ABSTRACT

The Real Wall: A Qualitative Case Study to Explore Latino Graduation Rates and the
Lack of Necessary Resources Available

Edward Peña, Ed.D.

Mentor: Sandi Cooper, Ph.D.

Latino attainment of bachelor's degrees is a crucial problem facing society today within the United States of America. If this issue continues, the future impact on society will influence the average annual household income in the United States. Researchers have proposed a series of possible solutions and honed in on contributing factors of this problem. The purpose of this multiple case study was to understand how Latino college students utilize and understand available institutional resources. Latino college students continue to not graduate with a bachelor's degree for a plethora of reasons. Current solutions have not gone far enough to remedy the problem as the issue persists. Different analyses of possible contributing factors have helped to serve institutional agendas but have not addressed the problem.

The literature suggests certain aspects of family background and culture impact the persistence of Latino college students. For this study, persistence's definition was the continued path towards a bachelor's degree. This study was rooted in utilizing elements of LatCrit as a guiding lens to codify thematic data collected in person-to-person

interviews. Additionally, LatCrit contexts served to inform the pre-written questions. LatCrit focuses on the experiences internalized by Latinas/os within society. These experiences continue to impact Latino students throughout different stages of their education life.

This study consisted of seven Latino participants interviewed in one-on-one video conferencing meetings. The participants attended a mid-sized college in the Northeast United States. The participants selected identified as Latino/a, Hispanic, or of South America or Central American heritage. The major themes found were that the advisement center, tutoring center, and career center serve as the most critical resources at an institution toward Latino student achievement. Family dynamics and expectations, financial status, and self-advocacy emerged as the most common lived experiences among Latino students that influenced their utilization of valuable resources for continued persistence. The results discovered in this study found that Latino students understood essential resources necessary toward graduation but often encountered barriers when attempting to utilize these offices. Additional results found that overcoming trauma and financial shortcomings was critical in resource utilization as participants understood their finite opportunities for achievement.

The Real Wall: A Qualitative Case Study to Explore Latino Graduation Rates
and the Lack of Necessary Resources Available

by

Edward Peña, M.A.

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Approved by the Dissertation Committee

_____

Sandi Cooper, Ph.D., Chairperson

_____

Jessica Meehan, Ed.D.

_____

Nicholas R. Werse, Ph.D.

Accepted by the Graduate School

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J. Larry Lyon, Ph.D., Dean

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DEDICATION

To Marcella

Thank you for teaching me what it means to love endlessly and give back to others for the future. This is dedicated to you. I hope your future is everything you want it to be with all the access you deserve. I will do my best to leave you a better world. You deserve nothing but the best. Dad loves you.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the Problem of Practice

Introduction

In 2014 the Latino population made up the United States of America's largest racial minority group at 17.4%. In 2060, this percentage will rise to approximately 29% of the overall population (Colby & Ortman, 2015). The Latino population in the United States has grown exponentially over the last few decades. For this study, the term Latino referred to individuals who identified as Hispanic or Latino/a/x, or a delineation of this population for clarity. With this growth, Latino families make decisions that impact the United States as a whole. One of these decisions is to attend college to obtain a bachelor's degree. As this population grows further, their impact on society depends on the consistent sustainability of their college level achievement.

Latino students struggle to graduate with bachelor's degrees in higher education institutions, and currently, remedies do not target the problem. The proportion of Latinos who graduated with their bachelor's degree in four years lagged by approximately 14% compared to whites in the same time frame (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Latino enrollment at colleges increased in the last decade; however, more students' enrollment has not put this population on pace to close the attainment gap. Steve Murdock, head of the Hobby Center and former U.S. Census Bureau Director under President George W. Bush, believed that if those gaps continued to exist, the annual household incomes for all Americans would drop by 5% by 2060, an average of $2,343 a year per the individual (Marcus, 2016). The bachelor's degree attainment gap is

a problem that requires immediate fixing, given the negative national impact that leaving this issue unsolved causes.

With the utilization of a multiple case study of Latino participants, this study investigated this Latino attainment gap. This study synthesized solutions to this unresolved problem via an in-depth analysis of seven participants. This analysis served to inform valuable clarifications to this problem. The documentation and understanding of Latino students' persistent attainment gaps is an ongoing research topic for researchers and theorists. However, much of the literature has focused on attainment gap issues with no completed solutions. This multiple case study developed a deep understanding of the current plight of the Latino population.

Statement of the Problem

Latino college-age students struggle to obtain their bachelor's degrees within higher education institutions in the United States. This issue has become more frequently discussed in the last few decades with the shifts in ethnic group populations in the United States. According to a study done by the Pew Research Center in 2011, "Since 1972, the number of Hispanic 18-to 24-year-olds has grown nearly five-fold, rising from 1.3 million then to 6.0 million in 2011" (Fry & Lopez, 2012, p. 9). The United States has seen a population growth of Latino individuals, and with this growth comes an increase of college-attending Latino students.

The continuation of the attainment gap impacts long-term societal change. A study done to double the rate of Latinos earning a college degree from 9% to 18% by 2006 determines that Latino students' attainment gap will create a societal problem (Vernez & Mizell, 2001, p. vii). Vernez and Mizell propose a series of solutions

necessary to achieve this goal, but the issue still exists today. From 2000–2016, the Latino bachelor's degree attainment rose from 10% to 19% (McFarland et al., 2017). According to McFarland, Vernez, and Mizell's previously shared goal remains idealistic and incomplete. Additionally, the overall percentage of associate's and bachelor's degrees awarded to Latino students increased from 10% to 11.6% between 1997 and 2007, failing to ascertain the proposed doubling of the rate of Latinos earning a degree (Habley, et al., 2012). With no substantive change existing in society or within higher education institutions, the future appears bleak for Latino bachelor's degree attainment unless a drastic change occurs immediately.

Latino students enrolled in colleges increased significantly with the surge in the growth of the racial minority group. According to the Pew Research Center, "For the first time, the number of 18 to 24-year-old Hispanics enrolled in college exceeded 2 million and reach a record of 16.5% share of all college enrollments" (Fry & Lopez, 2012, p. 6). As illustrated by the Pew Research Center, institutions of higher education experienced a large shift in that Latino students hold a large share of college enrollments across the United States. In 2006, the Latino student college population was approximately 11% of all college students. This number grew by 2011 to 16.5% (Fry & Lopez, 2012). Latino students enrolled in colleges grew exponentially in five years. Latino expansion in the overall population and college enrollments signify a positive outcome for the Latino populace's future in the United States. However, the increase has not produced results that would be ideal for long-term economic and educational growth. Bachelor's degrees conferred to Latino college students in 2010 was about 9%, or about 140,000, out of 1.7 million total granted (Fry & Lopez, 2012). Even with spikes in population growth and

college enrollment, this population had not made significant progress through 2011, and this non-progress continues through the present day.

Despite a growing young population of Latino individuals and high achievement for these students, fewer than 20% of Latino Americans ages 25–29 held a bachelor's degree or higher in 2016 (McFarland et al., 2017, pp. 44–45). A possible cause of this problem manifests itself as the lack of resources at the college level to appropriately assist this population with adequate tutoring, career preparation, and guidance through graduation. Although there is a fair amount of research on colleges' need to increase Latino students' graduation rate, the research does not go far enough regarding individual student attainment and success. Colleges tasked with admitting a higher percentage of Latino students to push some of this higher quantity towards graduation perpetuate a false sense of student achievement. As Latino populations continue to grow, the research will reflect the actual condition of this population. As it stands, the literature currently lags behind this ever-evolving population of society.

Latino college attainment required an investigation through a multiple case study to understand the individual intricacies of participant experiences. According to a website post written on The Education Trust, there is an understanding that student success can only improve when institutional stakeholders and leaders make it the top priority (Nichols, 2017). Currently, institutions struggle to close the attainment gap through different solutions that have not worked.

Purpose of the Study

This case study explored seven cases to gain insight into the institutional resources understood as available for Latino college students that they interpret as

necessary to their graduation process at Eastern College. Additionally, this study explored how lived experiences influence what resources at an institution Latino students utilize throughout college to succeed, engage, and subsequently graduate. Eastern College ranked top five in the Top Institutions Awarding bachelor's degrees to Hispanics in the Northeast United States in 2015–2016 (Excelencia in Education, 2017). In chronicling the lived, rich experiences of Latino college students, this frame of exploration provided a deeper understanding of this diverse group of learners' current plight. This study evaluated participant feedback and research at institutions of higher education. With newly gained ontological insight, institutions of higher education can investigate Latino students in their immediate area. These investigations will produce unique and valuable plans that serve Latino students in the future.

This study examined the resources Latino students prioritize in pursuing their college degree at Eastern College, utilizing a series of research questions. This study's unique research questions address the overall stated purpose of understanding Latino graduation rates and utilizing and interpreting resources at Eastern College. This study addressed two primary guiding research questions:

1. What do Latino students understand as resources vital toward graduation at Eastern College?

2. How do Latino lived experiences influence what resources at an institution they will utilize throughout college to succeed, engage, and subsequently graduate?

Philosophical Assumptions: Theoretical Framework

The structuring of the multiple case study focused on the *a priori* conceptual framework. This study emphasized concepts expounded upon in LatCrit, which serves as an extension of Critical Race Theory (CRT) that reveals the ways Latino individuals

experience societal aspects. These interpretations of societal factors focus on race and class concepts while recognizing immigration status, language, ethnicity, and culture (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001). Additionally, LatCrit seeks to analyze the "overarching similarities among Latina/o peoples, including language, in many instances, and a shared history of colonization and conquest" (Trucios-Haynes, 2015, p. 41). Concepts of LatCrit helped inform emergent themes and reflected on problematic dominant principles and biases during the research process.

For this study, an aspect of informative LatCrit is the ideology behind utilizing the term Latino rather than the colloquial Hispanic. "The racial politics of our self-designation therefore were very conscious, and signalled [*sic*] in part our commitment to the rejection and dismantling of white supremacy and privilege, both within and beyond Latina/o communities" (Valdes, 2005, p. 153). LatCrit focuses on the Latino experience when analyzing situations that occur within society. LatCrit theories began with the twin principles of anti-essentialism and anti-subordination. The emphasis of LatCrit beginnings stems from the inclusion of different identity classes instead of traditional descriptions of identities (Valdes, 2005). The necessary background knowledge and understanding of Latino individuals' multi-layered identities are vital to this study's complexity.

Latino populations frequently internalize aspects of society when discerning their place within that society. Latino students often filter their history through a colonialist lens, where non-European views, narratives, and cultural traditions are marginalized and suppressed in schools (Wiggan et al., 2014). Understanding this marginalization is critical

when exploring a case study of individuals that internalized racial disparities, losses, and trauma.

Research Design

In order to ascertain the information necessary to study Latino students, a qualitative study proved necessary. A qualitative case study design suited the holistic analysis of seven individual Latino students. Yin (2009) shared that case study research involves studying a case within a real-life, contemporary setting. A case study allowed for the development of a description of these multiple cases. Utilizing numerous sources allowed for triangulation of data and exploration of critical themes that enabled assertions and generalizations.

The collection process tasked the researcher with the development of the interview protocol for case studies. Creswell and Poth (2018) determined the development of data collection of the seven Latino students. An organized coding system allowed the maintenance of the anonymity of participants to minimize harm for current students regarding their institution. Recorded interviews (with consent) acquired during one-on-one interviews with the participants served to inform the research. The researcher predicted that following a set of pre-written questions would encourage rapport and empathy by following up with cultural or interpretive responses. The reflexivity of pre-written questions allowed the researcher to adjust and apply relevant individual understanding to each case study participant. During data collection and data transcription, emergent themes by the researcher required analysis and synthesis.

Searching for themes allowed the researcher to describe the cases and their independent contexts. Using aggregation, the researcher established themes and patterns

that enabled the researcher to visualize the data and develop naturalistic generalizations of extrapolated interviews and data. These assertions and analysis of themes during the data analysis process allowed the researcher to establish reliability, validity, congruence, and triangulation through the different data sets, interviews, and rigor. Generating detailed, thick descriptions and utilizing peer-review in the data analysis stage allowed the researcher to understand possible inconsistencies or reflexivity that determined generalizations.

Definition of Key Terms

The following definitions clarify essential concepts for this study:

Attainment: The reception of a bachelor's degree. This study focused exclusively on bachelor's degrees.

Familism: A value in Latino families that promotes the family's needs more than the needs of individuals.

Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI): Any degree-granting institution that has a population of at least 25% Latino.

Latino: People in the United States with cultural and national ties to Latin American, South American, Cuban, Puerto Rican, Mexican, or other Spanish cultures or origins.

LatCrit: An extension of Critical Race Theory (CRT) that reveals the ways Latino individuals experience societal aspects such as race and class while recognizing immigration status, language, ethnicity, and culture (Bernal, 2002).

Latino familial attainment: Latino families that have attained a college education that impact the attainment of their offspring.

Resources: Instructional methods, educational services, programs, items, and ideologies

    that higher education institutions provide that positively impact the attainment gap of

    the institution's students. Examples of these may include libraries, academic advisors,

    career centers, student life programs, diverse faculty and staff, and strategies. Each

    participant in this study identified a resource, as it can be subjective.

Conclusion

In conclusion, evaluating Latino students' individual resource needs at Eastern College allowed for a unique appropriation of resources that will begin to close the attainment gap. This study assessed Latino student participants' perspectives and lived experiences to provide feedback to the institution on how to serve its population better. An evaluation of the research for gaps is invaluable to provide the need for this study. Chapter Two provided a comprehensive analysis of this existing literature on contributing factors to the problem and proposed solutions. Ultimately, Chapter Two showcased the limitless contributing factors and how all solutions introduced continue to fall short of substantive help.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

The Latino attainment gap will continue to have negative ramifications for the United States unless addressed immediately. In this chapter, the existing literature presented unfolds to provide the reader with a series of contributing factors to the problem. This chapter delivers a comprehensive synopsis of Latino socio-economic information, Latino family backgrounds, and higher education institutional campus climates, all of which contribute to the Latino attainment gap. This chapter transitions into an exploration of literature that focuses on proposed solutions with this overview laid out. Proposed solutions in the research are increased funding and aid for Latino students, increased hiring of Latino faculty and staff, Latino student life programs, and institutional resources. This chapter concludes by emphasizing the shortcomings of current solutions and how, with the present investigation, the researcher seeks to address the gaps in the literature.

Latino students struggling to attain their bachelor's degree in institutions of higher education is problematic. As of 2016, the United States' Latino population stood at approximately 58 million individuals, and this group accounted for half of the national population growth since 2000 (Flores, 2017). The current status of this population, coupled with their difficulty in attaining a bachelor's degree, aims to negatively impact the United States if contributing factors to the problem continue within society. According to Jacquelyn D. Elliot and Rodney Parks (2018), "Latinos do not gain access

to college at the same rate as white or Asian Americans" (p. 11). This review provided the researcher with discoveries from the literature and unpacked the current issues contributing to the Latino population's non-attainment of a bachelor's degree. Different federal, state, local, and private-sector organizations consistently work to ameliorate the issues that face the Latino student attainment gap yet continue to fall short (Vernez & Mizell, 2001, p. 33). The current general recommendations in past research have failed to produce substantive change.

Contributing Factors to the Problem

The contributing factors to the problem inform the current issues facing Latino students today. The socio-economic status of Latino college students and this impact is vital in understanding. Secondly, an assessment of discrimination and the internalized impact on vulnerable Latino populations of discriminatory practices requires evaluation. A critical exploration of issues that stem from Latino households and family backgrounds occurs. Lastly, a thorough review of how an institution's campus climate impacts the persistence of Latino students is required.

Socio-economics

The socio-economic status of Latino households is a contributing factor to the ongoing attainment gap of this population. According to William Elliot and Terri Friedline (2013), "A problem that lower-income Latino/Hispanic families face is that they have very little to save or to use for college after they pay all of their other expenses" (p. 149). Within these lower-income households, there is an understanding to prioritize funds for the family rather than higher education. Additionally, higher education has become a higher and higher expense, making it a luxury rather than a

necessity. The rising cost of attending higher education institutions has been a contention point within society over the last few decades. Latino students that seek to attend college often struggle to find the financial means to do so. These families' lower-income statuses cause this diverse group of learners to prioritize aspects of their life aside from a bachelor's degree. According to the Senior Director of Higher Education Research and Data Analytics at The Education Trust, the number of Latinos living in poverty and low income communities is disproportionate (Nichols, 2017). Low-income communities do not prepare diverse individuals for future education levels since the emphasis is on paying other expenses, as summed up by Elliot and Friedline.

Cyclical poverty in low-income communities is inescapable when individuals are unable to change their status within society. "Currently, one out of two Hispanic children live in families in the lowest income quartile, compared with one in four of Asians, and one in five for non-Hispanic whites" (Vernez & Mizell, 2001, p. 35). Individuals that live in poverty will not maintain a stress-free focus on their college attainment level. In 2015, Latino children under the age of 18 that lived in poverty were ten percentage points higher than the national average of 20% (McFarland et al., 2017). If an individual grows up in poverty, they will struggle to the exorbitant college expense as an investment in their own future. Increases in income within a household may help the student. However, increasing salaries in a household does not remedy this issue. According to research analyzed by the RAND Institute on Education and Training, "Permanent income has a systematic effect on achievement, although current income does not, suggesting that a policy of increasing current family income by itself may not translate into higher

achievement" (Grissmer et al., 1994, p. 47). The ongoing monetary concerns will continue to exacerbate the problem, and any short-sighted solution accomplishes little.

Cost is a significant factor in why Latino students may choose not to enroll or drop out of college while pursuing their bachelor's degrees. The Latino student will possibly decide to persist in higher education if they can visualize how a bachelor's degree can impact their life and outweigh the initial cost. The previous section shared the difficulties of tracking cost as a single issue as to why these students may opt to drop out or not attend college at all. The low-income nature of Latino students leads to their likelihood that they will not graduate college. This non-attainment continues the cycle of poverty for the next generation of these students.

Discrimination and Its Internalized Impact

The unique perspective of Latino immigrants in the United States impacts their ability to exist serenely in society. These Latino immigrants can be the primary students in higher education institutions, or they can send their children to college for the first time. These children of immigrants must "navigate between two worlds and begin to learn the culture of their new communities" as they "confront both positive and negative ethnic stereotypes for the first time" (Perreira et al., 2010, p. 134). In institutions of higher education, Latino students face significant obstacles towards bachelor's degree attainment. These students learn to internalize discriminatory practices by administrators and faculty and, over time, are negatively affected. Latino students "who perceive a great deal of injustice in the current status hierarchy (at the system level or directed against their group) are more likely to believe that such injustices permeate the academic establishment" (Schmader et al., 2001, p. 99). Whether manifested or perceived, injustice

significantly impacts whether a college-age Latino student chooses to persist in higher education institutions.

Institutions of higher education occasionally strive to provide equitable access to all students, regardless of their ethnicity. However, "Latinos are more likely than European Americans to report they have been victims of personal discrimination based on their ethnicity" (Major et al., 2002, p. 273). Latino students deal with layers of prejudice that impact their ability to focus on their schooling. Some studies focus on the romanticism of poverty and celebrate Latino students that overcome discrimination. According to Vela et al. (2015), "Positive psychology and familial factors have potential to impact Latina/o college students' psychological grit" (p. 292). While helpful in awarding Latino college students who overcome adversity, studies that focus on the psychological grit ignore the reality of the Latino plight and the daily discrimination that impacts these individuals. Discrimination has long-lasting impacts on Latino college students' psyche. Those who overcome these injustices merit increased support rather than a comfortability in research to provide these students an award and ignore the layered injustices they have suffered. According to Schmader et al. (2001):

> In sum, converging evidence suggests that negatively stereotyped ethnic minority students disengage their self-esteem from the academic domain more than do European American students and that these ethnic differences in disengagement are accompanied by ethnic differences in a tendency to discount the validity of academic feedback, but not by the ethnic differences in the value placed on academic success. (p. 98)

Latino students seeking to attain their bachelor's degrees are vulnerable to the layers of discrimination that overwhelm them in society. Some of these individuals can overcome misfortune and prejudice, while others continue forgotten in their path of non-attainment.

Family Background

Latino bachelor's degree attainment continues impacting households that have different unique family backgrounds and structures. According to Georges Vernez and Lee Mizell (2001), "Currently, about one out of every three Hispanic children (aged 0 to 17) are living in a family in which both parents have less than a high school education" (p. 34). The Latino household impacts the attitude toward bachelor's degree attainment for the individuals in the household. There exist risks and limitations within households that determine whether an individual will seek higher education. "Educational attainment of parents may be a proxy for the cognitive abilities of the parents and thus affect the innate endowment of the child" (Grissmer et al., 1994, p. 45). When a household has not prioritized degree attainment, this ideology continues to the next generation if left without intervention. In a household where individuals did not attain a degree, there is a barrier to understanding the resources needed and the difficult in the attainment of a college degree.

For some families, the college admissions process continues to be a tricky factor for households. Latino students that lack the college-educated family will find confusion and struggle to understand the intricacies of deadlines, forms, and application availabilities (Elliot & Parks, 2018). The Latino student can remain interested in attending institutions of higher education. The lack of knowledgeable individuals within their household negatively impacts any chance to understand and complete the college application process. There is an understanding that this at-risk population does not often receive the necessary information to apply to college or is provided this information too late (Rivera, 2014). Without the essential family support or knowledge from peers, Latino students have an extreme disadvantage compared to their white counterparts.

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The accessibility in a household varies from student to student. Additionally, as Latinos in the United States, "Family risk factors include coming from a low-income family or single-parent household, not having a parent who completed high school, and living in a household where the primary language is not English" (McFarland et al., 2017, p. 2). Latino students struggle to overcome aspects of risk factors within households when there is skepticism regarding the outcome of education. Familial attainment is a factor in the continued persistence of the Latino college student. Additionally, the ideal of reaching a bachelor's degree may fluctuate within a household. These fluctuations respond to a child's academic ability (Kim et al., 2013). While household members may push a Latino child to attain their bachelor's degree, different household circumstances create inconsistencies. These inconsistencies cultivate a household culture that negatively impacts the Latino student. Within Latino households, the students are more likely to spend seventeen or more hours per week attempting to fulfill all family obligations even at the detriment of their studies (Baker & Robnett, 2012). Even in households where education is at the forefront for Latino students, there is an understanding that "intergenerational transmission of educational attainment from parents to children vary by level of household economic resources" (Huang, 2013, p. 113). Latino college students continue in a cycle of adversity with consistent detrimental factors impacting them throughout their life. The family will is the priority causing the Latino student to sacrifice their ambitions for the family's benefit (Elliot & Parks, 2018, p. 13). The overall income and assets of the household impact the attainment of families. These two problematic factors persist together, conflicting households and afflicting Latino bachelor's degree attainment rates.

Latino college students who are not born in the United States have a higher rate of dropping out. For individuals born in the United States, Latino students are most likely to drop out of any other race or ethnicity student born in the United States, except American Indian/Alaska Native. Latino students born outside the United States suffer significantly, with a staggering 18.7% that may drop out (McFarland et al., 2017). The combination of the lack of household wealth in terms of college knowledge and the ongoing problem that continues to be unresolved is an issue. Latino students are either not applying to college or dropping out. These two write-offs to a diverse group of individuals are an extreme disservice to the population. This population that remains in cyclical poverty is on the verge of becoming the largest racial minority group in the United States. If this population continues to fail in social and educational areas, society will suffer extensively.

Institutional Campus Climate

The institution serves as a microcosm of society, and the institutions must respond to these individuals. The research shows an issue that impacts a Latino student's possibility of achieving a bachelor's level in an institution is the institution's climate and resources utilization. A sense of belonging in the institution is reflective of whether institutions are providing inclusive environments (Garcia, 2017, p. 23). The institution is responsible for cultivating an environment where the Latino student feels welcome. There is no question that the importance of Latino students' need to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance from their peers, faculty, and administrators is valuable (Elliot & Parks, 2018, p. 12). Latino students seek interconnectedness in their schooling that allows them

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to be comfortable. The underlying issue is that higher education institutions are ill-equipped to deal with Latino experiences' complexities.

Furthermore, bringing higher education institutions to a point where they could aid these individuals in their persistence is a cost many will choose not to incur. As noted by Consuelo Arbona and Amaury Nora (2007), "Academic integration, or the degree of students' academic involvement on campus, both in and out of the classroom, is significant in impacting persistence, transfer, and degree attainment" (p. 251). The understanding that the institution must provide opportunities that instill a level of comfort, and a sense of belonging cannot be understated. According to Vernez and Mizell (2001):

> Generally, Hispanic college seniors report to have been less satisfied with their college experience than their non-Hispanic white counterparts. When seniors were asked "whether they would choose to re-enroll at this college," only one out of three Hispanic seniors responded "definitely yes" compared with one out of two non-Hispanic white seniors. (p. 39)

When Latino students report that only one out of three would re-enroll at the college, the institutional campus climate fails them. The institution consistently underestimates the individual experiences of the Latino student at the college.

The campus culture and involvement of Latino students with this culture is an essential factor of continued persistence. Furthermore, the necessary access to different cultural wealth levels will help keep Latino students in the institution. As previously shared from the research, this population primarily drop out in their first year. The cost of bringing institutions up to speed on this equity may not be worth considering for these students' institutions as they will continue to drop out or not attend.

The Latino student's sense of belonging at an institution is an integral part of persistence. According to Strayhorn (2019), discussing the importance of the institution to serve as a bridge for students to support services:

> Student's perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respect, valued by, and important to the group or others on campus . . . It's a cognitive evaluation (i.e., 'I think these are my people') that typically leads to an affective response. (p.55)

The feeling of belongingness and acclimation to a college campus impacts students' desire to get involved or be a part of something bigger. The institution's support is critical, and Latino students who fail to connect with the institution deal with negative consequences. Latino students who struggle to find connection with the institution, the student body, or administrators will lead to further issues with acclimation and persistence.

There are Hispanic-Serving Institutions that provide a higher possibility of a more inclusive campus climate. HSIs serve the Latino student population, with a large percentage of Latino students in attendance. The shadow side to HSIs is that predominantly white institutions will choose not to concern themselves with Latino students' attainment (Laden, 2001, p. 89). As the Latino population grows, the argument will be for naught. The more Latino students apply to an institution, the more the percentage of these colleges will become parallel towards HSI territory. The necessity of an inclusive campus climate is vital for the continued growth of Latino students achieving their bachelor's degrees. However, higher education institutions fail to utilize the campus climate or apply it not to make a long-term difference for the Latino student.

Latino students who do not feel welcomed or comfortable in the institution will not persist.

Examination of Contributing Factors

In conclusion, many contributing factors impact Latino students' bachelor's degree attainment rate in higher education. Latino college students continue to encounter factors that influence their bachelor's degree attainment. Assessment of Latino students' socioeconomic status reveals a significant inability to keep up with higher education institutions' financial demand. The large sums of money cause these students to prioritize factors that will not limit their future funding. Discrimination and the perceived fear of stereotypes and prejudice negatively impact a student's yearning to continue college. As psychological factors weigh on Latino college students, families and institutions are inadequately prepared to support them. The family background of Latino students serves as another problematic factor towards the attainment of a degree. These students that lack a wealth of household knowledge and college understanding from caretakers will struggle to comprehend the limiting structures in play. Latino students within a household that lacks college experience begin at a disadvantage and may opt not to attend college entirely. Lastly, even if the Latino student attends an institution, the institution's transition may prove too difficult. According to J. Elliot and Parks, "Latino students respond well when they are supported academically, enter a campus environment they can navigate socially, and have financial resources made available to them" (p.17). There are plenty of options to assist these students in overcoming detrimental factors. An exploration of proposed solutions will help understand the multi-layered issues this population faces. Funding sources, hiring diverse faculty and staff, student life

programming, and institutional resources are helpful ways that this population can succeed. The current series of proposed solutions that currently exists requires consistent adjustment to assist these diverse populations.

The multiple approaches to proposed solutions have fallen short of decreasing the Latino student attainment gap. An evaluation within the literature finds that Latino college students increased their attainment from 2000–2016; however, this growth is minimal. Starting at about 10% in 2000 to about 18% in 2016, this does not remotely constitute significant growth (McFarland et al., 2017). Every other racial and ethnic group started at a higher starting point than Latino college students. For a population that will soon become the most significant racial minority group in the United States, this group's minimal attainment does not help the country's future. Perhaps with this knowledge, a review of possible solutions to provide real attainment gains will occur. Much of the literature focuses on the potential funding avenues that help this population. However, it becomes apparent that the issue is much deeper than a simple fix of financial aid structures.

Proposed Solutions

Without addressing Latino student issues and limitations, Latino attainment rates will continue to falter. In this chapter, the literature explored analyzes the proposed solutions by researchers. Thus far, these solutions have failed to deliver substantive change and are ineffective. This chapter presents a thorough outline of funding/aid/cost for the Latino student, the practice of hiring Latino faculty and staff, Latino student life programs, and institutional resources. These areas provide different initiatives that assist the Latino student in persisting toward their bachelor's degree. This chapter individually

explored each of these proposed solutions for gaps that exist within them. These gaps call into question whether any proposed initiative is making a difference for Latino student attainment rates.

Funding, Aid, and, Costs for Latino Students

Financial aid is an available monetary adjustment available to students, given they are eligible for such benefits. There are different types of loans and financial aid sources available for which students may apply. A standard solution that exists for students to continue their education is to take out loans. Another proposed solution, such as student loans, is available for college students from different ethnic backgrounds. However, Latino students, often already disadvantaged economically, may struggle to repay loans. According to a study conducted at Arizona State University:

> The risks for taking on student loan debt is higher for Hispanic/Latino Americans who are more likely to leave collect without completing their degree and who are more like to report greater hardship due to student loans than anticipated compared with White and Asian Americans. (Tran, Mintert, Llamas, & Lam, 2018, p. 465)

Latino students are more likely to drop out of higher education institutions regardless of receiving financial assistance. Additionally, this population is most likely to struggle to pay back student loans. This cause-and-effect relationship creates an endless cycle of impoverishment and debt that becomes stressful for Latinos to manage. According to a study done on low-income students dropping out of college, "Hispanics are found to be more likely to drop out of higher education in the first year. Low-income students also tend to have higher risks of dropping out than the other income groups" (Chen & DesJardins, 2010, p. 195). Latino students do not just struggle with the cost of college, but also the repayment of loans is something that they struggle to take on following degree attainment. The possibility of long-term loans deters the Latino students from

obtaining them, eventually effecting their enrollment. Further complicating financial aid issues, Latino students have a higher drop-out rate in the first year of higher education than any other ethnic group. Dropping out of school in the first year is something that requires further exploration. Students that drop out in their first year, especially those with initial funding, require helpful intervention from the institution. A different type of struggle is occurring for these students that are not financial.

Latino students may feel limited in their choices to attain loans or find funding. These limitations create situations for Latino students that add unnecessary stress. Tran et al. state, "Hispanic/Latino Americans express greater regret about student loan debt [e.g., wishing that they had borrowed less, making changes in career plans or feeling limited in educational choices due to student loans]" (2018, p. 465). Latino students feel higher levels of stress regarding their loan choices if they do indeed opt to attend college. The students feel trapped between the amount of debt they owe and the limitation of exploring different college paths as their resource pool diminishes. Latino students are not being set up for collegiate attainment because they struggle to coexist with the resources allotted to them. They still drop out and experience levels of regret and stress when reflecting on loans or aspects of their collegiate experience. Access to further funding does not always resolve individuals' problems, especially in the case of Latino students that deal with multiple layers of subjugation. Even in situations where individual Latino students can repay institutions, the United States' exorbitant cost marks this solution as a near-impossibility.

Continued funding of any student, let alone exclusively Latino students, will cost millions of dollars to the United States. According to Vernez and Mizell (2001):

Assuming an average of $5,507 for today's aid package to a student from a low-income family at a public four-year college, the cost of offering financial aid to Hispanic students in 2010 would be roughly $170 million (in 2000 dollars). Meeting the rest of their unmet needs would require another $117 million in financial assistance. Doubling the rate at which Hispanics graduate with a bachelor's degree would add a conservative estimate of half a billion dollars in need for financial aid on an annual basis. (p. 44)

Feasibly, the continued funding of Latino students for the foreseeable future is a difficult ask. Institutions of higher education cannot fund these students without significantly cutting necessary resources or programs that benefits the entire student body.

The institution's responsibility in fostering an equitable means for these individuals to have a chance to learn and graduate is necessary. Financial aid packages and possible funding sources have limitations. These packages are finite and consistently depend on stakeholder and political buy-in. Additionally, the political fallout from the possible funding of exclusively one group of students will impact the Latino student's climate in the institution's grander scheme. This potential solution falls short of providing tangible long-term change for the Latino student who weighs attending college because there are limited funds.

Hiring Latino Faculty and Staff

A proposed solution that is often referenced in the literature concerns itself with diverse faculty and staff hiring. According to Emily R. Crawford and Edward J. Fuller, "One potential issue affecting the underperformance of Latino students is the lack of Latino educators—including school leaders" (2017, p. 1169). Providing administration that understands Latino students' unique backgrounds and problems continues as a possible cure-all for the low attainment rates. A study done in the San Francisco Bay Area in Northern California found that when participants had to choose an individual at

the institution that should lead diversity and inclusion initiatives they stated, "Faculty had the greatest degree of responsibility for creating this environment" (Elliott et al., 2013, p. 8). Within higher education institutions, diverse student bodies provide the administration with the proof needed to hire diverse individuals. The institution maintains hiring practices to engage diverse individuals consistent with the student body demographics. The immense hope for institutions is that by presenting the diverse body of administrators and faculty to the student body, diverse students' retention will increase. However, this solution continues to exist, and campus climate surveys administered to showcase diverse faculty and staff that serve as a smokescreen to the greater issue at hand. Latino bachelor's degree attainment rates continue to stay stagnant as these administrators, faculty, and department heads persist in their roles.

The hiring of diverse faculty and staff fails to be the panacea to an issue that has spanned decades is the inclusion of these staff members in the bigger picture of the institution. According to C.M. Elliot et al. (2013), when strategizing how to best serve diverse students with diverse faculty:

> In addition, faculty, staff, and students should collaborate on how best to infuse curricula with diversity and inclusion so that it is consistent, apparent, and relevant, and it contributes to the learning outcomes for each course. It was clear that these efforts thus far are ad hoc, and need specific attention. (p. 8)

The keyword from this statement is the idea of *ad hoc*. There are many solutions strategized to increase the Latino attainment rate. However, the administration continues to piece these solutions together as needed rather than conduct an exhaustive reevaluation of what this group truly needs to graduate with a bachelor's degree. Much of the faculty and administration at many regional universities are predominantly white, and the experiences with Latino students are limited (Haro, 2004, p. 213). The hiring of diverse

faculty and staff allows for Latino students to identify with individuals. However, the hiring of these individuals has not dictated the closing of the Latino attainment gap.

While a valuable and supportive solution, institutions must not remain close-minded to the Latino college students' exact problems. According to a study done by Lisa Anne Rodriguez (2008), "There is a definite need for faculty in all disciplines and high level staff positions to provide programs and support systems and be readily available to Latino students who might not other actively seek academic help" (p. 31). Latino college students benefit from faculty and mentors that reach out and look out for their academic growth. However, there are not enough minority staff members working in colleges to meet students' emotional and personal needs (Laden, 2001, p. 80). There is a balance within higher education institutions between hiring diverse faculty and staff and providing students mentors of color. The emphasis placed on the diverse faculty and staff places a higher demand on the individuals' time due to the necessary cross-cultural effort needed for the study body (Laden, 2001, p. 85). These overworked faculty and administrators will struggle within their roles to progress forward or become promoted, starting a cycle of possible firing and new hiring. However, much like resources available to Latino college students—these are finite, and colleges continue to lack the capabilities to make a difference utilizing diverse faculty. Even with the allotment of resources, evaluations of programs offered at the institution require in-depth research.

Latino Student Life Programs

Student life programs at institutions of higher education consistently function to assist the college student. Throughout institutions across the nation, these programs look different. Many of these programs are put into effect by administration tailor to the

student body. Student life programs exist in forms such as student clubs and organizations and celebrations of heritage months. These helpful but often too broad community builders leave Latino students desiring more. One of these programs takes the form of student clubs for different racial groups. According to Karen Inkelas (2004), "These groups include, but are not limited to: fraternities and sororities open solely to membership among one racial/ethnic group, [and] cultural groups that celebrate one specific racial or ethnic heritage" (p. 285). Student life offerings of communities and organizations at a college campus based on the ethnic background of the student body are an available solution for the continued persistence of Latino students. Student life programs and organizations offer a safe space for Latino students' self-development amongst similar peers and the student body. However, a criticism of minority-based student groups is that there is no room for these students to cooperate with members of other racial groups and may prove unfavorable to the progress of minority students (Baker, 2008, p. 280).

Additionally, the contributions of Latinos in the United States necessitate celebration during designated months or inclusion initiatives practiced through the observance of holidays during the academic year (Wiggan et al., 2014, p. 60). Latino celebrations and inclusionary programs in student life agendas often fall short of their sole purpose. These cultural celebrations exist within designated days or months of the year, where broad ideologies coincide on the calendar. The programs can fail to accomplish a positive institutional campus climate, negatively impacting Latino students' relationship with the institution.

Student life programs continue to underperform and negatively impact Latino college-age students. Programs continue to exist within institutions of higher education that fall short of enhancing completion rates. According to Habley et al. (2012):

> Intra-institutional student success should not focus on the layering on of fringe programs and services. Rather, we call upon campuses to intensify efforts to extend and expand programs and services that have stood the test of time. Those services—assessment and developmental education, academic advising, and student transition programs—are at the heart of student success. (p. 234)

Institutions must continue to evaluate the student life programs and offerings of inclusion to increase retention. With constant year-long offerings by institutions that continue to provide minimal impact on the Latino attainment gap, colleges must reconsider what is genuinely worthwhile as an institutional program. If programs and inclusionary initiatives continue to operate with no evaluation layer, then the disservice to these students will continue. While student life programs can help create environments that enhance students' learning, institutions continue to fall short of making substantive change.

Institutional Resources

Cost and campus climate plays a part in Latino students' persistence toward their bachelor's degree in higher education institutions. The scope of an institution's work for its' student body can be the most impactful aspect of a student's experience. Institutions offer a series of initiatives, programs, and resources to students to assist the student body. These programs serve the student body to understand what is needed of them both professionally and academically. A study conducted at colleges and universities with twenty percent or more Hispanic students to discover resources an institution utilizes to retain its' students found:

> Seventy-nine percent of all four-year colleges or universities with ≥ 20% Hispanic student enrollment indicated a person on their campus was responsible for the

coordination of retention programs, while 21% indicated there was no person responsible for such coordination. The position titles for these individuals varied widely. From among the 13 positions listed, Assistant/Associate Provost/ Chief Academic Affairs Officer/Dean, and Chief Enrollment Officer were most frequently selected by 12% each. (Habley et al., 2010, p. 1)

In 2010, the climate taken of higher education institutions found that colleges with greater than 20% of Latino student enrollment had minimal resources allocated towards student retention. An example of a crucial resource to the attainment of Latino college students is any retention programming. In this study, the data explicitly clarifies that the prioritization of institutional resources allocated towards student retention, especially of the Latino students, is not happening. One person overseeing the possible retention initiatives of a unique population struggling to attain their bachelor's degree is not enough.

Once enrolled, the institution must understand the fragile cross-section between the cost incurred by these students. Additionally, the institution must comprehend its students' financial and social backgrounds. Lastly, an understanding of the campus climate requires acknowledgment. These factors cause their Latino students to withdraw and become just another statistic of Latino non-attainment. Institutions must create programs and partner with individuals to create unique learning experiences to boost institutional student persistence. "DirectConnect, in which the University of Central Florida partners with local community colleges" (Habley et al., 2010, p. 1). The University of Central Florida works with community colleges to increase the number of Latino students it may receive as transfers from community colleges. There are circumstances where students do not feel that they are supported when transferring from another college, especially a two-year college (Vernez & Mizell, 2001, p. 39). While this

program's adaptation is accessible nationwide and has had success for the University of Central Florida, this program only aids Latino students that enroll at a community college. The intricacies of complex transfer applications and already existing student loan debt are not conducive to have this population succeed from a simple transfer program.

Work at individual institutions is needed to increase persistence. If the institution does not shift its' focus towards the offerings available for diverse learners, these students will continue not to graduate. Campus leaders, administration, and staff must brainstorm the priorities of the institution when providing accessible resources. With the growing number of Latino students, college populations will eventually face an influx of this student body and not rethink solutions and offerings to impact this population negatively. Analyses of institutional resources continue because, in many cases, these resources will be a last stand of sorts for the Latino student that will choose to persist or drop out. Higher education institutions need to understand that Latino students may not have reached the level of scholastic achievement necessary for college admission (Elliot & Parks, 2018, p. 15). Transferring students to an institution is detrimental if the senior institution's resources do not materialize or are not ready for diverse learners.

Furthermore, many Latinos who enroll in higher education institutions require resources and intervention in English and mathematics, but many do not receive it (Vernez & Mizell, 2001, p. 33). A study that evaluated Latino persistence toward degree attainment found that "students' cumulative grade point average at the end of their first year in college was three times more important in college persistence for Hispanic and African American students than it was for their White counterparts" (Arbona & Nora, 2007, p. 249). If institutions continue to offer resources that are not interested in the

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student's success toward graduation, then the administration must determine these programs as ineffective and change them.

The effectiveness of resources is a researchable consideration at an institution that quickly occurs with an administration that focuses on creating tangible transformations. According to a study done on the utilization of college resources:

> Troubling is the rate at which Latino/a students are accessing college resources (i.e., college representative, college publication or website, and college search guides). A little more than 20% of Latino/a students have not accessed these resources for information about college, the highest percentage of any racial/ethnic group. In addition, a look at the highest rate at which students access college resources, at least three times, a smaller percentage of Latino/a students (26%) do so. This is between 7 and 12 percentage points lower than students from other racial/ethnic groups. (Martinez & Cervera, 2012, p. 395)

Resources are currently not benefitting the student. In instances where the resources help the student, the institution fails to make offerings clear to students. If the institution offers resources with low utilization rates by the Latino student body, those resources are possibly not worthwhile. Many aspects of the literature have previously revealed that Latino college students may not fully understand the college's different aspects or necessary timelines. Institutions must apply this same frame of thinking to the offerings they provide students. A measurement of this effectiveness at an institution can help analyze where funding serves the best purpose. Institutions of higher education must explore current resources. According to Vernez and Mizell (2001):

> A better understanding of the effectiveness of programs that have already been developed to help disadvantaged students at various stages in their education should be developed. To date, few reliable evaluations have examined the effects of current programs on college-going and persistence. Without such analysis, it is difficult to make wise decisions about which interventions to invest in and expand. (p. 45)

Presently, institutions offer a broader array of resources for its' student body. These resources vary, but all strive to increase the success of the students they serve. Higher education institutions' focus should be to shift the frame of thinking that currently exists to dictate what are resources to the student body. Leaders must develop and assess what is truly a resource and an attempt to check off a box. Possible solutions' introductions cannot continue if there is no analysis of the overall outcomes. The primary method of campus surveys or noting attendance at a resource center on campus is not enough to constitute success. Institutions need to re-evaluate the resources they offer students based on the actual needs of the student body.

Conclusion

Currently, Latino students' bachelor's degree attainment contends with a series of contributing factors to the attainment gap and possible solutions that institutions utilize to alleviate the problem. These contributing factors continue to set back the Latino population, which will become one of the largest minority groups in the United States. As evidenced by the literature, there is currently a gap in a possible solution. The solutions offered do not go far enough to alleviate the problem. If society focuses on the current suggestions, Latino students in college will not complete their bachelor's degrees. Funding for Latino students is a possible solution presented that is unreasonable. Funding is dependent per institution and student, meaning that any change to funding sources or totals negatively impacts Latino students. A second possible option to increase Latino attainment is the hiring of diverse faculty and staff. These hiring practices benefit students, but without an increase in graduation rates, this option requires reevaluation. Latino student life programs are helpful, but their general nature leaves much to be

desired for the Latino student attempting to persist. These programs may connect with the Latino student in a broad sense but fall short of celebrating Latino cultures' individual wealth. Institutional resources serve as another example to assist Latino bachelor's degree attainment rates. However, individual institutions run different resources without consistency.

Additionally, students may consider resources differently than the institution. An institution that offers a comprehensive writing center that caters to Latino students may not be necessary if the Latino students are not utilizing it. This concept is that individuals who do not directly face the problem make decisions for an institution. It is easier to provide an umbrella solution when the assessments and rich cultural narratives become forgotten and ignored by higher education administration.

An assessment of the current resources is vital to increase the attainment rate. As made clear by Vernez and Mizell (2001), "There is also a need to expand outreach and support programs that provide counseling, mentoring, tutoring, and remediation" (p. 44). These expansions provide understandings of specific resources available at institutions that require evaluation. An in-depth assessment of the current resources available at an institution, how they serve the Latino student, and how this population prioritizes resources due to lived experiences is necessary to positively impact the Latino bachelor's degree attainment rate.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

This study was necessary as its purpose is unique and impactful, given the literature gaps about the graduation rates of Latino students and the understanding of how they can succeed in college. The literature review encompassed a series of contributing factors to the problem of Latino bachelor's degree attainment. Additionally, the literature review provided a series of proposed solutions that institutions and stakeholder entities have implemented to no avail. Different approaches to the problem have resulted in minimal results. The continuing failure of a rotating door of proposed solutions is a borderline injustice to this population. The following section divulged the researcher's approach toward ameliorating this complex issue and answering the research questions that guide this study.

The conclusion of the previous chapter articulated the need for a different approach to this problem. Instead of focusing on umbrella-like approaches to a complex issue that requires deep analytical and cultural contexts, researchers should analyze existing institutional resources and their utilization by Latino students. Researchers seeking to introduce new solutions need an understanding of the unique lived experiences of their participants. These lived experiences influence how Latino students prioritize the resources that exist at an institution. This approach allowed for the delicate balance of analyzing the current resources with how the population utilizing these resources interpret them. The nature of this study and the gaps in the literature necessitate the

utilization of a qualitative study. This qualitative study provided understanding and context of the Latino college student and their lived experiences. This study addressed the answers to two primary research questions:

1. What do Latino students understand as resources vital toward graduation at Eastern College?

2. How do Latino lived experiences influence what resources at an institution they will utilize throughout college to succeed, engage, and subsequently graduate?

Qualitative research questions are best suited to ascertain detailed descriptions from participants. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), "qualitative research is interpretive research; the inquirer is typically involved in a sustain and intensive experience with participants" (p. 183). The qualitative research questions utilized for this study allowed the researcher to explore diverse individuals' lived experiences. The first question focused on the resources available at an institution and which Latino students prioritize pursuing a college degree. The second primary research question explored the unique cultural context and positionality that influence Latino college learners' utilization of resources. Through these two questions, the researcher identified a unique collection of data that provided a thorough understanding of the issue at hand and how it impacts Latino college learners.

Researcher Perspective and Positionality

The researcher was the primary tool in this qualitative case study. My disclaimer with this study is my position in the study itself. As a Latino in the United States that attended college, I have felt that Latino students often receive the short end of the stick in terms of resources and long-term planning towards degree attainment. I am a Colombian immigrant that has attained various levels of education in the United States. My journey

began with my mother leaving a tumultuous situation in Cali, Colombia, and arriving in the United States undocumented. My mother worked tirelessly to make ends meet. Her focus was on assimilation and for me to begin and continue my education in the United States.

As an undergraduate, I attended a mid-sized institution in the northeastern United States. During this time, I did not see any issues with the way institutions ran or resource allotment. My upbringing instilled an aggressive mentality, challenging me to focus on overcoming my circumstances and entertaining hopefulness while lacking the mindset to visualize this. If I had problems with my schooling and education, I was the responsible element for this struggle. The institution, culturally, received a pass on resources allocated to students. The institution could do no wrong according to the context of my South American upbringing. If I did not grasp a concept, a tutor was not the answer to this. I accepted this as the norm for societal approaches to Latino students. I believed the answer was working harder, or maybe I was a lazy student with a learning hindrance.

I had guidance counselors and advisors recommend I take gap years or transfer to a community college. Due to the cultural nature of my household, my mother agreed. She never had the chance to attend college or understand any of the complicated paperwork that went into an application; these touchpoints and resources let her know I was not ready for a bachelor's degree. I persisted with my bachelor's degree, digging myself out of borderline academic probation during the first year of my undergraduate experience. I finished my master's degree in a year and kind of sat still for years. I had internalized the assimilation mentality that my mother imbued in me as I went from green card holder to citizen in 2014. I always had a gnawing feeling about my experiences growing up;

however, becoming a citizen meant I needed to leave certain cultural aspects behind to succeed.

My perspectives grew while working in higher education with students who felt and lived some of the experiences I had when I was younger. While I maintained a helpful façade, I did not honestly fully believe in understand my identity at the time. It was not until 2016 and 2017 came around that I discovered who and what I was.

As an undocumented immigrant to the United States, I struggled with the media explosion on xenophobic rhetoric and immigrant children in detention centers. I could not reconcile how a country my mother and I loved and gave so much to could not find it in their core to love us back. My mother chose to assimilate further to ignore conflict, and I chose the opposite route to her dismay.

I utilized my experiences to launch many of the initiatives I started in my workplace and public advocacy. I embraced who I was, where I came from, and how I was *lucky* to get to where I was. I use the term *lucky* because the concept of *pulling yourself up by your bootstraps* is a misleading cliché phrase utilized by individuals that can turn a blind eye to the injustices of a people. I dug deeper into educational inequities that marred the growth of children like myself, read the reports of learning disabilities, and diagnoses for cultural misunderstandings by educators who had not immersed themselves in their population's needs.

My higher education work allowed me to understand that I did not have the resources to succeed when I was younger. Some fault of this fell on the institution, and some of that fell on my understanding of how schools worked. My interpretation of resources based on my household and cultural upbringing was pivotal in using the

resources. My experience is that of one person, full of detailed, thick descriptions, which is why I have utilized the multiple case study to collect of data of Latino college students' lived experiences.

My positionality to Eastern College is that I currently work there in a professional capacity. I believe Eastern College strives to serve its students but due to gaps in the literature, the college, like many around the United States, falls short of connecting institutional resources with the needs of their Latino learners. My hope with this study was to shed light on issues plaguing the Latino population in the United States that are forgotten or misunderstood. While this study might not immediately solve the problem at hand across the United States, I challenge those who utilize it to be a stepping stone for substantive change.

Theoretical Frameworks

This study's initial chapter emphasized the a priori conceptual framework that utilized aspects of LatCrit. Using LatCrit as an analytical guide was necessary due to the research focusing on a dominant Eurocentric ideology that minimizes and devalues the skills, intelligence, and attainment of Latino students (Bernal, 2002). This population's devaluing allows for a hodgepodge approach to proposed solutions that continue to fail this population. This framework provided the reader with the necessary tools to understand the study's unique cultural context via its LatCrit and Critical Race Theory elements to understand the researcher's arrival to this study's findings. LatCrit confirms, affirms, and validates experiences and responses to various forms of oppression and stories (Bernal, 2002). LatCrit allows for the tools to understand the epistemological practices in the United States regarding Latino individuals. According to Sandra Harding,

epistemology explains the theory of knowledge and who can know, what is known, and why information is known (Harding, 1987). Furthermore, dominant epistemologies in the United States have produced narratives of educational idleness regarding Latino individuals.

The primary research questions focused on the resources Latino students are aware of at an institution. The secondary research question explored the unique cultural context and positionality that influence Latino college learners' utilization of resources. The elements of LatCrit and Critical Race Theory introduced throughout the narrative, and the cultural wealth of the research allow the reader to understand the constructs that impact a Latino college student. The information disseminated and gathered allowed for a unique collection and interpretation of data. Cultural wealth is pivotal to the growth and educational attainment of a Latino college student. Many assumptions impact data collection and analysis that LatCrit and the researcher provide awareness to allow fruitful and straightforward data triangulation. One assumption, according to Clarena Larrotta and Jesse Gainer is:

> A commonly held assumption based in deficit thinking posit that parents … are not interested in their children's education, do not have literacy skills necessary to help their children with schoolwork, and do not spend time reading with their children at home. (2008, p. 45)

There are stakeholders and educational systems that believe that Latino college learners' home environment does not support their attainment. This misunderstanding exists due to data interpretation that has historically underserved Latino college students. Bernal (2002) focuses on defining elements of LatCrit that seek to challenge the way race is understood, utilizing the unique cultural stories of Latino individuals.

LatCrit is at its strongest when it aims to provide a lens to challenge epistemologies. Using LatCrit as a guiding lens and framework allowed the researcher to uniquely analyze this group of diverse learners historically marginalized, ignored, and written off. At its absolute core, one tenet "requires that Latinos not be viewed as deficient or disadvantaged because of their racial or ethnic identity, gender, class, immigration status, generation status or language ability" (Villalpando, 2004, p. 46). The literature and researchers that often critique Latino students do so from a cultural deficiency point of view.

The conversation becomes about the Latino individual's struggle due to their identity but not of "not having access to better-resourced schools, a competent health care system, or fair-paying jobs" (p. 46). This approach to deficit thinking forces this population into a box that allows researchers to define and enforce the dominant ideology. This study sought to utilize a LatCrit guiding lens to identify the dominant ideologies and epistemologies while analyzing emerging themes that celebrate and embrace Latino college students' unique lived experiences.

The data analysis of a unique cultural context was critical to the elements of this study. According to Octavio Villalpando, "LatCrit can help higher education practitioners develop more responsive and comprehensive approaches that enhance the educational experience of Latino college students" (2004, p. 48). Analyzing Latino learners in higher education institutions requires staff and faculty to understand that this population views resources and support uniquely. As mentioned previously in this section, the unique population of Latino individuals in college requires an approach to data collection and analysis that focuses on their individuality. Bernal (2002), building on the work of

Solórzano (1998), developed five tenets that encompass elements of LatCrit in relationship to educational research (Table 3.1). These elements serve as the framework in which the researcher coded and analyzed the data.

Table 3.1

Five Tenets of LatCrit

Tenet	Tenet Information
Tenet One	The importance of transdisciplinary approaches (seeks to embrace ethnic studies and various disciplines to critique predominantly white ideologies)
Tenet Two	An emphasis on experiential knowledge (viewing the learned experience of students of color as a strength instead of a con)
Tenet Three	A challenge to dominant ideologies (challenging of the power dynamic of dominant white-centric ideologies)
Tenet Four	The centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination
Tenet Five	A commitment to social justice

These five tenets of LatCrit were pivotal in applying framework analysis and codes once the researcher conducted an initial coding via thematic analysis of the multiple case study. Utilizing LatCrit as a lens to analyze data is crucial when arriving at emerging themes that can easily be mistaken and misinterpreted due to the dominant epistemology engrained in society. Diverse learners have a unique internalization of lived experiences that impact data collection and data analysis.

Research Design and Rationale

The natural setting needed to collect data for this study necessitates a qualitative approach to the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 181). A multiple case study allowed for the emerging themes to arise from the population researched. According to Robert Yin:

The aim is not to consider the case in such a case study as a sample of a larger

population of like cases, but to discover patterns and processes within the case
and to use analytic generalization to extract the lessons learned. (2016, p. 105)

A multiple case study allowed for in-depth information and description to develop through rich interview data. There are aspects of this multiple case study research that may provide significant narrative. The multiple case study research allowed for the exploration of "multiple bounded systems (cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection" (Creswell et al., 2007, p. 245). A case study is the only viable option to conduct this research due to the research questions focusing on how and why questions (Yin, 2018). This case study sought to study a real-life situation that is difficult to replicate in a laboratory setting, which is considered a strength for the multiple case study approach (Yin, 2004).

The multiple case study was ideal for this research as it allowed for articulating unique data about an event that impacts individuals. The researcher utilized the study to "explain causal links and pathways" of the Latino participant sample (Crowe et al., 2011, p. 4). The sampling comprised of a stratified purposive sample of currently enrolled participants. Approaching this study with the multiple case study design and the participants noted allowed for gathering detailed data descriptions without limiting the participant pool based on their resources or grade point averages at Eastern College.

A qualitative study was the best route to explore the lived experiences and elicit detailed descriptions of Latino students. Merriam stated that "the key to understanding qualitative research lies with the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world" (2002, p. 3). Latino college students are a unique population of individuals in the United States. The researcher ascertained that Latino college students' unique lived experience and their interpretations of graduation needs, a

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qualitative case study is the only approach possible. In qualitative research, it is crucial to understand that the "researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and data analysis" (Merriam, 2002, p. 5). As the researcher, I believed the approach, methodology, and data collection choices were necessary to discover Latino college students' lived experiences.

Additionally, the one-on-one interviews allowed for the researcher to immerse themselves with the participants. The meaning and interpretation of the participants are valuable to a case study. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), "in the entire qualitative research process, the researchers keep a focus on learning the meaning that the participants hold about the problem of issue, not the meaning the researchers bring" (p. 182). The semi-structured interviews of this multiple case study allowed the researcher to discover the meaning of Latino college students.

In this study, a multiple case study allowed for exploring Latino college students' perspectives and experiences. These students' lived experiences were valuable to understand their approaches to university resources and the rationale of these resources' utilization. Understanding Latino students' interpretation of resources vital toward graduation at Eastern College was crucial in answering the research questions.

Site of Selection and Participant Sampling

The site for this study was Eastern College, a mid-sized public institution in the Northeast United States. The conducted case study interviews occurred via video conferencing. The researcher utilized the same site for every participant to establish an equitable approach to the interview process. This data collection strategy required permission from Eastern College. The utilization of video conferencing interviews arose

from the COVID-19 pandemic as access to students was limited. Although the interviews were unable to occur in person, the researcher adjusted the scheduling of interviews around participant needs. As evidenced by the literature review, Latino populations that live in poverty often reside in an under-resourced household, which is usually an indicator of "constrained access to the internet and new communication technologies" (Katz & Gonzalez, 2016, p. 59). The utilization of this site was to provide an accessible location for the college students of Eastern College. Some individuals do not have equitable resources at home to undertake phone calls or video calls. Higher education institutions often operate with an illusion that "Latinos have an opportunity to succeed that is equal to that of majority white students" (Villalpando, 2004, p. 44). While many researchers reproduce this ideology, this ideology was not this study's approach as the researcher understands that inequalities exist. Researchers who genuinely wish to ameliorate the issue at hand must provide as much equitable access as possible—utilizing video conferencing allowed the researcher to adjust to any internet access issues. While no participant had issues with a stable internet connection for video conferencing, the researcher shared with students that the interview could pivot to phone calls if they did have issues. Video conferencing allowed for minimalizing interruptions that could have occurred in a public space at the college. The participants utilizing video conferencing allowed the researcher to provide a comfortable context when conducting interviews.

For this study, stratified, purposive sampling of enrolled or graduated participants was vital for the research. The participants of this study needed to reflect the diversity of their population. This study utilized the term Latino throughout the narrative, understanding the varying identities of individuals that would participate. The small

number of cases allow the researcher to utilize different Latino participants from different areas of the world to represent the experience of their population at Eastern College. Utilizing enrolled and graduated participants allowed the researcher to explore an equitable series of factors with this subset. The participants received a series of recruitment messages to ascertain their interest in the study. Additionally, meticulous recruitment messaging demonstrated the need for a special population for the research but refrained from discovering quantitative information that may decrease validity for this study's purpose. The researcher limited any information regarding student GPA, test scores, or class standings to ascertain rich, thick, qualitative experiences. The sampling population encompassed unique Latino students in their educational journey at Eastern College. The participants selected for this study provided a contextual and cultural lens that is thematically interpretable via LatCrit while adding a layer of understanding through their relationship to Eastern College. Perhaps by utilizing LatCrit to understand these individuals' lived experiences, the researcher understood the resources contextually available and uniquely utilized at Eastern College.

Data Collection Procedures

In order to understand the lived experiences of Latino college students and how these experiences impact their understanding and utilization of resources, person-to-person interviews proved necessary. According to Merriam (2009), compelling qualitative interviewing is more open-ended and less structured. This study utilized semi-structured interviews to inspire rich details and a unique understanding of Latino college students. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to have flexibility in the interview process. However, to ensure reliability, the researcher utilized an interview

protocol as a guide (see Appendix A). According to Merriam (2009), "the largest part of the interview is guided by a list of questions or issue to be explored, and neither the exact wording nor the order of questions is determined ahead of time" (p. 90). The semi-structured interview approach allowed the researcher to embrace the cultural narratives to emerge, rather than limit culturally significant information to develop. The utilization of the semi-structured interview process additionally allowed the researcher to discover emerging themes from the Latino population interviewed. Allowing for empathetic follow-up and responses, the participant provided the researcher with unique cultural explanations and understandings. The researcher followed up in the semi-structured format and utilized their unique positionality to explore and expound.

Qualitative interviews allowed the researcher to conduct face-to-face interviews with the sample population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Purposive sampling was the ideal approach to this qualitative case study. According to Flick (2018), "The key idea underlying purposive sampling is to select instances that are information-rich to answer the research question" (p. 88). The chosen sampling was specific to a unique set of circumstances and experiences in the Northeast United States. The choice of having seven cases while considered a limiting factor allowed for the "selecting information-rich instances that are relevant to the research questions and sample composition are considered more important than sample size" (Flick, 2018, p. 89). Sampling is a key component of any research design, and the utilization of a multiple case study approach allowed for significant exploration of rich information.

The data collection process consisted of a series of steps, the first being the identification and recruitment of participants. The researcher's outreach utilized an

introductory email to a mailing list provided by Eastern College information gatekeepers (Appendix E). Table 3.2 describes the population eligible for this study and the appropriate description of how participant sorting occurs. The researcher explained the research to all possible participants via email. The students that received the email understood the anonymity of their responses and subsequent participation. The participants in this study emailed understood that they belonged to one of two categories: being currently enrolled in Eastern College or graduated from Eastern College within the last two years. The participant also understood that to participate, they identify as Latino/a, LatinX, or a delineation of this population. Lastly, the participant recognized that the study required them to discuss collegiate and personal experiences pursuing a college degree. According to Eastern College and Baylor IRB, the participants also had to identify as being 18 years of age.

Table 3.2

Students Eligible for Study and Definitions of Eligibility

Enrolled	Graduated
Current student at Eastern College taking full-time credits (12) or higher. Must be enrolled in a degree-seeking program	Students that have attained their bachelor's degree from Eastern College within two academic years of the data collection semester

Participants that responded to the email and met the criteria received an invitation to a one-on-one video conference interview.

The subsequent step upon the researcher receiving signed consent forms was the disbursement of a pre-study questionnaire to participants who agreed to be in the study. The pre-study questionnaire further confirmed the participant was over 18 years old and

met the necessary criteria of the study. The pre-study questionnaire's purpose was to obtain initial information via a Likert scale to understand the participant before the one-on-one interview.

The next step was the reception of the participant at the location where the data collection process occurred. On the day of the interview, the researcher hosted the video conferencing interviews. Once the participant arrived, the researcher provided the participant with an agenda (Appendix B) for review. The agenda stated the necessary time commitment for the one-on-one interviews, previously shared with the participant. The researcher took this time to ascertain that the participant knew the information and time commitment sought. Additionally, the participants were encouraged to ask outstanding questions regarding the agenda and the study. Lastly, the participant became educated on their options to end the study or choose to no longer participate. This process assisted in establishing rapport in further minimizing any participant harm.

Lastly, the researcher undertook the interview process with the participant. Following the protocol for qualitative interviews, the "interviews involve unstructured and generally open-ended questions that are few in number and intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 187). Face-to-face interviews allowed the researcher to receive any cultural context and background while allowing for a series of questions and empathetic responses. The researcher's interview protocol shared with the participant required consent (Appendix D). The researcher recorded audio, video, and live transcription via the video conferencing platform. Additionally, the researcher took handwritten notes during the interviews. These handwritten notes provided reference points and opportunities for the researcher to follow

up for further lines of inquiry. Interviews were uploaded into NVivo for data collection

and analysis. The interviews were transcribed and filtered for themes. The researcher

combined the auto coding feature with handwritten codes for validity on emerging

themes. Interviews were searched utilizing key words from handwritten interview notes.

Person-to-person interviews were the primary means of data gathered. Semi-

structured interviews required the researcher to understand that individuals respond in

unique ways (Merriam, 2009). As outlined in this study, the Latino population is

distinctive. The approach of utilizing LatCrit as a guiding lens required the researcher to

consider semi-structured interviews as the only possibility of data collection. In this

study, lived experiences, emotions, and ideologies are discernable only through in-person

interviews. The protocols followed in Appendix A allowed the researcher flexibility and

transcribed notes and summaries in the allotted column. This documentation of narrative

information was pivotal for the researcher to analyze and recognize emerging themes.

Follow-up questions required notations and transcription in the notes column to identify

any emerging themes at the moment from information relayed by the participant.

Data Analysis Procedures

The first step of this study's data analysis process involved the researcher initially

organizing and arranging the data. This step allowed the researcher to explore and read

all information for an opportunity to reflect and organize. NVivo was utilized to store all

transcribed interview information and highlighted researcher notes. This allowed the

researcher to consistently evaluate the emerging themes and continue to build codes the

represented the rich description of the multiple case study. This organization period was

crucial to establish validity and congruence at an initial stage. The data consisted of

transcribed interviews and handwritten notes that emerged throughout the interview process. Reading and managing all the data allowed the researcher further confirmation that all data needed was complete.

The second step of this study's data analysis utilized the organized data files and reading emerging ideas within the data and forming initial codes. The following list depicts the eight steps usually used in forming codes as detailed by Tesch (1990) and outlined by Creswell & Creswell (2018). The adapted process utilized by the researcher keeps the integrity of Tesch's original work:

1. Get a sense of all information. Read all the transcribed data and take notes.

2. Sift through individual documents that are of interest. Write notes about why the information was of interest.

3. Once steps 1-2 are complete, write down all topics and themes. Cluster together information that is similar and organize it.

4. Using this list, begin to build codes to organize data into usable chunks.

5. Use the most interesting or descriptive word or theme and turn it into a category. Reduce categories by analyzing possible groups or sub-categories.

6. Decide on what categories will become a theme.

7. Bring together all data belonging to a category and analyze to make sure it fits.

8. If needed, recode all information.

In qualitative research, the development and ongoing organization of data are essential. When "data are the only source," a researcher needs to organize and categorize the data collected (Tesch, 1990, p. 142). Utilizing Tesch's steps, once data transcription was complete, the researcher conducted initial coding and subsequently coded the data according to the guiding framework of LatCrit. The researcher clustered themes into similar and smaller topics and these themes required analysis utilizing the guiding lens of

LatCrit for coding. Searching for themes allowed the researcher to describe the cases and their independent contexts. The aggregation of data enabled the researcher to establish themes and patterns that allowed for data visualization. This visualization was crucial for the development of naturalistic generalizations of the participants. These assertions and analysis of themes during the data analysis process allowed the researcher to establish reliability, validity, congruence, and triangulation through the different data sets, interviews, and rigor. Generating rich, thick descriptions requiring peer-reviewing in the data analysis stage allowed the researcher to understand any possible inconsistencies or reflexivity that need acknowledgment. The different sources, participants, and methods allowed the researcher to establish triangulation. Clarifying any bias the researcher may have, as mentioned previously, was vital in maintaining a robust internal audit. Peer reviews assisted in the external audit, as well as prolonged engagement in the field.

The third step of this multiple case study's data analysis involved the researcher undertaking framework analysis, specifically applying the five tenets of LatCrit. According to Catherine Riessman (2005), "the thematic approach is useful for theorising across a number of cases—finding common thematic elements across research participants and the events they report" (p. 3). The information and data that arose from the cases required coding and organizing for recurring themes and elements. Utilizing one-on-one interviews, or "long sections of talk," the researcher transcribed all notes and text for inspection (Riessman, 2005, p. 1).

According to Saldaña (2009), coding is "an exploratory problem-solving technique without specific formulas to follow" (p. 8). The case study required the researcher to formulate codes for the data but maintain flexibility with other linking

codes, especially for emerging themes and threads that may arise. The researcher interpreted these utilizing the five tenets of LatCrit. The application of LatCrit aided the researcher in understanding the unique lived experience of Latino students. This information proved crucial to the data analysis stage. Understanding the meaning of the participant became of the utmost importance to the reliability of this study. The researcher combined their background as a Latino college graduate and the five tents of LatCrit for fidelity.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher complied with the IRB regulations of Eastern College and Baylor University. IRB approval from Eastern College's Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) was vital to this study's continuation. All participant interviews and data were confidential and reported anonymously to minimize participant harm. Participants were aware of my relationship with Eastern College, as I work in a network of colleges, Eastern College being one of them. The researcher also shared with the participants that interviews and data collected would not reflect poorly on them. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), an "aspect of reflecting on the role of the researcher is to be aware of connections between the researcher and the participants or the research sites that may unduly influence the researcher's interpretation" (p. 184). The researcher understood that their study might attain data potentially harming Eastern College and the participant's relationship. The researcher chose Eastern College as the site for this study's data collection due to limitations and access to other institutions. Additionally, the researcher's connection to Eastern College was crucial in data interpretation and interview protocols.

Completed questionnaires required coding and transcription on an encrypted medium to maintain privacy between the researcher and the participant. An establishment of codes required application by the researcher based on the interpretation of data. According to Saldaña (2009), "a code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (p. 3). The creation of codes by the researcher allowed for data to remain complete and secure.

Limitations and Delimitations

As of Fall 2020, Eastern College remained closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At the onset of this study, this limitation was unforeseen as the researcher aimed to conduct the study in the institution. The usage of video conferencing interviews for data collection was a viable option. However, the researcher had to restructure safety and collection protocols due to prior breaches in security with the video-conferencing platform used for this study. The researcher kept considerations in mind regarding the utilization of technology. Participants who could access technology or have stable resources would become the majority of the participant pool, potentially skewing emerging themes. Qualitative interview collection approaches allowed for research to occur through video or a phone call. These approaches are not without limitations, as previously shared. Not all participants have equitable access to technologies or safe spaces for alternative interview approaches.

For delimitations, the researcher chose to focus on one institution. New York provides a unique set of participants dealing with extraordinary circumstances. While the study merits further expansion of participants across the nation, the time to complete such

an endeavor was limited. The researcher focused on one public institution to focus on the themes that emerged and proved critical.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher described their positionality to the research topic, study, and data collection site. The researcher laid out methods and approaches to participant recruitment and data collection and analysis. Utilizing LatCrit as a guiding lens in interpreting data and understanding participant responses, the researcher ascertained detailed descriptions throughout the multiple case study. Seven interviews undertaken with Latino/a/x students at Eastern College proved fruitful. Each case proved helpful in triangulating data and establishing reliability. One-on-one interviews served as the primary source of data collection. The following chapter discusses the research findings and results as well as addresses further implications of these findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results and Implications

Introduction

This multiple case study explored the unique resources at an institution and how Latino lived experiences influence what Latino college students utilize to graduate. This study's purpose was to gain insight into the institutional resources available for Latino college students. This study was a necessary step to equip higher education institutions to understand their Latino population and how they can support their graduation. In this chapter, the multiple case study required evaluation to answer the research questions. The primary research question of this study was, "What do Latino students understand as resources vital toward graduation at Eastern College?" The second research question asked, "How do Latino lived experiences influence what resources at an institution they will utilize throughout college to succeed, engage, and subsequently graduate?" The researcher explored these questions by interviewing the seven participants organized as part of this multiple case study. The analysis of detailed lived experiences helped provide evidence for the research questions.

The following chapter provides an overview of the results. The chapter uncovers that this study identifies what Latino students understand as resources. First, the researcher analyzed the data to discover the emerging themes of resources that proved common among the participants. Secondly, the study also found how Latino lived experiences influence what resources at an institution they will utilize throughout college.

The data analysis of this study provided evidence for what resources at Eastern College Latino students use and how lived experiences influence the population's utilization.

The seven participants of this multiple case study research design participated in one-on-one video conferencing interviews with the researcher. An application of initial codes to transcribed qualitative data occurred. The researcher uploaded all transcribed data into NVivo. A mixture of the auto code feature and manual codes proved valuable to analyze in-depth all data. NVivo allowed the researcher to undertake narrative analysis, specifically thematic analysis. Next, the expansion of further codes from the transcribed qualitative data occurred. The researcher reviewed the codes and evaluated all data according to the series of codes developed. The next phase of the coding involved labeling and defining the codes. An analysis into necessary exclusions occurred and required identification in the research study. The researcher utilized NVivo coding and manually coded to establish congruency and fully exhaust all possible codes. Creswell and Poth (2018) guided on creating codes, summarizing data, annotating codes, and subsequently classifying this information to report findings (p. 187). Once the researcher demonstrated reliability based on the multiple approaches and evaluation of codes, the data needed an application of the guiding lens of LatCrit. LatCrit allowed for a unique understanding of diverse populations based on its foundation in Critical Race Theory. LatCrit analyzes the exceptional circumstances and issues surrounding Latino populations.

In this multiple case study, the researcher examined common themes and codes through the lens of LatCrit. As highlighted in Chapter Three, LatCrit explores the subjugation of Latino individuals. Cota states, "LatCrit is a theoretical tool that allows

scholars to untangle the complex identities of Latinx and addresses the intersectionality of classism, sexism, racism, and other forms of oppression" (Cota, 2018, pp. 12–13). The internalized norm represses cultural wealth and value, causing a predominantly white ideology to be at the forefront. Transcribed data from the semi-structured interviews and the pre-study questionnaires gauged the internalization of resources at Eastern College while exploring how lived experiences impact Latino student utilization of resources. The researcher addressed the critical interview questions to stay congruent and establish reliability throughout the interview and data collection process.

The purpose of the narrative of this multiple case study was to detail the lived experiences of Latino college students at Eastern College and their path towards graduation. The following chapter provides readers with a description of the participant population, their results of the pre-study questionnaire, and relevant data for this study. The researcher then analyzed research question one for major emerging themes, conducted thematic analysis, and provided a framework analysis. The researcher then examined research question two for major emerging themes, conducted thematic analysis, and provided a framework analysis. Lastly, a synthesis of data and themes were compared and contrasted.

Participants

Participants for this study were recruited based on the defined criteria and interviewed with the researcher. Interviews took place during a two-hour span, allowing the last 10 minutes as space and time for participants to follow up. Table 4.1 provides an overview of the participant demographics and current status. The researcher labeled the participants by their case number to provide anonymity on information shared. The

researcher chose to share their birth month and year as two participants were outliers regarding their respective ages, participant C2 being 31 years of age and participant C3 being 26. Through interview discovery, the researcher understood that C4 and C5 had exclusively attended Eastern College virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the data analysis phase, an understanding that two participants had never experienced Eastern College resources at the physical institution appeared critical to a deeper understanding. An unexpected emerging theme regarding the participants was the topic of parent or guardian status. During the data collection process, the researcher determined that four out of the seven participants shared that their parents or guardians were separated.

Once each participant consented to the study and the researcher confirmed the participant met the criteria, the researcher distributed pre-study questionnaires (Appendix C) to obtain data on the participant to utilize for the semi-structured interviews. Table 4.2 provides the numerical designations chosen by the participant in a table. The pre-study questionnaire sought to determine the importance of attending and graduating college to the participant and the participant's family or guardians. The subsequent questions aimed to understand the participant's sense of belonging at Eastern College and if the participant had ever experienced racism or prejudice at the institution. The questions provided a Likert-type scale with one indicating being not important at all. Five on the scale stated a very important value for the first two questions, very belonging for question three, and very frequently for the final question.

Table 4.1

Participant Information

Participant	Date of Birth	Sex/Gender	Academic Status	Attendance	Parent or Guardian Status
C1	10/2000	Female	Currently Enrolled (Junior)	Attended Eastern College in person	Separated
C2	07/1990	Female	Currently Enrolled (Sophomore)	Attended Eastern College in person	Married
C3	12/1995	Female	Currently Enrolled (Senior)	Attended Eastern College in person	Married
C4	08/2001	Male	Currently Enrolled (Junior)	Attended Eastern College virtually after transferring	Separated
C5	07/2001	Female	Currently Enrolled (Sophomore)	Attended Eastern College virtually	Married
C6	01/2001	Male	Currently Enrolled (Sophomore)	Attended Eastern College virtually	Separated
C7	11/2000	Female	Currently Enrolled (Senior)	Attended Eastern College in person	Separated

Once each participant consented to the study and the researcher confirmed the participant met the criteria, the researcher distributed pre-study questionnaires (Appendix C) to obtain data on the participant to utilize for the semi-structured interviews. Table 4.2 provides the numerical designations chosen by the participant in a table. The pre-study

questionnaire sought to determine the importance of attending and graduating college to the participant and the participant's family or guardians. The subsequent questions aimed to understand the participant's sense of belonging at Eastern College and if the participant had ever experienced racism or prejudice at the institution. The questions provided a Likert-type scale with one indicating being not important at all. Five on the scale stated a very important value for the first two questions, very belonging for question three, and very frequently for the final question.

Table 4.2

Pre-Study Questionnaire Data

Participant	Indicate Importance of Attending and Graduating (1–5)	Indicate Importance of Attending and Graduating to Family and/or Guardians (1–5)	Indicate Sense of Belonging at Eastern College (1–5)	Indicate Having Experienced Racism or Prejudice at Eastern College (1–5)
C1	5	5	3	1
C2	5	4	5	1
C3	5	5	4	1
C4	5	5	3	1
C5	5	5	3	1
C6	5	5	1	1
C7	5	5	5	1

The participants all indicated that graduation and attending college is as important to them as their parents and guardians. The participants also shared that they had never experienced racism or prejudice at Eastern College. There were varying numerical designations for the participants' sense of belonging at the college. Campus climate often plays a role in the success of Latino students at an institution (Locks, Hurtado, Bowman, & Oseguera, 2008). A sense of belonging at an institution is a critical component for

Latino college students to graduate. While the participant population shared in the pre-study questionnaire an overall neutral average regarding their sense of belonging at Eastern College, none were in danger of dropping out. No participant felt they had experienced racism, but most participants felt neutral regarding their sense of belonging at Eastern College.

Research Question #1: What do Latino Students Understand as Resources Vital Toward Graduation at Eastern College?

Throughout the interview process with the participants, the term resource was utilized loosely by the researcher. The idea behind this was to have the participant share what they believe are resources, rather than provide a list of all the resources Eastern College states they offer to students. Three themes emerged as critical resources toward graduation throughout the participant interviews: advisement, tutoring, and career services. Of the three major themes, the career center emerged as the strongest. Participants identified their financial and cultural needs as significantly impacted by the career center. The career center's outreach, or lack thereof, was deemed critical in educational decision-making.

Advisement

The advisement center at Eastern College aims to provide students information and one-on-one counseling to determine their course path toward graduation. At Eastern College, students who have issues with courses or seek guidance in switching majors must meet with an advisor to approve their path. There are digital options available to the student body, allowing them to track their course load. However, glitches and other technical issues often hinder digital opportunities, forcing students to schedule an

appointment with an office often viewed as over-encumbered. This office is not just a resource as it is mandatory to receive approval for a bachelor's degree. C6, a participant who shared he works 15 hours a week, has struggled with the availability with the advisement center. According to C6:

> I think we need more staff and faculty for resources like academic counseling. Open office hours would be great for people to just drop in, I know it's always a big deal you show up at the academic advisor's office and they refer you to schedule online. So you leave, you schedule a meeting online, you wait two weeks, you meet with them, and they might not even show up on video conference.

Participant C6's frustration stemmed from having multiple interactions with the advising center and often feeling that Eastern College was purposely making it difficult to graduate. C6 shared that the advising center was their least utilized resource, which was problematic given the necessity to chart a course map toward graduation. C6 stated, regarding the advising center:

> I think, even before the pandemic, it was hard to get a meeting with an advisor. And then now especially there's essentially no shot the way I see it, I see on forums and group chats with other groups, students, they have incredible difficulty connecting. So for me, I don't even wish to try to engage with that.

Participant C6 detailed that no matter if there was a remote learning environment brought upon by the COVID-19 pandemic or a typical day at Eastern College, the advisement center proved to be an issue in any scenario. C6 's interview shared how valuable the advisement center was. The information it holds impacts a student's graduation ability and can impact persistence. If a student cannot register for classes they need or want, their motivation to continue decreases. C6 continued:

> Eastern College is business, all business. So all of the resources are geared towards the business students so for my major I needed to go up and personally ask about what I should be doing. And the same attention and care in detail that went into the business students, I was not afforded. So I had to essentially figure

things out myself, I found a few resources on the website of mapping my public affairs major. But I'm picking classes, I sometimes, I can't find anything so I literally have to go to the online platform and plug in a class and do the estimate and see if it satisfies something. And that's what I'm working with essentially and I'm trying to keep it in within the four-year timeframe, but it's difficult when you don't have that backing from staff because maybe your major is not, like, as popular.

C6 did not feel like the advising center had his best interests in mind. He viewed resources available to other majors as more thought out and plentiful. He believed that his experience with the advisement center stemmed from their workload and his choice of college major. The participant taught themselves how to navigate the necessary curriculum and course map to ensure they would graduate on time.

This sentiment of feeling unable to reach academic advisors at Eastern College consistently arose throughout other interviews. Participant C2 shared:

It's hard because we have to do everything by ourselves. When I contact an advisor, they don't respond to the email. They take, like a week. Sometimes I call, and call, and call. They give me a number, but they don't respond.

Participant C2 shared her previous college experience at a private institution that differed vastly from their experience at Eastern College. C2 felt significantly more supported at their last institution than at Eastern College. Aspects of this stemmed from the subpar support they thought they received from the academic advisement area. Participant C3 sums up her experience by simply stating, "I think they are not doing a good job." Eastern College's academic advising area falls short of participant expectations. The participants understood the office is unique and is in high demand. However, the participants only expected a baseline of information and not for extraordinary service.

The college also offers academic advisors to students in the honors program. Participant C5 is a current Eastern College honors student. The participant received an

academic advisor from Eastern College and a second honors academic advisor who only

advises honors students. C5 is a high-achieving, determined student. However, even C5

shared having issues with academic advisors, including the honors advisor. C5 states:

> Last year for advisement, the advisor had a week of meetings, and he just, like, canceled them all to go to New Orleans. I just, I don't think that's very professional, and I think it puts those students, like, at a disadvantage for advising. I don't know, I just have a problem with him also, I don't think I like his personality very much.

The academic advisement center is a resource at Eastern College that plays a significant

role in the success and graduation of college students. The lack of trust and empathy

different participants formed with the advisement center was concerning. The participants

felt that Eastern College continued to present barriers to their resource utilization. An

institution that mandates students to utilize a resource and subsequently operates the

resource at non-helpful levels is problematic. The advisement center approves whether or

not a student meets the criteria for graduation, which is incredibly problematic. C7 states

a concerning issue at Eastern College:

> Everybody that like if you talk to anybody at EC and you ask them like how their experiences is talking to an advisor you're always, like, you're always told, like you, better know what you have to ask them because, if not, they're just going to cut the call and do something else because they don't have the time they have other students to attend to and like they don't care.

The academic advisement center, while necessary, elicits an adverse reaction from the

participant. The participant referenced conversing with other students regarding the

advisement center. The information the student received was not favorable. The

participant's initial reaction with the advisement center before scheduling any meeting

was one of pre-determined disappointment. The participant learned from peers that the

best approach to the advisement center was not seeking blind guidance but approaching the center with full preparedness or risk particular derision from advisors.

> There's also like a huge problem at Eastern College, or like the staff or like the system that they're running ensures that like you do not finish college within four years, they will extend it as far as they can and will try to make you stay in school for five. A lot of kids at Eastern College struggle with trying to finish their degree in four years, because the prerequisites that the school requires these students to take are absolutely ridiculous. Then you take four classes that are actually on your major and then graduate, but sometimes getting into these prerequisite classes is so hard because they fill up so fast. And then you try to talk to an advisor, and they're like, " Well, you just have to wait until that happens."

Participant C7 clarified that she did not believe that Eastern College and its advising center had the best interests of the students in mind. The participant accepted that the advisement center and Eastern College seek to stall its students' graduation. The student not only shared their own experience but that of classmates. The issues other participants brought up regarding the inaccessibility of the advising center stemmed from the eventual fear that Eastern College was attempting to stall their graduation on time. The advisement center's role in student graduation cannot be understated. Throughout the different participant interviews, the theme of an understood resource toward graduation was Eastern College's advisement center. No participant shared having a positive experience with the advising center out of the participant pool. Every participant shared wanting to better connect to the advising center but remained disenchanted after frustrating experiences. The advising center emerged as a consistent topic and theme during participant interviews. Eastern College's advising center serves as a critical puzzle piece toward a student's graduation. The participants shared how valuable the advising center was, how this resource was supposed to work, and how it was not currently working.

Tutoring Center

Eastern College's tutoring center utilizes high-achieving students to critique and edit student papers. Additionally, different subject tutors are available for university students to use towards successful graduation. The student body uses the tutoring center for a varying number of needs. At Eastern College, the tutoring center received a mixed review from the participants of the study. Participant C1 stated, "I'd say one that has helped me the least is the tutoring center." When the researcher inquired further about the strong condemnation, C1 mentioned that they had only gone there once, which was not helpful because of the limited offerings. A university tutoring center for students is valuable, given it can offer support in all classes and not just a few.

Participant C2 shared a significant issue that higher education institutions must consider when advertising resources to Latino students. C2 shared with the researcher that the English language was her second language. The understanding of the word counselor varies in different dialects of the Spanish language. C2 shared a struggle with a math course, partially grounded in her attending a university in the Dominican Republic. The word counselor for some Spanish dialects closely resembles the words advisor or consultant. C2 shared,

> I was having trouble with my math class, and my professor referred me to the counselor center. And when I get the appointment, I was filling the document; the document they sent me was like I was having a mental problem, or something different to "has a problem from math." And I feel like that does not make sense. I am having problem because I don't understand how she explains. I don't know, and they send me something that "I'm crazy" or have any problem because, for the quarantine, I feel like, "no, I don't want to do anymore." That's why I think, like, counseling is important but at the same time, for me, something else because they make me feel like I have mental problem or I am stupid.

Participant C2 believed the tutoring center to be her solution to issues in her math class. The participant recognized the importance of utilizing a resource such as the tutoring

center; however, the participant lacked adequate referral from her professor. The participant believed the professor was referring her to a student tutor from the tutoring center. The misunderstanding of the student, based on their native tongue, combined with the ignorance of unique cultural and diverse understanding, caused this participant to become disenchanted with the concept of the tutoring center, let alone other resources. The tutoring center is critical as a resource beneficial towards graduation. However, administration and staff that incorrectly connect students to a resource create a rift between the college and the students.

The tutoring center elicits reactions from students that utilize it. During the interview with participant C5, the participant shared, "I could go to the tutoring center, but it feels like, I think partially because of ego, that I don't need the tutoring center, but I am sure, like, in some way, I could probably use it." The educational motivation of C5 is evident in conversations. C5's enrollment in an honors program covers her tuition. The honors program admits students that showcase academic excellence when enrolling at Eastern College. However, participant C5 shared that they choose not to utilize the tutoring center due to their beliefs on using it. There is an understanding that the tutoring center may help, but Latino students internalize a sense of self-sufficiency in their approach to college, explored later in Chapter Four. Participants of this study detailed their self-sufficiency through the interview process. The research in Chapter Two marked how specific Latino populations are unaware of existing resources in higher education institutions. Participant C5 is well aware of the resources and has chosen not to utilize the tutoring center. The concept of ego approaching the tutoring center arose during the interview with C7, stating, "it's another student." Lived experience information detailed

in Chapter Four expands on the notion of ego aligning more with the value of pride. However, the information shared regarding having more faculty or administrator assistance in tutoring centers is essential.

The tutoring center was a critical resource for student success at Eastern College. However, the participant data depicted a disenchantment with the course offerings for tutoring. The combination of minimal offerings and the utilization of fellow collegiate peers for feedback creates discomfort for Latino students. Eastern College inadvertently creates further discomfort seen in participant C2 that experienced a lack of understanding when referred to the tutoring center. The tutoring center at Eastern College, while valuable, is not in its current form, ideal for the student body.

Career Center

The third theme that arose interview after interview was the career center office at Eastern College. Career attainment is essential for Latino students. For households, the student's success in higher education requires measurement via their ability to attain a career that shifts the narrative of the home. Participants detailed the need for the career center to provide services to Latino students seeking future jobs. Participant C1 shared she had utilized the career center. According to C1, "they did help me restructure my resume, but in terms of giving support on my career path for my career specifically, not really helpful." It is important to note that career growth proved critical for the participants of this study. Among the varying responsibilities, six out of seven participants indicated working a part-time job that required at least 10 hours of their time during the week. Participant C1 remained the only outlier of Latino participants enrolled at Eastern College. They were not working a part-time job or shared they were working

when prompted during the interview process. C1 received feedback and resume editing to either aid in attaining a career or a job during the academic year. The value of the career center cannot be understated as Latino households focus on career attainment and household advancement per the literature shared in Chapter Two.

The career center proved to be one of the resources that participants remembered receiving information via their emails from Eastern College. Participant C3 remembered, "since the beginning, they send me an email, and that's how I knew about them. Like I didn't have to do any research or anything, they reached out to me." The previous resources of the advisement center and tutoring center participants felt they needed to seek out. The career center became the first resource prioritized towards graduation that participants remembered receiving some outreach. Participant C4 also recalled, "they would send us emails of jobs and events and say they will assist you with applications and the resources necessary to apply." The resource of the career center registered as crucial for participants, and the outreach proved memorable. A resource vital towards graduation, such as the career center, is only seen when it provides a sense of welcome to the Latino student.

The importance of the career center did not solely focus on resume writing and career applications. Certain participants in the study indicated a need for networking through the career center. Participant C4, mentioned previously having a positive relationship with the career center, stated, "I do not believe I have a strong network, and learning how to network would be something that I would be able to use." However, accessible times for students with part-time jobs arose as a possible issue. C4 detailed that networking events "fall into the work time, and I cannot give up my time right now

to do these things." The participants had to pay costs and tuition in their lives to the point they prioritized part-time jobs over a resource they shared was vital to graduate, the career center. Participant C5 utilized the career center "for networking" and that she had "gotten a lot of internships from this contact point." The participants shared receiving a positive experience from the career center and, for the most part getting a strong use from it.

Throughout the themes of resources that emerged as vital toward the graduation of the Latino student at Eastern College, the career center surfaced as the most important. Additionally, the career center served as the resource most received positively by the participant pool. The participants felt the career center developed significant outreach instead of the other two emerging themes of the advisement center and the tutoring center. There appeared to be a balance between the access and need of a resource and the outreach built in for students with the respective resource. Participants that had not yet attended Eastern College in person due to the COVID-19 pandemic expressed similar views to those that had previous access to the resources at the physical Eastern College location. Latino participants understood three areas of institutional resources at Eastern College as pivotal toward their graduation, with the career center proving most valuable and most welcoming.

Framework Analysis of Research Question One

The development and utilization of the LatCrit guiding tenets as a framework proved critical to assess the data further. The theoretical model applied allowed for a more vital articulation of how participants understood resources at an institution. The three emerging themes: advisement center, tutoring center, and career center, all were

understood uniquely by participants. The second tenet of LatCrit focuses on emphasis on experiential knowledge. The participants who struggled with the advisement center, an essential graduation resource, had to take time out of their schedules and routine to adapt. The experience of Latino students of color, in this instance, forced them to showcase resilience. The tutoring center served as a prime example of forcing consistent resilience. Participants did not feel that the tutoring center provided significant offerings that developed their academic ability towards graduation. Participants sought to utilize this resource but instead found themselves studying and editing, whether due to ego or minimal offerings. In Latino households, there is often an imbued sense of pride. This pride combined with the belief that "students of color can be seen as holders and creators of knowledge who have the potential to transform schools into places where the experience of all individuals are acknowledged, taught, and cherished" pushed Latino participants away from the tutoring center (Bernal, 2002, p. 121).

Participant C7 shared how it seemed to her that Eastern College did not want students to graduate in the four years they set out to do so. The Latino students have overcome the bureaucracy of Eastern College's advisement center. In doing so, the participants challenged the power dynamic of white-centric ideologies, tenet four of LatCrit. Bernal writes,

> The insidious nature of a Eurocentric epistemological perspective allows it to subtly (and not so subtly) shape the belief system and practices of researchers, educators, and the school curriculum while continuing to adversely influence the educational experiences of … students of color. (2002, p. 111)

This challenge of power dynamic is subliminally evident in the experiences of C2 when referred to the tutoring center. It is unacceptable for Latino students needing help with math to end up referred to the counseling center. The necessary investment in the Latino

student body is valuable only if the institution truly wishes to serve Latino students. Suppose the student body believed that Eastern College established barriers and obstacles towards graduation. How then were Latino students supposed to feel supported or want to use resources? The participant believed that their professor, an envoy of the institution, would connect them with the appropriate resource. According to Cooper Stein et al., "According to dominant narratives, Latina/os were lazy, disrespectful to teachers, disinterested in school, and generally disconnected unless they participated" (2018, p. 115). Dominant narratives in institutions of higher education are only evident when stakeholders understand the unique intricacies of LatCrit. The normalization of cultural ignorance is problematic in higher education administration. The intentions and motives of the professor in this instance were unknown. The participant suffered, whether it was a simple misunderstanding or a more significant subversive issue. The literature in place when considering LatCrit analysis assesses marginalized policies that assume Latino/a are inept educationally (Gandara & Contreras, 2009). A student in higher education institutions that feels marginalized by their professor can subsequently disconnect from the institution. Participant C2 shared her experience during the debrief portion of the interview, a space held for participants to reflect and share anything pertinent that aided the researcher after the interview. The incident caused the student trauma and subsequent distrust with the institution.

Resources at an institution play a pivotal role in how the student approaches graduation. According to Solórzano and Yosso, "LatCrit scholars in education acknowledge that educational institutions operate in contradictory ways with their potential to oppress and marginalize co-existing with their potential to emancipate and

empower" (2001, p. 479). The advisement center displayed contradictory ways to the Latino participants. The consideration of utilizing resources such as the tutoring center, the advisement center, and the career center was a difficult choice for Latino students. Throughout the data collection process of the participants to establish what resources are critical toward graduation, the three resources that emerged all provided a barrier for the student. The conversations revolved around the inability to schedule, the harboring of negative feelings with staff, and the impression of distrust from the institution.

Conclusion of Research Question One

In conclusion of research question one, three themes emerged as vital toward the persistence and graduation of Latino students at Eastern College. The advisement center is a resource that is helpful but also mandatory for the students of Eastern College. Approaching the understanding of the advisement center, the tutoring center, and the career center from a LatCrit lens allowed the researcher to cultivate a deeper understanding. The institution of Eastern College operates to process students and fill classrooms to collect tuition, like any other university. These resources and offices are ill-equipped to deal with students of color due to the nature of most university foundations. The participants understood their value and resilience when faced with administrators that seemingly did not care. Suppose these individuals made the participants feel like they did not care about their path toward graduation. If an institution struggles to understand the unique lived perspectives of Latino students and how this may impact their college approach, then the student will disconnect from the institution. How can these students expect these same individuals to understand their diverse perspectives on resources?

Research Question #2: How do Latino Lived Experiences Influence What Resources at an Institution They Will Utilize Throughout College to Succeed, Engage, and Subsequently Graduate?

Latino lived experiences are essential for any decision-making for Latino students. Unfortunately, according to Bernal, "This has not been the case in education, where for too long, family cultural narratives have not been considered a legitimate part of research or practice" (Bernal, 2002, p. 120). Throughout the interview process with the participants, lived experiences proved critical for utilizing resources at an institution. Lived experiences were unique to each participant. A qualitative approach via a multiple case study allowed the researcher to detail each participant's lived experience fully. A lived experience is a personal connection to the participant. This experience is something that cultivates a reaction or thought process when approaching resources at an institution. Beliefs or thoughts often impact whether individuals will connect or disconnect from something they may understand is essential. The researcher recognized the necessity of understanding how lived experiences influenced what resources at an institution a Latino student will utilize to engage and graduate. During the interviews, three lived experiences emerged as impactful on a student's decision to utilize or overlook a resource: family dynamic and expectations, financial status, and self-advocacy.

Family Dynamic and Expectations

The first theme of family dynamic and expectations proved a motivating factor for the participants of this study. Each participant detailed how family expectations provided a motivating factor in seeking out resources. There are family dynamics that burden the student and others that provide support. Understanding family expectations and how

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these experiences mold the understanding of resource utilization at an institution is valuable. Participant C1 shared:

> I feel like my dad is more open to hearing about that kind of thing because he didn't go to college. He just completed high school now pretty much it. And so whenever I talked to him about things I do at school, he's always really proud and wants me to talk about it, and I'll talk about it for hours. And he's always like absorbs me so interested in, like, just super supportive of everything I do.

C1's information regarding her father showcased the pride and hope that parents and guardians have for their children's educational attainment. Chapter Two outlined a series of family background considerations that impact a student's continuation toward a bachelor's degree. C1's father, having no college background, believes that college is an opportunity for a better life. Her father does not necessarily understand the intricacies of college, or the resources needed to graduate. Still, the hopefulness of her success cultivates an opportunity that allowed him to listen and learn. C1 states how she wishes to talk about her schooling and college experience for hours and finds unlimited support in her father. Within a household, the lived experiences of family expectations impact seeking out resources. C1 shared in the previous section how the tutoring center and the career center were valuable resources but not helpful ones. Family expectations arose as a strong reason why the student sought out resources in the first place. During the interview, the participant spoke of her parents with pride. C1 did share a slightly different perception of her mother, who had attended college previously. C1 detailed:

> When it comes to my mom, she went to college, so her idea is like she compares it to her experience and kind of doesn't understand why I'm feeling stressed, but I'm like, "you went to college like before I was born." And I'm 20, so that's a long time ago. And things have definitely changed.

Based on the literature, the researcher's expectations regarding C1's guardians were not accurate. Chapter Two detailed literature that analyzes the educational attainment of

parents and guardians, including possible risk factors commonly associated with not completing a bachelor's degree, including having a parent or guardian that did not complete high school or college (McFarland et al., 2017). Chapter Two detailed the understanding that parents' educational attainment impacts their intelligence and affects the innate motivation of the Latino child (Grissmer et al., 1994). C1's mother attained college, and her father did not. Her mother served as more of a risk factor to her continued persistence, even though her educational attainment is high. C1's father served as a continued motivator to achieve a bachelor's degree. There is a constant balance between the educational attainment of guardians and the impact it has as a lived experience for Latino students. Often, household family members that do not attain a college degree seek to prioritize college but will default to financial providing for a family if finances become strained. In the case of C1, the participant's mother received a bachelor's degree. The knowledge base of a household regarding a collegiate experience increases with added individual attainment. However, C1's mother compared the student's collegiate experience to her own, a concept that did not arise in literature. The participant details a conversation that revolved around time. The mother's lived experience of college differed from participant C1's experience. The participant, seeking guidance, found a listening demeanor in her mother but one that received feedback based on a completely different experience. C1 continued:

> And another thing was that she also was not super involved on campus. She was the type to take summer classes and that kind of thing just to get her credits and get out. So she doesn't understand my involvement with programs on campus and that kind of thing, and how that takes up my time.

The researcher expected student life programming and institutional culture to arise as a lived experience that was motivational in bachelor's degree attainment. Instead,

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participants predominately did not attribute their success or understanding of resources to the institutional campus climate. Furthermore, the resource of student life programming was not highly sought after by the participant pool. Instead, participants relied on family and guardian structures in place of institutional, cultural programming. C1's situation proved unique. The participant sought feedback on how best to approach college. C1 found her father to elicit feelings of pride and positivity. However, her father did not have the necessary collegiate background to address the resources available to the student. A support system is precious. However, there is sometimes a need for pertinent information regarding one's approach to college. C1's mother understood the resources at an institution, but that knowledge did not enhance the participant's utilization of resources at Eastern College. C1 shared that her mother is "more of a tough-love kind of person, and I'd say she support me and my determination to do as well as I can." C1 believes her mother has her best interests in mind but may approach it from a lower empathetic point than her father. When asked about her relationship with her mother, C1 continues:

> My mom had my oldest sibling when she was 19 and was married when she was 20. So, for her, it was a matter of like she was juggling a lot. But I guess she kind of like saw it as like, that's what life is supposed to be, just hard work. And she shouldn't go for like things that would, I guess. Benefit her career path, and it was more so trying to, I guess, survive in a way.

C1's upbringing and lived experiences imbued by her mother taught a belief that life is supposed to be a series of decisions that encompass hard work. Perhaps this concept, combined with the lack of unique informational support from her mother at certain key moments of her collegiate career, impacted C1's yearning to utilize the resources at Eastern College. Academically, C1 was on a path towards graduation, even though she was not using the resources offered by Eastern College to their full potential. C1's family

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expects her to obtain a bachelor's degree, and the balance between her "ambitious" mother and "compassionate" father allowed her to reflect on her path consistently. The lived experience of family expectations is critical towards resource usage in institutions of higher education. Therefore, guardians need to have a unique knowledge of the inner workings of an institution and the delivery of family expectations.

A household's information on the collegiate process plays a crucial role in utilizing resources at an institution. Individuals that are not aware of the offerings of a college struggle to define these for students. Participant C4 shared:

> I tend to stay in the basement, and what I see is that my parents and my guardians they respect that, and they tend to leave me alone, isolated in the basement. And I see that as useful to me because I do get that freedom now. Another thing is, when I do have a problem that I feel like I cannot deal with by myself, I do go to my father and my stepmother to see what's, what have they done to the past, right.

C4's family dynamic understands and respects his space. C4 benefits from having access to his guardians and family when it is ideal. C4 indicated living with his father and stepmother in Queens, New York. His residence is in the home's basement, where he spends most of his personal and academic time. He has now been home for a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. When faced with an academic strain, C4 recalls having access to his guardians. Like the parent of C1, C4's father did not complete a college degree. However, C4's father attended Eastern College but dropped out. The participant shared that his father dropped out due to family obligations and lacking the resources to deal with those family obligations. Even though the instance occurred in the past, the sting of dropping out of an institution became evident in the conversation with C4. C4 continued:

> So recently I've been taking a hard class, and it was hard for me to keep up with my studies, so I went to my father and asked him what did he do when he was taking this class, and he showed me a studying method that I plan to be using and test out see if it would help me. And that is something that I find supportive

compared to just telling me I should do this or that. They show me the method and, or explain something that would be that they've experienced and how they went through it. My father also talked about the resources available that he remembered about Eastern College during family orientation, which was important.

The participant detailed a specific academic issue that arose. The family dynamic of the household proved fruitful for the participant. Through conversations with his father, he learned a new approach to the academic issue. Much like C1's father, the participant reflected upon a sense of empathy and understanding with satisfaction. However, C4's father not only attended the institution previously, even though he dropped out. What is critical is that his father remembered the family orientation information shared. Though the participant did not know the exact information transmitted in this family orientation, C4 shared that his father was well-versed in Eastern College resources. The father of C4 helped as much as possible with the academic issue and then transitioned the participant to potential resources. The rapport established within the household, this established dynamic, is a powerful resource. Since transferring, C4's exclusively virtual attendance at Eastern College did not impact his positive feedback with the career center. The participant reflected on how the combination of his father's input and professors who "are humane" and "want you to talk to them about their day" provided a positive lens when seeking out resources. C4's interactions with his father portrayed the resources at Eastern College in a positive light. The conversation impacted the interactions C4 felt from staff and faculty.

During this study, many participants felt Eastern College did not have their best interests in mind. However, C4's family dynamic and expectations created a different understanding of the culture. The researcher interpreted C4's body language and voice

inflections when referring to Eastern College as positive. C4's father expected him to complete his college degree and was proud of his accomplishment thus far. Providing a positive family dynamic at home further emphasized the positive motivation towards resource utilization at the institution. The cultivation of a positive lived experience within the household carries over into the day-to-day interactions of this Latino participant at Eastern College. C4 indicated an awareness of the resources available, the utilization of them, and a positive experience.

Participant C6 detailed how meaningful his lived experiences were in resource utilization at Eastern College. According to C6, his parents had separated, and he lived with his mother and two older sisters. C6 shared that he is not very close to his father, though he occasionally works to catch up. He holds his mother and sisters in high esteem and has seen them as people in his life who "break the barrier" and helps "lead us along the way." He refers to his oldest sister as the primary role model of college approaches. Having an individual in a family dynamic that trailblazes that path for others is vital. C6, in the previous section, described his disappointment with the advising center. Additionally, C6 did not utilize the career center because he is "lucky enough to have a plan" and understood that he did not benefit from the tutoring center. C6 recognized the importance of those resources but did not seek to utilize any due to the nature of the household dynamics. His support system and ultimate resource combine his mother's expectations and his sisters' successes. The same family dynamic exists for participant C5. C5 states:

> My parents have always encouraged me that you can get where you want to be no matter where you are because they could do it. My dad had like three jobs, like, growing up, you know, like, and like doing school, so if he could do it with those circumstances, I could do it, and I'm going to do it for them.

C5 received a robust modeling system in her home dynamic. It is this modeling that pushed her toward her high achieving status. The participant applied to the honors program at Eastern College and was accepted. The support of her parents to achieve anything and the research they did to assist her in her path towards resource utilization was the main reason for her success. C5 understood that her parents had achieved inspiring things in her youth. This information cultivated a family dynamic and expectation of greatness, humility, and outreach. The outreach manifested itself in the form of utilizing college resources to strive for graduation continually.

Financial Status

The financial status of Latino students plays a critical role in the utilization of resources. Participants of this study struggled at times to utilize resources based on the financial position of the household. Students prioritized household income over the usage of college resources. The lived experience of raising funds to support the household or fund a college degree is a stress factor for Latino students. C4 shared that he often missed events or possible avenues to network for future career growth due to timing. According to C4, career center events sometimes "fall into the work time, and I cannot give up my time right now to do these things, so right now the constraint is time." C4 shared in a previous section the importance of college resources and how he views these resources as positive. Even as the participant cannot utilize the resources due to the constraints of his work schedule, he knows it is due to his circumstances. The participant wishes to use the resources at the institution, but the household's priorities and paying for his college degree are equally if not more important. C4 states:

> So, I haven't been able to receive financial aid, so it's been on my parents and me to pay off college. I haven't gone for a loan yet, but so far, in the years that I've

been doing college that I have been able to pay it off due to the work I've been doing. And that was before the pandemic

Participant C4 mentioned the COVID-19 pandemic as having further exacerbated possible access to funds stunting him from utilizing resources. The student's focus was on paying their tuition and lessening the financial burden of his parents. The struggle here is that the student truly wanted to have enough money to utilize the resources at Eastern College. C4 detailed how he seeks to "build up as much money" during the summer so he can "receive an internship, even if it was unpaid." He wishes to utilize the career center to seek internships, but the events' hours do not align with his work schedule. During the interview process with the student, he indicated only needing about $500 to $1,000 extra per semester to cut down on his hours and utilize the resources at hand. His lived experience of needing to pay his tuition creates a cyclical dilemma that is not easily solved for the student. The chances of Eastern College providing this amount of money to the student on a semester basis is not likely. However, the participant did not expect it. Instead, he focused on wanting events that were not during work time.

The approaches of participants change with having access to a different lived financial experience. For example, participant C5 shared, "I also don't have to think I guess about, bills and financial like aspects or like a lot of other things, and that has given me the ability just to do what I want and focus on school." Participant C5 utilized every possible resource due to the financial lived experience of her household. C5 shared having a financial lived experience much different than her parents. She recalled her father "being charged rent from his mother at 12" and visiting her grandparents, who "were alcoholics" and "my dad's mom was a junkie." She understood that the lived experience of financial status made all the difference for her and her siblings. C5's

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financial status that she lived and experienced developed her to seek resources and ultimately accomplish anything she wants to. According to C5, "I have a bit of a better situation than a lot of people. My parents understand the situation of internships." C5 is aware of the financial status of her household that allowed her to seek out internships, and she has the support of her family to do so. Unlike C4, C5 can focus on taking advantage of all opportunities. The data collection process with C5 depicted an individual driven to achieve as much as possible. Her financial circumstances have allowed her not to have to focus on bills or other expenses. The participant applied for the honors college that financially covered tuition, which further aids in cultivating a positive financial lived status. The access that C5 had to positive resources based on the financial status of their household was critical in developing a high-achieving student. The participant attributed her success to believing she is "extremely privileged" since her honors college pays her tuition, so her parents pay her bills, and an apartment. She recognized the unique circumstance of how her family had the means to provide her with a critical education. She shared how her family was not "necessarily poor" when she was younger but that they "have more money now." There is a stress on the student's lived experience focusing on the parents growing up very poor, so they seek to "give to us as much as possible." The participant is grateful for the opportunities she has and subsequently used the financial status of her household not to create a further burden. Admittance into the honors college required schooling resources that she recognized and appreciated. Understanding the lived experience of having slightly less money when she was younger created an individual that focused on utilizing every possible resource for growth in social mobility. The financial status of a Latino household impacts the utilization of

resources. In C1, the participant could not utilize resources available due to the prioritization of paying tuition. The lack of these resources is relevant to the participant as he knows that it is most likely stunting his ability to attain an internship.

The previous two cases showcased two different participants with unique financial lived experiences. The participant population of this study depicted individuals that varied in their access to a stable financial situation. In participant C3, her utilization of resources stemmed from her understanding of possible financial status once she graduated. C3 shared:

> I don't know, like the same thing as a woman, and I probably will get paid less, even though it doesn't have anything to do, and then probably, someone that doesn't speak, or probably, speak better in English, I need to use resources to learn to speak English better to make more money. I'll probably get paid less. Still, I feel like, I don't know, that's not going to stop me or like or just going to try to keep improving and improving until I get there.

To participant C3, future financial stress was a significant reason for her resource utilization at the institution. C3 shared that she immigrated to the United States from Colombia, leaving behind both her guardians. They sought to provide her an opportunity in the United States that she would not have had in Colombia. In Colombia, her financial lived experience in her household was not ideal. Her parents did not have bountiful opportunities. The choice to move to the United States revolved around the potential access to future careers. The participant understood that she would be in a job that underpaid her or not consider her employable due to her background, accent, and sex. The interview with C3 was the first instance in the data collection process where a participant shared their fear over having English as a second language. The student sought resources that would help her with her English. Her internalized financial lived experience from Colombia was one of borderline poverty. The participant sought out

resources due to a fear of the unknown. The participant remained unsure whether or not

she would have an opportunity to succeed in the United States. The student's motivation

existed due to her understanding of her lived experience in Colombia and the possibility

of reliving the cycle in the United States.

Self-Advocacy

The last lived experience that emerged as a common theme across participants

that impacts the utilization of resources at Eastern College is the idea of self-advocacy.

Due to the nature of many Latino households, college students may have to represent

themselves in specific scenarios. For example, suppose a household has a guardian who

is not knowledgeable on college procedures or cannot communicate effectively with their

student. In that case, the student alone must seek the answers. Thus, self-advocacy plays a

critical role in the utilization of resources at an institution. Whether or not a student will

speak up in specific scenarios can determine continued persistence. The lived experience

of self-advocacy is unique to each student, and various participants depicted self-

advocacy in numerous manners.

The lived experience of self-advocacy presented itself uniquely within the

different participants of this study. There were circumstances in which a participant

utilized negative or resentful feelings to act upon decisions. Participant C1 shared:

> I've had that experience like I felt like I didn't belong. It wasn't any experience
> with someone like making me feel that way—this was more of an internal thing. I
> was like comparing myself to other students and where they are now successful. I
> compared them to myself. And then I realized, I go at my own pace and that kind
> of thing. I wanted to be better than needing the resources.

C1 utilized comparisons of herself with other students as a reason for her decision-

making. The participant described instances of feeling lesser than other students based on

their success. Other students did not publicize these feelings at Eastern College but birthed from inner thought processes. C1 eventually recognized that it is understandable that each student operates at different paces. However, the student utilized this thought process to stymie self-advocacy. In this scenario, the student's self-advocacy approach ignores resources based on their lived experience purposely. The student communicated her needs with the researcher regarding not seeking out resource help, but it most likely impacted her relationship with institutional resources. In the previous section, C1 noted how she believed the tutoring center provided minor assistance. This Latino participant utilized their lived experience to compare success versus other students and chose not to use university resources.

Self-advocacy arises from situations in which students internalize a lived experience they do not want to experience again. Lived experiences require attention when attempting to understanding Latino students in institutions of higher education. An account of persistence in the face of difficulty will lack understanding if university stakeholders are unaware of deeper thought processes. Participant C3 shared:

> I immigrated by myself, as I mentioned, so I always have this internal motivation that I don't know where it comes from, from my past or my family, I guess. There are really strong women, so I think they inspire me to keep going, but others, and I want to, I know I have this personal thing to prove myself to other people. Using any possible resource means I can achieve anything. I just need someone that speaks my language so they can understand me.

The participant shared information she mentioned during the data collection process regarding her immigrating to the United States and leaving her family behind. The participant focused on her internal motivation that stems from having an inspiring family that has taught her to aim higher. The participant managed to share how they do not take resources for granted. The individual lived experience of C3 motivated her to honor those

that motivated and helped shape her. She understands the importance of utilizing

collegiate resources at Eastern College to further her goals. However, the participant

shared a hesitation regarding her native language. As mentioned in a previous section, the

participant's native language is Spanish. A resource she valued was any program or offer

that allowed her to work on her English. However, when it comes to utilizing collegiate

resources, the participant was looking for an added understanding. C3 detailed how

valuable her opportunity to be in college was throughout the data collection process since

her family in Colombia struggled to ascertain equitable education opportunities. The

lived experience of growing up in Colombia and understanding the alternative life she

could have added motivation to her approach to utilize institutional resources. The

consideration of immigrant lived experiences requires comprehension from institutional

stakeholders. Additionally, the participant believed the institutional resources were

beneficial, even if they did not always feel accessible based on her comfortability with

language.

Participant C3 also understood how her circumstances in the United States served

to push her towards resource utilization. C3 noted:

> When Donald Trump was in the presidency, I remember people saying that ICE
> was stopping people in Queens. I was like maybe, maybe it will be me, and even
> though I have my residency card, I was concerned for my friends and even for
> myself, like I didn't know if there was corruption. You don't know what they can
> do with you in that situation, and as a woman, you're more fearful. I utilized
> resources to distract me from the bad, from the fear.

Participant C3 utilized resources to distract her from the trauma of understanding the

political issues that may impact her well-being. The participant recognized that their fear

could prove crippling in her path towards graduation. However, the lived experience of

fear aided the student in her self-advocacy to seek out resources towards graduation. No

student or participant needs to deal with the fear of deportation while attending any institution of higher education. Faced with an insurmountable day-to-day routine, C3 utilized the moment to recognize the value of her lived experience. The resources she used out of fear became resources helpful toward shifting aspects of her mindset. Further research studies need to evaluate the impact of divisive fearmongering and the impact of college resource utilization.

A common lived experience among Latino students is an imbued sense of pride from family. This infusion manifests itself differently from household to household. However, the concept can often create limitations or an understanding that is not entirely beneficial to college students' growth. Participant C5, the high-achieving honors student, shared details regarding her household influence. The lived experiences of her household combined with the cultivation of a proud Latino culture helped develop her motivation drive. However, the approach to college resources became influenced by the household philosophy. Participant C5 shared:

> I'm not sure if you've experienced this, but it's like, "Oh, but you don't need it, like, like why ask for help, because you shouldn't be asking for help," like it's not like they've ever said you shouldn't be asking for help, but I think it's been implemented in my brain that, like, "Oh, but you don't need the help," even though it's being offered, and I think a lot of Hispanics experience that.

The participant utilized this portion of the data collection process to relate to the researcher. To C5, the concept of self-advocacy is a struggle with ideologies imbued within the household. As a Latino individual, the belief is that the inability to ask for assistance is normalized. Self-advocacy is often tricky for Latino students to conceptualize as lived experiences and household cultures push students to attempt to outwork and not seek help. In theory, this concept is simple and valuable. However, as

evidenced throughout the data collection process and the literature, Latino households

often create conflicting understandings of higher education institutions. These

misunderstandings can lead the Latino college student in multiple directions or create

confusion when approaching the institution. C5 continued:

> I've been taught a lot to just like grind and like to do as much as possible and, like
> you're going to get where you need to get, it doesn't matter who, you are doesn't
> matter if you're a woman, doesn't matter if you're Hispanic, like no one's gonna
> stop you from getting what you need. I know a lot of people don't have that
> encouragement to, even at all, and I think that's helped me.

The word "grind" in this quote is utilized as a verb to resemble the concept of working

hard and diligently. C5 views the idea of just grinding until you have completed the work

as one of the most important facets of approaching collegiate work. The participant's

lived experience influences her seeking out resources. In the previous section, C5 detailed

how she chose not to use the tutoring center out of "ego" and had issues with the

advisement center based on her disappointing experience with her advisor. The lived

experience of learning to grind proved successful for the individual participant. C5

admits that it is possible that the resources can help her, but the learned self-resilience

from her household amplified with poor experiences at the college level creates a cocktail

for the non-usage of resources at Eastern College. The concept of "ego" as a rationale for

not utilizing collegiate resources is possible. In the case of C5, the participant showcased

high empathetic skills, humility when speaking about their experiences, and a deep

understanding of university resources. Perhaps the influence of a household teaching her

to grind is the ultimate rationale for the non-utilization of college resources.

C6 also considered his experiences at Eastern College as being sufficient. He did

not expect much from Eastern College and understood his relationship with the

institution. C6 noted, "Maybe it's the lack of oppression that I may feel like I am supported at Eastern College because the oppression isn't there." C6's lived experience at Eastern College resulted in his self-advocacy.

Framework Analysis of Research Question Two

LatCrit serves as an extension of Critical Race Theory. Lived experiences of Latino students analyzed through the lens of LatCrit provide necessary contexts to comprehend. According to Bernal (2002), LatCrit analysis allows "educators to consider creative admissions, curricular, and pedagogical policies that acknowledge, respect, and nurture the ways of knowing and understanding in communities of color" (p. 118). The utilization of resources of Latino students at Eastern College may depend on their lived experiences and how they interpret these experiences. The tenets of LatCrit address the relationship that Latino individuals and students have in institutions and within society. The three emerging themes: family dynamic and expectations, financial status, and self-advocacy, impact a student's understanding and utilization of resources at the institution.

The second tenet of LatCrit details the emphasis on experiential knowledge. The participants of this study shared instances in which they utilized their learned experience as a strength. Each participant's unique lived experiences enhanced their understanding and utilization of college resources at Eastern College. In the cases of some participants, they forewent using resources due to the nature of their family dynamics. Participants utilized their understanding of family dynamics as a motivational driver. In instances of a family dynamic where the household did not understand the resource needs of the college student, the participant sought out the necessary tools to succeed. In other instances, participants shared having access to resources or understanding at home. The

participants, in this case, made choices that were available to them to either utilize the resources or utilize the household knowledge.

Tenet three of LatCrit addresses the challenge to dominant ideologies. In participant C3, the participant feared her residency status as a potential of losing out on the access to Eastern College. The participant combatted this fear by setting aside her mental anguish to persist in her degree attainment. Additionally, C3 shared her concern with her future financial situation and her inability to speak English fluently. Her understanding of her lived experience focused on her relationships with external factors. These external white-centric power dynamics alarmed the participant. However, this fear pushed the participant to utilize resources at the institution. The participant sought to rise past the anxiety and trauma to continue to challenge white-centric ideologies. The participants in this study understood their status juxtaposed with that of their white counterparts.

The fourth and fifth tenets of the Critical Race Theory extension, LatCrit, focus on race, racism, and forms of subordination and commitments to social justice. These approaches are critical to keep in mind for any institution of higher education. The participants in this study understood how their race impacted their lived experiences. C3 shared situations in which language and politics played a part in her interpretation of her lived experiences. C1 mentioned that she did not feel like she belonged. While the participant mentioned the feelings were self-imposed, this feeling of belonging resulted from her belief in where she should be. Belonging and understanding do not occur in a vacuum. Students and university culture combined with lived experiences impact whether students will internalize feelings of belonging. C1 knew that her feelings were due to her

own beliefs. However, the lived experiences of needing to succeed according to white-centric standards and ideologies did not help. The participants of this study revealed they chose to participate in this study to help Latino students of the future. The current status of the participants is that they are on track to graduate, some utilizing the resources at the institution. However, lived experiences and the hope for a better tomorrow for individuals of their background to continue to combat the white-centric narrative proved a valuable motivator in college persistence. There is a need for an overall understanding on how some aspects of family dynamics and expectations, financial status, and self-advocacy influence resource utilization

Conclusion of Research Question Two

In conclusion, lived experiences influence the usage of college resources by Latino students. In this multiple case study, the participants shared various lived experiences that influenced their utilization of resources at Eastern College. Higher education institutions must be cognizant of the lived experiences of their campus Latino population to provide unique resources at the exact time they are needed. According to Bernal, "One's identity is not based on the social construction of race but rather is multidimensional and intersects with various experiences" (Bernal, 2002, p. 118). The participants in this study detailed instances that impacted their identity and the subsequent choices in seeking out resources at the institution.

Lived experiences create opportunities for resource usage or deter students from utilizing resources. The viewed influence stems from the interpretation of the lived experiences. Latino students can use less than ideal experiences and overcome the adversity in their path to seek social mobility via the resources at the institution. In other

instances, a student with access to resources at home may not use institutional resources due to feeling a sense of belonging and satisfaction at home. The institution plays a pivotal role in the feelings of belonging of the student. If the resources presented to the student population instill feelings of discontent, the lived experience of this discontent prevents them from using the institutional support. Bernal writes, "For example, universities that have language or diversity requirements might develop innovative curricular and pedagogical ways to include bilingualism and biculturalism of students into the curriculum" (2002, p. 117). The institution must create opportunities for Latino students to process their lived experiences while balancing the educational opportunities provided by the institution.

In the next section of Chapter Four, the researcher discusses the findings, implications, and stakeholders' recommendations. The results of this study inform implications, recommendations, and solutions. Using the data collected and the analyzed information presented, the researcher lays out pertinent information to enhance the future experiences of Latino college students at Eastern College and beyond.

Discussion

The results of this multiple case study emphasized the implications for higher education institutions in regards to their Latino population interpreting lived experiences to utilize resources. The two research questions of this study and the utilization of semi-structured interviews proved critical to ascertain rich data. The data analysis of this multiple case study delivered stakeholders with key information on understanding their Latino population better and ensuring that the institution is doing all it can to support a

path towards bachelor's degree attainment for this population. The research stated in Chapter Two details a series of contributing factors and proposed solutions.

Latino students in this study detailed three emerging themes of the resources they understood as available to them at the institution. Table 4.3 details the emerging themes of research questions one and two that the researcher discovered in the data analysis process. The literature on Latino students' lived experiences and resource needs in higher education institutions is scare but ever-growing. With these emerging themes, this study demonstrates that Latino students require access to resources and fewer barriers when attempting to access them. Additionally, to support these Latino students, institutions must understand the cultural contexts and lived experiences of this student population.

Table 4.3

Emerging Themes of Research Questions One and Two

What do Latino students understand as resources vital toward graduation at Eastern College?	How do Latino lived experiences influence what resources at an institution they will utilize throughout college to succeed, engage, and subsequently graduate?
Advisement Center	Family Dynamics and Expectations
Tutoring Center	Financial Status
Career Center	Self-Advocacy

Gathering data and analyzing it is not the only step needed for researchers to interpret findings. Latino college students at Eastern College detailed the need for three resources the most, as noted in the emerging themes. Their lived experiences influenced their beliefs and utilization of resources at the institution. In particular cases, participants chose to either utilize or refrain from using a resource based on their interpretation of their own lived experience. Latino students do not gain access to higher education institutions or access to equitable educational resources as their white counterparts (Elliot & Parks

2018; Huang 2013; Vernez & Mizell 2001). This information detailed in the literature review proved crucial to the understanding of Latino participants. Participants in this study detailed instances of feeling a lack of support from the institution. Participants felt that administrators and specific resources were not available or accessible.

The literature details cost and finances as being significant factors in continued persistence. The research describes a lack of funds or funding allocations to directly impact Latino student enrollment (Elliot & Friedline 2013; McFarland et al., 2017; Vernez & Mizell 2001). This study detailed multiple participants holding part-time jobs to fund their education. In the instances of participants who struggled to maintain their educational status due to funding, they did not share feelings about leaving the institution to address personal or familial funding needs. The participants stressed the importance and value of education. The research focused on the lack of funding rather than the yearning for educational achievement that proved worthwhile, no matter the hours and institutional events missed.

The application of theory that appropriately assesses the understandings of Latino students requires employment. Critical Race Theory's unique offshoot of LatCrit provided a valuable frame to analyze emerging themes further. Qualitative analysis involves applying pertinent theories and a case study method to explore circumstances with no clear set of outcomes (Yin, 2016). Utilizing a LatCrit guiding lens and the researcher's positionality of understanding the Latino experience, the researcher used Table 4.4 to detail emerging themes with the LatCrit theoretical framework tenets divulged in Chapter Three.

Table 4.4

Emerging Themes and Applied Framework

Emerging Themes for Question One	LatCrit Application	Emerging Themes for Question Two	LatCrit Application
Advisement Center	Challenging dominant power dynamics	Family Dynamics and Expectations	Emphasis on experiential knowledge
Tutoring Center	Emphasis on experiential knowledge	Financial Status	Challenging dominant power dynamics
Career Center	Commitment to social justice	Self-Advocacy	The centrality of race and other forms of subordination
	Importance of transdisciplinary approaches		Commitment to social justice

Latino students at Eastern College focused on three resources the most. Access to those resources became a critical point for students looking to persist at the institution. Participants detailed barriers and cultural misunderstandings in pursuit of resource utilization. The Latino students' lived experience further amplified these barriers. Lived experiences require significant understanding by the college administration. The theoretical framework application of LatCrit detailed the importance of viewing data and resources about Latino students from a guiding lens. There are instances in the data collection and analysis of Latino students whose experiences and rationale required further viewing from an analytical perspective. This approach creates a disservice to Latino students at an institution. The evidence from this multiple case study provided future recommendations for institutions.

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Implications and Recommendations

Institutions of higher education that service Latino students must recognize the intricacies and understandings of their population. The themes that emerged from this multiple case study necessitate changes and initiatives tailored to the ever-growing Latino population in higher education institutions. The following section offers recommendations for institutional change. The first recommendation revolves around surveying the Latino student body accurately at an institution. The second recommendation focuses on necessary evaluations of programs and resources by the institution. Lastly, a discussion regarding the accessibility of resources requires occurring. This section additionally details possible future research recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Surveys

A recommendation to survey the Latino student body is vital. Resources at an institution prove valuable if the student body is utilizing them. If Latino students are not using the resources or have found other alternatives, the institution's responsibility is to discover the rationale. In addition, surveys allow the institution to gather a wide array of quantitative data. This data aids in creating unique surveys pointed at the student body. Participants of this study indicated different reasons for the utilization or indifference regarding resources available. Some participants felt strongly about the tutoring center and the concept of asking for help. In this case, participants needed to feel that the institution was supporting them as best as possible. Utilizing surveys to document data and experiences of Latino students during key times will prove valuable for any institution. Participants shared wanting access to resources helpful towards their growth. Surveys allow institutions to understand their populations and provide helpful resources.

Participants ranged from students that did not need them to want to use them often. Additionally, lived experiences influenced whether or not a participant sought to utilize resources. Usually, resources geared to Latino students focus on the deficits of their household or surroundings. This study's findings explored the different dynamics of Latino students and the access in their household environment.

Surveys enable institutions to learn more about their student body. As per the data, some participants established a mindset with institutional resources based on the geopolitics of their race. Utilizing surveys to assess student feedback allows the institution to address the gaps that exist. Small gaps over time become problematic for the student body. It is the institution's responsibility to survey students whenever possible in different parts of their undergraduate journey. The institution needs to utilize the data received to address the issues students face and explore the unique circumstances of the problems shared.

Recommendation 2: Program and Resource Evaluation

For participants of this study, three consistent resources emerged as valuable toward graduation. It was unexpected to the researcher that more students did not consider student life programs or diverse faculty and staff as pivotal toward graduation. Participants glossed over these concepts, focusing on the three areas of the institution. The institution provides specific budgets to places such as student life programming. The literature review of Chapter Two provided details on the different umbrella programs used to celebrate cultural diversity at an institution. Participants did not consider student life programming as a potential resource at the institution. Participants seeking a sense of

belonging or cultural wealth discovered that information in their household with guardians carrying the stories of their families and guardians.

Institutions must evaluate the offerings at the institution. If a Latino participant does not utilize a resource, discovering the reasoning is vital. This discovery allows the institution to evaluate program outcomes and address the budgets at the institution. If student life programs are not attended or viewed as needless, perhaps shifting budget funds to hire tutors at the tutoring center that are not current undergraduates creates a strong impact. If hiring diverse faculty has a minimal effect on student retention and persistence, allocating funding for various advisors can significantly benefit Latino students. Institutions must evaluate the success or shortcomings of institutional programs and offices to provide helpful resources for Latino students. An institution that consistently evaluates offices and the programs offered can provide unique resources to Latino students and adjust funding for diverse institutional growth.

Recommendation 3: Accessibility

As detailed in Chapter Four, the Latino students interviewed felt constant barriers when considering utilizing different resources. As per the data, students thought that the institution made it too difficult to access essential resources. Participants that worked a part-time job or had scheduling issues found it difficult to utilize pivotal resources toward graduation. Additionally, participants either felt or learned from other students that resources such as the advisement center did not effectively serve the Latino student body. Additionally, several students felt that scheduling or speaking with an administrator was a difficult task and subsequently chose to avoid it by any means necessary. The institution can inspire hope in Latino students by addressing certain cultural truths. The

participants in this study managed multiple responsibilities, some working as breadwinners for their families. When faced with working or attending an essential resource towards graduation, the student chose to work.

The institution will benefit Latino students by providing accessible resources for students. Perhaps this is as simple as providing a late-night video conference for a group of students who cannot attend an event during the day. The accessibility will manifest by providing diverse staff to address these students. Participants shared their experience commuting to school, fearful of deportation. The trauma of this situation, repressed to deal with the stresses of school, requires addressing. Diverse offerings at unique times conducive to the Latino population that works and serves as caretakers in their own home requires implementation. Having a diverse individual speak with a student that understands that word counselor as an advisor and subsequently refers the student appropriately is a resource worth having.

Recommendations for Future Research

Researchers studying Latino students at institutions can build upon this study for future stakeholders and institutions. Investigations need to address the student life programs that resonate with Latino students. While this study did not find student life programs as an emerging theme among participants, there may exist a possible value in continuing specific programs. However, the researcher did not discover student life programming to provide a helpful lens to the population of this study.

Latino students that drop out from the institution require further research. There is a gap in research on what resources help this population. Additionally, during the data collection process, the researcher discovered that no information gets collected on

students who drop out. This population may help bridge the gap or add further understanding to resource utilization and lived experiences.

Lastly, an exploration into whether or not there is a further influence on resource utilization and lived experiences on students who share that their parents or guardians are separated or divorced. Throughout the data collection process, participants shared attending college from a household where the parents were separated. Further analysis into the utilization and understanding of resources when a Latino participant's household experiences a separation or divorce of guardians could prove critical for future studies. The researcher did not discover emerging themes on the topic but expanding the participant pool, and interview questions that focus on this theme may prove essential.

Conclusion

The purpose of this multiple case study was to discover what resources at an institution do Latino students prioritize en route to a bachelor's degree. Additionally, the study attained insight into how Latino lived experiences influence resource utilization on a bachelor's degree path. The study explored the experiences at Eastern College of seven Latino participants, all currently enrolled in the institution. The semi-structured interviews with this population enabled the collection of rich descriptive data. This study sought to answer two research questions: What do Latino students understand as resources vital toward graduation at Eastern College? How do Latino lived experiences influence what resources at an institution they will utilize throughout college to succeed, engage, and subsequently graduate? To answer these research questions, the qualitative multiple case study of seven Latino participants explored emerging themes of the two research questions.

The findings of this multiple case study detailed a gap between Eastern College and its Latino students. The themes identified in research question one, focusing on what resources Latino students understand as vital toward graduation, were: advisement, tutoring, and career services. Research question two, focusing on how lived experiences influence resource utilization by Latino students at Eastern College, found: family dynamic and expectations, financial status, and self-advocacy. The researcher applied the theoretical framework of LatCrit, founded in Critical Race Theory, to provide a further context of the emerging themes. The researcher found that the seven participants all shared unique cultural elements that influenced their resource utilization. Given the circumstances of each participant, the researcher determined the participants all displayed aspects of self-sufficiency and understood the unique cultural intricacies that impact day-to-day interactions at an institution.

This study provided an understanding regarding Latino college students at an institution of higher education not obtained in the literature. The participants in this study valued their experience at Eastern College and the resource at the institution even if they did not utilize the resources. The seven participants detailed their experiences at the institution, the resources they interpreted as available, and how their lived experiences influence the usage of these resources. The researcher understood how Latino students' lived experiences, need for resources, and institutional access all exist in a delicate alliance toward bachelor's degree attainment.

CHAPTER FIVE

Distribution of Findings

Executive Summary

There is a growing population of Latino students in institutions of higher

education. The population of this diverse group of individuals will continue to grow, and

they will subsequently make choices regarding their higher education attendance. The

Latino population will make up about 29% of the United States population by 2060

(Colby & Ortman, 2015). This rising population disproportionately graduates less with

their bachelor's degree than their white peers by nearly 14% in a four-year time frame

(National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). The continuation of solutions that do not

ameliorate the attainment gap will result in Americans' annual household incomes

dropping by 5% by 2060 (Marcus, 2016). Though Latino student enrollments have

increased in higher education over the last decade, the lack of a bachelor's degree will

create a workforce achievement issue and subsequent erosion of annual income measures

for all Americans, regardless of race or creed.

Some studies explore and claim to provide solutions to the bachelor's attainment

gap of Latino students. However, the issue persists even as solutions touted as the

panacea continue to fail. There are gaps in the literature that fail to address Latino

students' unique understanding and lived experiences in higher education institutions.

This multiple case study identified what resources at Eastern College, a mid-sized college

in the Northeast United States, Latino students understood as a critical towards

graduation and subsequently investigated how lived experiences influenced what this

population utilized to achieve a bachelor's degree. Using a guiding theoretical framework of LatCrit, an extension of Critical Race Theory, provided a deeper understanding of Latino college students missed in the literature. The following section provides an overview of the data collection and analysis processes utilized in this multiple case study.

Overview of Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The present study utilized a qualitative multiple case study approach for data collection and data analysis of seven Latino participants. Employing a qualitative approach allowed the researcher to explore unique stories of Latino students enrolled at Eastern College. Data collected quantitatively often lacks the unique understanding of the participant's reality, which occurred through one-on-one interviews. Understanding the nature of the participant's reality proved the only possible method to define resources at Eastern College and identify the impact and influence of lived experiences toward resource utilization.

Upon receiving necessary Institutional Review Board approval from Eastern College and Baylor University, the data collection of seven Latino participants currently enrolled in Eastern College transpired. The participants were given a pre-study questionnaire upon confirmation of their eligibility for the study, the parameters of which required the participant to identify as Latino, Latina, Latinx, or any delineation of this identifier. The seven participants received invitations to a video conference one-on-one interview. The video conference interview utilized a semi-structured interview allowing the researcher to understand unique lived stories and establish rapport.

After the data collection, the researcher transcribed and coded interviews for emerging themes. NVivo and manual codes allowed the researcher to analyze the data

deeply. The cases' emerging themes for both sets of research questions were detailed, and the guiding theoretical framework of LatCrit cultivated a more profound understanding unique to the Latino experience.

Summary of Findings

The data analyzed and collected answered the two research questions: What do Latino students understand as resources vital toward graduation at Eastern College? How do Latino lived experiences influence what resources at an institution they will utilize throughout college to succeed, engage, and subsequently graduate? The results of the data depicted consistent findings across the cases. Each of the seven cases provided its own story regarding the findings that emerged. The notable findings focused on the vital resources: the advisement center, the tutoring center, and the career center. The findings pertaining to lived experiences and their influence on resource utilization noted critical: family dynamics and expectations, financial status, and self-advocacy. Each of the seven cases provided a unique context that answered the research questions while providing rich information that envelops the study.

The first set of findings detailed the importance of college resources that are critical to the success of Latino students. While the researcher expected offices or grants related to funding the college experience to be most important, as often found anecdotally in the literature, the researcher learned this was not the case. Latino students understood the value of the advisement center, the tutoring center, and the career center. Participants felt endless barriers when accessing these offices that are for students at the institution. Even in a mandatory office like the advisement center, participants did not feel supported by the resources they wanted to utilize. Participants found their experiences with these

offices less than ideal, often citing negative experiences. Latino participants have a desire to use resources to succeed and find necessary ways to overcome institutional hurdles to resource access.

The second set of findings found a set of lived experiences that influenced the utilization of resources. Aside from institutional barriers, lived experiences proved critical in whether or not a Latino student utilized a resource. Participants utilized their families and guardians to serve as the resources they felt they did not have at the institution. Participants who understood their financial situation willed themselves to utilize resources toward graduation to change their fiscal position, even if the institution continued to provide barriers. Lastly, when faced with trauma and constant obstacles, participants learned to advocate for themselves. These participants understood that their resources and opportunities were finite, ultimately pushing students to persist and overcome. Whether the student dealt with the fear of deportation, a feeling of neutrality due to not feeling oppressed, or coping with taught cultural norms of not asking for help, these participants advocated their needs to succeed.

Informed Recommendations

This study's data collection and analysis provided critical details on Latino students' understanding of resources at an institution. The emerging themes and findings provide considerations on how to ameliorate the issue. Three recommendations are valuable and require review by Eastern College and higher education institutions facing a calling to provide Latino students with pivotal resources toward graduation.

The first recommendation is for the institution to survey diverse students with newer and different methods. The institution must understand the unique nature of their

student body and subsequently adapt to this population. The one-on-one interviews with participants resulted in culturally rich details that influence a student's relationship with an institution. Participants recalled receiving surveys via email; however, these surveys ascertained quantitative data on their institutional relationship and understanding of resources. The surveys failed to provide a sense of unique support needed to attain valuable data from Latino participants.

The second recommendation tasks the institution with evaluating the current funding and resource allotment available to students. In one-on-one interviews, participants detailed barriers and unmet needs. Institutions utilizing surveys or other methods can deeply understand the importance of resources and allocate budgetary funds to alleviate barriers. If an institution understands lived experiences and how they influence the utilization of resources, an institution can stay one step ahead of student needs. An institution can save money, hire necessary staff, or strip away barriers of critical resources if they work to comprehend the unique needs of their student body.

Lastly, institutions should increase access to resources and institutional success factors. Participants in this study predominately held part-time jobs to fund their bachelor's degree attainment and felt that they missed out on developmental opportunities. While an institution cannot provide resources every hour of every day, it can evaluate how to allocate staff, events, or programs to assist Latino student attainment. Providing instances for Latino students to utilize a resource on a flexible schedule will go a long way in establishing rapport and trust with the student. Offices such as the advisement center that polled poorly with the participant population would go a long way by providing accessible ways in which students can utilize the office.

Findings Distribution Proposal

The following section details the information necessary for sharing the results of this study. First, this section provides more information about the target audience and why this group is essential to include in the distribution of findings. Secondly, this section outlines the proposed distribution plan and distribution materials required to share findings. The information and findings detailed in this study require communicating with necessary stakeholders to ameliorate the problem. The stakeholders can utilize this information to develop strategies and initiatives that will enhance the institutional growth of Latino bachelor's degree attainment.

Target Audience

The target audience of this study is the program coordinators and university executive staff, such as vice presidents, presidents, or Board of Trustees. Program coordinators take many forms at an institution. For this study, program coordinators are administrators who control programming initiatives for students and staff and those who serve in a student-facing capacity, such as a front desk and support staff. Individuals in charge of offices, events, or cultural programs must recognize the value of this study. Program coordinators serve in different capacities across institutions. Whether scheduling, managing, marketing, or serving as a touchpoint for students, program coordinators are vital members who must understand student needs. Program coordinators have the opportunity to make immediate changes that impact students every day. Presenting to program coordinators will allow them to make informed decisions regarding departmental procedures that can significantly benefit the Latino student population.

The second audience critical to present findings to is university executive staff. The university executive staff serve as the primary change agents of an institution. These individuals allocate and drive institutional goals and large-scale funding that influences all areas of the institution. These staff members serve the institution, all the staff, and all the students. Presenting information on findings to these staff members can help determine the future of Latino students and their quest to attain a bachelor's degree.

Proposed Distribution Method

These findings require presenting to the program coordinators and the university executive staff via unique presentations for each group. Program coordinators would receive a presentation including all sections of this study, defining key terms, unique data collected, and recommendations to serve the student population better. This presentation would consist of digital slides with data and information shared throughout a two-hour timespan. Additionally, program coordinators will have an opportunity to ask questions regarding findings and recommendations.

A professional presentation is also valuable for the university executive staff. The presentation with this staff will provide a unique, tailored experience as the researcher seeks to use the estimated financial information of the institution. The researcher would provide scenarios depending on institutional knowledge and information sharing on how budgets would serve students better. If the researcher cannot attain institutional information, the researcher will utilize estimated scenarios based on the literature found on institutional funding. The researcher will utilize digital slides to create an estimated timeline on institutional goals and the graduation rate of Latino students. This two-hour presentation will detail the possible outcomes of the estimated scenarios by focusing on

the current percentage of Latino students enrolled at the institution and the adjustments needed for this population to continue attending the college. Utilizing stakeholder data allows the researcher to measure budget implications and income from the Latino attendees to the college, allowing for a numerical figure to arise. Consistent meetings and evaluations require scheduling with the university executive staff. These meetings would allow the researcher and the university executive staff to evolve implications and adjustments consistently.

Distribution Materials

The findings of this study via a presentation and informal question and answer section allow for the most influential interpretation of data. A digital slide presentation will provide an overview of the literature review, the data collection and analysis process, and the interposition of LatCrit to provide cultural awareness and diverse context. The presentation will share major themes tied to the research questions and institutional resources and provide the data collection and analysis process to enable individuals to query their population. This presentation, consisting of two hours, aims to increase the understanding of Latino students' needs toward graduation. An informal question and answer portion will allow learners to develop thoughtful responses that can drive institutional initiatives for years to come if answered appropriately through data and analysis information collected. Much like the participants' one-on-one conversations, the individuals who receive this presentation should share their unique experiences and understanding. To effectively deliver data, knowledge of the learner population must occur. After the presentation, recipients would receive an email recording of notes and a video recording.

Conclusion

This multiple case study shared the experiences and understanding of seven Latino students at Eastern College. The themes, lived experiences, and understanding of resources provided by the Latino participants of this study proved valuable. The themes of the advisement center, the tutoring center, and the career center shed light on the necessary resources at an institution critical toward bachelor's degree attainment. Furthermore, the themes of family dynamics and expectations, financial status, and self-advocacy provided details on the influences that impact Latino students' utilization of resources. This study's results detailed the resources a Latino college student prioritizes and how the institution presents barriers to these resources. Additionally, institutions must keep in mind how lived experiences influence the resource utilization of Latino college students. Future studies on this topic must continue to address the distinctive experiences of Latino students rather than provide quantitative information on a population that deals with a unique reality.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol

Interviewee:
Interviewee Ethnicity:
Interviewee Sex:
Interviewee Year of Enrollment:
Interviewee Last Academic Standing:
Interviewee Primary Living While Attending:
Location:
Date:
Time Start:
Time Ended:

Interview Question	Research Question Addressed by Interview Question	Researcher Notes
What does your average full day look like at Eastern College? (Start of the day to end of the day [including commute/work]	2. How do Latino lived experiences influence what resources at an institution they will utilize throughout college to succeed, engage, and subsequently graduate?	
What do you consider as valuable tools provided by Eastern College toward graduation?	1. What do Latino students understand as resources vital toward graduation at Eastern College?	
Which of these tools did you utilize the most and the least?	1. What do Latino students understand as resources vital toward graduation at Eastern College?	
Suppose you had to explain the utilization of these tools to your guardian(s); how would you do so?	2. How do Latino lived experiences influence what resources at an institution they will utilize throughout college to succeed, engage, and subsequently graduate?	
How do/did your guardian(s) support your college experience?	2. How do Latino lived experiences influence what resources at an institution they will utilize throughout	

	college to succeed, engage, and subsequently graduate?	
Where were your attitudes towards Eastern College in the last year, and how do you believe they influence your graduation?	2. How do Latino lived experiences influence what resources at an institution they will utilize throughout college to succeed, engage, and subsequently graduate?	
Did/do you ever feel that you were/are not welcome at Eastern College?	2. How do Latino lived experiences influence what resources at an institution they will utilize throughout college to succeed, engage, and subsequently graduate?	
What changes at Eastern College would help/helped/have helped you graduate?	1. What do Latino students understand as resources vital toward graduation at Eastern College? 2. How do Latino lived experiences influence what resources at an institution they will utilize throughout college to succeed, engage, and subsequently graduate?	

APPENDIX B

Participant Agenda

The researcher required participants to allot two hours for the interview process.

Research Agenda
15 minutes – Introduction and Welcome
1 hour and 40 minutes – One-on-one Interview
5 minutes – Debrief and Next Steps

APPENDIX C

Pre-Study Questionnaire

The researcher will confirm that all participants are at least 18 years of age before continuing with the Pre-Study Questionnaire.

Pre-Study Questionnaire

- Participant Name:

- Are you 18 years of age? (Yes/No; Please include date of birth)
Answer:
  - Designation at Eastern College (please [x] the applicable following)
    - Currently enrolled in Eastern College [ ]
    - Graduated from Eastern College within the last two years [ ]
    - Was enrolled in Eastern College but dropped out [ ]
  - Self-Identification
    - Are you Latino/a/x? (Yes/No)
Answer:
    - Please share your race/ethnicity:
Answer:
  - What is your interest in participating in Study?
Answer:
  - On a scale of 1-5 (1 being not important at all and 5 being very important), please indicate the importance of attending and graduating college to yourself (the student).
Answer:
  - On a scale of 1-5 (1 being not important at all and 5 being very important), please indicate the importance of attending and graduating college to family and/or guardians around you (the student).
Answer:
  - On a scale of 1-5 (1 being not belonging at all and 5 being very belonging), please indicate your sense of belonging at Eastern College.
Answer:
  - On a scale of 1-5 (1 being never and 5 being very frequently), please indicate your having had experienced racism or prejudice at Eastern College.
Answer:

APPENDIX D

Consent Form

Baylor University

Consent Form for Research

PROTOCOL TITLE: The Real Wall: A Qualitative Case Study to Explore Latino Graduation Rates and the Lack of Necessary Resources Available

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Edward Peña

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to be part of a research study. This consent form will help you choose whether or not to participate in the study. Feel free to ask if anything is not clear in this consent form.

Important Information about this Research Study

Things you should know:
- The purpose of the study is to gain insight into the institutional resources understood as available for Latino college students that they interpret as necessary to their graduation process at Eastern College. Additionally, this study explores how lived experiences influence what resources at an institution Latino students will utilize throughout college to succeed, engage, and subsequently graduate.
- In order to participate, you must identify as Latino/a, LatinX, or a delineation of this population. Additionally, participants must be currently enrolled in Eastern College or graduated from Eastern College within the last two years. You must also be at least 18 years of age.
- If you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete a pre-study questionnaire to ensure you meet the criteria. Next an agenda for a Zoom meeting for an introduction and welcome with Edward and subsequent interview after the introduction and welcome. You will be provided an agenda for your day for the interview that will last no longer than 3 hours.
- Risks or discomforts from this research include information being shared with Eastern College on experiences and feelings of the institution. Information will

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be coded when provided to Eastern College to guard identity and participant from risk.

- The possible benefits of this study include changes in how Eastern College provides resources and support to its' Latino population. Additionally, Eastern College will have a greater understanding of its' population.
- Taking part in this research study is voluntary. You do not have to participate, and you can stop at any time.
- This research is not being conducted under the auspices of Eastern College nor in any capacity as an employee of Eastern College

More detailed information may be described later in this form. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research study.

Why is this study being done?

The purpose of this study is necessary as its' purpose is unique and impactful. Given the gaps in the literature about the graduation rates of Latino students and the understanding of how they can succeed in college. The purpose of the study is to gain insight into the institutional resources understood as available for Latino college students that they interpret as necessary to their graduation process at Eastern College. Additionally, this study explores how lived experiences influence what resources at an institution Latino students will utilize throughout college to succeed, engage, and subsequently graduate.

What will happen if I take part in this research study?

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to fill out a pre-study questionnaire to ensure you meet the criteria. Next, you will receive an agenda for a video conference meeting for an introduction and welcome with Edward and subsequent interview after the introduction and welcome.

We will ask you to participate in a one-on-one interview for an hour to answer a series of questions.

Lastly, we will allow a debrief period that will last no more than 30 minutes.

We would like to make an audio and video recording of you during this study. Audio and video recording is required for this study. If you do not want to be recorded, you should not be in this study.

How long will I be in this study and how many people will be in the study?

Participation in this study will last three hours on the day of your arrival. 10 subjects will take part in this research study.

What are the risks of taking part in this research study?
We don't believe there are any risks from participating in this research.

Are there any benefits from being in this research study?
Although you will not directly benefit from being in this study, others might benefit because your experiences and information shared may help shape the future of the institution to come.

How Will You Protect my Information?

A risk of taking part in this study is the possibility of a loss of confidentiality. Loss of confidentiality includes having your personal information shared with someone who is not on the study team and was not supposed to see or know about your information. The researcher plans to protect your confidentiality.

We will keep the records of this study confidential by encrypting the files off a main server. Additionally, all information shared regarding the results of the study or participant information will be coded. We will make every effort to keep your records confidential. However, there are times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of your records.

The following people or groups may review your study records for purposes such as quality control or safety:
- Representatives of Baylor University and the BU Institutional Review Board
- Federal and state agencies that oversee or review research (such as the HHS Office of Human Research Protection or the Food and Drug Administration)

The results of this study may also be used for teaching, publications, or presentations at professional meetings. If your individual results are discussed, your identity will be protected by using a code number or pseudonym rather than your name or other identifying information.

Will I be compensated for being part of the study?

You will not be paid for taking part in this study.

Your Participation in this Study is Voluntary
Taking part in this study is your choice. You are free not to take part or to withdraw at any time for any reason. No matter what you decide, there will be no penalty or loss of benefit to which you are entitled. If you decide to withdraw from this study, the

information that you have already provided will be kept confidential. You cannot withdraw information collected prior to your withdrawal.

If you are a Baylor student or faculty/staff member, you may choose not to be in the study or to stop being in the study before it is over at any time. This will not affect your grades or job status at Baylor University. You will not be offered or receive any special consideration if you take part in this research study.

Contact Information for the Study Team and Questions about the Research

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact:
Edward Peña
Phone: [REDACTED]
Email: [REDACTED]

Or

[Name of secondary contact person(s)]
Phone:
Email:

Contact Information for Questions about Your Rights as a Research Participant

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the following:

Baylor University Institutional Review Board
Office of the Vice Provost for Research
Phone:
Email:

Your Consent

SIGNATURE OF SUBJECT:

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. We will give you a copy of this document for your records. We will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I understand what the study is about, and my questions so far have been answered. I agree to take part in this study.

_____   _____

Signature of Subject   Date

Sample Recruitment Email

Hello (Student Name),

Thank you for your interest in participating in my research study. As mentioned in the recruitment email, I am inviting LatinX students to participate in my research study that focuses on graduation rates and university resources at Eastern College. This email serves to provide you information on the research. In case you are interested, please know that this is on a volunteer basis, and there is no compensation involved.

Attached is a consent form needed to proceed with this study and a pre-study questionnaire. Please note that both the consent form and pre-study questionnaire are needed in order to be considered for this study. Please complete and send both back to me as soon as possible. The consent form will share any and all uses of this information. The pre-study questionnaire will determine eligibility for the study. If you are determined to be ineligible all your information will be saved for a month in case the approach to participants changes. After a month, this information would be deleted. Please do not continue this study if you are not at least 18 years of age.

Please feel free to ask any follow-up questions to the pertaining documents.

Best,

Edward

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