5), pp. 599-619.

Beatty-Guenter, P. (1994). Sorting, Supporting, Connecting, and Transforming: Retention

>Strategies at Community Colleges. *Community College Journal of Research and*

>*Practice*, 18, pp. 113-129.

Bell, E., Hunter, C., Benitez, T., Uysal, J., Walovich, C., McConnell, L., Vega, Cisneros, N.,

>Hidalgo, L., Walton, J. R. & Wang, M. (2022). Intervention Strategies and Lessons

>Learned from a Student-Led Initiative to Support Lactating Women in the University

>Setting. *Health Promotion Practice*, 23(1), pp. 154-165.

Ben-Moshe, L. (2020). Decarcerating Disability: Deinstitutionalization and Prison Abolition.

>University of Minnesota Press.

Benítez, M. (1998). Hispanic-Serving Institutions: Challenges and Opportunities. *New*

>*Directions for Higher Education*, 102, pp. 57-68.

Benton, S. A., Robertson, J. M., Tseng, W. C., Newton, F. B. & Benton, S. L. (2003). Changes in

>Counseling Center Client Problems Across 13 Years. *Professional Psychology: Research*

>*and Practice*, 34(1), pp. 66-72.

Berge, Z. L. & Huang, Y. P. (2004). A Model for Sustainable Student Retention: A Holistic

>Perspective on the Student Dropout Problem with Special Attention to E-Learning.

>DEOSNEWS, 13 (5).

Blankstein, M., Frederick, J. K., & Wolff-Eisenberg, C. (2020, June 25). *Student Experiences*

>*During the Pandemic Pivot*. https://sr.ithaka.org/publications/student-experiences-during-
>the-pandemic-pivot/

Bolton, S. C. (2023). Crip Colony: Mestizaje, US Imperialism, and the Queer Politics of

Disability in the Philippines. Duke University Press.

Bourke, B. Meaning and Implications of Being Labeled a Predominantly White Institution. *College and University*, 91(3), pp. 12-18, 20-21.

Brock, T. (2010). Young Adults and Higher Education: Barriers and Breakthroughs to Success. *The Future of Children*, 20 (1), pp. 109-132.

Burkham, J. (2019). The Geography of Underrepresentation: Latino Student Success and Absence at a Predominantly White Public University. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 18, pp. 187-205.

Byrd, M. Y. (2014). Diversity Issues: Exploring "Critical" Through Multiple Lenses. Advances in Developing Human Resources, 16(4), pp. 515-528.

Calderon, D., Delgado-Bernal, D., Perez Huber, L., Malagon, M. C. & Velez, V. N. (2012). A Chicana Feminist Epistemology Revisited: Cultivating Ideas a Generation Later. *Harvard Educational Review*, 82, pp. 513-539.

Calderon, D. & Urrieta, L. (2019). Studying in Relation: Critical Latinx Indigeneities and Education. Equity & Excellence in Education, 52(2-3), pp. 219-238.

Cardemil, E. V. & Millán, F. (2019). A New, More Inclusive Name: The Journal of Latinx Psychology. *Journal of Latinx Psychology*, 7(1), pp.1-5.

Castrejon, J. A., (2017). *Jornaleros engaged in a multidimensional struggle: A critical ethnography with day laborers in Las Vegas.* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Nevada, Las Vegas].

Chickering, A. & Reisser, L. (1993). *Education and Identity*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Cisneros, J. & Valdivia, D. (2020). "We Are Legit Now": Establishing Undocumented Student Resource Centers on Campus. Journal of College Student Development, 61(1), pp. 51-66.

Cole, J., Leak, J. B. & Martinez, E. (2021). The Pandemics of Racism and COVID-19. *Journal of Higher Education Management*, 36(1), pp. 5-6.

Cruz, C. (2001). Toward an Epistemology of a Brown Body. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 14, pp. 657-669. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390110059874

Dame-Griff, E. C. (2022). What Do We Mean When We Say "Latinx"?: Definitional Power, The Limits of Inclusivity, and the (Un/Re)Constitution of an Identity Category. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 15(2), pp. 119-131.

DeFreitas, S. C., Crone, T., DeLeon, M. & Ajayi, A. (2018). Perceived and Personal Mental Health Stigma in Latino and African American College Students. Frontiers in Public Health, 6 (49).

Delgado Bernal, D. (2002). Critical Race Theory, Latino Critical Theory, and Critical Raced-Gendered Epistemologies: Recognizing Students of Color as Holders and Creators of Knowledge. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8(1), pp. 105-126.

DeMatthews, D. (2020). Addressing Racism and Ableism in Schools: A DisCrit Leadership Framework for Principals. The Clearing House, 93(1), pp. 27-34. https://doi.org/10.1080/00098655.2019.1690419

de Onís, C. M. (2017). What We Talk About When We Talk About Latinx Literature. *Chiricú Journal: Latina/o Literatures, Arts, and Cultures*, 1(2), pp. 789-91.

Duran, J. V. (2016). *Academic performance, retention rates, and persistence rates of first-year, first-generation, latino college students*. [Doctoral dissertation, Liberty University].

Espino, M. (2014). Exploring the Role of Community Cultural Wealth in Graduate School

    Access and Persistence for Mexican American PhDs. *American Journal of Education*,

    120, pp. 545-574.

Espino, M. M., Vega, I. I., Rendón, L. I., Ranero, J. J., & Muñiz, M. M. (2012). The Process of

    Reflexión in Bridging Testimonios Across Lived Experience. *Equity & Excellence in*

    *Education,* 45(3), pp. 444-459. https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2012.698188

Espino, M. M., Vega, I. I., Rendón, L. I., Ranero, J. J., & Muñiz, M. M. (2017). The Process of

    Reflexión in Bridging Testimonios Across Lived Experience. In Delgago Bernal, D.,

    Burciaga, R., & Carmona J. F. (Eds.), *Chicana/Latina Testimonios as Pedagogical,*

    *Methodological, and Activist Approaches to Social Justice.* (pp. 81-96). Routledge.

Fernandez, M. Pola, A., Rose, J. & Harris, B. (2023). Antiracist Storytelling: Latinx Graduate

    Students and Faculty Experiences in Academia. *Leisure/Loisir*, 47(1), pp. 85-100.

Fonseca-Bolorin, G. (2022). *A strength-based framework of college student persistence: The*

    *relationship between campus racial climate, racial ethnic identity, sense of belonging*

    *and intentions to persist among black and latinx students attending predominantly white*

    *institutions*. [Doctoral dissertation, The University of Michigan].

Franklin, J. D., Smith, W. A. & Hung, M. (2014). Racial Battle Fatigue for Latina/o Students: A

    Quantitative Perspective. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education,* 13(4), pp. 303-322.

Franklin, R. (2013). The Roles of Population, Place, and Institution in Student Diversity in

    American Higher Education. *Growth and Change*, 44(1), pp. 30-53.

Fraser, A. M., Bryce, C. I., Cahill, K. M. & Jenkins, D. L. (2022). Social Support and Positive

    Future Expectations, Hope, and Achievement Among Latinx Students: Implications by

Gender and Special Education. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 0(0), pp. 1-26.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Continuum International Publishing.

Freire, P. (1973). *Education for Critical Consciousness*. Continuum International Publishing.

Gage, N. A., Katsiyannis, A. & Pico, D. (2021). Exploring Disproportionate Discipline for Latinx Students With and Without Disabilities: A National Analysis. *Division for Emotional and Behavioral Health*, 47(1), pp. 3-13.

Gagnon Crowell, J. (2023). *How do First-Gen Students Succeed When They Don't Know What They Don't Know? The Lived Experiences of First-Generation College Students.* [Doctoral dissertation, Southern New Hampshire University].

Garcia, C. (2017). Where We Are: Latinx Compositions and Rhetorics. *Composition Studies*, 45(2), pp. 210-211.

González, F. E. (2001). Haciendo Que Hacer – Cultivating a Mestiza Worldview and Academic Achievement: Braiding Cultural Knowledge into Educational Research, Policy, Practice. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 14 (5), pp. 641-656.

Goodman, L. (2017). Mental Health on University Campuses and the Needs of Students They Seek to Serve. *Building Healthy Academic Communities Journal*, 1 (2), pp. 31-44.

Gorman, K. S., Bruns, C., Chin, C., Fitzpatrick, N., Koenig, L., LeViness, P. & Sokolowski, K. (2022). Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors Annual Survey. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.aucccd.org/assets/documents/Survey/2021-22%20Annual%20Survey%20Report%20Public%20FINAL.pdf

Grace-Odeleye, B. & Santiago, J. (2019). A Review of Some Diverse Models of Summer Bridge

    Programs for First-Generation and At-Risk College Students. *Administrative Issues*

    *Journal: Connecting Education, Practice, and Research*. 9(1), pp. 35-47.

Griffin, K. A. (2020). Institutional Barriers, Strategies, and Benefits to Increasing the

    Representation of Women and Men of Color in the Professoriate: Looking Beyond the

    Pipeline. In Perna, L. W. (Eds.), *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*

    (pp. 277-349). Springer Nature Switzerland.

Guiffrida, D. (2005). Othermothering as a Framework for Understanding African American

    Students' Definitions of Student-Centered Faculty. *The Journal of Higher Education*,

    76(6), pp. 701-23.

Gullion, J. S. (2016). A Brief History of Ethnography. In: Writing Ethnography. Teaching

    Writing. SensePublishers, Rotterdam. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6300-381-0_1

Haber-Curran, P. & Tapia-Fuselier, N. (2020). Elevating Latina Voices of Leadership: Latina

    Student Leaders' Beliefs, Approaches, and Influences to Leadership. *Journal of*

    *Leadership Education*, 19(14), pp. 37-49.

Harris, C. (1993). Whiteness as Property. *Harvard Law Review*, 106 (8), pp. 1709-91.

Hartzell, S. Y. T., Hagen, M. M. & Devereus, P. G. (2021). Disproportionate Impacts of

    COVID-19 on University Students in Underrepresented Groups: A Quantitative and

    Qualitative Descriptive Study to Assess Needs and Hear Student Voices. *Journal of*

    *Higher Education Management*, 36 (1), pp. 144-153.

Hatt, B. (2012). Smartness as a Cultural Practice in Schools, *American Educational Research*

    *Journal*, 49(3), pp. 438-460.

Hatt, B. (2016). Racializing Smartness. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 19(6), pp. 1141-1148.

Harper, S. & Hurtado, S. (2007). Nine Themes in Campus Racial Climates and Implications for Institutional Transformation. *New Directions for Student Services*, 120, pp. 7-24.

Hartzell, S. Y. T., Hagen, M. M. & Devereux, P. G. (2021). Disproportionate Impacts of COVID-19 on University Students in Underrepresented Groups: A Quantitative and Qualitative Descriptive Study to Assess Needs and Hear Student Voices. *Journal of Higher Education Management*, 36(1), pp. 144-153.

Havlik, S., Pulliam, N. & Steen, S. (2017). Strengths and Struggles: First-Generation College-Goers Persisting at One Predominantly White Institution. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 22 (1), pp. 118-140.

Hefner, D. (2002). Black Cultural Centers: Standing on Shaky Ground? *Black Issues in Higher Education*, 18(26), pp. 22-29.

Hefner, J. & Eisenberg, D. (2009). Social Support and Mental Health Among College Students. *American Psychological Association*, 79 (4), pp. 491-499.

Hernandez, J. C. & Lopez, M. A. (2007). Leaking Pipeline: Issues Impacting Latino/a College Student Retention. In Seidman, A. (Eds.) Minority Student Retention. (pp. 37-60). Routledge.

Huerta, A. H. & Fishan, S. M. (2014). Marginality and Mattering: Urban Latino Male Undergraduates in Higher Education. *Journal of The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition*, 25(1), pp. 85-100.

Hurtado, S. & Alvarado, A. R. (2015) Discrimination and Bias, Underrepresentation, and Sense of Belonging on Campus. Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA.

Hurtado, S. & Carter, D. F. (1997). Effects of College Transition and Perceptions of the Campus

    Racial Climate on Latino College Students' Sense of Belonging. *Sociology of Education*,

    70(4), pp. 324-345.

Hurtado, S., Milem, J. F., Clayton-Pederson, A. R. & Allen, W. R. (1998). Enhancing Campus

    Climates for Racial/Ethnic Diversity: Educational Policy and Practice. *The Review of*

    *Higher Education*, 21(3).

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to Transgress*. Routledge.

Kegan, R. (1982). *The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development*. Harvard

    University Press.

Kouyoumdijan, C., Guzmán, B. L., Garcia, N. M. & Talavera-Bustillos, V. (2017). A

    Community Cultural Wealth Examination of Sources of Support and Challenges Among

    Latino First- and Second-Generation College Students at a Hispanic Serving Institution.

    *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 16(1), pp. 61-76.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a Theory of Cultural Relevant Pedagogy. *American*

    *Educational Research Journal*, 32, pp. 465-491.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2000). Racialized Discourses and Ethnic Epistemologies. In N. K. Denzin

    & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of Qualitative Research (2nd ed., pp. 257-277).

    Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2021). I'm Here for the Hard Re-Set: Post Pandemic Pedagogy to Preserve

    Our Culture. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 54(1), pp. 68-78.

Leo, A. & Wilcox, K. C. (2023). Beyond Deficit and Determinism to Address the Latinx

    Attainment Gap. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 22(2), pp. 729-744.

Leonardo, Z. & Broderick, A. A. (2011). Smartness as Property: A Critical Exploration of

    Intersections Between Whiteness and Disability Studies, *Teachers College Record,*

    113(10), pp. 2206-2232.

Lira, N. (2021). *Laboratory of Deficiency*. University of California Press.

Llamas, J. D., Nguyen, K. & Tran, A. G. T. T. (2021). The Case for Greater Faculty Diversity:

    Examining the Educational Impacts of Student-Faculty Racial/Ethnic Match. *Race*

    *Ethnicity and Education*, 24(3), pp. 375-391.

Love, H. R. & Beneke, M. R. (2021). Pursuing Justice-Driven Inclusive Education Research:

    Disability Critical Race Theory (DisCrit) in Early Childhood. *Topics in Early Childhood*

    *Special Education*, 41(1), pp. 31-44. https://doi.org/10.1177/0271121421990833

Lozano, A. (2011). Latina/o Culture Centers: Providing a Sense of Belonging and Promoting

    Student Success. In Patton, L. D. (Ed.) *Culture Centers in Higher Education*. Routledge.

    pp. 3-25.

Lozano, A. (2019). Anchor and Launching Pad: The Role of a Latino Cultural Center in Latinx

    College Student Success at a Historically White Institution. Future Review: International

    *Journal of Transition, College, and Career Success*, 1(2), pp. 19-28.

Marshall, B., Cardon, P. Poddar, A. & Fontenot, R. (2013). Does Sample Size Matter in

    Qualitative Research: A Review of Qualitative Interviews in IS Research. *Journal of*

    *Computer Information Systems*, 54(1), pp. 11-22.

Martinez, M. A., Chang, A. & Welton, A. D. (2017). Assistant Professors of Color Confront the

    Inequitable Terrain of Academia: A Community Cultural Wealth Perspective. *Race*

    *Ethnicity and Education*, 20(5), pp. 696-710.

Marx, D., Torres, T., & Maher, M. (2024). Laying the Groundwork, Transforming the University: An Origin Story of a Latinx Mentoring Program at a Predominantly White Institution. *Urban Education*, 59(6), pp. 2023-2053.

Matsuda, M. J. (1991). Voices of America: Accent, Antidiscrimination Law, and a Jurisprudence for the Last Reconstruction. *Yale Law Journal*, 100(5), pp. 1329-1407.

McClain, K. S. & Perry, A. (2017). Where Did They Go: Retention Rates for Students of Color at Predominantly White Institutions. *College Student Affairs Leadership,* 4(1).

McCoy, L. (2023). *From High School to Post-Secondary Life – Exploring the College Transition Experiences of Bilingual Latinx Youth*. [Doctoral dissertation, Columbia University].

McCoy, D. L., Winkle-Wagner, R. & Luedke, C. L. (2015). Colorblind Mentoring? Exploring White Faculty Mentoring of Students of Color. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 8(4), pp. 225-242.

Meyer, D. (2022). Campus Activism in Polarized Times. In Binder, A. J. & Kidder, J. L. (Eds.), *The Channels of Student Activism: How the Left and Right Are Winning (and Losing) in Campus Politics Today*. (pp. 813-818). University of Chicago Press.

Migliarini, V. & Annamma, S. (2019). Applying Disability Critical Race Theory in the Practice of Teacher Education in the United States. In *Educational Theories and Philosophies*. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education. DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.783

Mireles, D. (2020). *Dis/rupting and dis/mantling racism and ableism in higher education*. [Doctoral dissertation, UC Riverside]. https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2zf0x9fv

Molock, S. D. & Parchem, B. (2021). The Impact of COVID-19 on College Students from

    Communities of Color. *Journal of American College Health*, 70(8), pp. 2399-2405. DOI:

    10.1080/07448481.2020.1865380

Montelongo, R. (2019). Cultural Factors that Impact Latina/o College Student Success at

    Predominantly-White Institutions: Past and Current Knowledge for Educators. *Diversity,*

    *Social Justice, and the Educational Leader*, 3(1), pp. 11-25.

Monzo, L. D. (2015). Ethnography in Charting Paths Toward Personal and Social Liberation:

    Using my Latina Cultural Intuition. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in*

    *Education*, 28(4), pp. 373-393. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2014.891771

Museus, S. D. & Chang, T. (2021). The Impact of Campus Environments on Sense of Belonging

    for First-Generation College Students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 62(3),

    pp. 367-372.

Museus, S. D. & Ravello, J. N. (2010). Characteristics of Academic Advising that Contribute to

    Racial and Ethnic Minority Student Success at Predominantly White Institutions.

    *NACADA Journal,* 30(1), pp. 47-58.

National Center of Education Statistics (2020). Fast Facts: Enrollment (98) [Fact sheet].

    https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=98

National Center for Education Statistics (2022). Fast Facts: Educational Institutions [Fact sheet].

    https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=1122

National Center for Education Statistics. (2022). Undergraduate Retention and Graduation

    Rates. *Condition of Education*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education

    Sciences. Retrieved [December 2023],

    from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/ctr.

National Center of Education Statistics (2023). Characteristics of Postsecondary Faculty. *Condition of Education.* U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=61

Ojeda, L. & Navarro, R. L. (2011). The Role of La Familia on Mexican American Men's College Persistence Intentions. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 12(3), pp. 216-229.

Pacheco-Vega, R. & Parizeau, K. (2018). Doubly Engaged Ethnography: Opportunities and Challenges When Working with Vulnerable Communities. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 17(1-13).

Padilla, A. (2018). *Race, disability and the possibilities of radical agency: Toward a political philosophy of decolonial critical hermeneutics in Latinx DisCrit.* [Doctoral dissertation, The University of New Mexico]. ProQuest.

Padilla, A. (2021). *Disability, Intersectional Agency, and Latinx Identity*. Routledge.

Padilla, A. (2022). LatDisCrit: Exploring Latinx Global South DisCrit Reverberations as Spaces Toward Emancipatory Learning and Radical Solidarity. In Annamma, S. A., Ferri, B. A. & Connor, D. J. (Eds.), *DisCrit Expanded: Reverberations, Ruptures, and Inquiries* (147-162). Teachers College Press.

Page, J. (2013). Hispanics: A Diverse Population of Students to Influence the Landscape of Higher Education. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education,* 12(1), pp. 37-48. DOI: 10.1177/1538192712454133

Parrish, C., Winkler, R. B., Ross, A., Robertson, T. & Maryn, A. G. (2022). "You Can Start a Movement with a Hashtag". In Cuklanz, L. M. (Ed.) Gender Violence, Social Media, and Online Environments. Routledge.

Passell, J. S., Lopez, M. H., & Cohn D. (2022). U.S. Hispanic Population Continued its

Geographic Spread in the 2010s. Pew Research Center.

Pedota, J. (2023). Institutionalization of a Latinx Cultural Center: Exploring a Case of Racialized

Administrative Burdens Faced by Latinx Staff and Students. *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership*, 00 (0), pp. 1-13.

Peralta, K. J. & Klonowski, M. (2017). Examining Conceptual and Operational Definitions of

"First-Generation College Student" in Research on Retention. *Journal of College Student Development*, 58(4), pp. 630-636.

Pérez Huber, L. P. & Aguilar-Tinajero, G. (2024). Revisiting Testimonio as Critical Race

Feminista Methodology in Educational Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education.*

Pérez Huber, L. P. & Cueva, B. M. (2012). Chicana/Latina Testimonios on Effects and

Responses to Microaggressions. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 45(3), pp. 392-410.

Porter, C. M., Grimm, K. & Budowle, R. (2023). Narrowing the Equity Gap in Student Food

Security: A Student-Led Approach at the University of Wyoming. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 12(2), pp. 37-45.

Ramirez, E. (2017). Unequal Socialization: Interrogating the Chicano/Latino(a) Doctoral

Education Experience. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 10(1), pp. 25-38.

Reichard, R. (2015). Why we say Latinx: Trans & gender non-conforming people explain.

*Latina Magazine*. http://www.latina.com/lifestyle/our-issues/why-we-say-latinx-transgender-non-conforming-people-explain

Reyes, H. L. & Duran, A. (2021). Higher Education Scholars Challenging Deficit Thinking: An

    Analysis of Research Informed by Community Cultural Wealth. *Journal of Critical*

    *Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs,* 6(1), pp. 7-21.

Reyes, K. B. & Rodriguez, J. E. C. (2012). Testimonio: Origins, Terms, and Resources. *Equity &*

    *Excellence in Education,* 45(3), pp. 525-538.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2012.698571

Río-González, A. M. (2021). To Latinx or Not to Latinx: A Question of Gender Inclusivity

    Versus Gender Neutrality. *American Journal of Public Health*, 111(6), pp. 1018-1021.

    https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2021.306238

Robertson, R. V., Bravo, A., & Chaney, C. (2016). Racism and the Experiences of Latina/o

    College Students at a PWI (Predominantly White Institution). *Critical Sociology,* 42(4-5),

    pp. 715-735. DOI: 10.1177/0896920514532664

Rodríguez-Planas, N. (2022). COVID-19, College Academic Performance, and the Flexible

    Grading Policy: A Longitudinal Analysis. *Journal of Public Economics*, 207, pp. 1-11.

Rodriguez, D., Luterbach, K. J., Woolf, S. B. & Rivera, S. P. (2020). Self-Acceptance of

    Adolescent Latino Students with Disabilities. *Educational Consideration*, 45 (3), pp. 1-

    14.

Rodríguez, R. T. (2017). X Marks the Spot. *Cultural Dynamics*, 29(3), pp. 202-213.

Roy, A. (2020). *The Pandemic is a Portal*. Financial Times.

    https://www.ft.com/content/10d8f5e8-74eb-11ea-95fe-fcd274e920ca

Russel y Rodriguez, M. (2007). Messy Spaces, Chicana testimonio, and the Un-Disciplining of

    Ethnography. *Chicana/Latina Studies Journal*, 7, pp. 86–121. DOI:10.2307/23014675

Ruvalcaba, J. G. (2023). *For us, by us: An ethnographic study of Baltimore City's Latine community creating meaning and sense of self through community events and place*. [Master's thesis, University of Maryland, Baltimore County]. https://api.mdsoar.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/cf8614b8-77de-4c36-ba0b-e9f883f4d55b/content

Salinas, C. (2020). The Complexity of the "X" in Latinx: How Latinx/a/o Students Relate to, Identify With, and Understand the Term Latinx. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 19(2), pp. 149-168.

Salinas, C. & Lozano, A. (2017). Mapping and Recontextualizing the Evolution of the Term Latinx: An Environmental Scanning in Higher Education. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 18(4), pp. 302-315.

Salinas, C., Doran, E. E. & Swingle, E. C. (2020). Community Colleges' Use of the Term "Latinx". *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 2020(190), pp. 9-20.

Salvosa, C. K. (2022). Freshman retention rate bounced back upon return to campus, officials say. UWIRE Text, 1. https://link-gale-com.libezproxy2.syr.edu/apps/doc/A700081520/HRCA?u=nysl_ce_syr&sid=googleScholar&xid=1d5e1b54

Sapon-Shevin M. (1987). Giftedness as a social construct. *Teachers College Record*, 89(1), pp. 39–53. Crossref. ISI.

Sapon-Shevin M. (1994). *Playing favorites: Gifted education and the disruption of community*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Scott-Jones, J. (2010). Origins and Ancestors: A Brief History of Ethnography. In Scott-Jones, J. & Watt, S. (Eds.) *Ethnography in Social Science*, 13-27. Routledge.

Silva, D. J. (2005). *A Holistic Approach to Student Support and Engagement*. [Doctoral dissertation, Royal Roads University] Ottawa, ON, CA.

Smith, T. B., Dean, B., Floyd, S., Silva, C., Yamashita, M., Durtschi, J. & Heaps, R. A. (2011). Pressing Issues in College Counseling: A Survey of American College Counseling Association Members. *Journal of College Counseling*, 10(1), pp. 64-78.

Solórzano, D. G. (1998). Critical Race Theory, Racial and Gender Microaggressions, and the Experiences of Chicana and Chicano Scholars. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 11, pp. 121-136.

Solórzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2001). Critical race and LatCrit theory and method: Counter-storytelling. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education,* 14(4), pp. 471-495. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390110063365

Solórzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2023). Critical Race Methodology: Counter-Storytelling as an Analytical Framework for Educational Research. In Taylor, E., Gillborn, D., Ladson-Billings, G. (Eds.), *Foundations of Critical Race Theory in Education* (159-174). Routledge.

Stapleton, L. & James, L. (2020). Not Another All White Study: Challenging Color-Evasiveness Ideology in Disability Scholarship (Practice Belief). Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, 33(3), pp. 215-222.

Stephens, N. M., Fryberg, S. A., Markus, H. R., & Johnson, C. S. (2012). Unseen Disadvantage: How American Universities' Focus on Independence Undermines the Academic Performance of first-generation college students. *Interpersonal Relations and Group Processes*, 102(6), pp. 1178-1197. DOI: 10.1037/a0027143

Takimoto, A. G., Peraza, P. D. G. & Azmitia, M. (2021). "We Belong Here": Identities, Family,

    Sense of Belonging, and Persistence in Latinx First-Generation College Students'

    Educational Journeys. *Adversity and Resilience Science*, 2, pp. 303-314.

Tefera, A. (2019). Perspectives and Experiences of Black and Latinx Students with Disabilities:

    Examining the Challenges and Contradictions of High-Stakes Testing Policies. *The*

    *Urban Review*, 51, pp. 457-476.

Thornhill, T. (2023). Goodbye Florida, I'm Out! For Good. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, 9

    (4), pp. 440-443.

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition* (2nd

    ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tinto, V. (2016, September 25). *From Retention to Persistence*. Inside Higher Ed.

    https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2016/09/26/how-improve-student-persistence-

    and-completion-essay

Toutkoushian, R. K., Stollberg, R. A. & Slaton, K. A. (2018). Talking 'Bout My Generation:

    Defining "First-Generation College Students" in Higher Education Research. *Teachers*

    *College Record*, 120(4), pp. 1-38.

Trent, F., Dwiwardani, C. & Page, C. (2021). Factors Impacting the Retention of Students of

    Color in Graduate Programs: A Qualitative Study. *Training and Education in*

    *Professional Psychology*, 15(3), pp. 219-229.

Trevino, N. N. & DeFreitas, S. C. (2014). The Relationship Between Intrinsic Motivation and

    Academic Achievement for First Generation Latino College Students. *Social Psychology*

    *of Education: An International Journal*, 17(2), pp. 293-306.

Treviño, L. E. J., García, J. & Bybee, E. R. (2017). "The Day that Changed my Life, Again": The Testimonio of a Latino DACAmented Teacher. *The Urban Review*, 49(4), pp. 627-647.

Trinidad Galván, R. (2001). Portraits of Mujeres Desjuicias: Womanist Pedagogies of the Everyday, the Mundane and the Ordinary. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 14(5), pp. 603-621.

Trucios-Haynes, E. (2000). Why "race matters": LatCrit theory and latina/o racial identity. *Berkeley La Raza Law Journal,* 12(1), pp. 1-42.

Turner, C. S. V., Gonzalez, J. C. & Wood, J. L. (2008). Faculty of Color in Academe: What 20 Years of Literature Tells Us. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 1 (3), pp. 139-168.

Urrieta, L. (2017). Identity, Violence and Authenticity: Challenging Static Conceptions of Indigeneity. *Latino Studies*, 15, pp. 254-261.

U.S. Department of Education. "Hispanic-Serving Institutions: An Analysis of Higher Education Institutions Eligible for the Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program, Title III of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as Amended." Unpublished paper, 1997a.

Valdes, F. (1997). Under Construction: LatCrit Consciousness, Community, and Theory. Latcrit: Latinas/os and the Law: A Joint Symposium by California Law Review and La Raza Law Journal: Foreword.

Valdes, F. (2005). An Introduction to LatCrit Theory, Praxis and Community. *Legal Reform and Social Justice*, 142(3), pp. 148-173.

Villalpando, O. (2004). Practical considerations of critical race theory and latino critical theory for latino college students. *Special Issue: Addressing the Unique Needs of Latino American Students,* pp. 41-50.

Von Robertson, R., Bravo, A. & Chaney, C. (2016). Racism and the Experiences of Latina/o College Students at a PWI (Predominantly White Institution). *Critical Sociology*, 42, pp. 715-735.

Wilke, A. K. (2023). Constructing Smartness and Intelligence: A Content Analysis of Postsecondary Disability Literature, *The Educational Forum.* https://doi.org/10.1080/00131725.2023.2228354

Winwood, J. (2019). Using Interviews. In Lambert, M. (Ed.) *Practical Research Methods in Education: An Early Researcher's Critical Guide*. Routledge. pp. 12-22.

Xiao, H., Carney, D. M., Youn, S. J., Janis, R. A., Castonguay, L. G., Hayes, J. A. & Locke, B. D. (2017). Are We in Crisis? National Mental Health and Treatment Trends in College Counseling Centers. *Psychological Services*, 14(4), pp. 407-415,

Yosso, T. J. (2005) Whose Culture has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education,* 8(1), pp. 69-91. https://doi.org/10.1080/1361332052000341006

Yosso, T. (2006). Critical Race Counterstories along the Chicano/Chicana Educational Pipeline. *Routledge*.

Zambrana, R. E., Wingfield, A. H., Lapeyrouse, L. M., Dávila, B. A., Hoagland, T. L. & Valdez, R. B. (2016). Blantant, Subtle, and Insidious: URM Faculty Perceptions of Discriminatory Practices in Predominantly White Institutions. *Sociological Inquiry*, 87(2), pp. 207-232.

Zhou, E., Kyeong, Y., Cheung, C. S. & Michalska, K. J. (2022). Shared Cultural Values Influence Mental Health Help-Seeking Behaviors in Asian and Latinx College Students. *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities*, 9, pp. 1325-1334.

**Curriculum Vitae (CV)**

**Cassaundra Guzman** *(she/her/ella)*
Syracuse, NY
cvcaudil@syr.edu

EDUCATION

---

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **PhD** | Syracuse University, Cultural Foundations of Education | Summer 2024 |
| **CAS** | Syracuse University, Disability Studies | Spring 2024 |
| **MS** | Syracuse University, Cultural Foundations of Education | Spring 2021 |
| **BA** | Humboldt State University, Journalism | Spring 2020 |

HONORS AND AWARDS

---

Dissertation Funding Competition — Spring 2024
*A selective competition hosted through the American Assoc. For Colleges of Teacher Education where I was awarded funding for successfully presenting my on-going doctoral research.*

Certificate of University Teaching — Spring 2023
*A certification garnered through the Future Professoriate Program that certifies my completion of teaching seminars and presentation of my teaching portfolio.*

Engaged BIPOC Scholar-Practitioner — Fall 2021
*A program that aims to provide guidance in terms of professional development as BIPOC grad students.*

Future Professoriate Program — Fall 2021
*A program that supports the professional development of graduate students looking to enter the professoriate.*

Orange Holmes Scholar — Spring 2021
*A program that supports underrepresented communities enrolled in doctoral programs in education to further diversify academia.*

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

---

Instructor on Record — 2023-2024
Course: EDU 221: Education as Transformation
Institution: Syracuse University
*Led a required course for undergraduate students that engages with various forms of media that reflect past and current issues within the field of education.*

Teaching Assistant — 2022-2023
Advisor: Dr. Kal Alston

Course: EDU 221: Education as Transformation
Institution: Syracuse University
*Assisted Dr. Alston in this required, undergraduate course*
*that teaches students the ways media reflects systemic*
*issues in education.*

Instructor on Record                                           2022-2023
Course: FYS 101: First-Year Seminar
Institution: Syracuse University
*Led a required course for first-year undergraduate students which*
*presented students with a basic understanding of how their*
*positionality in society may affect their experiences in college*
*and beyond.*

Teaching Assistant                                             2021-2022
Advisor: Dr. Barbara Applebaum
Course: EDU/WGS 444: Schooling & Diversity
Institution: Syracuse University
*Assisted Dr. Applebaum in their cross-listed, required course*
*that taught undergraduate students the foundations of diversity*
*and inclusion within the field of education.*

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant, Sharpe Lab                                 Summer 2022
Advisor: Dr. Charlotte Sharpe
Institution: Syracuse University
*Assisting Dr. Sharpe in creating materials for high school*
*students who will be participating in her study. Materials*
*that will support them in their preparation as educators.*

Research Assistant, CODE^SHIFT                                 Summer 2022
Advisor: Dr. Srivi Ramasubramania
Institution: Syracuse University
*Assisting Dr. Ramasubramania in analyzing and coding*
*already collected qualitative data for future publications*
*surrounding the intersections of mass media and education.*

Research Apprenticeship Project, Manuscript                   Spring 2022
Advisor: Dr. Gretchen Lopez
Institution: Syracuse University
*This manuscript focused on guiding incoming*
*graduate students on the obstacles faced by BIPOC.*

CONFERENCES

Guzman, C. (2024, November). *An Exploration of Joy in Higher Education.* Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE), Minneapolis, MN. (Submitted).

Guzman, C. (2024, April). *The Value and Impact of Holistic Student Support for Latinx Students Attending Predominantly White Institutions*. American Educational Research Association (AERA), Philadelphia, PA.

**Guzman, C.** & Perez, M. (2024, April). *Sustaining Joy in the Classroom: A Latinx Studies Perspective on Pedagogy.* Latinx Studies Association (LSA), Tempe, AZ.

**Guzman, C.** & Jaimes Costilla, J. (2024, April). *La Alegría de Asesoría: Sharing Best Practices for Supporting Latinx Students*. Latinx Studies Association (LSA), Tempe, AZ.

Guzman, C. (2024, February). *Las Voces Poderosas: Valuing Latinx Undergraduate Perspectives When Re-Assessing Student Supports at Predominantly White Institutions*. American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), Denver, CO.

Guzman, C. (2024, January). *Reckoning with Yourself Through Others: Analyzing the Importance of Culture within Student-Faculty Mentorships at Predominantly White Institutions*. IAFOR International Conference on Education (IICE), Honolulu, HI. (Accepted).

Guzman, C. (2023, November). *Expanding the Confines of Wellness through Solidarity: The Need and Implementation of Hair Care Discourse.* American Studies Association (ASA), Montreal, CAN.

**Guzman, C.**, & Andre, L. (2023, October). *The Power of Creating and Sustaining Community as BIPOC Graduate Students at a Predominantly White Institution*. 2023 Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) Symposium, Syracuse, NY.

Guzman, C. (2023, June). *Valuing Holistic Forms of Student Support: How Predominantly White Institutions Can Better Retain Latinx Students Through Implementation of Holistic Forms.* The International Academic Forum (IAFOR), Paris, France (Accepted).

Guzman, C. (2023, June). *Learning How to Be Unapologetically Brown: A Discourse Analysis of Respectability Politics*. National Conference on Race and Ethnicity (NCORE), New Orleans, LA (Accepted).

Guzman, C. (2023, May). *What's Queerness Got to Do With It? Un/defining Indigenous, Black & Brown Gender & Love in the Apocalypse*. Sexuality Studies Association (SSA) Conference, Toronto, CAN.

Andre, L., Bryant, P., **Guzman, C.**, McGhee, A., & Tetteh, B. (2023, May). *It All Counts: Your Peers Discussing Teaching Experiences and Development of a Comprehensive Teaching Portfolio*. Future Professoriate Program (FPP) Conference, Altmar, NY.

Guzman, C. (2023, March). *Learning How to Be Unapologetically Brown: A Discourse Analysis of Respectability Politics within Higher Education*. New York State Foundations of Education (NYSFEA) Conference, Staten Island, NY. (Accepted)

Guzman, C. (2023, March). *Interrogating Institutions*. Center for Black, Brown & Queer Studies Conference, Zoom.

Guzman, C. (2023, February). *Bridging the Gap in Supporting Latinx Students*. American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) Conference, Indianapolis, IN.

McGhee, A., **Guzman, C.**, Bouldin, C., & Borja, A. (2022, November). *Dreaming with bell hooks*. American Educational Studies Association (AESA) Conference, Pittsburgh, PA.

Guzman, C. (2022, February). *The Importance of Diversifying Syllabi*. American Association for Teacher Education (AACTE) Conference, New Orleans, LA.

## PUBLICATIONS

Guzman, C. (2023). There's Beauty in Vulnerability Within the Workplace. *Escape the Cape: From Existing to Evolving* (In publication).

Guzman, C. (2023). The Art of Showing Up for & By Women of Color. *Escape the Cape: From Existing to Evolving* (In publication).

McGhee, A. & **Guzman, C.** (2023). I'm With You Fam: Creating Homeplace Elsewhere. *Voices of the Field: DEIA Champions in Higher Education*, 77-86.

## PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE)
American Educational Studies Association (AESA)
American Educational Research Association (AERA)
American Studies Association (ASA)
Latinx/a/o Studies Association (LSA)
National Conference on Race and Ethnicity (NCORE)
National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity (NCFDD)
New York State Foundations of Education Association (NYSFEA)