Title

Examining the educational paths of Indigenous Mexican College Students in California's Central Coast

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Publication Date

2021

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Barbara

Ichǐ Nà Sákua'a: Ichǐ Nà Sákua'a: Examining the educational paths of Indigenous Mexican
College Students in California's Central Coast

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Education

by

Elizabeth Villa – Rosales

Committee in charge:

Professor Mary E. Brenner, Chair

Professor Mary Bucholtz

Professor Emiko Saldivar Tanaka

September 2021

The dissertation of Elizabeth Villa - Rosales is approved.

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Mary Bucholtz

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Emiko Saldivar

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Mary E. Brenner, Committee Chair

June 2021

Ichĭ Nà Sákua'a: Examining the educational paths of Indigenous Mexican College Students in
California's Central Coast

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by

Elizabeth Villa - Rosales

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EDUCATION

University of California, Santa Barbara, CA   June 2021
Gevirtz Graduate School of Education (GGSE)
Ph.D., Cultural Perspectives and Comparative Education
Advisor: Dr. Mary E. Brenner

University of California, Santa Barbara, CA   May 2017
Gevirtz Graduate School of Education
M.A., Cultural Perspectives and Comparative Education
Advisor: Dr. Mary E. Brenner

University of California, Los Angeles, CA   June 2007
B.A., Latin American Studies

East Los Angeles College, Los Angeles, CA June 2002   June 2004
A.A., General Education

Research Experience

Indigenous Students Community College Educational Study   Spring 2018 – Fall 2020
(Principal Investigator)
University of California Santa Barbara
Research Advisor: Dr. Mary Elizabeth Brenner
> -Designed interview study on the academic trajectories of Indigenous youth who
> enrolled in a community college and transferred to a four-year university.
> - Study is framed from a Critical Race Theory perspective and examines structural
> challenges and supports that enable these students to successfully transfer and persist
> toward a baccalaureate

Language Ideologies in children's peer play interactions   Fall 2011- Fall 2012
(Graduate Research Assistant)
University of California Santa Barbara
Research Advisor: Dr. Amy Kyratzis
> - Worked with principal investigator on language research by on a grant funded by UC
> Mexus –Conacyt on children's play interaction and literacy activities in a local
> bilingual preschool. Collected ethnographic video and written data in the classroom.
> Responsible for transferring and rendering data to be transcribed.

Indigenous student migrants in Zacatecas Study   Fall 2009
(Ethnographer)
University of California Los Angeles – Field Research Program
Research Advisor: Dr. John Sullivan

- Traveled to Zacatecas Mexico and conducted interviews with native Nahuatl speakers who are currently working within higher education and the positive effects that contribute to the success of Indigenous students in an academic environment.

Teaching Experience

California State University Channel Islands   Spring 2021
Lecturer – University Studies Department
      Course: UNIV 350: Critical Race Media Representations (Fully Online)

California State University Channel Islands   Fall 2020
Lecturer – University Studies Department 150
      Course: UNIV 150: Examining Racialization, Educational Inequalities and Critical Race Theory in Xicanx Education (Fully Online)

University of California Santa Barbara   Spring 2018
      Teaching Assistant – Sociology of Law – Sociology Department
      Instructor: Dr. Gordon Abra

University of California Santa Barbara   Winter 2018
      Teaching Assistant: Sexuality and Gender – Chicana/o Studies Department
      Instructor: Dr. Ellie Hernandez

University of California Santa Barbara   Fall 2017
      Teaching Assistant: Introduction to Chicano Studies – Chicana/o Studies Department
      Instructor: Dr. Mario Garcia

University of California Santa Barbara   Fall 2016
      Teaching Assistant: Caribbean Studies – Black Studies Department
      Instructor: Dr. Roberto Strongman

University of California Santa Barbara   Fall 2015
      Teaching Assistant: Introduction to Chicana/o Studies – Chicano Studies Department
      Instructor: Dr. Ralph Armbuster

University of California Santa Barbara   Summer 2015
      Teaching Assistant: Introduction to African Studies
      Instructor: Dr. Jude Akudinobi

University of California Santa Barbara   Spring 2015
      Teaching Assistant: Introduction to Chicana/o Studies
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University of California Santa Barbara   Winter 2015
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University of California Santa Barbara   Spring 2014
      Teaching Assistant: Caribbean Studies – Black Studies Department
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University of California Santa Barbara   Winter 2014
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      Instructor: Dr. Tara Yosso

University of California Santa Barbara   Winter 2013
      Teaching Assistant: Blacks in the Media – Black Studies Department
      Instructor: Otis Madison

University of California Santa Barbara   Fall 2012
      Teaching Assistant: Chicana Art and Feminism – Chicana/o Studies
      Instructor: Dr. Cristina Serna

Professional Experience

CSUCI - Community Outreach Specialist   6/18 – 9/20

Coordinate project outreach activities targeting under-resourced and first-generation students within the CI campus and local community by creating partnerships with organizations and high schools. Prepare and implement presentations and workshops to parents and students concerning higher education such as college planning and financial aid literacy. Supervise and provide professional development opportunities for student peer mentors to train them in facilitating workshops, presentations and materials to high school and college students and families.

CSUCI -Teach Program Recruiter   6/17 – 6/18

Visit local high schools and community organizations to present and promote Cal State Channel Island's teaching credential programs. Serve as a liaison between students, teachers, and the school of education. Prepare and disseminate marketing materials to participating schools. Coordinate fieldtrips by planning transportation, presentations, and meals on campus.

Teaching Assistant, UCSB   9/12 – 6/18

Reinforce lessons presented by professor by reviewing material with students, plan lessons for the students and facilitate classroom discussions, assist the professor in managing a class of 55 students and ensure each student gets personal attention. Set paper questions, determine subject for project work, and perform other tasks related to course evaluation, conduct exams and supervise the behavior of students. Communicate with students to understand their problems and difficulties. Support the students in understanding class material. Maintain grading and attendance records for each class.

Migrant Education Recruiter/Parent Liaison   9/16 – 9/17

Identify and recruit eligible migrant children, serve as a liaison between the school and migrant family, assist the community regarding educational programs, services and various student issues; assist in coordinating and arranging various programs and services to meet the needs of students, assist high school students in cyberhigh credit recovery program, provide information on applying to college and financial aid.

Tequio Youth Coordinator   2/15 – 3/17

Duties: Design a plan of action to implement activities and proposals in accordance with the group's objectives. Facilitate weekly meetings at the main office. Facilitate club sessions at the local high schools. Maintain efforts to increase the group's attendance and participation. Coordinate presentations and invited guests at the meetings. Prepare presentations on the college application process, transfer process, and provide information on how to apply to scholarships.

Study Abroad Experience

Institute for Research and Ethnology of Zacatecas   6/10 – 8/10
       Summer Intensive Nahuatl Course – Zacatecas, MX

UC Field Research Program – Zacatecas, MX   6/09 – 11/09
       Educational Migration Courses

Institute for Research and Ethnology of Zacatecas   6/09 – 8/09
       Summer Intensive Nahuatl Course – Zacatecas, MX

National Autonomous University of Mexico, MX   06/06 – 6/07
       Undergraduate Coursework

Conference Presentations

Identidad y apoyo en la educación para estudiantes Indígenas   July 2019
Binational Academy of Leaders, Merida, Yucatan, México

Educational Trajectories of Indigenous Youth in California's Central Coast April 2019
National Association of Chicano Chicana Studies (NACCS) Albuquerque, New Mexico

The power of podcasts: New media as a way to support Indigenous   May 2017
 language and oral traditions

Workshops on American Indigenous Languages (WAIL), University of California Santa Barbara

**Collaborative Language Maintenance of Mixtec and Zapotec in a
Youth Group Setting** May 2016
Workshops on American Indigenous Languages (WAIL), University of California Santa Barbara

Jóvenes mixtecos: Barreras y apoyos comunitarios en el camino hacia la educación superior March 2016
Simposio Binacional sobre la Educación de Estudiantes Indígenas Mexicanos en México y California, Oaxaca México

From la Huasteca to Zacatecas: Educational Migration of Nahua Students - Paper presented at the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies, Pasadena, CA – April 2011

Invited Presentations

Educational Trajectories of Indigenous Youth in California's Central Coast June 2019
Guest Presenter, CSU Channel Island's course; The Chicanx experience in education studies

Indigenous migration and Identity July 2012
Guest presenter University of California Los Angeles course; Politics of Education

Languages

Fluent in English and Spanish, Studied Nahuatl

Abstract

Ichǐ Nà Sákua'a: Examining the educational paths of Indigenous Mexican College Students in California's Central Coast

by

Elizabeth Villa Rosales

Indigenous students in California experience considerable challenges in the educational system. They are identified as "Hispanic" which does not take into consideration distinct linguistic and cultural traits they possess which vary greatly from other Latinx groups. Institutions play a large role as gatekeepers within education, which impacted Indigenous youths' perception of themselves within this system. My previous study (Villa, 2017) found that a disproportionate number of Indigenous students begin their path to higher education at a community college by default due to being tracked into non-college preparatory courses.

This study seeks to explore institutional and student-centered barriers that Mexican Immigrant Indigenous students confront as well as the strengths they draw upon to help them navigate higher education. It is the goal of this investigation to highlight the strengths and cultural wealth that Indigenous students possess to inform institutions and to propose ways in which these institutions can build on the cultural strategies those students employ to create stronger pathways for transfer.

The data collection involved participant observation and semi-structured interviews with fifteen members of the Nacavi youth group that served the Indigenous Mixtec and Zapotec communities along the California Central Coast. I interviewed students who were in different stages of their educational paths beginning with: 1. Matriculation from High School

to community college, 2. Completion of coursework for transfer eligibility, 3. Application to four-year universities, and 4. Experiences at the university. I utilized Critical Race Theory framework to examine the inequalities, structures, policies and procedures that reproduce unequal outcomes and limit educational opportunities for students of color. I also took an assets-based approach to examine the students' resiliency and supports they received which helped them navigate through college.

The findings of this study show that the Nacavi students chose to attend community college for a number of reasons. Primarily, a disproportionate number of students were tracked into remedial coursework in high school which severely restricted their eligibility for admittance into a university. Lower track placement rendered them unable to receive equal access to: College information; English courses that qualify for college entry; and academic content and critical writing skills. In addition, financial challenges were also a major influence in attending a community college.

The results also illustrate the various forms of supports students used. Most all the Nacavi students reported receiving college preparation and support through program interventions such as Nacavi, Migrant education, the EAOP program or through community college representatives directly. In addition, all the students mentioned that their parents' expectations and encouragement were the prime motivator in pursuing higher education. The findings of this study add to limited research that analyzes the educational experiences of Indigenous communities in the United States. The study concludes with a discussion of limitations and suggestions for future research.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Chapter 1: Purpose of the study

The current study analyzes experiences and experiential knowledge of Indigenous Mexican students enrolled in community college with aspirations to transfer to a four- year university. My previous study (Villa, 2017) found that a disproportionate number of Indigenous students begin their path to higher education at a community college by default due to being tracked into non-college preparatory courses. Institutions played a large role as gatekeepers within education, which impacted Indigenous youths' perception of themselves within this system. This study seeks to explore institutional and student-centered barriers that Mexican Immigrant Indigenous students confront as well as the strengths they draw upon to help them navigate higher education. It is the goal of this investigation to highlight the strengths and cultural wealth that Indigenous students possess to inform institutions and to propose ways in which these institutions can build on the cultural strategies those students employ to create stronger pathways for transfer.

According to the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, Xicanx students represent the largest group enrolled within the California Community Colleges (CCCO, 2021), yet the number of these students who manage to transfer to a four-year college is highly incongruent with that figure. Demographic trends in California continue to project an increase of Xicanx students within the states' public-school systems and it is highly likely that many will attend CCC's. Although there has been a considerable amount of research that examining transfer barriers and persistence and of Xincanx students within the California Community Colleges, to date there are no published studies that focus specifically on Mexican Indigenous Immigrant students who are included in this population.

Indigenous immigrant students in California experience considerable challenges in the California educational system as they are identified under the term "Hispanic or Xicanx" (these terms are used with the aim of being more inclusive as they are the non-gendered forms of Latinx and Xicana/o) which does not take into account their unique cultural needs and strengths which vary greatly from other Latino groups. Unfortunately, Indigenous people's identities often become homogenized into generic labels such as "Hispanic", "Xicanx" and "Mestizo" (Mexican people who have mixed Indigenous and European Ancestry and do not solely identify as Indigenous), diminishing the specific needs of this population.

Currently, there is very limited research that looks exclusively at the educational paths of Mexican Indigenous youth and only a very few that look at the experience of Indigenous students in college (Barillas-Chon 2010; Casanova,2012; Kovats; 2018)

In one of the few studies that looks specifically at Indigenous Oaxacan students within high schools in California, Barillas-Chón (2010) highlighted that most research on Mexican immigrants, especially within education, has focused on populations that have historical labor ties to the US and originate from states which have dominated in linguistics, social, political and cultural areas. As a consequence of this over-representation, the author asserts that this has "resulted in research that homogenizes Mexican immigrants by neglecting to document the experiences of groups of immigrant students who come from non-Spanish-speaking communities and who have historically been politically, economically, and socially disenfranchised" (p. 304). Failure to recognize and address the needs of the Indigenous students will continue to further alienate this population in schools.

In her work Casanova (2012) conducted a longitudinal single case study of Lupe, a Mayan student who immigrated to the US as a young teen and followed her trajectory towards

2

higher education. Her study found that Lupe had faced discrimination from peers and low expectations from her teachers who discouraged her from applying to college. Despite this adversity she attended college after receiving support from a few teachers, particularly a Chicano teacher who helped her with the college application process. Upon graduation from college she became a teacher at a low-income school where the majority of her students were immigrants. The study found that her academic resilience was due to supportive educators, family encouragement and the development of a strong Indigenous identity.

Nicolas (2012), discussed the impact of college courses in fostering Indigenous pride for Mexican Zapotec college students at a university. The families of the participants in her study had been a part of a local community organization that had been active within civic and cultural participation. However, after taking courses and learning about the socio-political histories of Indigenous communities, the students became motivated to reclaim their own sense of Indigenous identity. In addition to publicly claiming their Indigenous identity, the students also became more politically active on their campus.

Although Indigenous students are of Mexican descent, and come from immigrant backgrounds and share many of the same educational barriers with Xicanx and Latinx groups they also have specific needs that are overlooked and underserviced due to a lack of understanding of their background and identities. As one of the most marginalized groups in Mexico, they hold the highest rates of poverty, are extremely under-resourced often living in remote areas, and have less access to quality education. Many Indigenous people also have limited proficiency in Spanish and literacy in in their heritage languages (Poole, 2004).

As a vulnerable group in Mexico, Indigenous people face increased difficulties as they migrate to the United States; upon migrating these conditions unequivocally affect their

educational experience. For instance, many Mixtec families speak Mixteco as their primary language with Spanish as their second and they learn English as their third, yet it is often assumed that they can comprehend Spanish as native speakers.

In addition to limited research, it has also been particularly difficult to get a close approximation of the number of Indigenous students in schools which makes providing resources increasingly complex. Within Ventura and Santa Barbara county Indigenous languages are the second most spoken language after Spanish (California Department of Education, 2017), however school data regarding language are not congruent with this report. In a study published by Community Commission for Ventura County (2010) states "At the time of this study, school counselors and administrators reported that there is no system to track Mixtec students at the district level" (currently they are ethnically categorized under "Hispanic" or "other"). As a response, the school local districts have added Mixtec to the home language survey in an attempt to identify and design appropriate instruction and support services for English learners. Unfortunately, due to the enduring discrimination Indigenous communities have faced, many families attempt to pass for Mestizo or refuse to ethnically self-identify. In other cases, parents may neglect to select their home language being unaware of the significance and the impact this can have on their child's curriculum instruction.

Oftentimes schools and teachers are unfamiliar with their students' ethnic identities and fail to understand that although they are from Mexico, Spanish is a foreign language to them. This causes a disconnection in communication between parents and students and can cause students to become socially segregated. Consequently, due to this disconnection students may become frustrated and feel shame or become angry about their ethnic identity and hide their identity and language. (Barillas-Chón, 2010; Gálvez-Hard, 2006; Stephen,

2007). Additionally, due to the language barrier between families and schools, parents are much less likely to become involved in their children's education especially if schools do not provide adequate language interpretation (Flynn, 2005).

Higher education and attaining a college degree show a direct correlation with income. In 2015, 15% of Latinxs age 25 and above had earned a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 36% of Whites (U.S. Census, 2015). In 2012, the annual median income of someone with a bachelor's degree was $50,360; in contrast to $29,423 for those with just a high school degree (Zaback et al., 2012). It is important to reiterate that if social equality is to be achieved, focusing on educational attainment is a vital component of this goal.

Latinx are the largest growing student population in the United States (Pastor, 2013). However, regardless of changing demographics where Whites are becoming the minority and Latinx students will become the majority, there is still a large educational achievement gap when comparing both groups. In 2015, it was estimated that 66.7% of all Latina/os graduated high school, in comparison to 93.3% of White students. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). In 2011, using data from the Current Population Survey (CPS) Covarrubias expanded upon Solorzano and Yosso's educational pipeline of Xicanx students and found that out of 100 students 56 will graduate high school, 27 will attend a community college, 10 will graduate with a B.A. and 2 will go on to receive an MA or professional degree while .2 will earn a doctorate. This study looks at "Xicanx " students, a designation for students who are of Mexican descent. However, it does not differentiate between Indigenous and Mestizo Mexican students. One of the objectives of this study is to highlight this unique population and examine the institutional factors affecting their education.

Background of the problem

Mexico is comprised of diverse ethnicities and Indigenous groups that practice their own traditions and have distinct ethnic identities. They are often labeled under the generic term "Hispanic" however they have their own unique beliefs in terms of spirituality, cosmovision, traditions and language. Although Spanish is the predominant language spoken there is no legislation recognizing it as Mexico's official language. In 2003, Mexico passed the 'General Law of Linguistic Rights of the Indigenous Peoples' (INALI) which recognizes 68 Indigenous languages containing several variants.

Indigenous populations are unfortunately at the forefront of marginalization and poverty in Mexico (De la Torre García, 2010; Mier, Rocha, & Rabell Romero, 2003). Approximately 35% of the Indigenous population in urban areas is considered highly marginalized, compared to only 2% of the non-Indigenous population. In rural areas, half of the Indigenous population is highly marginalized, compared to 7% of non-Indigenous persons (Aguilar Ramírez, Flores Vázquez, & Burtón Yáñez, 2007). According to the population count in 2005, 88% of the municipalities that are considered Indigenous have high levels of exclusion (INEGI 2005). Indigenous groups living in rural areas live in extreme conditions having poor housing, lacking proper drainage systems and running water. This lack of infrastructure also affects public services such as healthcare and education. These conditions lead Indigenous communities to seek their livelihoods outside of their communities at a young age.

Inadequate education is a key concern, as it a major factor in creating social marginalization. Work published by Hernandez-Zavala, Patrinos, Sakellariou, & Shapiro (2006) showed that adults in concentrated Indigenous municipalities in Mexico have completed on average a minimum of three years of schooling as compared to adults in non-

6

Indigenous municipalities who have completed eight years. Additionally, 11% of elementary aged Indigenous children did not attend school in comparison to 3.9% of non-Indigenous children. The authors also reported that 46.5% of the population in Mexico has not received an adequate education or completed elementary school. There is also a gender gap, with 50.6% of females compared to 42.1% of males completing school. Low levels of education are inevitably correlated with higher indexes of poverty (De La Torre Garcia, 2010).

In recent decades Indigenous farmers' subsistence on agriculture in Mexico has waned to due to economic crises, low wages and land loss, which has substantially increased Indigenous migration to the United States (Fox, & Rivera-Salgado, 2004). Beginning in the early 2000s, researchers began identifying large numbers of Indigenous immigrants that began entering the US to work within the agricultural sector. Of these the largest ethnic groups consist of Nahuas, Purepechas, Triques, Mixtec, Zapotec and Otomi communities (Rivera-Salgado, 2005).

Since California has a large agricultural economy, it has become home to one of the largest Mexican Indigenous populations in the United States. The population of Indigenous Mexicans in California is between 100,000 and 150,000 (Huizar Murillo & Cerda, 2004; Kresge, 2007; Rubio & Millan, 2000). The most prevalent group of Indigenous immigrants are comprised of communities coming from the state of Oaxaca with estimates of one million residing in the United States (Holmes 2006, Tuirán, 2006). Although many immigrants come from this state it is extremely diverse; Oaxaca has 17 different recognized ethnicities with their own distinct languages and variants according to the National Institute for Indigenous Languages (Catalogo de las lenguas Indigenas Nacionales, 2015).

California's Central Coast in particular has a large Indigenous population working in agriculture, that has been largely under-represented. Ventura County has largely depended on migrant farmworkers to harvest crops. The largest Indigenous populations in Ventura County are primarily from the state of Oaxaca with a few exceptions of other Indigenous groups from Guerrero, and Puebla (Kresge, 2007). The estimated Indigenous population of Ventura County is 20,000 with the largest groups primarily from the state of Oaxaca and Guerrero and Puebla. "The Indigenous Farmworkers Study" conducted by Mines, Nichols, & Runsten (2010) found that: "Almost all farmworkers originate in Eastern Guerrero or in Western and Southern Oaxaca where three native languages predominate—Mixteco, Zapoteco and Triqui. In fact, over 80% of the farmworkers come from Oaxaca, another 9% are from Guerrero, 2% come from Puebla and 1 % are from Michoacán; only about 4% originate from other Mexican states" (p.19). In the one of the local school districts about 40% of the population qualifies for the Migrant Education Program. One of the requirements for participation in this program is for the student and/or parent to be currently employed within agriculture.

The largest Indigenous ethnic group in Ventura County is comprised of Mixtec people followed by Zapotec. (Mines, Nichols, and Runsten, 2010) The word Mixtec is actually a Nahuatl word meaning 'People of the clouds' however this group refers to themselves as 'Nuu Savi' which means 'People of the rain'. Since most research has used 'Mixtec' to refer to this group I will employ that term for my research.

Indigenous people in Mexico work primarily within the agricultural sector that leaves very limited room for social mobility. The National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) reported that about half a million of primary Indigenous workers worked jobs within menial labor and the other half million were unemployed. In addition, Indigenous people

received considerably less than their mestizo counterparts (Navarrete Linares, 2008). Menial jobs and those within agriculture leave very little room for the opportunity to access other types of employment that can provide better working conditions. Moreover, those who need to sacrifice school to find work are often faced with taking jobs in which they are susceptible to low wages and exploitation.

Prior studies with Indigenous youth have documented daily challenges they face within schools including discrimination by their peers due to factors such as phenotype, lack of language fluency and being academically limited based on their English language abilities (Casanova, 2011; Marcelli & Cornelius, 2001; Perez, Vasquez, & Buriel, 2016; Ruiz & Barajas 2012). These studies have focused on the lack of an education that has addressed the complexity of their linguistic and cultural needs. When Mexican Indigenous students enter the school system, they are labeled English Learners with the assumption that Spanish is their heritage language since they are Mexican. However, the students I interviewed from my previous study (Villa, 2017) mentioned that their parents were mostly monolingual Mixtec speakers and had limited Spanish proficiency. These students were expected to rely on their limited Spanish skills in school to learn English.

The purpose of placing students in English Language Development courses is to develop students' English language proficiency for them to move on to academically rigorous content. However, studies (Callahan, Wilkinson & Muller, 2008; Callahan, 2005; Jimerson, 2008) have shown that few students ever test out of these ELL (English Language Learner) courses in high school and move onto more demanding courses that prepare them for four-year colleges. Callahan's (2005) study also showed how placement in the ELL courses had ramifications for other aspects of the curriculum they received, not just English curriculum. It

affected the instruction they received in critical writing skills, as well as their receipt of necessary college eligibility information.

My previous investigation confirmed many of these same findings, especially regarding the lack of linguistic support and placement in A-G courses necessary for college eligibility. Specifically, my results illustrated how, once students were labeled as ELL, they were often tracked into remedial courses that met the basic requirements for high school graduation but restricted them from college preparation. This impeded them from receiving equal access to: 1) College information; 2) Courses that met college entry requirements; 3) Academic content and critical writing skills to prepare them to pass standardized tests such as the high school exit exam, SAT, and other tests necessary for college entry, thus rendering them ineligible to attend a four year college upon graduation from high school. These obstacles operated similarly to the forms of tracking discovered in Oakes' (1985) research that placed school administrators as the gatekeepers to higher education. Therefore, many Indigenous immigrant students who were placed in ELL classes attended community college as their only option for advancing toward higher education.

This study seeks to contribute to the dearth of research on the educational experiences of Indigenous Mexican Immigrant students as a significant and growing population within the United States that has been largely overlooked by academia. My research seeks to contribute in the following four ways; first to provide information that will shed light on the sizeable Indigenous community in Ventura County which has largely been under-researched especially within the educational sector. Secondly, to add to the literature on the transfer persistence of Indigenous Mexican students within the California community colleges. Third, to provide research that is student centered allowing Indigenous students' voices to be the focus of the

study. Lastly, I employ Critical Race Theory to analyze how institutional inequalities have

created barriers that prevent access to higher education for Indigenous Mexican students and

at the same time illustrate how they have utilized their strengths to overcome those barriers.

My research data will provide new information on the needs of Indigenous students and how

schools can support their trajectories in higher education. Such information can serve to

benefit schools and policies that can help to determine program funding to improve

educational outcomes for Indigenous students while also contributing to a broader

understanding of California Community Colleges.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

This chapter provides an overview of the educational research literature, theoretical frameworks, and other issues relevant to this study. Much of the literature that I have encountered looks at educational research focused on Xicanx and Latinx students in community college. For the purposes of this investigation the literature referenced concentrates on Mexican or Xicanx students who share many of the same characteristics and similarities with Mexican Indigenous immigrant students within education. The literature I have engaged has utilized Critical Race Theory and Latino Critical Theory as a framework to center race and investigate culturally relevant methods to engage Xicanx and Latinx students. However, this framework has not yet been applied to Indigenous students. My study seeks to understand ways in which schools can increase educational outcomes of Indigenous Mexican Immigrant students in higher education specifically in community college. By centering the students' voices and experiences and understanding the ways in which these students can be supported, colleges can allocate support and resources to fit their needs.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Race Theory In this study Critical Race Theory (CRT) will be used as a theoretical framework to examine the educational paths of Mexican Indigenous students' in community college who intend to transfer and pursue a baccalaureate degree at a four-year college. Employing CRT as a framework allows the focus to be diverted from deficit attitudes and perspectives that have traditionally been applied to students of color and analyze the ways

in which institutions, policies, and structures utilize subjugating practices toward these students within education. The framework of Critical Race Theory within education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) states that both the practices of race and racism are central in understanding how historical and current contexts employ oppressive and subjugating practices in education towards people of color. This is a theoretical perspective that analyzes institutional environments and social constructs that affect students of color, helps shed light on the factors that influence and inhibit the persistence of Indigenous students in higher education and, identifies why so few students transfer to a four year college.

As previously mentioned, the literature I will be referencing has focused primarily on Xicanx and Latinx students. However, I argue that this framework is also applicable to Indigenous communities as it analyzes the ways in which race and inequalities intersect. In addition, this framework highlights the attributes of people who have been portrayed as deficit. Thus, I believe that these tools of analysis have much to offer the investigation of Indigenous identified students, as they are a highly, underrepresented group in higher education and there has been little research on this population in regards to their educational experiences as a community in the US. By using CRT, my study adds new perspectives to the prior findings about the challenges and supports for Indigenous youth.

Critical Race Theory evolved from Critical Legal Studies (CLS) as an adaptation for the purpose of interpreting issues relating to racial inequality. CLS, "emphasizes the importance of viewing policies and policy making within a proper historical and cultural context to deconstruct their racialized content" (Bell, 1992, p. 21). CRT was born from CLS during the 1970s primarily through the writings of Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado. These academics, along with other scholars and activists, were realizing that the

advances in legal protections acquired during the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s were slow in implementation or ignored altogether. Critical legal scholars stated that the US legal system is used to maintain the status quo of its power structures ignoring the rights of the poor and using the courts as compensation. Crenshaw (1988) pointed out that "Critical legal scholars have attempted to analyze legal ideology and discourse as a social artifact which operates to recreate and legitimate American society" (p. 135). Furthermore, "legal ideology has helped to create, support, and legitimate America's present class structure" (p. 135). Thus, CLS scholars focus on how the law maintains power dynamics within society between the rich and the poor. However, scholars of color critiqued this restrictive ideology because it does not take race into consideration. CLS proponents countered this argument by stating that since there is no biological foundation for race it does not exist (Delgado, 1995). CRT scholars challenged this idea and stated that CLS fails to understand that although race is a social construct it does have real consequences on the lived realities of people of color. Thus, Critical Race Theory was born from legal scholars of color who challenged those ideas and felt that CLS was not doing enough to acknowledge the central role that race plays in the legal system (Crenshaw et al.,1995).

CRT scholars have advanced the notion that "racism is ordinary…the usual way society does business, the common, everyday experience of most people of color in this country" (Delgado, 2012, p.7). The idea that racism is seen as normalized is the premise on which CRT scholars refute the CLS tenet that the legal system is based on a hegemonic conception of meritocracy. CRT scholars maintain that failing to recognize race leads to colorblindness which upholds and preserves the continuance of systemic racism and inequality. Thus, in order to be dismantled, race and racism must be directly addressed.

CRT's framework consists of the following five tenets: 1. The permanence of racism 2. Counter-storytelling, 3. Whiteness as property, 4. Interest conversion and 5. The critique of liberalism (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Counter-storytelling describes the way narratives are presented can delegitimize, and subordinate experiences of marginalized groups (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Parker & Villalpando, 2007). DeCuir and Dixson stated that counter-stories are a resource that both expose and critique the dominant (male, White, heterosexual) ideology, which perpetuates racial stereotypes. Counter-stories are personal, composite stories or narratives of people of color (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002).

The prominent premise of CRT states that "racism is a permanent component of American life" (Bell, 1992 p.13). This implies that racism is systemic and governs all major political, social and educational structures within the US. Thus, it privileges Whites and white supremacy over all other people while perpetuating the marginalization of people of color.

Before the use of CRT in the field of education, inequality was addressed mostly on issues of class and gender (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Weiler, 1988). Other educational scholars (Banks & Banks, 1995) began to write about the use of multicultural education to examine school environments and diverse student groups. However, academics of color felt that multiculturalism was not placing enough emphasis on the issues of race. In their seminal work "Toward a Critical Race Theory in Education" Ladson Billings and Tate introduced CRT within education in 1994 at the American Educational Research Association presentation and later published their work. In their article they proposed for deeper theorization regarding race and education. They specifically called for educational scholars to "theorize race and to use it as an analytical tool for understanding school inequality" (Ladson Billings & Tate,

1995, p.11). Though they acknowledged that much has been written around educational inequality based on class and gender the issue of race as a central notion in analyzing inequality was lacking.

Ladson Billings and Tate argued that social and educational inequity is based primarily on three "propositions": "1). Race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States 2). U.S. society is based on property rights 3). The intersection of race and property creates an analytic tool through which we can understand social (and, consequently, school) inequity" (p.48). This work provided some of the fundamental tenets of CRT that is the basis for its application into education.

Further, Ladson Billings and Tate contended that racism is a structural and institutional mechanism inherent in American society that maintains White supremacy while disadvantaging people of color as racism permeates major institutions within economic, political, and social spheres. In their article they dissected legal scholarship to demonstrate that US society is based on property rights rather than human rights. By analyzing the work done by Critical Legal Studies, Ladson Billings & Tate (1995) argued that citizenship was tied to the ownership of property, which only worked to serve mostly White males.

Their examination situated racism historically and how that ideological construct explains inequalities amongst Black and Latino students that lead to high unfair suspension rates and school dropout. Accordingly, they showed how the property value that people of color possess influences their quality of education. They claimed that CRT can be used as a tool for analyzing the political and material conditions of racism while also linking it to race and class within US schooling. Their contribution lies in setting forth a proposition of using a

critical analysis of racism within the system of education that can be used as a tool for students of color to understand how they are disadvantaged by this system.

Since the publishing of that article there have been numerous other scholars who have advanced the work of CRT in education. Shortly after Ladson-Billings & Tate's article was published it incited a field of work using CRT within education. Many other scholars from diverse disciplines have also added to expanding Critical Race Theory within their respective fields (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2005; Parker & Lynn, 2002). Though there has been a large body of work published under the label of CRT, going forward the work that I will review acknowledges its CLS lineage and employs the tenets as their framework.

Daniel Solorzano made a significant contribution to the field in 1997 with his article 'Images and words that wound'. In it, he defined Critical Race Theory as "a framework or set of basic perspectives, methods and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural and cultural aspects of society that maintain the subordination and marginalization of People of Color" (p. 6). Solorzano further developed five tenets of CRT specifically within education that also inform its research methodologies and pedagogy:

1. The centrality and intersectionality of race and racism is based on the premise that race and racism are endemic and permanent and "a central rather than a marginal factor in defining and explaining individual experiences of the law (Russell, 1992, p.762-763). This also acknowledges that although race is central, it is also examined in its intersectionality with other forms of subordination such as gender and class discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989, 1993).

2. The challenge to dominant ideology. CRT challenges the traditional claims that educational institutions make toward objectivity, meritocracy, colorblindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity. CRT scholars argue that these traditional claims act as a camouflage for the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups in U.S. society (Calmore, 1992). The ideas of neutrality and objectivity in research are challenged and thus, expose deficit informed research that silences, ignores, and distorts the experience of students of color.

3. The commitment to social justice. CRT is committed to social justice and offers a transformative response to racial, gender, and class, and sexual orientation. (Mastusda 1991) Its social justice research agenda aims to empower students of color.

4. The centrality of experiential knowledge of CRT recognizes that people of color hold legitimate value in identifying, understanding, analyzing and teaching about racial oppression and subordination in education. CRT draws from lived experiences and uses methods such as storytelling, family histories, biographies, scenarios, parables, chronicles, and narratives (Bell, 1987, Delgado, 1989, 1995, Olivas 1990)

5. The transdisciplinary perspective. Critical race theory challenges ahistoricism and the unidisciplinary focus of most analyses and insists on analyzing race and racism by placing them in both an historical and contemporary context using interdisciplinary methods.

Although these themes built upon the tenets of CRT, Solorzano was one of the first scholars to develop a methodology and epistemological framework to apply CRT to the study of K-12 and higher education.

As CRT and its scholarship challenged the slow progress of the promised Civil Rights legislation it was also critiqued by those who felt that it was based on a Black vs. White paradigm. Yosso pointed out that "Women and People of Color who felt their gendered, classed, sexual, immigrant and language experiences and histories were being silenced, challenged this tendency toward a Black/White binary. They stressed that oppression in the law and society could not be fully understood in terms of only Black and White" (Yosso, 2005, p.72). As a result, scholars of color used CRT as a context that extends into other communities of color such as FemCrits, AsianCrits, WhiteCrits, TribalCrits and LatCrits.

Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit)

Latino critical theory (LatCrit) is an offshoot of CRT which analyzes the multiple layers of racialized subordination that comprise the experiences of Latino/as living in the United States. LatCrit encompasses CRT's framework but also takes into consideration issues related to language, immigration status, phenotype in relation to the educational attainment of Xicanx students. These are specific issues that CRT has not included in its critiques since it was mainly centralized around the Black/White binary paradigm of race relations.

LatCrit also has five leading principles that are based on CRT but with a specific application to issues facing Latinos. The first is that race and racism are "endemic and permanent" in the U.S. society (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001, p. 312) and oppression manifests from different angles including race, gender, language, and immigration status.

19

Secondly, challenging the dominant ideology or refuting the majoritarian stories that have been used to rationalize inequality concerning Latino under-achievement and cultural inferiority and the use of deficit frameworks that have been applied as an answer to these inequalities. Third, is the commitment to social justice that works toward the elimination of oppression and the empowerment of underrepresented minority groups. Fourth, LatCrit relies heavily on the lived experiences and knowledge of Latinx people to validate experiences and importance of storytelling in Latinx communities. Fifth, is a multidisciplinary approach to discover and understand the situations that affect Latinx in this society.

I have chosen to use this framework as it specifically looks at the experiences of Xicanx students. LatCrit expands on the initial premises of CRT and further delves into the issues affecting the Latinx community such as language, immigration, geography, ethnicity, culture, identity, phenotype and sexuality (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). Solorzano & Delgado Bernal (2001) suggested that "LatCrit theory is conceived as an anti-subordination and anti-essentialist project that attempts to link theory with practice, scholarship with teaching, and the academy with the community" ("Fact Sheet: LatCrit," 2000). Francisco Valdes (1996) positions that LatCrit is not in competition with CRT: "Instead, LatCrit theory is supplementary, complementary, to critical race theory. LatCrit theory at its best should operate as a close cousin—related to critical race theory in real and lasting ways, but not necessarily living under the same roof" (p. 26-27). Solorzano & Delgado Bernal maintain that both CRT and LatCrit serve to challenge the dominant discourse on race and racism as they relate to education by analyzing how mainstream educational theory and practice are used to subordinate and marginalize Xicanx students.

Deficit Perspective: Inequity in the classrooms

The deficit perspective lens has been historically applied by the American educational system as one of the foremost ways in which inequalities take placing blame on Xicanx culture for low employment and educational achievement (Chavez, 1992; Yosso, 2006; Salkind 2008). Some of the deficit cultural values include underestimating the importance of education, immediate gratification over deferred fulfillment, focusing on the present versus having a vision of the future and cooperation over competition (Valencia, 1997).

Salkind (2008) defines the cultural deficit model as:

> The perspective that minority group members are different because their culture is deficit in important ways from the dominant majority group. The field of educational psychology has long been interested in understanding why racially different, non-White children perform differently in school, with an emphasis on academic underachievement. The deficit model has been important in the evolution of thinking about this important social issue. Hence, the deficit model asserts that racial/ethnic minority groups do not achieve as well as their White majority peers in school and life because their family culture is dysfunctional and lacking important characteristics compared to the White American culture. Other names for the deficit model have been cultural disadvantage. Thus, in order for these students to progress; education is used as a tool for assimilation into American values. (p. 216)

Deficit views toward People of Color are one of the primary ways that racism takes place within schools in the US. Research on deficit thinking conducted by García and Guerra (2004) found that deficit attitudes places blame on students of color and their families for low academic performance because children enter the school without: a.) the normative cultural knowledge and skills; and b.) parents neither value nor support their child's education. Furthermore, these scholars argued that the beliefs inherent in deficit thinking and their racial, gender and class prejudices must be re-evaluated by educators and called for a 'critical examination of systemic factors that perpetuate deficit thinking and reproduce educational inequities for students from non-dominant sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds' (p. 155).

Non-white student cultures and language have traditionally been seen as a hindrance to overcome instead of a strength to build upon (Delgado-Gaitan, 1992).

One way in which a deficit perspective manifests itself in US schools has been through the practice of tracking, which consists of assigning students into separate education tracks based on a student's supposed academic performance. Jeannie Oakes' pioneering work on tracking (1985, 1987, 2005) defined tracking as "The placing of students in any of several courses of study according to ability, achievement, or needs or ability grouping." (Pg. 45)

Overtime, tracking has become much more covert in its practices shifting away from classification based on a student's race, immigration status, and religion to assigning tracks based on a student's perceived level of ability and performance. The guidelines are also variable within in different districts. Oakes stated that "Both curriculum tracking and ability grouping vary from school to school in the number of subjects that are tracked, in the number of levels provided, and in the ways in which students are placed" (p.22). Oakes emphasizes that the actual tracking process can be very complicated to define specifically as these processes change from school to school and manifest covertly. She stated: "It is important to realize that tracking students in school is not an orderly phenomenon in which practices, even within a single school, are consistent or even reflective of clearly stated school or district policies. To the contrary, sorting out what tracking is actually done at a school is rather like putting together pieces of a puzzle," (Oakes, 2005, p. 43). A modern example of the negative effects of tracking is especially true when schools place students in non-college preparatory and vocational tracks that neglect core curriculum. By being advised against taking academically rigorous courses, students fall behind in subjects that affect the rest of their schooling making it much more difficult for them to attend college.

CRT and LatCrit in Higher Education

Though my research involves working with Indigenous students I am employing the use of LatCrit as part of my theoretical framework as there are various ways in which social, economic, and educational issues within Xicanx students and Indigenous students intersect.

Since its inception in the mid 90s there is now an abundance of published work on CRT in education. However due to the purposes of this research paper I have chosen to focus on the use of CRT and LatCrit as a methodological and epistemological framework to examine the continuance of unequal educational opportunities as it has been applied to Xicanx students within higher education.

Principal barriers Xicanx students face include lack of access to high school courses that meet college eligibility. Data from the Campaign for College (2015) reported that in Ventura County, only 28.3% of Hispanic graduates from Ventura County public High Schools are eligible to apply to a 4-year CA public university, compared to 50.6% of White students. Ventura County Latinx high school students are not being provided adequate academic advising and university planning guidance as evidenced by high student-to-counselor ratios in Ventura County High Schools as the target schools average 1:384. These ratios mean high-need students receive no individualized counseling, highlighting the critical need for outreach services on pathways to a 4-year degree. requirements, academic under-preparedness, and adequate counseling.

Lacking the fundamental knowledge on financial aid resources, funding and affordability for college, along with increasing funding cuts in support for student services highlight some of the ways that Xicanx students are not readily being supported by their high schools and which correlate for the high pushout rate and enrolling at a community college as

a sole option with very few students managing to transfer to a community college (Chapa & Schink, 2006; Crisp & Nora; 2010; Fry, 2002, 2004; Pascarella, Wolniak, Pierson, & Terenzini, 2003).

LatCrit and Undocumented Students in Higher Education

LatCrit has also been used to examine the barriers faced by undocumented students in higher education. The work of Pérez Huber (2011) examined how racist nativism looks at undocumented students through a deficit lens. Racist nativism is defined as: "The institutionalized ways people perceive, understand and make sense of contemporary US immigration, that justifies (White) dominance and reinforces hegemonic power" (p. 380). Also,

"the view that the United States should give priority to its current citizenry and limit immigration" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 151). Pérez Huber further emphasized this concept by summarizing the following points: 1.There is often interest opposition to the foreigner which 2. Creates the defense and protection of a nationalistic identity, where 3. The foreigner becomes a perceived threat to the nationalistic identity" (p.80).   In her investigation, Pérez Huber collected 40 testimonies from 20 undocumented students and Xicanx students who were attending a UC campus to uncover how racist nativist discourses had been institutionalized within California public school practices. Her study found that the most prominent ways that these students experienced racist nativist micro-agressions are by; perceiving Spanish speaking students as having an "impairment", being portrayed as academically deficit when compared to their English dominant counterparts, exclusion by not receiving the same communication given to English speaking students and physical separation of Spanish speaking students from the rest of their classmates. Pérez Huber argued that these

practices must be addressed in order to shift the focus of deficit perspectives away from students and place accountability on school practices for student underperformance.

Affordability and financing are a major concern for all students. For undocumented students this is an especially distressing issue since they are restricted from receiving federal financial aid and must rely on their states' laws to be eligible for state aid and reduced tuition. In 2001, undocumented students in California became eligible to pay in state tuition fees in public institutions of higher education with the passing of Assembly Bill 540. The bill allows students to pay in state tuition fees provided they have attended a California high school for three years and graduated and have sworn to file for permanent residency.

In addition to the immense issue of financing their education, undocumented students' concern extends to their legal status within the US. Pérez Huber and Malagon (2007) specifically pointed out that undocumented students: "not only need information and guidance about the college going process and experience, but they also need information about how their legal status will present specific barriers at an institution and about how to navigate through those barriers" (p. 850). This was especially true during the Trump administration whose conservative political climate targeted undocumented immigrants and described them as criminals and reduced support and resources. In addition to not being eligible for federal financial aid, undocumented students were not eligible to participate in programs that were federally funded such as the McNair program, Pell grants and loans.

Undocumented students face yet another economic barrier; not being able to obtain legal employment further deterring their path towards higher education. By using a LatCrit as an analytical framework it is possible to show how immigration status and institutional racism intersect in the lives of undocumented students through their own voices.

Though students in California may be eligible to pay in-state tuition fees and have access to funding through state grants, this is usually not enough to cover tuition. Often students and their families must cover the rest of their educational costs and of living expenses out of pocket. This raises another barrier for undocumented students, the accessibility to legal employment. Since undocumented students face greater financial need with less resources, they often must work to help with their expenses. Currently the only means of having legal employment for AB540 students is through the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which provides a temporary work permit renewable every two years to undocumented students who entered the country as minors and have graduated from a high school or were honorably discharged from the military and do not have a criminal record. Unfortunately, however not all undocumented students qualify for DACA such as newer arrivals who do not meet the eligibility requirements. Specifically, the criteria for eligibility are as follows:

1. Were under the age of 31 as of June 15, 2012;
2. Came to the United States before reaching your 16th birthday;
3. Have continuously resided in the United States since June 15, 2007, up to the present
time;
4. Were physically present in the United States on June 15, 2012, and at the time of making your request for consideration of deferred action with USCIS;
5. Entered without inspection before June 15, 2012, or your lawful immigration status expired as of June 15, 2012;
6. Are currently in school, have graduated or obtained a certificate of completion from high school, have obtained a general education development (GED) certificate, or are an
honorably discharged veteran of the Coast Guard or Armed Forces of the United States;
and
7. Have not been convicted of a felony, significant misdemeanor, three or more other misdemeanors, and do not otherwise pose a threat to national security or public safety.

https://www.uscis.gov/i-821d

Since its inception, DACA has been highly contested within legislation as there has been ongoing debate on what to do with the beneficiaries of this program who have called the United States their home for most of their lives. The department of homeland security has the right to renew or terminate the program altogether. Students who have been granted DACA are eligible to receive a social security number and obtain work and receive a driver's license in some states. DACA granted students can also file to renew after the initial two-year period. Although it does grant immigrants some short-term rights it does not guarantee a path to citizenship.

The above articles I have reviewed within LatCrit focus on Latino and Xicanx students. However, there is not a distinction between Xicanx who identify as belonging to a Mexican Indigenous group and those who are Mestizo. I am choosing to use LatCrit as the theoretical framework informing my study primarily as it expands on CRT and as there is an extensive amount of scholarly work using this theoretical model as it applies to Xicanx experiences within education which share many similar issues that Mexican Indigenous students face. I am also aware that this brings up two important elements that need to be addressed; there are to my knowledge only a handful of studies that have used LatCrit to analyze the educational experiences of Indigenous immigrant youth within the United States and secondly it must also be acknowledged that LatCrit was not designed specifically with Indigenous people in mind. Since its early inception this theoretical model has faced criticism for failing to acknowledge the struggles of Indigenous issues of race, phenotype, languages, customs and identities (Guerra, 1998; Hernandez-Truyol 1998, 1999; Trucio-Haynes, 2000; Weissner, 1998).

Although LatCrit does acknowledge the unequal power relationship between the usage of English and Spanish within the United States, Spanish is currently the third most spoken language in the world (Central Intelligence Agency, 2016) and the dominant language in Mexico and Latin America. As such it is a thriving language with an immense wealth of literature with an established alphabet, and as a European language it has a shared lineage with English. In contrast, most Indigenous languages in Mexico are oral languages that have adopted the Roman alphabet as a method of attempting to standardize their language, which creates another learning challenge for students within schools: they must also learn to become literate in languages that are not theirs. For instance, if a newly arrived student from Mexico enters public school they are automatically placed in programs or classrooms designed for Spanish speakers. Indigenous Mexican students, however, may be monolingual speakers in their native language or have very limited Spanish proficiency (Perez & Vasquez, 2016). Barillas Chon (2010) has observed that the research done on Mexican immigrant students from dominant groups has led to homogenization of the Mexican immigrant experience within schools to the detriment of incoming Indigenous groups that have been growing in numbers. Thus, Indigenous immigrant students must struggle as they learn to speak both English and Spanish simultaneously but also learn how to read and become familiar with literary practices.

Writing from an understanding of the gap between LatCrit and lack of addressing racial dynamics within Latinx communities, Kovats-Sanchez's (2018) study of Mixtec students in higher education incorporated a framework of CRT and LatCrit while also supplementing this with an anti-colonial focus (Patel, 2015; Wane, 2008) with the intent of "affirming the unique experiences of Mexican Indigenous students while shedding light on the colonial structures that continue to marginalize them" (p. 4).

Although these students share many of the same educational barriers with Xicanx such as the intersection of barriers to higher education, shared deficit perspectives, phenotype, language issues, and immigration there are also several issues that are unique to their situation that needs further exploration and recognition in order to properly address retention rates and deficit views toward their ethnic background and provide resources that will enable them to draw upon their culture as a strength within education.

The role of Community Colleges

Community College is the first step for many students seeking higher education. Students attend local community colleges with the aspiration to transfer to a four-year university but very few students actually manage to do so (Ornelas, 2002; Ornelas & Solórzano, 2004: Yosso, 2006). Studies suggest that Black and Latino students are disproportionately affected by low transfer rates. Accordingly, there is a large body of research literature that has focused on transfer persistence and obstacles for Xicanx students in community college. These studies can help shed light on some of the intersectionality between Xicanx and Mexican Indigenous students.

The function of the community colleges was designed to become the entryway to four years schools by offering lower-division transferable courses and granting eligible students access to the University of California and the California State University. In 1960 The California Master Plan for education was written as a way for students to have equal access to the three main institutions of higher learning within the California public education system consisting of the community college systems, the California State Universities and the University of California (UCOP, 2018). Legally, they were also obligated to have open enrollment and allow all interested students the opportunity to enroll. Moreover, it is

stipulated that California community college transfer students get priority consideration upon admission to UC's and CSU's. As a result, community colleges are often a student's foundational entrance into higher education. With an open enrollment policy and the opportunity for transfer it offers students who have been underprepared and underserved by their high schools another opportunity to attend a four-year college. Indeed, for many students community college may be their only option as an entryway for higher education.

Xicanx students in the California Community Colleges

Though the majority of Xicanx students begin their post-secondary education at a community college (Ornelas & Solorzano 2004) the data show that there is a disconnection between those who enroll and those who actually manage to transfer to a four-year school. Gandara, Driscoll & Orfield (2012) conducted a study in which they found that in 2008, 69% of Latino students began their post-secondary education at a community college yet their transfer rates were dismal in comparison to their enrollment. They show as an example that in 2003 Latinos were 24.9% of freshmen, but later represented 21.7% of BA degrees in 2008 showing that their rate of degree completion was actually less than their freshman enrollment five years earlier. Thus, even though Latino students plan on transferring to a four-year college a small percentage manage to do so (Hagedorn and Cepeda, 2004; Handel & Herrera, 2006; Ornelas and Solorzano, 2004).

A major incentive for Xicanx students to enroll at community college is affordability. Cohen (2003) showed how the difference in tuition is a major incentive for enrollment at a community college. In California as of the Summer of 2017, the cost for each unit fee was $46 and in order for a student to be considered full time they had to be enrolled in 12 units which would total of $552 per semester.

(https://www.laccd.edu/Students/FinancialAid/Pages/BOGFW.aspx) This is a considerable

difference when compared to the California State's tuition fees at $270 per unit.

In another attempt to make college more accessible Governor Jerry Brown signed

California Assembly Bill 19 in October 2017, which proposed to expand the Board of

Governor's California Promise Grant's fee waiver for low-income students. This would

waive the first-year fees for all first-time students who are attending school full time without

considering their financial necessity. Thus, cost effectiveness is a vital motivating factor for

students from low socio-economic backgrounds to attend local community colleges.

Institutional Barriers

One of the most vital indicators of student success in college begins at the high school

level; this is especially pertinent for students who enroll in community college as they can be

placed in a vulnerable position. Studies have shown that students who come from low-

performing schools are often left academically unprepared for higher education (Adelman,

2005; Chapa & Schink, 2006; Fry, 2004, Hagedorn, 2007; Ornelas and Solorzano 2004).

These studies have shown that high schools contribute to low transfer rates by lacking

academically rigorous coursework and inadequately informing students about the college

application process.

Though they can compensate for the courses not taken in high school, a students'

insufficient academic preparation is still a factor when determining the level and quantity of

courses they will need before reaching proficiency to take advanced classes. Studies have

shown however, (Fry, 2004; Solorzano, Villalpando & Oseguera, 2005) that this lack of

academic rigor weighs heavily on the courses they are permitted to take upon enrollment.

Thus, many students are not eligible to take transferable courses upon entry in community

college. During matriculation, students must take a Math and English assessment to determine their placement. Often times depending on their scores they are placed into remedial classes that are obligatory pre-requisites before being permitted to enroll into college level transferable courses. In some cases, there can be up to four remediation classed taken before registering for a college credit course. As studies have illustrated (Gandara, Driscoll & Orfield, 2012; Melguizo, Hagedorn, & Cypers, 2008) the remediation process can often take long unanticipated amounts of time and resources, which can lead to students' exhaustion, triggering them to leave their studies before completing a degree. This concept is what Burton Clark (1960) coined as the "cooling out" function: the process whereby community colleges redirect students with less academic preparation away from transferring which often leads students toward leaving school, or conforming to vocational or terminal degrees.

Students in these remediation courses or 'development' courses who enter in the lower levels are usually from disadvantaged groups. In a report published from the public policy institute of California (2016) the authors Mejia, Rodriguez and Johnson used data from the California Community College Chancellor's Office Management System (MIS) to conduct a longitudinal study of students enrolled in every college within the California community college system from 2009 – 2010 and tracked them through the spring term of 2016. They found that Latino students are disproportionately represented in these classes, "half of developmental education students are Latino… and about 70 percent are low-income students" (p. 5). Specifically, they found that 41% of Latino students had enrolled in developmental coursework at some point. Their data also suggested a correlation with these remediation courses and a student's socio-economic status: "Likewise, those who enrolled in developmental education were more likely to be low-income (71% versus 46%) and part-time

students (73% versus 66%) than those students who started in college-level math and English" (p.11).

The role that effective counseling plays is fundamental to a student's navigation of the college-going process (Dougherty, 1992; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004). Students without the proper guidance face greater risks of taking unnecessary coursework, missing deadlines, increasing their time to transfer, and lacking an understanding of the differences in the pathways and courses leading to a UC and CSU. In a study conducted by Gandara, Driscoll & Orfield (2012) the authors highlighted that there is often one guidance counselor for over 800 students within the K-12 system. They also emphasized that many high school counselors often have limited or dated information regarding the college application process and requirements. Furthermore, since community colleges are not competitive and have an open-door policy, high school counselors do not usually consider them a priority or focus on providing information of the different courses and paths to transfer. Students will usually learn about the transfer process through actual community college representatives and counselors who visit the high school, or once they arrive on the campus and meet with the counselors at a community college directly.

Melguizo, Hagedorn, and Cypers (2008) conducted an empirical study that looked at the actual costs and time to transfer of community college students within the nine campuses of the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD). Their sample consisted of 5,011 students who answered a lengthy 47 item questionnaire. They also focused on students who were enrolled in remedial and college level English courses. Though the articulation agreements of attending a community college is centered around the completion within two years, they found that a small percentage of students transfer within this time frame. Their

data also demonstrated the importance of adequate early counseling at the community college level. They found that the counselor student ratio was about 2000 to one, being much more limited at the community colleges than in high schools. Their study tracked 5,000 students throughout the course of five years and found that one of the most important factors that led to transferring were students who took their required transfer classes early in their coursework. This point supports the underlying notion that early counseling in a student's career increases their chances of transferring.

Proper counseling is also increasingly difficult to attain for part-time students and those who are attending school in the evening. A report published by the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center used data from the California Community Colleges, Chancellor's Office 2007, (CCCO, 2007), found that as of 2006, two-thirds of Latinx students were enrolled in daytime classes while one third was enrolled in evening classes with percentages showing a consistent increase from the previous ten years. Additionally, they found that most students who attended community college in the evening were Latinxs students. In their study, Ornelas & Solorzano (2004) showed that students who took evening courses were not able to access institutional support since the college services held regular business hours during the day. The majority of students attending evening classes worked during the day and found it difficult to have regular interaction with onsite campus resources. Another adverse factor mentioned was the limited availability of course offerings in the evenings. Certain major requisite courses were usually only offered during the day leaving evening students feeling frustrated and potentially in a financially vulnerable position by possibly having to find other employment or working less hours to access these courses. Thus, the lack of

institutional support coupled with limited course offerings for evening students act as further deterrents marginalizing Xicanx students in the transfer process.

Personal Challenges

Low socio-economic backgrounds. When examining the educational experiences and outcomes of Xicanx students, it is crucial to take into consideration the personal challenges that affect these students' trajectories as they seek post-secondary education. A large number of Xicanx students come from working class families and many see attending community college as a practical option due to proximity, affordability and schedule flexibility. However, even with the best intentions it is increasingly difficult for students to reverse the educational impact that coming from under-resourced schools has. Yosso (2006) identified obstacles that have lasting consequences on the marginalization of students of Xicanx students:

> Xicanxs/os usually attend underfinanced, racially segregated, over-crowded elementary schools that lack basic human and material resources. The least experienced teachers tend to be placed in the most low-income, over-crowded schools. Indeed, schools comprised predominantly of low-income students of color evidence a higher proportion of uncertified and less experienced teachers, more unfilled teacher vacancies, and a high teacher turnover rate. (p. 21).

These challenged affected the perpetuation of poverty for the Xicanx population leading many students to feel the pressure of having to help their struggling families economically by working, which often leads to prioritizing work and attending school part-time.

Working students and part-time attendance

Community colleges offer the possibility of half-time enrollment as students usually work somewhere between part-time and fulltime. Several studies have shown that part-time college attendance puts students in a precarious position becoming at risk for not transferring.

(Crisp & Nora, 2010; Fry 2002, 2004; Gándara, Alvarado, Driscoll & Orfield, 2012; Ornelas & Solorzano, 2004; Saenz, 2002; Zarate & Burciaga, 2010).

In his 2002 study, Fry found that there was a very high labor force participation by Latinx students especially in immigrant households. He described that in many immigrant households, youth often work full-time and attend school part-time due to economic issues where members of a family combine their earnings and contribute to the larger household. However, this pattern differed for second generation students who are more likely to be in school full-time instead of working. Similarly, Gándara, Alvarado, Driscoll & Orfield (2012) reported a major challenge for Latino students regarding transfer readiness was the conflict between school and their jobs. "One in four Latinos noted this as their principal challenge. Students recounted the problems they faced in working long hours and then having to be prepared in class" (p.82). While working and/or going to school part-time are not the sole reasons for failing to transfer, it is important to take into consideration other factors including the number of developmental courses, study time, patience and motivation. Balancing work and school often extends the time to transfer completion, which can often deplete students of their resources.

Despite these circumstances Xicanx students enroll in community college with the aspiration to transfer. Fry (2002) found that although Latino students were actively pursuing higher education, the initial high enrollment numbers did not equate with graduation rates. "Of the nation's 166 million high school graduates, about 7% or 12.3 million are enrolled in undergraduate studies. The nation's 11.7 million Latino high school graduates attend college at a higher rate. More than 10 percent—nearly 1.2 million Latino high school graduates— pursue undergraduate education at community colleges and four-year colleges" (p.4). His

study also found that only 75% of Latino students in the US attend college full-time as compared to 85% of white students. Thus, while Latino students demonstrate great educational aspirations, their higher levels of part-time enrollment were a contributing factor towards the lack of transfer and degree completion.

First generation college students

Accessibility to higher education involves much more than intelligence, achieving a high grade point average and passing standardized tests. For many first-generation college students, understanding how to navigate the college application process can be intimidating. The complexity of the college enrollment process can also serve to explain why the majority of Xicanx students enroll at a community college instead of going directly to a four-year school. A research brief from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office showed that from 2012-2014, 61% of students were first-generation Hispanic students. Being a first-generation student is also considered to be a risk factor for not transferring (Pascarella, et. al., 2003). One of the major factors attributed to this is that many students apply to colleges without assistance and guidance from their parents as opposed to peers whose parents are college educated and understand the preparation process and college culture.

Chapa and Schink (2006) conducted a study examining if community colleges were a "Help or hindrance to Latinos in higher education?" Using data from the 1992 - 2001 California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office they also reported that "the competitive process works to the significant advantage of students from higher income families" and also "the system works better for students from families from more highly educated parents" (p. 47). One of the major findings reveals that the three tier post-secondary education system

works against Xicanx/Latinx whose parents have lower income levels as opposed to their white counterparts, and it also favors students with educated parents that understand how higher education works. This also correlates with Saunders and Serna's (2004) study which finds that many first generation college students do not have the same 'cultural capital' that students from more affluent backgrounds who have college educated parents and access to networks that promote college- going culture. Essentially these studies suggest that many Latinx students are not transferring due to lack of a clear vision, proper support, and familiarity with the transfer process in a way that is culturally relevant for them.

English Language Learners

High school English curriculum is a determining factor in students' post-secondary academic options. In my previous study where I looked at the barriers for Indigenous students at the high school level, I found that students who are labeled as English Language Learners (ELL) are often restricted from taking college-prep courses. The ELL label in high school can severely impede students from being given the skills and/or the resources to navigate the educational system by their teachers. There is a strong correlation between English fluency and teacher expectations which directly affects the services and information that students in English language learner courses do and do not receive. Once students are designated as ELL, they are placed into a set of English courses that meet high school graduation requirements but lack the rigorous content to make these courses eligible for college prep. Furthermore, aside from not meeting college prep standards the students are not being exposed to literature, critical writing skills and learning strategies which would help them pass standardized tests (Callahan, Wilkinson, and Muller, 2010; Callahan, 2005).

Callahan's (2005) study looked at the impact of tracking on ELL students in high schools. Her research questioned whether track placement or English proficiency were indicators of academic achievement for English Language Learners. Through a quantitative study with a sample size of 355 students, which were all of the English Language Learners at a rural high school in northern California, the research team took into consideration the following dependent variables: GPA, course credits, standardized testing scores in math, language, the SAT9 and CAHSEE (California High School Exit Exam). Independent variables included: track placement, EL level, gender, immigrant arrival and amount of schooling previous to US arrival. Her results found that while English proficiency predicted SAT reading scores and pass rates on the CAHSEE language arts, they did not predict student grades in other courses, such as social studies. The results indicated that English proficiency is not the main factor in academic achievement but was more substantial when it came to standardized testing scores.

Conversely, track placement was a greater influence in overall student success. In her study she defined tracking as:

> *"Track placement* was defined according to the proportion of classes on a student's transcript that met college entry requirements. If a student is to graduate from high school eligible for entry into a 4-year university in California, two thirds of his or her coursework, on average, must meet college entry requirements. This ratio provides a general estimate of students' exposure to rigorous academic content and their opportunity to learn" (p.315).

Although becoming proficient in the English Language is of course the goal for ELL students, Callahan also measured how ELL student's track placement affected their college prep coursework. Her study found that less than 2% of students in ELL tracks had taken enough college preparatory courses to be eligible to apply to a four-year college. ELL

students were almost systematically placed into remedial courses based on their perceived English aptitude assuming that language was a barrier for advancement in their classes. This process of ability grouping assigns students to different academic levels (e.g., the remedial or advance math class), and those levels correspond with varying degrees of privilege, discrimination, and opportunity.

What the data revealed is that ELL placement in high school created 'defacto' tracking by excluding students from taking college preparatory courses and making it more difficult to take all the courses on-time during their four years. This rendered them unable to receive equal access to: 1. College information 2. Courses that meet college entry 3. Affected their eligibility to attend a four-year college upon graduation from high school 4. Academic content and critical writing skills that prepared them to pass standardized tests such as the CAHSEE, SAT, and other tests necessary for college entry (Callahan, et al 2010). These obstacles are similar to the forms of tracking discovered in Oakes' (2005) research which placed school administrators as the gatekeepers of course enrollment where they determined who is and isn't competent to take college prep classes and as a consequence directly affected students' admission into four year schools.

The K-12 schooling system has a very developed uniform system of English language classification, placement and record keeping throughout the state. Conversely, California community colleges do not have a shared standardized test that determines English placement. Recently, the English placement process at the California community colleges has begun to garner attention from researchers in terms of effective placement, how they are used and which tests should be used (Blumenthal, 2002; Bunch, 2008, 2009, Bunch et al. 2011). Bunch has shown that the evaluation of selecting proper placement tests for

incoming EL students is inconsistent throughout the state. While in some colleges the faculty and school personnel are involved in the testing and placement procedures, other colleges are often limited in resources to extensively evaluate the effectiveness of these tests while in others still lack clarity regarding the placement processes (Bunch et al., 2011).

Llosa and Bunch's study (2011) highlighted the English course placement of California community colleges and its impact on students who are US educated but come from language minority backgrounds termed US language minority students (US-LM). They are also referred to as "Generation 1.5 because they have linguistic backgrounds and characteristics that differ from native speakers of English and from international students, recent immigrants, and older adult Immigrants" (p.1). The 1.5 generation has been a focal point of other recent immigration studies (Raudenbush, Rowan, & Cheong, 1993; Roberge, Siegal, & Harklau 2009; Rumbaut, 2004).

The language placement tests that incoming students take also has a serious impact on a their path in community college. California ELL students can choose to take the standard placement test that all new students take or the English as a Second Language (ESL) placement test. Although students have the final decision on what test to take, they often lack the understanding of the implications regarding their placement and often follow the directions by college counselors. Bunch and Panayotova (2008) looked at the language testing and placement of ELLs in 16 of the California community colleges and their findings revealed that website information and descriptions of assessments were inconsistent and nebulous across the colleges. Most sites did not give students guided indication of what assessment to take. Additionally, the study also found that the language placement process was not taking into consideration students' previous schooling experiences such as the California English

Language Development Test (CELDT), prior classes or other language classifications. These examples illustrated the disconnection of constructive language programs in the educational pipelines between high school and community colleges which as a result further inhibited academic language development and educational advancement.

The testing outcome for US language minority students of these exams is also conflicting; while some seem to measure language proficiency, others use it as a determination for academic achievement. Bunch (2009) reiterated that ESL programs which measured the English proficiency of non-native speakers and regular English placement tests designed for native speakers were not effective assessments for 1.5 generation students; "In fact, many ESL tests require demonstration of mastery of the formally taught aspects of English language proficiency that circumstantial bilinguals may have had the least exposure to, and these same tests may overlook the English language proficiency that students have developed through their experiences in the US schools and communities" (p. 275). Thus, ELL students occupied a liminal space that required special consideration as they transitioned into higher education.

There also seemed to be a positive correlation between length of course sequence and attrition rates. In 2005 Patthey-Chavez, Dillon, and Thomas-Spiegel conducted a study that examined the outcomes of 238,032 students at nine of the California community colleges over the course of 11 years, from 1990 – 2000. They found that only 8% of students who began at the lowest levels of ELL passed a college level English course when compared to 29% of students who began in the advanced levels of ELL (p. 267). Although it cannot be confirmed that the sequence length for ESL classes caused attrition, it can be inferred that the length of time and sequence between credit bearing courses and collegiate courses presented a serious

hindrance to educational progression as it increased the risk factor for leaving school as has been found with remediation students.

The "cooling out" (Clark, 1960) process for English Language Learner students is intensified for those who aspired to transfer since ELL programs have several classes in their course sequence. Additionally, they must also complete developmental courses before they can take transferable courses. Though ELL and developmental coursework are comprised of a series of courses, ELL classes usually have longer sequences. The attrition rate amongst students who took remediation courses was such a problematic issue that California Governor Jerry Brown signed California Assembly Bill 705 in 2017, to reduce sole reliance of the college assessment exam for course placement and now incorporate other measures such as grades and courses completed in high school in the assessments. The remediation process can often take long unanticipated amounts of time and resources which can lead to students' exhaustion, triggering them to leave their studies before completing a degree (Gandara, Driscoll & Orfield, 2012; Hagedorn, & Cypers, 2008).

Based on the above literature review it has been established that the situation for ELL students is highly complex and the current state of English as a Second Language courses within the California community colleges are not equipped to adequately support US language minority students. Ironically, the students who are in most need of academic resources are the ones who are receiving less support.

Legal Status and accessibility to financial resources

One of the main concerns for any college student is financing their education. Lower income students usually cover their tuition in great part through Federal and State funding. However, these resources are only available to residents and US citizens. Undocumented

students do not qualify for federal funding. The low attendance cost at community college is one of the prime factors that attract undocumented students since they do not have as many financial resources available and face severe restrictions on financial aid due to their legal status (Perez, 2010). According to the Migration Policy Institute (2018), it is estimated that as of January 2018, there are about 60,000 undocumented students enrolled at the California community colleges with the majority coming from Mexico. To be eligible for federal funds students must be US citizens or have legal residency. Thus, since undocumented students cannot receive federal funds, they are only eligible for state funding, they are also not able to take out federal loans and have less access to grants and scholarships. State aid also provides a substantial source of financial aid to students. However, each state has its own legislation which may or may not allow undocumented students to receive state aid and their policies also determine the type of tuition costs that they are eligible for. Each state has specific regulations regarding how they administer their resources for undocumented students.

In California there are two laws that allow undocumented students to receive access to state funds the AB 540 and the DREAM Act. In 2001, California Governor Gray Davis passed the California Assembly Bill 540 (AB-540) which allowed an exemption for non-resident students who attended high school in California to pay in- state tuition fees. By contrast students who were non-resident previously had to pay out of state tuition as non-residents. To qualify for AB 540, an undocumented student in California must have attended at least 3 years of high school in California and is or planning to enroll in an institution of higher education at a California public college or university. Additionally, the student must also have graduated from high school with a GED or equivalent and must file an affidavit

with the college or university where they declare that they will file for legal residency as soon as they are eligible.

Another important legislative act to help fund undocumented students was the passing of the DREAM act. The Development, Relief, and Education (DREAM) for Alien Minors Act was signed into law by Jerry Brown in 2011. The act is constituted by two Assembly Bills 130 and 131 which allows for qualified AB 540 students to access state and non-state financial resources to pay for their education. Before the passing of AB 131, there had been no state regulations that provided any specifications regarding financial aid for undocumented students. This bill also allowed for low-income undocumented students at community colleges to apply for the Board of Governor's Fee Waivers, which waived the educational (tuition) fees. Another added benefit is that AB131 also allowed for undocumented students to receive Cal Grants after student residents have received their funding.

The political climate in the United States has been very hostile against people of color, especially immigrants. The Trump administration was very vocal about deporting undocumented residents and made scathing remarks against people of Mexican descent. There were also serious concerns about whether the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program would be abolished. The repeal of laws that were passed in the previous presidential administration to protect undocumented students would leave DREAMers virtually without any state funding to pay for their education. This is one of the main sources of financial aid for undocumented youth attending college. The termination of the program would have detrimental consequences on the lives of families with undocumented students; leaving them without the possibility of legal employment and seriously deterring students from considering college attendance by eliminating the means to finance it.

Transfer Success Predictors

The previous section discussed some of the most prominent barriers that Xicanx students faced in community college both institutionally and personally. The following section will focus on the factors that influenced student's transfer success at community colleges along with institutional supports that are available.

Crisp and Nora (2010) conducted a quantitative longitudinal study where they examined the persistence and transfer success of Hispanic students. Their study looked at 570 first year Hispanic community college students who intended to transfer. Their findings on factors that negatively influence transferring correlated with those previously mentioned in this paper. The elements that had a positive impact on transferring included:

> …enrolling in higher math courses during high school, having parents with higher levels of education, and receiving more financial aid increased the odds of being successful. Conversely, delaying enrollment in college and working more hours were both found to decrease the odds that a student would persist, transfer or earn an associate's degree in 2 years. In addition, the odds of being successful were found to be 2.75 times as large for students who enrolled in college full time and 1.61 times as large for students who enrolled in developmental courses (p.186).

Consequently, factors that predicted student success are in opposition to negative factors such as, having the social capital through parents to navigate college, economic support to be enrolled full-time while working less hours as well as being adequately prepared in high school to avoid taking developmental courses.

In an effort to redress the negative outcome that taking several development courses had on student's transfer objective, state policy makers took action. In October of 2017, Governor Jerry Brown signed into law California Assembly Bill 705. This bill authored by a local Ventura County representative, assembly woman Jacqui Irwin, D-Thousand Oaks, required community colleges to take into consideration high school grade point average

and/or coursework taken when assessing if a student is prepared for college transferable math and English courses instead of relying solely on the previous standardized test it used as a measure. Moreover, it also disallowed colleges from placing students in developmental courses unless evaluations which include work done in high school showed that those students are "highly unlikely" to succeed in college-level math and English (leginfo.legislature.ca.gov). For students who did need extra help in Math and English, there was been a proposition for a new structure of courses where students were required to be concurrently enrolled in another course that offered academic supports as "co-requisite" classes. Since these propositions have recently passed there is no published large-scale data report, and we will have to wait and see what results come from these policies.

The literature reviewed above showed how tracking has been historically based on racial categories, immigration and socioeconomic status placing Mexican and Indigenous students in courses that are focused on developmental and vocational courses rather than being provided with classes that promoted critical thinking and higher education. It has also been illustrated that many Indigenous students are not only being restricted from college preparatory coursework, but that they and Xicanx students are also under-represented in advanced placement courses which majorly impacted college admissions. This places students at an academic disadvantage as they are often found ineligible to attend a four-year college upon graduation from high school. Therefore, students enrolled in community college as the first step towards higher education but faced a number of both institutional and personal barriers that lead to low transfer rates. Thus, while taking these factors into consideration it is imperative to use a framework such as Critical Race Theory which places race as a focus on

educational inequality to deconstruct the racist premises in which educational practices and policies have been born from and continue to take place.

Identity

Immigration from Mexico and Central America continue to change the composition of the Latinx demographic, especially as there are many Indigenous migrants that seek to find employment in the US. As it pertains to the Indigenous Oaxacan population, there have been studies which have looked at the impact of migration on their identity and how their participation in ethnic Indigenous organizations elicits continuing negotiation into what it means to be Indigenous in the US (Besserer, 2002; Kearney, 2000; Nagengast & Kearney, 1990; Velasco Ortiz, 2005). However, as Kovats (2018) has pointed out, the majority of the body of research of Indigenous migrants have focused more on the adult population while overlooking the experiences of Indigenous immigrant children who grow up in the US and whose "process of acculturation and ethnic identification occurs against the backdrop of already existing mestizo Mexican and Latinx ethnic identities" (p. 2). As Indigenous communities in the US begin to expand and Indigenous youth attend schools, it is vital to comprehend the relationship between ethnic identity development in education. This brings into question the importance of how schools influence Indigenous students' ethnic identity.

Historically, schooling within the United states has coerced students from racial-ethnic minority and Indigenous groups to forcibly assimilate and become "American" by renouncing their cultures and enforcing English only policies. In a recent literature review (Langer-Osuna & Nasir, 2016), examined existing literature on race, culture and identity in educational research and the ways in which the legacies of racism have negatively impacted students of color by 'dehumanizing' them through deficit perspectives and subtractive schooling

practices. The outcome of such practices had damaging effects to students' sense of identity and further widened the equity gap. The authors' review also illustrated how schooling structures focused on the identities of the white dominant culture as aspirational but have neglected to critically discuss the entrenched privilege of such dominance to the detriment of people of color. There is a shift in seeking to 'rehumanize' students in education by fostering in students a positive sense of identity.

Some of the most prominent frameworks of ethnic identity development are attributed to the work by Phinney and Erikson. Essentially, both of these frameworks uphold that ethnic identity development occurs as individuals are confronted with crises and or come to realizations that produces an examination of the consequences of their ethnicity and its importance in their lives. Erikson (1968) defined identity as an individual's understanding of self. He also believed that a person's identity matures as they are challenged and can eventually achieve an understanding of both personal and cultural assimilation.

Identity development is a process of the individual defining their own identity. Phinney (1990) expands on this concept by including the definition of ethnic identity as a process that is constructed overtime as a member of a particular ethnic group. Furthermore, ethnic identity is multidimensional and flexible that changes in response to social and contextual factors. (Phinney, 1990; 1993; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990). Phinney's research was conducted in educational environments with ethnically diverse students from different high schools and colleges. She then examined how ethnic identity developed through time and how students placed value on their ethnicity. Phinney and authors Rivas-Drake et al., (2014) have also shown that having a healthy sense of ethnic identity boosts psycho-social welfare

that gives students competent coping mechanisms against discrimination and found that this also showed a positive correlation with schooling outcomes.

Within the discussion of identity, it is important to distinguish between ethnic and racial identity. Thus, other theories that examined the relationship between both and merge ethno-racial identity development should also be considered (Casey-Cannon, Coleman, Knudtson, & Velazquez, 2011; Cross & Cross, 2008; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014; Williams, Tolan, Durkee, Francois, & Anderson, 2012). Casey-Cannon made the case for a blending of both since the United States has historically shown to place social groups in racial categories which have also overlapped with ethnicity. Likewise, the study conducted by Cross and Cross (2008) emphasized that students do not compartmentalize their ethnic, racial and cultural identities as separate entities but they intersect throughout their daily experiences.

The dynamics between ethnic and racial identities, groups, and their interaction is complex. The increasing number of Indigenous Mexican students within the United States have begun to highlight the ethnic heterogeneity that exists within the Mexican diaspora. As discussed earlier, there exists tension between mestizo and Indigenous Mexicans that stem from hundreds of years of Spanish colonization. As a result, Indigenous people occupy the lowest ranks on the racial hierarchy in Mexico (Menchaca, 1993). Unfortunately, these biased attitudes against Indigenous communities continue to reproduce themselves in the United States through immigration. This existing tension is a prime example of the work done by Tajfel (1970) on within-group discrimination which refers to single groups developing conflicts against each other as a consequence of competition and/or prejudice. These prejudices can be often based on arbitrary and invented characteristics.

In accordance, Barillas-Chon's (2010) study specifically looked at the within group

discrimination experiences of Indigenous students by their mestizo peers. He discussed

"welcoming" and "unwelcoming" school practices that can restrict or enable students'

integration to their school environment. The most prominent "unwelcoming" practice was

exhibited by mestizo and second-generation Latino students where they discriminated against

native language speaking Oaxaqueño students, calling them 'Oaxaquita'. Indigenous students

noted how they were teased based on their physical attributes and short stature and were

considered slow or 'dumb' for not speaking Spanish or English fluently. Essentially the study

showed how peer dynamics of exclusion transmitted negative messaging to Indigenous

students that they internalized and as a consequence negatively affected their school

experiences. The findings from my previous study Villa (2017), also correlate with these

findings where Nacavi students faced the most discrimination from other Xicanx students and

often led them to consider stopping out of school.

The negative association with native language and identity often causes students to

experience shame about their identities and results in students refusing to speak their native

languages (Cummins, 1994; Skutnabb-Kangas et al., 1995; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco,

1995). This behavior concurs with Phinney's (1993) framework model of unexamined

identity; indicating that students of color adopt preconceived notions of their ethnic group

from the dominant/host culture. Torres and Baxter expand on this concept by stating that

students within the K-12 system who are not provided with an encouraging safe space to

examine their ethnic identity are susceptible to depend on outside sources that can heavily

influence their views making them more inclined to the internalization of negative

stereotypes. Thus, students of color who were not given this space often enter higher

education without having a grounded awareness of their own ethnic identities.

In contrast however, if students grew up in communities where there was a strong

presence of their ethnic groups, they will have a more solidified sense of identity which can be

a motivating factor in their college achievement. For example, Torres's (2003) study of

Latinx college student's identity development demonstrated that parents who encouraged the

importance of cultural practices and activities in their children were much more prone to

having a deeper attachment to their Latinx identity. For first-year college students the area in

which they were raised, generational status in the US, and self-perception was a prominent

factor in positioning their identity. Hence, the study showed that students attending

predominantly White institutions who came from ethnically homogenous communities

presented a more robust connection to their ethnicity and performed well academically.

In the absence of safe spaces for students of color in schools, a major intervention in

disrupting the educational system's lack of inclusion have been community-based educational

spaces (CBES) which are instrumental in informing these student's developing identities.

These programs include informal educational environments such as afterschool programs,

community-based youth organizations, cultural centers, etc,. As the US has been a home to a

myriad of immigrant populations, CBES have served as culturally affirming spaces that have

educated and sheltered youth from racial hostility (Mckenzie, 2018). Baldridge et al., 2017

contended that as CBES are not restricted to follow a mandated curriculum like educational

institutions; they have the flexibility to "address the needs of the youth and the communities

they serve" (p.384). Although most CBES offer academic support, their contributions

extended beyond an educational focus to include support in areas such as socio-emotional,

cultural and political resources. The Baldridge et al., 2017, literature review traced influential

work that examined how CBES can act as spaces that cultivated strong racial and ethnic

identities that incited learning and political activism in line with the needs of their

communities (Moje et al., 2004; Douglas & Peck, 2013; Jackson et al., 2014) . In these

programs, they found a space where they can dialogue about socio-political issues that were

relevant to their lives which are not available in their school settings. The educational

significance of CBES was due to their ability for their participants to understand how

"political, social, and cultural education aligns with the dominant academic standards of

school. This connection allowed students to bridge their lived reality and identity development

with the academic standards deemed important and has been shown to increase typical

measures of student success" (p. 389) In essence academic achievement was incited by

'reimagining' education and honoring students cultural backgrounds and lived experiences

prompting a desire for students to perform better in school.

Once students enter the realm of higher education, they often seek to explore their

ethnic identity through the participation in student organizations. Phinney's (1996) work also

affirmed the importance of ethnic student groups as: "assisting students in this process"

(p.148). In the previously cited Torres' (2003) study, the author also found that students of

color who had weaker connections to their ethnicity sought to learn more about their ethnic

backgrounds and language once in college. Moreover, students who felt a lack of connection

at their campuses pursued relationships with peers who shared their ethnic backgrounds. In

alignment with these concepts, Hurtado, and Carter (1997) conducted one of the fundamental

studies on racial climate and Latinx college students sense of belonging. Their study

indicated that participation in an ethnic student organization reported higher levels of

belonging. Similarly, Kovats (2018) study examined the experiences of college students whose sense of Indigenous identity was reinforced principally through enrollment in courses that were culturally validating.

In sum, the reviewed studies suggest that ethnic student organizations with student groups lead to greater opportunities for growth and identity development and academic success.

The findings in the reviewed articles revealed the importance of educational spaces that validated the ethno-racial identity development of students of color lead to a sense of belonging and correlate with desires for educational advancement and retention. (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Maestas, Vaquera, & Zehr, 2007).

A brief history of education in Ventura County

The US school system was designed since its inception to create a system of 'Americanization' to focus on accommodating the large influx of immigrant students who were mainly from European countries. During the mid-nineteenth century, the United States had scores of children who were not old enough to work and not enrolled in formal education. Simultaneously, an influx of ethnically diverse immigrants came in from various parts of Europe, which was culturally threatening to upper-class Anglo Protestants. Katz (1987) pointed out that the schooling system was built as a form of control to manage impoverished and immigrant children as an alternative to poorhouses and jails. Katz stated, "The need to discipline an urban workforce intersected with the fear of crime and poverty and the anxiety about cultural diversity to hasten the establishment of public educational systems" (p. 19). Therefore, the early school system was an agency geared toward instilling work habits and the assimilation of poor and immigrant children.

Mexican American students were racialized and segregated from White students in public schools by either having separate classrooms or being placed in different schools known as "Mexican classrooms" or "Mexican schools," (Donato, 1997; González, 1999; Guadalupe San Miguel, 1999, 2003). School districts claimed that Mexican American students needed to be segregated by stating that Mexican American children were dirty, had lower IQs, lacked motivation, could not speak English, and because their parents constantly moved due to their agricultural jobs (Bernal Delgado, 2000; Donato, 1997; Foley, 2014; González, 1999).

Likewise, in Ventura County during the turn of the century there was a large number of Mexican immigrants who were hired as farmworkers. As they were leaving a politically hostile climate in Mexico, these immigrants came with their families and labored as fieldworkers. Agriculture in Oxnard has historically played an important role in the city's economy that welcomed immigrant labor but not the presence of their children in shared public schooling.

In a study conducted by Garcia, Yosso, & Barajas (2012) the authors examined how unequal schooling conditions negatively affected Mexican Americans by creating conditions that left them vulnerable to be used as a cheap labor force within Ventura County. There was a great disparity within Mexican schools as the instruction focused on vocational training, and subtractive English only instruction. Students were also "Americanized" by being taught to adhere to the norms of White, European, patriarchal culture (Gonzalez, 1999).

During the early twentieth century Oxnard specifically created a system of segregation of Mexican students within its elementary schools. The Garcia, Yosso, & Barajas (2012) study examined Oxnard's school board meeting minutes, historical documents, newspapers,

and land titles from the 1930s. In school board minutes they found that White families were pushing for the segregation of their children and Mexican students. The minutes revealed that White parents expressed concern about having their children at the same schools as the Mexican students. The authors found that there was not an explicit reasoning for segregation, however, schools created a system of racial hierarchies based on concerns voiced by White parents.

> Without an articulated educational rationale for segregation, school officials created an intricate system of race-based enrollments that upheld whiteness as the indicator of academic excellence. Exercising tolerance for Mexican students to the extent that they did not disrupt the academic achievement of White students also set up an incentive for Mexicans to pursue educational opportunities via placement in White classes (P.12).

In its inception, tracking was a very explicit way to segregate students; in instances where complete school segregation between White and Mexican student became impossible by having them in different schools, tracking provided a means of physical separation within the school. Mexican students were only allowed to share the same classrooms with White students so long as they were "some of the brightest and best of the Mexican children in white classes when the white class is small and the Mexican class is too large" (p.11). Due to issues of space when complete segregation was not possible, physical and social separation was used as a method to restrict interaction. The rest of the students were then placed in "Mexican Classes" whose curricula focused on becoming 'American', learning English, hygiene, vocational courses and physical punishment for speaking Spanish.

The data in the Garcia, Yosso, & Barajas (2012) study also emphasized that very few Mexican students continued their formal education beyond primary school as Oxnard administrators found that there was no longer a need to segregate students at the sixth grade

level because there were so few students who persisted beyond elementary and also because "the Mexican language handicap by this time had largely disappeared and by this time his social adaptation has fitted him to go into the class with the white children" (p.10) This article is vital into the understanding of how school segregation led not only to the physical segregation of White students and Mexican students based on the creation of racist hierarchies that became embedded into school practices, but also to illustrate how Mexican children were essentially being 'tracked' into low curriculum courses that did not challenge them academically and focused on vocations geared toward maintaining the local agricultural economy while at the same time setting Whiteness as a standard of excellence by attempting to 'Americanize' these students and prohibiting their use of Spanish.

The Garcia, Yosso, & Barajas (2012) article demonstrated that the cultural deficit model was a commonly applied ideology when referring to Xicanx families. Essentially they considered that their underperformance was due to their family values that negatively affected their academic achievement (Yosso, 2006).

Chapter 3: Methods

This section will describe the specific research questions this study aimed to answer and the methodological approaches that were used in the process of answering those questions. This section will also discuss the participants involved in the study and the process of data collection.

The collaboration with participants for data gathering included an in person semi-structured interview, preliminary surveys and participant observation by attending the Nacavi's weekly meetings. As the purpose of the study is to understand the educational experiences of Indigenous students, interview questions include topics such as ethnic identity, knowledge of educational processes and personal experiences within school settings. It was not likely the participants' narratives would parallel each other. For this reason, the semi structured interview process allowed the participants to flesh out unique aspects of their experiences.

Research Questions

The questions guiding my research are as follows:

1. What are some of the institutional and direct barriers that Indigenous immigrant students face that limit their opportunities for higher education in high school and in community college?

2. What are some of the personal and institutional supports that Indigenous immigrant students use to overcome challenges encountered on their path in higher education?

Community Context

The Oaxacan community began establishing itself in Ventura's agricultural economy beginning in the 1970s working in labor intensive row crops primarily strawberries and raspberries (Mines, Nichols, & Runsten, 2010). By the late 90s the population had grown considerably; however, due to long work-days, language barriers, legal status and discrimination made their presence nearly imperceptible. In 2000, local Indigenous leaders began organizing around medical, labor, and educational issues. As a response to the needs of this population the organization, 'Encuentro de Pueblos Indígenas en California' (EPIC), (The name of all organizations and students used in this report are pseudonyms), was created in the central coast of California to address the needs of the farmworker families. This organization

is primarily staffed by local Indigenous community members from Ventura County and has a goal that seeks to establish a community leadership and self-reliance by means of educating and training programs within language, health outreach, humanitarian support and cultural promotion that allows the community to advocate for their concerns.

EPIC has grown from a solely labor and agricultural focused organization to address various other concerns including: organizing, healthcare and outreach workers, baby wellness classes, interpreting and cultural competency presentations to local institutions that serve the community.

Education has also become a primary concern that it has organized around. In 2010, after a series of youth leadership trainings participants felt the need to create a youth group component to address the specific issues that Indigenous students were facing in schools and the Nacavi youth group was formed. Their main objective was to develop the skills of indigenous youth with a focus on encouraging higher education, develop the leadership abilities of their members, promote an environment that instills Indigenous pride, and advocate against the bullying and discrimination of Indigenous youth. In accordance with this intention, they have four main objectives: 1) Reducing the discrimination toward the Oaxacan and Indigenous communities in schools by means of creating a policy that prohibits the use of the word "Oaxaquita". 2) Motivating and creating consciousness in the Indigenous community concerning the importance of higher education and providing information about different groups and institutions that offer scholarships to assist college and the university. 3) Creating a youth leadership concerned with the well-being of the community and capability to influence and inform the community in terms of education and employment. 4) To strengthen

their Indigenous and cultural identity through dialogues about their roots, culture, tradition, and Indigenous language.

Their initial goal was to educate school officials and school personnel on the discrimination that Indigenous students were facing in school which, they discussed was often a hostile environment, pressuring students to leave schools. The youth group organized their first campaign to reduce bullying by advocating for the banning of racial epithets as "Oaxaquita" and "Indito" (little Oaxacan and little Indian) from local school districts. These are both denigrating terms meant to infantilize Indigenous communities but have historic implications as Indigenous people have been treated as inferior, culturally backwards and makes reference to their stature. In 2012, the "No me llames Oaxaquita campaign" was successful in the passing their anti-bullying resolution in several districts within the county. Additionally, Nacavi clubs expanded to two local high schools to create a safe space for Indigenous students within the high schools.

For centuries after the Spanish Conquest Indigenous people have faced racism in Mexico from Mestizos often using racial and ethnic slurs that dehumanize them and frame them as others. In addition, having faced centuries of discrimination in Mexico this racism carries over to the United States where the discrimination they face is two-fold; from their Mexican peers and from their American counterparts (Perez & Vasquez, 2016). Due to these circumstances they are often the most ostracized group within an already marginalized immigrant population.

Participant Recruitment

Participants for this study were recruited from the Nacavi Youth group as past or present members. There were a number of previous members who were still affiliated with the

group through their involvement with cultural events and were on the organization's list serve. As part of my recruitment plan, I developed of letter of recruitment and asked administrative staff to send it to former members. Additionally, for recruitment of current Nacavi members, I attended Nacavi meetings to talk about my research and enlisting any interested students, and posted flyers with contact information on it.

The table below includes an overview of the 15 participants who were interviewed for this study. All participants were first generation, had enrolled in community college, had completed at least one semester, had been involved with the Nacavi youth group, and identified as Indigenous. There were 8 females and 7 male students. Twelve students were undocumented and four were documented. Seven of these students spoke an Indigenous language and all students except for one, had at least one parent who spoke an Indigenous language fluently.

Table 1

Nacavi Youth Participants

Name	Yr. in College	Identity	Language(s)	Major
Yair	Did not complete	Nuu Savi	Nuu Savi/Eng/Span	Child Development
Lupe	Did not complete	Indigenous	Eng/Span	Nursing
Ashley	Entering	Nuu Savi	Eng/Span	Business
Victoria	Entering	Nuu Savi	Nuu Savi/Eng/Span	Biology
Rosario	Continuing	Nuu Savi	Nuu Savi/Eng/Span	Environmental Sciences
Antonio	Continuing	Nuu Savi	Nuu Savi/Eng/Span	Mechanical Engineering

Estrella	Continuing	Nuu Savi	Eng/Span	Culinary Arts
Marissa	Continuing Student	Nuu Savi	Eng/Span	Spanish
Alba	Completed AA – Did not transfer	Nuu Savi	Eng/Span	Spanish
Claudia	Continuing Student	Zapotec	Eng/Span	Spanish
Maelo	Transferred - Graduated with a BA.	Nuu Savi	Nuu Savi/Eng/Span	Integrated Plant Sciences & Agricultural Biotechnology
Herminio	Transferred - Graduated with a B.A.	Nuu Savi	Eng/Span	Mechanical Engineering
Roman	Transferred to a university	Zapotec	Eng/Span	Business
Benjamin	Transferred to a university	Purepecha	Eng/Span	Liberal Arts
Miguel	Transferred to a university	Nuu Savi	Nuu Savi/Eng/Span	History

Data Collection

I conducted 15 semi structured participant interviews which took place in person and lasted approximately 60 minutes each. My aim was to recruit participants that represented a continuum of participation into and beyond community college. In the recruitment of students, I was looking for students in the following four categories; 1. high school seniors who planned on enrolling in community college, 2. those who were enrolled but stopped attending college without transferring and without a degree, 3. students currently enrolled at least half time, and 4. those who transferred to a four year school. Interviewing students in each of these four stages would serve to provide a wider scope of understanding of potential

barriers that students face and the different supports that facilitate their transition into higher education.

The interview protocol consisted of topics related to the research questions specifically on home and culture, educational experience, college preparation, financing and employment. The interviews were transcribed, coded and analyzed by content to look for emerging themes across the students' experiences. Data analysis followed a method consistent with grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006; Miles & Pérez Huberman, 1994). Secondly, I analyzed the data for any patterns, and/or relationships within the categories and look for specific examples to support the larger themes.

A qualitative study employing a Critical Race Theory framework is essential to center the voices of the students at the core of discussion concerning education inequality. This study utilized qualitative methods by means of a preliminary survey and interview. The survey consisted of questions regarding academic preparation in high school, home and school encouragement and first impressions of the enrollment process of community college. The survey was followed by an in depth semi-structured individual interview with Nacavi students who had been were are currently enrolled in community college.

Data Analysis

This study uses Grounded Theory as an analytical approach to the data interpretation. Grounded Theory as stated by Corbin and Strauss (1994) is "A general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed. Theory evolved during actual research, and it does this through continuous interplay between analysis and data collection" (p. 273). This model allowed for theory to arise organically from the data rather than having the data be constrained to a specified model.

This approach has also been used by other CRT researchers in education (Malagon, Malagon, Pérez Huber, 2009; Perez Huber, 2010; Solorzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000) In particular, scholars Malagon, Pérez Huber, Velez (2009) have employed a similar approach of using Critical Race Theory as a framework within the envelope of grounded theory method. They contend that although "Grounded theory was not developed as a methodology for collecting knowledge and building theory from the lived experiences of People of Color. However, we argue that, when used in partnership with a critical race framework, the researcher can utilize grounded methodology to interpret the perspectives and voices of the narratives that remain unacknowledged, invalidated, and distorted in social science research" (p. 259). With this methodical plan they allowed for "themes to emerge from the data", which in essence permits the participants views to speak for themselves.

Data analysis began as I collected data and began seeing themes emerge from individual interviews. While I conducted interviews, I began recording themes in research memos. Interviews were collected and transcribed in the language in which the interview occurred being in English or Spanish. The interviews and fieldnotes I collected were transcribed in the language they occurred. I transcribed the interviews in Spanish as well as any notes that I took. I translated Spanish language portions of the interviews and fieldnotes to include in this study.

During the coding process I utilized open coding to examine interviews, fieldnotes, and artifacts using both deductive and inductive codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), which allowed for data to be examined for common patterns and themes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). After the data collection I reviewed each transcript to identify themes and patterns related to race, racism, Indigeneity, higher education, resilience, and encouragement.

Trustworthiness

In order to establish trustworthiness (Moschkovich & Brenner, 2000), I included various sources of information to support the validity of my interpretations. In addition to the surveys and interviews, the data collection also included participant observation where I attended the weekly meetings and took field notes during the meetings. Previously, I served as Nacavi's coordinator for three years where I personally interacted with the youth group members and conducted the group's weekly meetings in the EPIC office and in two local schools. The coordinator position also gave me first-hand experience of the educational issues that the youth group members were facing in their high schools, which served as motivation for this study. For instance, the students felt that their schools were unfairly excluding them and their families from being active participants in their education because schools were not offering Indigenous language interpretation in school meetings or translating any of the materials into Mixtec or Zapotec. This led to the students organizing a successful campaign where they advocated for having interpreters in high schools. Working directly with the students in the community and within the schools gave me a contextual understanding of both their socioeconomic and school conditions.

Role of Researcher

As the primary researcher it is fundamental that I recognize my own experiences and biases that could influence the qualitative analytical process. Moreover, as I am employing Critical Race Theory it calls for the researcher to engage in the process of their own racial and cultural awareness and positionality as they conduct research. (Malagon, Huber, & Velez; 2009)

Solórzano and Yosso (2002) and Hunn, Guy & Manglitz (2006) discussed two

aspects of researcher positionality within CRT: theoretical sensitivity and cultural sensitivity. The concept of theoretical sensitivity (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) refers to the special insight and capacity of the researcher to interpret and give meaning to data. Cultural sensitivity (Bernal, 1998) refers to the capacity of individuals as members of socio historical communities to accurately examine and interpret the meaning of informants. I feel that I bring both sensitivities as an academic and a Xicanx student who has also faced challenges as a transfer student in my educational pipeline.

Specifically, as I was conducting my research with participants it is important to mention that I had previously known them as the youth coordinator, I had established relationships with most of the students I interviewed. Moreover, as an EPIC staff member I became familiar with the needs of the local community as the organization primarily serves Indigenous migrants within Ventura county. However, despite my relationship with the students I am aware that although I do share Mexican heritage with the Nacavi students, I am conscious of my ethnic identity as being mestiza, and a U.S. citizen. Due to these factors, I have privileges that the Nacavi students did not have. Thus, establishing rapport and building trust with the students was critical in my interactions with them.

Additionally, I have also reviewed documents such as mission statements, newspaper articles and proposals from EPIC in order to understand how Nacavi was organized, their principles, their political objectives, and how they constructed and expressed their identity. Although I am no longer employed by EPIC as the coordinator, I am on the Nacavi scholarship committee for the organization and maintain communication with the youth group.

Having this extended relationship with the organization establishes credibility as per Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria where they emphasize that "prolonged engagement" aids in assisting the relationship of trust between researcher and participant. I also employed dependability as another technique by recording all interviews and writing detailed field notes in accordance with maintaining an accurate and fair representation of students and their participation in the youth group. Similarly, during the data analysis phase I created research memos to provide an audit trail with the intention of recording my internal process of analysis and rationale regarding the themes being discussed.

Chapter 4 Results

The objective of this descriptive qualitative study is to analyze the barriers and supports that Indigenous students have on their educational path in community college, what college program support their transfer objectives and how students have used their resources and supports to navigate through community college. To answer this question, I conducted 15 interviews with Indigenous students who had attended community college within Ventura County, in addition to my participant observations and role as a former coordinator.

As I began the analysis of the interview data, I will be discussing my results by outlining the educational process as they move through the sequence of higher educational phases beginning with 1. Matriculation from High School to community college, 2. Completion of coursework for transfer eligibility, 3. Application to four-year universities, 4. Experiences at the university. I believe this method of analyzing the stages with participants who were at four different junctures on their path through higher education will help illustrate the challenges and supports that students need as they move through the higher education pipeline.

High School Preparation and Community College

The Nacavi youth experienced many challenges regarding their choice to attend community college. One of the central questions from my interview with the participants centered around the reasons why Indigenous students chose to attend a community college instead of a four-year college after high school graduation. My findings show that there were three main themes: 1. Being unfamiliar with the college application process, 2. Academic under preparation and 3. Financial concerns. These themes however intersected, as the majority of students often cited two or more reasons for choosing community college related to the themes listed above.

The most salient of these themes was students expressing that they did not feel prepared to go to a four-year college due to not having enough information and not receiving proper counseling about eligibility requirements and/or the application process. Of the fifteen students, nine mentioned feeling unfamiliar with the process of applying for college. Six specifically stated that they felt underprepared academically and expressed that they felt unfamiliar with the university application process. However, all the participants expressed that they enrolled in community college with the intention of transferring to a four-year school and obtaining their bachelor's degree. Many of the students reported that their high schools did not adequately prepare them to attend a four-year school or discuss the advantages of going to a community college.

In one example Lupe, mentioned having the goal of going to college but not understanding the differences between going to a four-year school and a community college:

> Well it was this person who was like a counselor at the career center and she and another counselor would help me a lot she said, "just get good grades and you can transfer." But I didn't understand the difference between going to a university out of high school and then going to a community college, and they would tell me so it's the

69

same thing, universities are expensive and it's a smart idea for you to go to Community College because it's cheaper.

By encouraging her to go to a community college and neglecting to explain the process and eligibility requirements and preparation necessary to go to a four- year school, the counselors did not provide her with the information needed for her to make her own choice. Thus, her only option was to attend community college.

Ashley also shared a similar experience. She remembered being in an AVID course and receiving encouragement to go to college from her teachers, but did not receive the practical knowledge as to how to apply or where to get further information with the application:

> Yeah. We always focused on that. I had my teachers that said, "Yeah, go to college." They were like, "No matter what. There's always help there." But they wouldn't present the help, they would always say, "There's always help." But they wouldn't tell you, "You get help here or some flyers or something." They would just say it. They wouldn't give actions.

Benjamin discussed having a high GPA and taking advanced courses in high school and being an involved student as the president of a history club. In explaining his choice to go to community college, he stated: "That's a hard one. I don't remember wanting to apply to any university specifically. I didn't differentiate the different campuses, right? So, I just saw community college as the option for me." Although Benjamin was eligible to attend a four-year school he did not receive the guidance to distinguish between the different tiers within higher education and ultimately chose a local college.

English Language Learners

Academic preparation in high school is often looked at as the primary predictor of college success. Research suggests that a student's performance in High School is regarded as

one of the critical factors for the prediction of college success (Astin, 1999; Fry, 2004; Solorzano, Villalpando & Oseguera, 2005). Of the fifteen students that I interviewed, all of them had been placed in English Language Learner courses throughout their education, seven of them stated that they continued to take at least two years of ELL courses in high school. Other students also reported not being academically prepared to transfer to a four-year school. This was especially significant for students who took English Language Learner courses, which count towards high school graduation requirements but do not fulfill the A-G requirements to be college eligible. High school graduation requirements differ in that there are fewer courses needed and the requirements are not as academically rigorous. The high school graduation requirements in the district that the Nacavi students attended only required three years of general English courses whereas the University of California and the Cal State University systems ask for four years of college preparatory English.

The English area for university requirements states that: "English ("b") – *Four years* of college preparatory English that integrates reading of classic and modern literature, frequent and regular writing, and practice listening and speaking" (http://www.ucop.edu/agguide/a-g-requirements/). Specifically, in the case of English language development courses UC guidelines state: "When applying to the University, students may use only one year of English coursework for second language learners to meet their four-year English requirement for UC admissions" (Ibid). This posed a challenge for English Language Learners who can only count the most advanced English Language Development (ELD) course to count toward the A-G requirements.

To understand how students are labeled as English Language Learners it is necessary to look at the placement process. According to the California Department of Education

students are placed in ELL courses after completing the CELDT (California English Language Development Test). The CELDT test is administered to students whose enrollment forms specifically the Home Language Survey (which is usually filled out by parents and/or guardians) indicates a language other than English as the home language. By law these students must take the exam within 30 days of enrollment in the school. The CELDT exam then provides assessment in four areas, listening, speaking, reading and writing. Students are then designated a status based on their scores.   The purposes of the CELDT are the following: "To identify students who are limited English proficient (LEP), to determine the level of English language proficiency of LEP students, and to assess the progress of LEP students in acquiring the skills of listening, reading, speaking, and writing in English"

http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/el/.

To place out of ELL courses students had to take the CELDT every year until they were considered to have met the criteria for English proficiency, which is based on a number of factors that include assessment scores on the English language development test, teacher evaluation, parental opinion, and performance that demonstrates sufficient command of English to participate with native English speakers of the same age.

Although Nacavi students mentioned that not speaking English was a barrier towards higher education, there was a strong correlation between not speaking English and teacher expectations, which directly affected the services and information that students received when compared to other students. English Language Learner students were not given the same skills or the resources to navigate the educational system as students in college preparatory courses were offered.

Roman, stated that he wanted to go to a UC or CSU after high school, but he specifically mentioned that he was not eligible since he did not place out of ELL courses;

> Yes, I did intend to apply to a four- year school after graduation from high school. My main goal was to go to a CSU or a UC but as a requirement they ask for three years of English on top of advanced ELD and I didn't have them, that was the impediment but since I didn't, I had no other option that to go to a community college.

Likewise, Miguel, also mentioned not knowing that ELL courses didn't count toward A-G requirements:

> I didn't know until my last year, it was in that moment when they told me that classes in ELD didn't count. Because when we were freshman, we did pay attention, but we were young, so we really didn't understand, and we didn't find out until the last grade that our English classes didn't count towards high education.

By the time he was a senior it was too late for him to take the additional English courses he needed, thus as with others, his only option was community college.

In Yair's case, although he had taken ELL courses in junior high, he remained in the ELL program with students who were taking the lowest English class as freshmen in high school:

> When I entered high school, they put me in the class with those who will still learning. All of my classes were normal it was just the English class. I knew that my English was more advanced than theirs, but my counselor told me that it was okay for me that I would just learn more. When I was a senior that is when I went into a normal English class.

In the case of the Nacavi students, their being labeled as English Language Learners resulted in being tracked into an entire set of courses that were basic and not college bound. For example, with ELL status, students are enrolled into English 101 rather than the college preparatory English class that would expose them to literature and critical writing skills. It is in these courses where they would learn content and strategies which would help them pass standardized tests and prepare them for college level rigor.

Students who have taken more than one year of ELL courses in high school are automatically placed at a disadvantage and need to make up for these units in addition to their regular course load to advance to college preparatory English. Oakes' research (1985) found that high track English classes were designed for students who would be attending four-year universities. Some of the content they encountered in their classes dealt with preparing for the SAT's, studying literary genres, research and expository writing. In contrast, students in low tracks did not engage in any SAT prep, read less challenging literature, and focused on basic English skills, leaving them underprepared in comparison to other students.

In addition to being unfamiliar with the college admission process. The students also expressed confusion regarding the purpose of the SAT's. Eleven of the fifteen students stated that they took the SAT exam. However, there were students who commented that they did not understand the purpose of the exam. When I asked Lupe if she had taken the SAT she responded:

> Yes, I did but I think if I knew what it was and what it meant I could have done better. If I knew the importance of those exams, I would have tried harder. For example, when I had to take the CAHSEE they told me that every student has to take it. I thought it was just mandatory I thought it was a regular test.

Similarly, Estrella and Maelo also voiced having the same misunderstanding:

> Estrella: Yeah. Or like, "Oh you need to study for the test." I just thought the ACT and the SAT were state tests, like the STARR one when you take, when you were little. I thought it was just there, but I didn't know it was something that the college is looked at.

> Maelo: Yes, actually my score was pretty high. Oh, yeah! I got an award Yes. But I really didn't know what was the meaning of any... what was going on. So like, I was very lost. To understand what was going on, I just knew that I was going to go to a four year college. And I think the first time I kind of heard about other option was when the Oxnard college people came, and they were talking about like transferring, but I still didn't get what were they really talking about. That was probably my first exposure to like other people talking about four year university.

Ashley: I did everything and the last minute I was like, "Okay." And they had the fee waiver and stuff, but it was really hard for me to go because my dad worked, usually every day. And I didn't know who to take me or where to go, I felt like... The professors there they were like, "Yeah, you have to take them." That's all they would say, they wouldn't say how. I don't know. If it was more help, they gave me or there was more encouragement I would've. Yeah. I was kind of embarrassed because everybody kind of took it. And I would try not to talk to the teacher because then she would be like, "Why didn't you? Where is your scores and stuff?" So I was kind of embarrassed.

The placement of ELL courses had significant impacts not just on their curriculum, but it also affected the instruction they received in critical writing skills, as well as their receipt of necessary college going information, including information about how to take and pass the SAT/ACT exams, which were university requirements. Standardized testing, especially the SAT/ACT's, are one of the most important college assessment measures yet as noted from the above quotes this information does not get conveyed to students in the lower tracked courses.

All of the students I interviewed mentioned having aspirations of going to college. However, the data in this section revealed that some students did not fully understand the distinctions between the different higher education pathways, and those in English Language Learner courses who were not able to meet A-G requirements. Moreover, several students who applied to a community college did so because they were ineligible to apply to a university upon graduation from high school and were unfamiliar with the process. The data showed that students need to consistently receive information about the four tiers of higher education throughout high school and receive adequate counseling so that students can plan their post high school pathways accordingly.

Financial Concerns

One of the most concerning topics when it comes to a college education for any student is how to finance it. Although community colleges have much lower tuition fees than

four-year schools, there are not as many financial resources that offer enough aid to cover living expenses or housing which universities do. (Perez, 2010).

Because the participants in this study came from low-income communities with limited financial resources, affordability was another major concern for students in deciding to attend a community college. Nine of the fifteen participants that I interviewed specifically mentioned enrolling in community college due to financial concerns. Of those nine participants eight were undocumented. For low income students financing educational costs is primarily funded through Federal and State government grants. Undocumented students do not have as many financial resources available and face severe restrictions on financial aid due to their legal status. To be eligible for federal funds students must be US citizens or have legal residency. Since undocumented students cannot receive federal funds, they are only eligible for state funding; they are also not able to take out federal loans and have less access to grants and scholarships as many of these require legal residency. State grant aid also provides a substantial source of financial aid to students however, each state has its own legislation which restricts eligibility requirements. Each state also has specific regulations regarding how they administer their resources for undocumented students.

In California there are two laws that allow undocumented students to receive access to state funds the AB 540 and the Dream Act. Before the passing of AB 131 there had been no state regulations that provided any specifications regarding financial aid for undocumented students. This bill also allowed for low-income undocumented students at community colleges to apply for the Board of Governor's Fee Waivers, which waive the matriculation fees. Another added benefit is that AB131 also allowed for undocumented students to receive

Cal Grants only after student residents have received their funding first, and then undocumented students could receive aid secondly.

Another major advantage for attending community college was the passing of AB19 known as the California Community College Promise, which gives local districts the discretion to use funds to waive tuition for low-income students during the first two years. Within Ventura County all community colleges were waiving tuition for students including AB540 and DACA recipients. This option further incentivizes students to attend schools locally and live at home to alleviate the cost of living expenses while still pursuing a college degree.

One student specifically chose to attend a community college even though she had gotten accepted to a four-year school: "Well, after high school my plans were to attend a four-year and I had committed and accepted to go attend at Cal State LA, but due to financial reasons, I wasn't able to attend that at the end and I signed up for community college a month before Fall semester started."

Another undocumented student with hopes of transferring to UC Berkeley chose to enroll in a community college concerned that grant funding from the DREAM Act would not be enough to cover her tuition and living expenses.

> I couldn't apply for loans, because in order to apply for loans, you needed to be documented. Then, you can't ask for FAFSA, because the only people who have citizenship can apply for FAFSA. I know about the DREAM Act, but that's not going to be enough, realistically, let's do community college, and then see from there. That's when I remember going to a table, and them mentioning that community college, it's way cheaper, and then the whole thing about transferring. You can get your AA, and as you're doing that, you can set your major, and then transfer. It's the same degree, too. In my head, I was like, okay now that's realistic. Then in between those two or three years that I'm in community college, I can see about how my status changes here.

Her response shows attending a community college as a 'realistic' option not just due to its affordability, but she also specifically mentioned using the time during her attendance as a waiting period with the hope that there would be a change in her legal status which would grant her accessibility to more financial resources.

Undocumented students who do not qualify for DACA (Deferred Action Childhood Arrivals) face increased financial restrictions since they do not have social security numbers and cannot legally work. They are left to find informal work where they are susceptible to exploitation, unsafe working conditions, less rights, no benefits, and lack of mobility. One of the students interviewed arrived in the US at the age of thirteen and began working in the fields with his family. When asked about financing his education he stated:

> I need more information about where to go and what to do. Since I don't have DACA I feel that I need more help than other students. I need more help with paying and what to do. I don't know where to apply and if there is help because I don't have papers, I don't have anything.

His response indicated a lack of familiarity with the extent of resource availability and feeling of vulnerability due to his legal status. Although he could receive funding through the Dream Act, this would not cover his living expenses. His financial situation was further exacerbated since he did not qualify for DACA and could not count on his family for economic support. At the time of the interview he was working as a dishwasher at a local restaurant and at the time of the interview was not taking any courses since his schedule was inconsistent.

Another finding that emerged from the data was the lack of understanding about financial

aid resources and coverage. The financial aid process is complicated; there are different forms of financial aid at the federal and state level, which consist of grants, loans and work

study all of which have different eligibility requirements. The FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) is exclusively for U.S. citizens and permanent residents. Undocumented students must fill out the California Dream Act Application (CADAA). U.S. citizens are eligible to receive aid at the federal level through Pell grants and loans provided they meet certain criteria. They are also eligible to receive state aid in California through Cal grants. Undocumented students however are only eligible to receive in-state tuition through Cal grants and other grants awarded by the university as well as some private scholarships. Also, due to their status they are not eligible to receive student loans. Thus, low income students and undocumented students see community college as the most practical cost saving option since tuition is free and they save on expenses by living at home.

The following two quotes are from students who were US citizens that could have qualified for federal and state grants to cover tuition and living expenses. However, they opted to go to a community college due to maximize cost effectiveness. The data also reflected students' anxiety and confusion about being eligible for loans or fearing that their financial aid eligibility would expire or that they would somehow be charged for the funds after already being qualified to receive aid his first year.

> …my plan was to go to CSU San Jose but after talking to some students I had a few friends who are already at the university and they told me that a lot of classes might not qualify for financial aid and I decided to save money. Since community college is free for two years, I wanted to do my general education there and then I plan to re-apply for Cal State San Jose and be more prepared for my major.

> My first year I got FAFSA but then after that, I stopped applying, because I didn't know if maybe they were going to, like, my mind was like they're probably going to charge me back, so I didn't apply again, after my first semester. Then I started paying out of my pocket. Just like the fees. It was $20 or $40. Because I had the BOG waiver.

Another student shared that she did apply for the CSU system upon graduating from high school but did not have the resources to pay for the application fees and did not know she could have qualified for a fee waiver.

> I think the only reason why I didn't apply was because for those Cal states, there was this, the price was showing up. And when I was done, the price kept showing up and I didn't know how to fix it. And I felt like-The applications, yeah. And so, I kind of felt embarrassed to ask, and I didn't ask at all. So, I just let it go and I didn't apply. I regret it so much.

As previously mentioned, undocumented students did not qualify for federal student loans as they could only receive state aid. However, as I was interviewing a Dreamer, she stated choosing to attend a local community college to avoid going into debt. "I thought it would be better to go to the (community) college because I would save money and because I don't want to get in debt, that is what I want to avoid at all costs because I don't like debts and it would be worse if it was educational debt, I would stress out if I owed any money."

The data revealed that students have misconceptions about the financial aid process, fund eligibility and disbursement administration. More importantly, it is also showing that students are not receiving adequate information and counseling of the financial aid process and specifically what options are available to them based on their individual situations. It becomes clear that high schools should provide students more information and individualized support of the financial aid process since the amount of offered support is a determining factor in enrollment decisions. Furthermore, schools place a large burden on students by placing on them the sole responsibility to seek out their financial aid options without having enough knowledge to make informed decisions.

Personal Challenges

       Financial responsibilities. A study conducted by Stephen Fry (2002) reported that a large number of high school students from low income, and most notably, immigrant households work to provide support for their families. "Among low skilled Latino immigrants, household incomes are often built to acceptable levels by combining the earnings of several workers who each might be taking home poverty-level wages. Thus, there is intense pressure on young people, especially males, to contribute to the family welfare as soon as they are old enough to work" (p.5). My data also supported this finding as all the students I interviewed came from low income immigrant households and all of the students interviewed stated that they worked at least part-time during high school.

       Although Fry's study looked at Latinx immigrants from low-income households, his study did not distinguish between students who possessed legal authorization to work and those who do not. It is important to highlight that undocumented students have restricted work options, which often lead to cash jobs paying minimum wage or less, unsafe working conditions, and little to no benefits. Since most of the students interviewed came from farmworker families, most students mentioned working in the fields during vacation and sometimes on the weekend. There were also some that had begun work at an early age and provided direct support to their families.

       Yair inadvertently revealed how he had received good grades until he started working: "I had good grades in the beginning, then when I started working my grades dropped and I started having problems at home, but I did pass all my classes. In my last grades I worked at a lunch truck so I would go to work and come home around midnight or 1:00 a.m. but it was full-time. On the weekends I would work too until 2:00 a.m." This student's parents did not

live with him in the US; his mother had returned to Mexico and he lived with an older sister. As a consequence, he could not rely on his family for financial support.

Antonio, the oldest of his household, shared how he had to leave school to help his family after they had to move for fear that his father risked deportation:

> I couldn't go to high school, I was a week away and very excited to start but my dad came home one day and told us that immigration had gone to the offices of the farm where they worked and asked the owner for reports and documentation of all of the workers. Unfortunately, my parents are undocumented and for this reason we had to move to Oxnard. I was going to start school here, but I couldn't because I had to leave school to work and help my family.

Fortunately, Antonio began taking adult school courses earning his GED and then enrolled in a community college. To make himself more competitive, he chose to enroll in developmental courses that focused on fundamental English skills to continue working on his grammatical and writing skills to prepare himself and become a more competitive university applicant.

Another student, Maelo, mentioned working in the field at a young age: "I was 12, I remember I was in my 7th grade when I started working. Because I needed clothes and that sort of stuff, and I would go and work. Only during the summer. I would go in with my parents, and I would come out with my parents. All my years so, throughout high school."

Similarly, Claudia shared how she worked alongside her mother while she was in high school: "I think it was the summer before my freshman year that I started working in the fields. I worked in beets, cabbage, pumpkin, which was when I was still in eighth grade during the weekends too."

Although it can be common for high school students to work during their summer vacations, this was a vital period for the Nacavi students since these breaks provided the

opportunity for full-time work and was the main source of yearly income. These wages not only allowed them to pay for their own personal expenses during the school year; they also provided supplemental support for their households.

One of the consequences students faced while working during the weekends and vacation was not being able to receive supplemental academic support such as summer school or weekend tutoring. With a conflicting work schedule, it became difficult for students needing to make up a class, earn extra credits or simply become involved in extracurricular activities. Miguel and Yair were two students in the migrant ed program who had not met their A-G requirements. Both missed out on various resources offered by the program since they both worked on the weekends. For example, the program offered academic assistance, tutoring, and fieldtrips which they could not participate in. Although they needed the additional support, they also missed the opportunity to retake the classes to become college eligible. As noted in the literature review, Latinx students that come from low income households are often put in a precarious situation where they must balance work and school.

Anti-Indigenous Discrimination and Bullying

Previous studies that have been conducted with Indigenous students have documented how Indigenous students have experienced discrimination within high school contexts (Barillas-Chón, 2010; Gonzalez & Cooper, 2016; Kovats, 2010) causing them to feel shame and hide their Indigenous identity. In her study Kovats, (2018) discusses that although youth in her study were active participants in their cultural practices and were part of a larger Indigenous community some "concealed their Indigeneity outside the home to avoid or mitigate potential discrimination from their mestizo classmates" (p.85). In addition, she

documented how students develop a sense of "private indigeneity" that is practiced in the safe spaces of their home or with other members of their community.

Lastly, one of the most prominent themes that arose from the interview data was the overt racism and discrimination the Nacavi students faced from their peers beginning in elementary and through their high school experiences. The Nacavi youth mentioned being harassed based on their physical appearance, phenotype, stature and language and receiving denigrating remarks such as being called "Oaxaquita" and/or "Indito". González (2018) defined the term Oaxaquito/a as "a diminutive slur referring to ethno-racial stereotypes that mark people from the southern state of Oaxaca as short in stature, of dark skin complexion, dumb, and dirty" (p. 2). These terms exemplify the discrimination that Indigenous students face based on ethnic markers. In Barillas-Chon's previous study he also found similar instances of discrimination against Indigenous Oaxacan students based on language use, "being perceived as "dummies" and inferior, and seen as less due to their physical appearance.

Nacavi students recounted personal examples of facing racial discrimination from their non-Indigenous Mexican counterparts:

> Miguel: Oh, before I don't know but…but if they at school called me Indian, I would take it very badly…because I don't know… and even hated my color. I would ask my mom 'Why am I like this?' People always say like "Oh Indian" or they always look at us like we are less because my color it's like it means less for them, and whiteness is high… I think…and they always treated us like less. And my height too, they would say like 'Oaxaquita' when I was in the field, they would say that there too.

Miguel's narrative highlighted social distinctions against Indigenous students based on racial and cultural stereotypes, most notably based on his stature and colorism that he experienced in school and while he was working as an agricultural worker in the fields. Unfortunately, this type of discrimination against Indigenous people was all too evident with such pervasive use of the pejorative term 'Oaxaquita' by their peers. Yair, also recalled

facing negative school experiences amongst his peers and being bullied for his ethnicity; "When I arrived here there were some students who weren't Indigenous, they still discriminate against you anyway or they say 'Oaxaquita' or 'go back to your village'…things like that. But for me it's all the same, it doesn't affect me anymore."   Within Mexican society the terms 'Oaxaquita' and 'Indio' are used interchangeably since the state of Oaxaca has a large Indigenous population. The association with being "Indian" is seen as inferior.

Alba also mentioned that she saw one of her cousin's being discriminated against for being Indigenous and the shame he experienced: "I saw one of my cousins being bullied in high school and I saw that he would deny that he was from Oaxaca and I would ask myself why he would deny it if he's my cousin and he grew up there? And then I figured out it was because he didn't want to be bullied anymore."

The Nacavi students' self-perception changed negatively after enrolling in US schools and receiving denigrating remarks by their peers causing them feel shame and deny their ethnicity. Claudia shared an incident she experienced in the 5th grade as the first time she understood she was Indigenous and felt different from her peers

> So, my mom was picking me up from school and an aunt was there and they were speaking Zapoteco. And students that knew me, or classmates that knew me, they were like, looking kind of weird. And for me, I always thought that everyone spoke Zapoteco, but I didn't know that it was only us. And so, when they were like, "What's that? What are they talking about? What are they saying?" And I'm like you don't understand? They're saying this. And they're like, "We don't know what that is, is it Chinese?" Or they would make fun of it. And that's, I think that was the first time I felt like my family was different. I was embarrassed because I felt that I was, I was different, but I felt like a lot of the students saw me as different now. They kind of like, there was a lot of bullying, and a lot of negative comments. And so, I feel like I've always been very friendly, and I had a lot of friends in elementary. So, after that day I feel like a lot of people kind of stopped talking to me. They would always say, they would always make comments about my skin color, and then after the language incident, they started saying, "What do you speak?" And then they would kind of use me

as like, how do you say this? How do you say this? And I just kind of shut down a lot of the times when they would start talking about it, because I wasn't sure if to speak about it or not because my parents told me not to, and I felt like I had to give them an answer. I don't know it was just, I was very confused.

Maelo specifically mentioned being proud of being able to speak Mixteco in elementary school but by the 7th grade he stopped speaking it publicly:

 At first I was very proud of speaking my language in elementary school but when it came to junior high and high school I kind of stopped speaking it because people would be like, 'oh yeah you are Oaxaquita' they would be making fun of us for speaking our language so I stopped speaking Mixteco for a while; around probably 6-7th grade.

The students discussed the shame they felt after being discriminated against by their peers for speaking their language. Similarly, in the following example Lupe shared her experience of the micro-aggressions she faced when she told her peers that she is Indigenous, and they commented on her speaking ability and appearance.

Oh, and where are you from?" And I told them "I am Indigenous." Then they say, "Oh but you are not like the rest." And I say "How?" they say, "but you speak Spanish well and you are different from the rest". And I say "The rest who? Why different?" And they say "No well from the rest of the people of Oaxaca. Well do you speak Mixtec?" and I said "No" so they said, "That's why". So, I told them that not all people from Oaxaca speak it. Then they said, "Oh you kind of look like you are from there, I can see it now, because of your height." I responded, "Well my dad is tall like you, and he has your color and he is from Oaxaca." And they said, "Oh your dad is not short, and he isn't dark?" I said, "No my dad is tall just like you and his color are not too dark and not too light." And they just looked at me and said, "Well it's because the people are very short, there are some that are very tiny." And I said, "Well yes but not everyone from there is like that.

Although Lupe wasn't perceived by her peers to be Indigenous since her skin tone was not 'dark' and she does not speak an Indigenous language, she expressed her peers were surprised to learn that she identified as such. It is also important to note that Lupe showed resistance and engaged with her peers questioning them and challenging the negative

stereotypes they held against Indigenous people. Thus, what the above passage serves to highlight, are the common misconceptions associated with Indigenous people; having a darker phenotype and short stature.

When race is not perceivable based on color, language and accent are another identity marker that can lead to discrimination. Students who are phenotypically darker, are shorter and/or speak an Indigenous language face the most bullying by other students because they are less likely to "pass" for mestizo. However, since most Mexicans share an Indigenous lineage, phenotype varies widely. Indigenous people who speak their native language and do not speak Spanish fluently are perceived by the larger dominant Mexican society as being illiterate. Facing such discrimination from their peers, Indigenous youth begin to feel shame and hide their identity by refusing to speak their language, and deny they have Indigenous heritage.

Summary of findings: High School to Community College

The section above illustrated the most salient findings about the challenges that the Nacavi students perceived as being the primary factors for deciding to attend a community college after high school. These barriers predominantly centered on being uninformed about college requirements and the application process, lack of academic preparation, and limited financial resources. The data also revealed how high school institutions can impose barriers on the advancement of these students by acting as gatekeepers in the following ways: 1. Tracking students into basic/remedial courses that do not meet college A-G requirements, 2. Not providing adequate information on the different pathways of higher education and eligibility, 3. Insufficient counseling on financial aid literacy and resources, which were also sensitive to the needs of undocumented students. In addition, even though Nacavi students

experienced overt racism from their peers they still maintained aspirations for educational advancement.

Support networks and programs in High School

  Nacavi Youth Group. The challenges discussed in the previous section demonstrated how high schools were not meeting the needs of Indigenous students to adequately prepare them for higher education. As a response to this institutional neglect, the student organizers involved with EPIC created the Nacavi youth group to provide culturally relevant support for Indigenous youth within the county. The founders of the Nacavi youth group felt that Indigenous students needed to have not just information on college preparation but also have a safe space where they could develop pride in their community and become leaders.

  The most prominent support that students mentioned that helped them on their way toward higher education was participation in the Nacavi youth group. Educational consciousness in post- secondary education is one of the four objectives the group was founded on. Specifically, regarding higher education, the Nacavi youth group provided various services scholarship opportunities, visits to universities, workshops on college applications and transferring to a university, writing personal statements and financial aid. The youth group coordinator also served as a mentor for students.

  College Preparation Workshops. As discussed in the previous findings section, the students that interviewed for this study shared feelings of isolation and being ostracized from the college going culture in their high schools, by not being part of the discourse on higher education especially those who had been in ELL courses in high school. Nacavi provided them with personalized information specific to their needs as Indigenous and undocumented students who had largely been ignored by the school system.

Miguel shared what he considered to be some of the most important ways Nacavi supported him:

> Well the truth everything I learned about college I learned in Nacavi. They helped me fill out applications and how to revise my scholarships and they also helped me with a lot of things like they helped me to continue to keep going to school and they also helped me learn more about my culture.

Lupe, a founding member of the group arrived to the United States at the age of ten, and was placed in ELL courses during junior high but was then placed in college prep English courses as a sophomore in high school. She acknowledges that she received more information about the college application process:

> I didn't know anything about college. I didn't know anything about scholarships, I didn't know what a personal statement was, what a resume was, I didn't know anything and in Nacavi well the director was the one who guided me because he would tell us "There are scholarships'. Because I was very shy, I wouldn't talk, I was very quiet, and he was the one who investigated at the school where I went. He was the person who took charge of the scholarships or how to guide the students. Then he would put us in contact with that person and it was like that how we started to understand. And if I had a question, I would always go to him and say, 'Oh but I don't understand this' and he would explain or ask.

Her response showed that she felt very uninformed and unfamiliar with the college application process. However, she established good rapport with the executive director who served as a mentor and guided her to the appropriate resources.

As the EPIC organization continued to grow, new staff were hired of which many had college degrees. Specifically, the last two Nacavi Youth coordinators of the group had bachelors degrees. This personal experience of attaining higher education served as a resource for the Nacavi youth helping to mentor them and being able to provide information on the college experience, (i.e. application process, financial aid, scholarship applications). Additionally administrators, professors and other professionals were often invited to give presentations on their various areas of expertise, which included workshops on: financial aid

for undocumented students, writing personal statements, knowing your rights, artists, and many career professionals who have shared their personal stories of their educational pathways.

Nacavi Scholarship. In an effort to provide some financial support for local students, the Nacavi scholarship fund was started in 2012 to motivate local underrepresented Indigenous students from Ventura County to continue their path towards higher education. Since federal and state financial resources for undocumented college students were very limited, it is even more so for students who are not AB540 eligible. Some of the distinguishing features of the scholarship included: coming from an Indigenous background and specifying that applicants do not have to be FAFSA eligible thus immigration status is not a factor in applying. Moreover, eligible students were encouraged to re-apply each year.

The award amounts ranged from $250 to $1,000 dollars and the awards were given out as checks and payable to students directly with the understanding that students had immediate material needs they can allocate their monies to (i.e. rent, transportation, clothes and other personal uses). Most students did not have bank accounts where school institutions can disburse their refunds, which saved students the effort of having to go through the bureaucratic process of waiting for the colleges or institutions to disburse funds. Lupe, for example used the scholarship award she received toward a down payment for a used car. Miguel was able to support himself and take some time off from work to focus on school.

Students who were awarded a scholarship were invited to attend a banquet held annually in the summer where certificates of recognition and checks were handed over to recipients. The banquet dinner was one of the most important events for the organization, it is designed to represent the Indigenous culture of the organization. The dinner is specially

catered to represent Oaxacan cuisine and the guests were entertained by traditional Oaxacan music and folkloric dances by local members of the community. The event hosted over 200 guests which included community members, teachers, professionals, school administrators, and artists. For many students this event was especially important, since they were encouraged to invite their families and are being recognized by their own communities. This was one of the few opportunities where undocumented Indigenous youth were eligible to receive scholarships and participate in uniquely Oaxacan cultural festivities with their families.

College Credit Courses. Through a partnership with a local university, students within Nacavi were given the opportunity to participate in a program that offered college credit courses with a focus on language and culture. The class was open to high school and community college students and is facilitated by graduate students at the EPIC offices. The course taught students about linguistics while also giving them the opportunity to conduct research within their own communities and to participate in fieldtrips to the host University. In previous courses the Nacavi youth group have worked with their instructors to develop a video documentary project, podcasts, poetry and creating materials in their own Indigenous languages, which they showcased during the end of semester at the University.

In most cases Indigenous students could speak their native language and the use was primarily oral since most languages do not have a formal written system. Through this program students were taught how to write their language using a universal phonetic alphabet and they also were able to interact with writers and written materials that academics were producing on language revitalization. Ashley expressed her appreciation for seeing a dictionary written in her native language: **"**I liked when they brought people in, speakers.

Yeah, that was kind of cool. Especially when they brought in a writer, he presented his work. He was working on a dictionary for Mixtec, that was pretty cool. I would've like more... writer presenters because the second year we were doing some writing too." Many students felt a sense of empowerment seeing their language represented within academia.

Marissa, who had taken the course as a high school student, specifically mentioned the program as one of the benefits that Nacavi offered: "through the program that they offered that really helped. And then going to and actually seeing a classroom, the college classroom and it was like, I feel like that prepared us into kind of getting to know a little bit of what was expected of a college student." The program's visits and coursework gave students an insight into the University experience. For students who had not been placed into college preparatory courses, this program also offered the engagement of an academically rigorous course.

Community Activism

In 2011 members of EPIC who were also high school students at the time felt that the organization also needed to look at specific issues of racism and discrimination that Indigenous Mexican students were facing in schools by students and school staff. Reflecting on their own experiences and those of their peers they all recounted stories in which Indigenous students were targets of bullying and were often subjected to being called "Oaxaquita" or "Indito". The students of the group at that time organized and approached local school districts directly to bring attention to the issues that Indigenous students were facing.

In May of 2012 EPIC and the Nacavi youth held a press conference where they invited journalists, reporters and other local agencies. They used this opportunity to publicly broadcast the "No me llames Oaxaquita" campaign where they sought to eliminate racial

epithets against Indigenous Mexicans. The campaign's name is literally translated in English to "Don't call me little Oaxacan". In addition to asking for the local school districts' cooperation in reducing racism by banning these terms, they also asked that the schools promote ethnic diversity and sensitivity training for staff and administrators while also asking that schools support a curriculum that teaches culturally sensitive material relating to diverse Mexican history.

After the success of the campaign, EPIC and especially Nacavi, received significant recognition. The collective interest of the group and their organizing gave the group the strength to raise their voice. Lupe commented how her perspective was shaped by the advocacy work after participating in Nacavi and the sense of responsibility and agency she felt after being one of the founding members of the group. She was also one of the few female students who was involved in the campaign:

> Well I learned to raise my voice. Because I feel that now I know how to defend myself better, I feel like I don't feel like I used to that I saw someone getting bullied and I would stay like quiet, now it's not like that now it's like 'It happened to me and I have to do something for them.' And I do it because it comes naturally to raise my voice and speak and say that it's not right.

Similarly, Maelo echoed Lupe's sentiments of self-advocacy learned through Nacavi:

> Just being able to organize myself. Be able to be an outspoken student having the courage speak out when I felt something was wrong. To not be afraid of it. That's probably the biggest thing they have given me. Just speaking out and not being afraid to be in the spotlight.

Roman also mentioned:

> The biggest lesson I took from Nacavi was that they show you how to be a leader in your community, they show you how to express your needs and ask for help. They showed me how to raise my voice when I need help and also to defend myself if it there is something that is not right. Also, to be an advocate for things that maybe I need or my community needs.

The common theme amongst the youth was a sense of empowerment through organizing and having the courage to be an advocate on behalf of their community. For students to become advocates indicates that they came to a place of realization where they understand that there are larger systemic issues of neglect that affect their communities and that they have a right to access resources and support. In doing so, they have disrupted the deficit narratives that were placed on them.

Identity

During the interviews when I asked the students what the most important things they learned from Nacavi, their answers centered around two main themes: being proud of their Indigenous heritage and developing a sense of family with the group. Because Indigenous pride was one of the group's main objectives, the group provided a safe space where students received validation and affirmation and their identities were nurtured.

Hiding Indigenous ethnicity or giving the sense of being mestizo as young students, was a common theme for the Nacavi students due to having negative experiences in school and with mestizo peers. However, after joining the group they were more open about sharing their ethnic identity in public. The work of Alberto (2017) and Kovats (2018) discussed this sense of fostering an Indigenous identity within the home and community but was restricted to these safe spaces to avoid discrimination. Kovats specifically discusses this concept as: "private Indigeneity as something private and not public…For many participants, deciding not to publicly disclose their Indigenous identity was a form of protection from potential teasing or rejection" (p. 84). Alberto (2017), described her experience of giving a presentation in class about her family's Zapotec heritage as 'coming out' and publicly claiming her native

heritage in front of her classmates and teacher. Indeed, many of the Nacavi students shared

that they kept their Indigenous identity to themselves.

In one example Claudia mentioned not disclosing her ethnicity when she was younger,

after being discriminated against by her classmates in elementary school and then learning to

embrace her Indigenous identity after joining the youth group:

> I feel like I'm even more proud. I identified way before, after fifth grade and before Nacavi, I always said that I was Mexican. And I never really said I'm Indigenous, never said Oaxaca. I don't even mention Oaxaca, so I was born in Sinaloa, but my parents are from Oaxaca. I didn't really grow up in Sinaloa, I grew up here. But I grew up with traditions and culture and language from Oaxaca. So, I'm like, I'm Oaxacan, I feel Oaxacan so I'm Indigenous, and I don't know, now I feel like when someone asks me where are you from? Like, we're from Oaxaca, not I am from Oaxaca but we're from Oaxaca. And it's like, I feel more comfortable saying it, it's not like I'm embarrassed or I'm hiding it anymore, I'm happy.

Initially, by identifying as Mexican and saying she was born in Sinaloa, she associated with a

state that is predominantly mestizo and purposely omitted that her parents are Zapotec from

Oaxaca. However, after joining Nacavi she included herself into a community emphasizing

"...we're from Oaxaca, not I am from Oaxaca…". More importantly Claudia mentioned that

she was happy and no longer felt shame or concealed her identity after gaining a sense of

empowerment through the group.

Ashley also described a similar experience of frustration as a child for speaking her

native language in school and being made fun of. As a child, she could only speak Mixteco

and recalled talking to her mother: "I would tell her 'I don't want to go. They make fun of me

because I speak Mixteco'. I was a little girl, I was in first or second, yeah." However when

asking her what she felt was one of the most important things she learned from the group she

enthusiastically responded: "How to not be embarrassed of being from Oaxaca or speaking

Mixtec and just put it out there. If they're telling you things, who cares. It's you, that's what

makes it you." Receiving validation through her participation in the youth group she was unafraid of publicly expressing her identity and recognized her Mixteco ethnicity is a part of who she is.

Interaction with peers in the youth group who shared similar backgrounds offered a validating environment in contrast to being a minority in school and concealing their identity. Antonio, who was born in Oaxaca and brought to the US as a pre-teen monolingual Mixteco speaker stated he never concealed his identity even though he received denigrating remarks from his peers. However, participating in Nacavi with other Indigenous students being proud of who they are served to affirm his identity:

> When I was in Santa Ana they would tell us "Oaxaca" or would call us "Oaxaqueño". I would say 'Well yes, what is wrong with being Oaxaqueño? It is my roots, it is the roots of my parents. I have always identified that way. I tell them that I am proud of being Mexican and being able to speak my dialect, Mixteco. Being in Nacavi I see other students that identify, they are not embarrassed about where they are from and their roots. It gives me pride to be Indigenous Oaxacan or from Guerrero. Or any other culture and to speak another language.

For other students, the group also served to learn about themselves and comprehend why they felt different from other students. In her interview Marissa remembered feeling a sense of difference from some of her friends but not really understanding why:

> …growing up I always heard my friends calling my parents language 'weird'. So, I knew that I was different, and I always questioned why my friends spoke a different language, than my parents. Why did they not speak that language? I always saw other people speak Mixteco and I kind of already knew you could tell they're from where I'm from. I really didn't know what Indigenous really meant, and so I started getting involved with Nacavi I started to learn more about where I came from. At first, I knew I was Mexican, but after learning a little bit more of where I came from, I now consider myself Mexican Indigenous.

Although Marissa could sense a cultural difference between her and her friends, she did not indicate a sense of shame but rather confusion about why her friends' families did not speak

an Indigenous language or why they called her language 'weird'. As a young child it was normal for her to see others speaking Mixteco and growing up around other people from her parents hometown who shared similar cultural traits. After joining Nacavi she began understanding that she and her family were ethnically different from the majority of her peers in school and began identifying as Mixteca.

Several students also expressed that the youth group also provided a sense of family. Although not all of the members were from the same ethnic group, Nacavi served as a space where students' private indigeneities could be expressed openly around other students who shared similar struggles and could speak about their experiences. For instance, Victoria shared: "I like that I can express myself, give my opinion and that they are like me, Indigenous, so they are like part of my family."

Maelo, one of the founding members of the group, discussed how he still came back to the group even after graduating from college to motivate younger Nacavi students.

> I think I got a lot of support with Nacavi. It's been like my family. My real family, because even when I was there in Washington and I come back, they always called me to speak, to reiterate my identity. You know you are Indigenous and you're in a university, and you are doing something good.

At the time when this dissertation was being written, Maelo was a graduate student who is still visited the group and talked about the importance of being Indigenous in higher education.

During my interview with Antonio, he brought up a having a sense of family in three different occasions while discussing Nacavi. As described above, his family first immigrated to Santa Ana, California where there were no other Mixtecos. This was a very isolating experience for him especially as he was a dominant Mixteco speaker while learning both Spanish and English in school. He recalled: "when I lived in Santa Ana they discriminated

against us because we were Oaxacan but what could I do? It is my roots. I came to the group and I said, "there so many", I felt like I was with family." Before entering high school, his family moved to Oxnard and started working in the fields and he began adult school at night. Joining Nacavi for him had been a support in reinforcing his identity. He continued: "to identify, because for me it has been like a family where I found my roots again after being in Santa Ana. Here, I found other students that identify as Indigenous like me. It has motivated me to see them progress in school and it keeps me going". After joining he also encouraged his younger siblings to attend the youth group: "The reason I brought them is because they have kind of stopped speaking Mixteco, I don't know why. I brought them to Nacavi so they could feel like they were with family, where there are more people who speak Mixteco and Spanish and English. So, they could see that there is nothing wrong with still speaking an Indigenous language." Realizing that he was not alone and that there was a larger community of other Indigenous students gave him the motivation to continue his education and reinforce his identity. Likewise, he also wanted his siblings to feel recognized and interact with others and feel a sense of extended family.

The students' responses indicate that their involvement with Nacavi went beyond being part of a youth group but gave them an overall feeling of kinship to each other and developed stronger ties to their community bolstering their sense of identity and connection to the group.

College Application Program Support

The college application process can be difficult and overwhelming. Although applying to community college is open to everyone and does not require submission of personal statements or taking standardized tests, the process can still be confusing and

intimidating for students who are unfamiliar with filling out lengthy applications. As

discussed earlier in my findings, being unfamiliar with the application process was a major

concern that students expressed. Specifically, as shared by Lupe, Ashley and Rosario, they

were given encouragement to go to college but not told 'how', indicating a need for practical

guidance.

Gandara, Driscoll & Orfields' (2012) study found that high school counselors did not

prioritize information on community colleges or discuss the transfer process. Instead,

students learned more about the community college process directly from representatives

themselves. The data collected from my interviews also supports their findings. The students

that I interviewed mentioned receiving direct help with filling out their community college

applications not from their high school counselors but through interventions from other

programs. Out of the fifteen students interviewed, fourteen stated that they received

personalized help with filling out their community college applications by attending a

workshop with college representatives or with a counselor through a college preparatory

program at their high schools, while one student said she filled out the application without

help.

Of the fourteen students who received direct help, two sought out support with the

registration process at their local community college while the remaining twelve received

assistance by their high schools through workshops that were facilitated by community

college representatives or were taken directly to the college campus and registered there.

Maelo stated not understanding the process and credited a local community college

representative with inciting his higher educational pathway:

> So, in my senior year, when we were graduating, I remember they invited Oxnard
> College, to our high school, they were talking about registering and going to

community college. So that's how I knew, so I signed up and I went to community college. If they (counselors) didn't, I wouldn't probably have gone to community college because I didn't know the process. I was very lost. So, they went helped us register. And I made an appointment to go do the test so that I had to get in, and that's how I went.

Ashley mentioned feeling unsure about where to get practical help with her college applications and readily volunteered when her high school teachers asked if anyone wanted to go to the local community college to sign up.

> We went on this Friday they were in the classes, the teachers, in the world civ class. I guess the school made the whole teachers during that period to ask their students who's going to... Because they had a field trip, they were like, "Who's going to community college?" And they're like, "Even if you're applying and going to a four year just go and fill that application for the community college, you never know." So, I was like, "Okay", I raised my hand and we took a bus and we went to the college and we took the assessment there, in that same day.

Since the students and their families were agricultural workers, some of the Nacavi students also received additional support through the migrant education program. This program was established in 1967 and was designed to provide support services for migrant students and their families. A child was considered "migrant" and eligible for three years of benefits if the guardian or student was a migratory worker in the agricultural, dairy, lumber, or fishing industries and whose family had moved during the past three years. The support programs vary from district to district and schools with larger migrant populations usually have more resources.

Students who had been involved in the migrant education program mentioned that they registered for community college because they had a special workshop where the coordinator invited all seniors and their parents to help them fill out their applications. Program representatives also had parents bring their tax documents to fill out their financial aid forms. Lupe shared her experience of receiving help for being in the migrant education program.

Yes and she, the migrant coordinator was helping us with all the paperwork and she was telling us that that if we wanted to bring her parents they could so there were some parents there too and they brought their tax information for financial aid. There was a meeting with parents, but it was only for the migrant education program students that was held at the computer lab after school.

Equally, Roman stated receiving help as a senior during afterschool workshops:

In the migrant program they gave workshops and that's how I could apply. There were community college students that would come to our school and present on financial aid. Since I was part of the program, they would invite us, and it was required that we go and that's how I applied, and they helped me with financial aid.

Yair also stated receiving most information about community college directly from the migrant program coordinator: "That's where I had more information about college, they would give us presentations and I signed up."

The migrant students received personalized support sensitive to the needs of their families by assisting them with the application and financial aid process. This culturally relevant resource provided direct attention and information that may not have been otherwise available to these students who were English Language Learners and therefore had not met their A-G requirements thus limiting their accessibility to other forms of college preparation and information.

In addition to the migrant program there were five other students who received help from the Early Academic Outreach Program (EAOP) program at their High School. The mission of the program was "To increase the number of educationally disadvantaged students who have the opportunity to achieve a post-secondary education and/or who are prepared to matriculate to a four-year college or university" (https://eaop.ucr.edu/wwa/mission). EAOP was a state-wide college preparatory program sponsored by the University of California. This program helped students at local schools with information on completing UC/CSU admission

requirements and applying for college and financial aid. The program offered academic enrichment, specialized advising assistance with college entry exams and college knowledge workshops. This program was the UC's largest academic preparation program and had offices located on every UC campus and served schools within their geographic locations.

Though the Nacavi students went to different high schools, the EAOP program was available throughout their district. The students discussed how the program offered close guidance throughout their years in school. Marissa participated for three years and received encouragement from the program representative to get involved in extra-curricular activities as it would look favorable on her college applications:

> Because I was involved in EAOPS since my sophomore year, that advisor of the program always talked to us about college and making sure that we always got involved with school clubs and sports because that eventually will get us into a college. So, she always made sure that we were involved with the school, like being in clubs or being in the sports. Like I also played softball in high school.

Also, as discussed in the literature review, taking into consideration the disproportionately low ratio of high school counselors to students, representatives of the EAOP provided more direct attention to students. During his interview, Herminio mentioned the benefit of having the program coordinator available after school to assist him with his financial aid applications: "When I was applying for financial aid and everything, there was a lady at the career center, she was working for a UC. Yeah, she would help us out with the financial aid. I remember I stayed a couple of times after school so she could help me fill out the FAFSA."

Benjamin credited his involvement in EAOP with being able to complete his high school graduation requirements and apply to community college:

> I was actually in a group of students that were set out to complete the A through G requirements and that was the program through UCSB. I believe my high school and

UCSB were linked together. We had a separate counselor that met with each student several times throughout the year. And she'd keep track of what classes we were taking, what classes we needed to take, whether we were on progress with the A through G requirements, and we'd be incentivized with a little pizza or something afterwards.

I think I got involved maybe my sophomore year through an invitation...there was a lady by the name of Mrs. Marcy that came into class. We started becoming closer, right, she was Indigenous too, right? So, I guess there was that extra connection.

Through the program Benjamin received consistent personalized advising that tracked his progress throughout his time in high school which served as a safeguard against him falling behind and kept him on top of meeting his A-G requirements. Additionally, his response also reflects that he established good rapport with the coordinator as she was also Indigenous, which can serve as a positive factor in creating more culturally relevant relationships between staff and students.

The Nacavi students involved in the EAOP program reported having received positive benefits and much needed assistance with their matriculation process and financial aid. However, this program was limited in its capacity to serve a large number of students, especially those who were having academic difficulty and were in remedial classes. Though some of the services were available to all students attending the high school such as workshops and presentations, specialized services like individual advising was based by cohorts and required eligibility. To be considered eligible for the cohort program, students had to have a minimum 3.0. g.p.a, maintain a minimum 3.00 "a–g" grade point average (GPA) and have no D or F grades in "A-G" coursework (https://eaop.ucr.edu/eligibility). Thus, while being a beneficial program that targeted 'educationally disadvantaged' students, the participation requirements for the program automatically excluded students that need the most

103

assistance: those with lower grade point averages, and those who were tracked into lower courses that did not fall within the A-G requirements.

In summary, the data showed that having workshop interventions where there were representatives directly assisting students fill out their college applications and financial aid forms while they are still in high school proved to be successful in offering a bridge directly to the higher education pipeline. Additionally, these interventions also helped to mitigate the concern over the application process, which was one of the salient themes that emerged as a challenge toward higher education.

Familial Encouragement

Despite certain deficit perspectives that Indigenous families do not value higher education or support their children's aspirations, the Nacavi students mentioned their families' being the primary motivation for pursuing college. Because the majority of the Nacavi students' parents had very little formal educational attainment and limited literacy skills, they could not provide extensive academic support not because they did not want to but because this system was unfamiliar to them. However, they did have high expectations of their children and contributed to encouragement in other equally important ways. Most all students mentioned that their parents provided moral, emotional, or attitudinal support in various ways.

Lupe shared that it was just expected for her: "In my family not going to college was not an option we had to go whether it was community college or university. I had to continue." While some students like Alba and Yair mentioned that their parents would tell them to: *'echarle ganas'* (give your best effort), and other students like Herminio stated that his parents emphasized education "so you can have better opportunities". Though this may seem like humble or simple advice, the students credited their parents for being their biggest

support. Their words conveyed an underlying expectation that served as meaningful motivation for their educational aspirations.

Rosario's comments exemplified receiving support from her parents and understanding that school was something they were unfamiliar with. "Because my parents themselves, they never got the full experience of what it meant to go to school, so the only way they could help me was just being able to provide the school materials I needed, or just giving me pep talks here and there. Of like, "You've got to go to school. But that was more than enough for me because I knew, that even if they wanted to, they couldn't help me much. It was never like, "Oh, can you help me with my homework?".

Claudia discussed how the idea of higher education was instilled in her as a child by both of her parents:

> I feel like growing up it was always my mom and my dad telling me, "You go to school, you need to become a doctor, you need to do all these things." But I felt like, when I was in high school, I'm like, oh, they're saying do this to that, but they don't really understand the effort, and the sacrifices that I need to make to be where they want me to be. So, there was a lot of encouragement, but not much guidance.

Although many parents were willing to help with their children's education many were unfamiliar with how to actually do so, thus making the case for school support intervention programs such as the ones mentioned in the previous section.

It is important to highlight that the educational system in the United States can be complex to navigate especially for immigrant parents whose first language is not English and even more so for those who are not fluent Spanish speakers. However, some of the Nacavi students gave examples of parental involvement in their education in addition to moral support. Some parents were also directly involved in their student's education by attending meetings at school, asking for resources and meeting with counselors. Marissa shares how her

father would go with her to 'Back to school nights' and meet her teachers: "When it was back to school night, even though it wasn't really necessary for my parents to go, I would always tell him, Oh Dad, I have a parent conference, let's go. You can meet my teachers. So, my dad would go to the back to school nights, get to know my teachers and I would always tell him, oh this is where this happens, show him around campus even though he didn't go to school. But I would let him know."

In one particular example, Maelo explained how his family was directly involved in his educational success. He recalled how his father was advised by a friend of his to stop migrating because he needed to think about his children's education. So instead of the whole family migrating each season his mother would stay locally while his father migrated, and he was able to complete his high school education in one school. Furthermore, he went on to discuss how he had struggled with having a speech impediment and put into speech therapy courses. However, when he reached high school his father demanded his counselors put him into college prep courses. "He just went one day, because we were all starting our high school and we had an orientation and at that time they were giving me slower classes and he demanded they give me higher classes and they did. I was a freshman, but I still had my speech therapy classes even though I was still in all college prep." Maelo graduated high school with honors in Math courses and eventually went on to graduate school.

In other instances, students shared that their parents did get involved but were not met in a welcoming school environment that provided translation or culturally relevant practices. For instance, parent teacher meetings were held during the day when parents were working meaning that they had to miss half a day of work which was challenging for those were hourly wage earners. In other cases, when parents who did go to meetings, students were expected to

translate for their parents. Miguel who was an English Learner at the time remembers how his father attended a meeting with his teacher and he had to translate: "When we would go to the meetings and my dad would ask, what did they say? And sometimes I didn't understand because they were difficult words and I didn't know them."

While the students perceived that their parents were simply providing moral support, the interview data revealed their parents were also instilling principles within their advice. Roman stated that his parents helped him morally during his education. However, his response showed that his parents provided more than just verbal incentive: "Primarily the moral support my parents gave me to motivate me to stick to continuing my studies. Even though I had to face obstacles like language, that I should never give up. They have shown me that this should be my principal goal in life." Victoria correspondingly stated: "My dad is always there to encourage me and tell me nothing is impossible. That he is giving me the opportunity that he didn't have to go to school. He always tells me school is first."

Marissa's father played an important role in her educational aspirations:

> My dad always instilled a lot of education to us ever since we started school. He would always tell us education is gonna get you far, you guys are gonna get a good job. And no, don't ever let anyone tell you different or tell you that you can't do it. So, the support system that my dad had, that my dad gave us helped me or encouraged me to do better.

While these students mentioned their parents encouraging them to continue with their education, their statements demonstrated that they are also imparting the value of perseverance and prioritizing education.

Some Nacavi students stated that being exposed to the arduous labor of working in the fields gave them the practical incentive to seek higher education. In some cases, the students discussed how their parents used fieldwork as a cautionary example of what their futures

could be like without an education. Ashley shared: "They're (parents) always motivating me like, "Go to school and stuff. Don't be like us." Especially when they work on windy days, like they worked yesterday and stuff or on rainy days. They're like, "Look at us. We don't want this for you, you know?". Lupe shared a similar example: "They always tell us we will end up in the fields and not have a lot of money. For example, they do not know how to read or write, and they will be like 'You have the opportunity, we brought you here for a reason so make it worth it.' There was no need for them to tell us why, just looking at the situation makes you want to do something different." Antonio also commented "What motivated me the most was my family, my parents because in the years that I was working in the fields, I understood how difficult it is and I wanted to have good job in the future and help my parents."

As seen through Antonio's comment, the first-hand experience of working in the fields gave the students a great amount of empathy toward their parents, and the labor-intensive work they have endured as farmworkers. Likewise, Herminio stated feeling an understanding of his parents: "I worked in the fields too, I was able to get a taste of what they pretty much did over 20 years. That was one thing that really helped me to see if I don't go to school."

Claudia explicitly discussed how her mother took her and other school aged youth to the fields as a practical lesson:

> During those times my mom was in charge of a "cuadrilla" so she would take me all the time. She kind of had more of a reason to take me because she was in charge, and she would gather the people to work with her. And I remember one summer she took two of my friends, myself, my older brother, my aunt who was I think a senior in high school, her friend, so we were all young people working in the fields. And my mom was always like, before getting into the fields, she's like, "I want you to work, and when you get out, tell me what you prefer, school or working here." So, we'd have long days and after I think a week, two didn't show up anymore. They were like, "I'm going go to school," and I think they signed up for summer classes.

Though some of the youth ended up leaving, Claudia continued to work with her mother

throughout the summer; She continued:

> I think I got used to it but, I knew that I didn't want to stay there. So, it was just
> horrible because it was the summer, so there's higher temperatures. I lost weight but it
> was like, I would always get home really tired, I didn't want to do anything, and my
> younger siblings would stay home. And so, we'd come home and there'd be like dirty
> dishes, and we had to clean. So, I understood the feelings that my mom came with, and
> to a house that wasn't clean, or stuff like that. So, that's when I kind of I understood
> her a lot more.

After her experience of working alongside her mother in the fields, Claudia's response

illustrates acquiring a deeper understanding of the different roles parents still have to fulfill

after work such as caring for children, cooking and taking care of the home despite having

worked long hours in a physically strenuous job with little pay. Claudia went on to comment

that she aspires to do well in college to have a better future and be financially stable and

support her mother.

The sentiment of students wanting to go to college and have a better job to help their

parents was a common theme throughout the interviews. Herminio commented: "I always

kept my parents in the back of my head, all the struggle they've been through. At times I did

kind of feel like I wanted to give up, but since I knew that I wanted to help out my parents, I

feel like that's what kept me going, and hearing all the struggles that my parents have been

through working in the fields." Equally, Roman mentioned his family's effort: "I want to

repay my parents for all their effort, they have worked in the fields their whole lives and

sacrificed so that we could be in school…I want to improve my family's life." Yair

commented his mom was his prime motivation to pursue college: "It was my mom's sacrifice,

I saw how she sacrificed for us and no one has yet given her that joy, (of going to college),

and although she is not here with me, it's a way of giving her back all that she did for us." In

a parallel response Victoria stated: "I see my parents that their backs hurt everyday, that they work like nine hours a day and I made me reflect and see I don't want that, I want to help them and that is why I make an effort." The common sentiment within the data emphasized how students want to compensate their parents for their hard work by pursuing higher education. In essence the students' responses go beyond feeling empathy towards their parents to a sense of compassion in wanting to alleviate their years of hard labor by being successful.

Community College Experience

This section will describe the experiences of continuing community college experiences for Nacavi students following a similar outline to the previous section. I will discuss what they perceived as being their biggest challenges followed by the supports they received. I will also review the process for attending community college within the local district.

The previous section exemplified the most salient themes for the Nacavi students who chose to attend a community college upon graduating from high school. Some of the common challenges were due to being unfamiliar with the university application process, being/feeling academically underprepared, and financial apprehension. However, despite these concerns, all of the students stated that they aspired to enroll at a community college with the goal of transferring to a university and obtaining a bachelor's degree.

The Matriculation Process

To understand the high school to community college pipeline, it is necessary to discuss the matriculation process. The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (2012) stated the goals of matriculation are to ensure that all students complete their college courses,

persist through the next academic term, and achieve their educational objectives through: Admission, Orientation, Assessment and Testing, Counseling and Student Follow-up. It should also be noted that the matriculation process varied by campus and districts across the state. The table below illustrates the matriculation process for the local community college district that the Nacavi students attended as posted on the college website.

Table 2

The matriculation process for the local community college

Step 1:	The first step is the application for admission
Step 2:	Apply for financial aid through FAFSA or AB540/Dream Act
Step 3:	Set up an online school portal account
Step 4:	Complete the English and Math Placement recommendation
Step 5:	Complete a student orientation online
Step 6:	Develop a student educational plan which requires that students use a specialized software program designed to track degree progress and allow students to assess their transfer course advancement.
Step 7:	Submit official high school transcripts and any advanced placement (AP) test results to the college.
Step 8:	Register and pay for courses online.
Step 9:	Follow up with a counselor to develop a student education plan.

Source: Ventura Community College District

As seen above, matriculating has multiple steps and is very involved. Each step has its own process for completion which can be time consuming. For example, applying for financial aid in itself, is a tedious process that can be very confusing for students who are filling it out for the first time as it requires confidential documents such as parental tax information and other income verification. To complete step four, students are no longer required to take standardized assessment tests for placement in accordance with AB705 as of

April 2019. However, they do have to meet with counselors who will help them determine appropriate course placement based on the highest levels of English and Math taken and grades received in high school. Once students are ready to register it should be noted that dates for students differ as continuing students have earlier registration dates giving them an advantage over newer students. As a consequence, there are some courses that may already be full by the time new students have the opportunity to register. Course registration is essential to the timely transfer process. However, if a required course is not available, it becomes difficult for students to move through the necessary course sequence. As a result, students may be placed on long waitlists or they may have to take classes they do not need or desire to maintain the minimum level of units to still be able to receive financial aid.

The community college district had posted this process on their website to make the process clearer and understandable. However, in order to complete this extensive process online, it was assumed that the student had accessibility to the technology to finish it. Not all students were equipped with access to a computer and reliable internet which can affect their enrollment.

Educational Course Planning and Counseling. After completion of the matriculation process, students must follow an educational plan that would make them eligible to transfer to a CSU or a UC, similar to the A-G coursework completed in High School. To transfer, students needed to complete sixty college transferable units within a general education plan consisting of English, Mathematics, electives, and major preparation pre-requisites. The Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum, (IGETC), was recommended for students who want to apply to both UC and CSU campuses. For students who were planning to transfer to a CSU, they must follow the California State University

General Education (CSUGE) Plan. This plan does not require a language other than English however the IGETC does.

In relation to student counseling, Melguizo, Hagedorn, and Cypers (2008) conducted a study within the Los Angeles Community College District, which found that the counselor to student ratio was about 2000. Thus not all students can be served in a timely manner. Not having consistent counseling can negatively affect a student's trajectory causing them to stay much longer in community college than expected, leading to the "cooling out" (Burton, 106) effect.

Maelo attended community college for six years. This length of time was due to various reasons, such as helping his family, working full time and changing his major. However he mentioned focusing on school once he met a counselor with whom he established good rapport.

> I was having a lot of problems understanding the system until I met my martial arts teacher who was also a counselor and that's when she really started like, "You need to transfer." And I like, because in my mind, all that time was like, Oxnard college was it. So that's when she started like, "This is another path, you can transfer." That's when I really started, really thinking, taking all the classes that I really need to transfer and boosting up my GPA to transfer. So she kind of told me, I took so many classes that a lot of them weren't even transferring for the major that I want to. So basically, I had to restart all over to get all the science that I needed to do what I wanted to. So that's kind of like, set me back to another two years.

His response clearly stated a lack of understanding of the transfer system and the planning for the courses needed to transfer. He also discussed that one of the reasons he managed to transfer was due to taking a martial arts class with an instructor who also happened to be a counselor on campus. Fortunately, he found effective counseling and persisted in transferring although he had already taken a number of courses that were not transferable for his intended major.

Ashley discussed her experience in a similar situation once she was ready to transfer. Ashley was referred to the transfer center on campus. However since there was only one person, she had to make appointments far in advance:

> I went to my counselor she was like, "Okay, are you ready to transfer now?", and she helped me. She's like, "Make an appointment with this person, do this and do that." And I was like, "Okay." But what I didn't like was that as a transferring center there was only one, person and it was just her for the whole transfer center. And you had to make appointments way back, two months before. I would even tell her, "Can you help me?" She's like, "No, because... " She would help me, just a little bit, during the application, but I couldn't go and talk to her because she had other appointments. It was just her. I was just hoping there was more. Because I didn't know, I thought at first that you apply to the application for school and that's it and then they tell you if you come or not. But I didn't know you had to send the transcript and follow steps, follow up and stuff. And I didn't know that. And I tried to make an appointment with her and stuff.

In another example of lacking proper counseling, Lupe described her frustration with being told contradictory information by counselors, which led to delays in completing the coursework for her major:

> Well, I had to figure it out by myself that's why it took so long. Because sometimes I would go see a counselor and they would ask me why did you take this class? You don't need this for your major. Then I would say well I don't know, that's what they told me to take. Then I would go see another counselor and they would say yes you need it. You need to do this to transfer. It is really confusing. They were telling me different things it was frustrating.

In addition to receiving improper guidance, being a first-generation student was also another risk factor in transferring due to not having the same social capital that students whose parents have gone to college have available. When discussing her experience in enrolling for courses in community college, Lupe addressed being the first in her family to attend college and not understanding the enrollment process or the terminology being used by the counselors:

Yes because, like in my family no one ever has done what I had to do. When I would go with the counselor, I would tell them I didn't know what to do. When I would talk to the counselors and I told them that I didn't know what classes to take they would explain to me as if I already understood them. I had no idea, I didn't know. It was very frustrating when I first started college, they would make my ed plan and it will tell me oh you have to take these classes and then when I would tell them that I really didn't understand what they're saying, it was very embarrassing because they didn't really explain to me. When I told him that I didn't understand the process and the words that they were using. I felt like most of the students they kind of knew but I didn't know. I have never seen this in my family.

As the oldest, Lupe was the first in her family to navigate the community college system as an English Language Learner. Thus, her experience was consistent with Callahan's (2005) study, which found that students in ELL courses were considered remedial and unlikely to have been exposed to academic rigor and college planning. This may have caused her to be unfamiliar with language and concepts related to higher education.

English Course Placement as a Barrier

Lupe's challenges also highlight a significant barrier that Nacavi students faced. It is estimated that 70% to 90% of community college students in California are in need of developmental courses before reaching college-level courses (California Community Colleges Student Success Task Force, 2011). As many of them were English Language Learners who were not enrolled in college preparatory courses in high school, they had to be placed in remediation courses after their college assessment. These courses were non-transferable classes they had to pass before being eligible to enroll in a college credit course. Thus, they were already at a disadvantage even before getting to campus. Research has shown that college preparatory courses are vital in the academic pipeline for Xicanx transfer students (Fry, 2004; Solorzano, Villalpando & Oseguera, 2008) to develop the academic skills that will make them competitive in college. Particularly, seven students, Miguel, Herminio,

Roman, Yair, Antonio, Maelo, and Lupe all mentioned having to take at least one English

remediation courses in their first semester of community college.

As previously discussed, the placement of English language development courses in

high school does not adequately prepare students with the critical language and writing skills

necessary to be successful in college. Once in their college prep classes ELL students are the

most negatively impacted by not having been exposed to the necessary language arts skills.

Antonio purposefully chose to take several English remediation courses since he had

previously finished his GED in adult school and knew he needed to work on developing his

English writing skills. Similarly, Miguel was in community college for three years although

he was a full-time student because he had to take the ELL course sequence.

> I was there for three years. The first year was just ELD classes, I had to take them all
> over again and a Writing B class and then the class that I did not like was Reading 1. I
> did not have to take it, but I didn't know that at the moment. Later I found out that it
> doesn't transfer. It is important to read in academia but for me it was more important
> to learn how to write.

In another example Yair and Miguel specifically mentioned having difficulties with

writing at basic levels, such as with grammar and punctuation. Although Yair took a

remediation course, he still felt that he needed to focus more on improving his writing:

> I passed my English courses but have not been practicing writing constantly. If I write
> for a history course, it isn't like an English one. I feel that I still need to take another
> English class to go over some things like essay writing. I still have to go to the writing
> center when I turn in a paper.

Likewise, Miguel, discussed struggling in his classes and the strategies that he used to

improve his writing. "I always went to the writing and Math centers. I even made friends at

the writing center because I would go so much and see them every day. I would also go to see

my professors during office hours." Despite not receiving advanced writing instruction in high school, they pursued writing resources and support services on their campus.

As evidenced by the following statements some students had not written extensive essays or research papers in high school and then struggled with this in college. Victoria stated: "In high school we never learned how to write a research paper well. They would assign it to us but never really showed us the correct way to do it. Now, it is something new for me. It is what brought my grade down a bit." Claudia also echoed the same concern about writing when asked what her most difficult classes were. She mentioned how she also struggled with research papers but received help from the writing center on campus:

> Both English classes, because when I was in high school, I think the longest essay I wrote was probably like two pages. Yes, so when I was in my English class, my first the 101, I had to write a research paper. I was like, oh my gosh, where do I start with the research, and then the paper had to be 10 pages long. So, I was like, where do I go? Where do I start? I was lost. But I got to A in her class.

Although Victoria and Claudia were not in ELL classes in high school and had received good grades in their college prep English courses, they both mentioned not having been required to write extensive research papers, which affected them later during their community college courses.

It has become evident that there are structural flaws within ELL course studies that need to be redesigned across the colleges. The interview data revealed that students in both ELL courses and those in college preparatory courses faced difficulty with college level writing and English courses. Students whose first language was not English and the 1.5 generation who come from minority backgrounds were not being adequately serviced within their instruction. High schools need to be held accountable and to work with community

colleges to provide adequate and rigorous coursework that prepares students for the demand

of college.

Students Financial Barriers

Institutional Aid & Unmet Need. As referenced in the previous section one of the most salient reasons for students choosing to attend community college was due to financial concerns. Specifically, all students benefitted from the California Promise grant that waives tuition. However, despite having free tuition, high need students still struggle to cover their full college related expenses. They still have to pay for their living expenses out of pocket to cover their unmet need. This refers to the amount between college costs and what students have to pay after they have been given aid. California does offer some state aid for undocumented students such as Cal Grants, however this aid is still limited. At a four-year university, financial aid award offers take into account all estimated costs of attendance that include tuition and fees, housing, books & materials as well as personal expenses. However, undocumented students; are excluded from federal aid such as the Pell Grant. Although full financial assistance is not generally awarded through state and federal grants, qualifying students are eligible to cover their costs through loans and scholarships. These options are restricted for undocumented students since there is no federal loan eligibility for undocumented students. Scholarships are also restrictive for undocumented students, as many require social security numbers and FAFSA documentation, which are only applicable for citizens or residents (Teranishi et al., 2015). Consequently, for low-income students in community college to cover their educational and living expenses they must have employment. **Part-time vs. Full time attendance.** Of the fifteen Nacavi students interviewed, thirteen stated attending school full time and two attended part-time. However the students reported that there was some fluctuation due to their work schedules. Despite most of the students attending full time, they all reported working at least 20 hours part-time and nine of them reported working at least thirty hours a week. Of all the participants there

were five students: Maelo, Roman, Yair, Victoria and Lupe, who were mostly working full-time during community college.

Research has shown that part-time attendance is a risk factor since it prolongs the time to transfer and is a contributing factor in student stop- out (Fry, 2002). Stop-out is a term that is used to refer to student's irregular attendance or non-attendance patterns in higher education (Goldrick-Rab, 2007). Additionally, for students who come from low-income households their families are often unable to help them pay their college expenses. It is also very common for students to help their families financially. My findings corroborate Fry's research, which also found that students from immigrant households worked full-time and attended school part-time to contribute to their households.

Another significant barrier for Xicanx students who work full-time was facing a restricted schedule that will usually lead to students attending school in the evening, affecting course availability and access to student services. In their study Ornelas & Solorzano (2004) found that there were limited course offerings in the evenings, which affected students' opportunities to take required courses needed for completion of their educational plan. Furthermore, their study also found that most student support services held traditional business hours during the day when evening students were working, thus it was difficult for evening students to access campus resources and support in the evening.

Maelo's experience exemplified these barriers; he was working more than part-time while trying to take courses in the evening and finding that his options were limited:

> I probably worked almost more than half time. Yeah, and I would try to take a lot of classes at night. And the problem with that was there wasn't really a lot of options to take at night. Because I had to cover a lot of my expenses, like my parents couldn't afford to cover my car, my insurance, and all that.

During the interview he indicated that his time in community college was prolonged due to his demanding work schedule. Later, he was able to find other full-time work with the benefit of a flexible schedule. Despite working almost full-time during his six years at community college, Maelo was able to transfer to a four-year school.

While in community college, Roman had full-time enrollment while also working full-time at his family's small flower business. Because he was taking a full courseload each semester during his three years, his parents prioritized his education and he had the opportunity to have a flexible schedule. When I asked why he took such a large number of units he responded:

> I felt a lot of pressure that I had to finish as soon as possible because my goal was to be at a university. Another factor was that I can't get a regular job because I don't have a social security number so my only option is to go to the field but in the field you can't go in at whatever time you want. In the field there is a begin time and end time and there are not a lot of farms that offer the opportunity for you to go at the time you want. So, I didn't have another option than to be full-time and I had to take advantage of my time.

There was a definite sense of urgency to transfer since for him transferring and graduating sooner meant he could get a better paying full-time job. Although he attended school full-time it took him three years to transfer. He took remediation courses as he was an ELL student and took a few non-credit courses before he was able to take a transferable English course. It is important to indicate that he was fortunate in having an employment opportunity where he did not have to work in the fields, which would have made it extremely difficult for him to transfer.

At the time of the interview, Victoria had just started her second semester of community college and had been working full-time while also taking a full courseload. Similar to Roman she also expressed a sense of feeling pressure to attend school full-time so

she can transfer as soon as possible. She was working at a fish packing plant where she was working from 11:00 am to 8:00 pm four days a week and had two days free during the week where she would go to school. Her parents were fieldworkers and she mentioned that it was hard for her to see her parents work so many hours in the field and wanted to help them financially. She stated that she gave her parents half of her wages to contribute to their household, and the rest went toward her personal needs and school materials. However, balancing both work and school was difficult: "It was hard, I would stay up late studying, I thought I was going to get bad grades and almost wanted to leave but I got three B's." Victoria went on to mention that she intended to look for other employment once the semester was over to have more time to focus on her studies.

Lupe was the eldest of five children and had worked consistently since she was in high school to help support her family. When she started college, she was enrolled full-time, she worked during the day and took courses in the evenings. However, she had the added difficulty of depending on public transportation to navigate going between work, school and home. Lupe's career goals were to become a nurse, which requires several math and science pre-requisites before transferring to a four-year college. It is important to point out that nursing is a competitive major which includes several advanced Math and Science courses that are sometimes only offered once a semester and are scheduled during the day. In addition, many of these courses have a separate laboratory component that are also usually scheduled during the day. Thus, enrolling in these courses is difficult for students who work full-time during the week and have limited availability. Lupe has been attending community college on and off for five years. Although she stated she felt her courses were easy she acknowledges that working full-time has definitely impacted her grades and degree

123

completion. "My classes have been easy, but I don't feel good about math and science because I feel I could've done better. I needed more time to be able to study but because of work I wasn't able to." At the time of this interview she was still taking courses.

Unfortunately, not all students have the possibility for flexible full-time employment. For Dreamers, specifically those who do not qualify for DACA, it is difficult to find these opportunities, which can put them in precarious situations. Yair, enrolled in college with the intent to transfer and study child development to work with children. However, unlike the other Nacavi students, he lived with a sister since his parents returned to Mexico. He has worked full-time since high school to pay for his own expenses and supported his mother in Mexico. Since starting community college he had worked full-time in a number of different jobs but eventually worked in the fields for almost two years before finding work in a restaurant.

In addition to coming from low-income households, most of the students had very limited employment opportunities since they were undocumented. The kinds of jobs that are available to undocumented students often involve full-time work and leave them with very restricted schedule making it very difficult for these students to have a school-work balance.

Persistence & Stop Outs

Of the 15 Nacavi students that enrolled for community college two students, Lupe and Yair exhibited stop-out patterns. At the time of their interviews Yair and Lupe had been attending community college on and off for five years since graduating from high school. However, despite this they did have plans to transfer in the future and Lupe was about three courses away from transferring. In another case, Alba completed her Associates Degree but did not continue her education at a university. All three students shared the following

characteristics: they were independent students who were not living with their parents, were undocumented and showed extreme financial hardship that affected their college enrollment.

Parents' financial situation makes an enormous impact on a student's educational attainment especially when they are undocumented. A study conducted by Terriquez (2015) showed that children of immigrants stop out at higher rates due to various factors, which include the tendency to assume more family financial responsibilities than their peers. They also added that students having parents who are undocumented "may encounter a host of financial barriers that other students do not face in paying for school. To begin with, they often come from poor families, partially because many of their undocumented parents work in very low-wage and unstable jobs" (p. 135). Consequently, many students find themselves needing to supplement their household income. Also, in addition to financial responsibilities many students are also caretakers for younger siblings and/or help with cooking and housekeeping chores as parents are working.

In accordance with having a sense of duty towards familial obligations, Lupe explains how being the oldest sister in her family also brought its own set of responsibilities at home:

> It's different for every person but in our culture, they don't understand that for example what it means if you're the oldest than if you were the youngest. Also, my mom doesn't drive, and I feel like when you're the oldest you have more responsibilities at home. It's different than someone that's just Mexican you have to not only look out for yourself but in my case I have responsibilities with my mom and my siblings since I was the only one that drives and has a car. But I work too, and you don't see a lot of students that do that, some just work but we still have so many things at home that we have to deal with.

Facing extreme hardship, Lupe prioritized working to help support her family and worked full-time while going to school part-time. After almost two years after beginning community college, Lupe's younger sister Ashley, moved to Fresno with relatives and began attending

CSU Fresno while also working about 30 hours a week. During this time her mother began having health concerns and needed to have surgery which complicated their financial situation even further. With rising costs of living in the local county and difficulty securing affordable housing, Lupe's mother moved their family to Fresno. At this point she stopped-out for almost a year and a half and worked two jobs. Later, she decided to come back to Ventura County to get her associates degree and transfer. When asked about where she is planning on transferring for her bachelor's degree she commented on the challenges she faced financially, and deciding on whether or not to move in with her parents. As a Dreamer she felt she would not get her tuition and living expenses covered. "It's too expensive, first off all when you don't have FAFSA with the Dream Act you get less than half what they get. Basically, that only helps you pay some of your classes, the tuition. I would have to work full-time." She weighted the costs of saving on some living expenses while being able to balance familial responsibilities while expecting to work full-time:

> I want to go to Fresno State but then I don't want to go because my parents are there and if I go it will be hard for me and I'll be getting all these responsibilities again. It's going to be harder for me to concentrate and do what I have to do because I have to think about others and not to be selfish but, it's a lot…and my mom would always ask me why don't you come? If I lived with my parents it will be easier because then I wouldn't have to pay so much rent, it wouldn't be a big amount and I wouldn't have to buy food. Most of the time I don't cook, and takeout is expensive so I know that if I live with my parents it will be easier but then I would have to deal with all these responsibilities.

Although she knows that living at home with her parents would allow her to save some expenses on rent and meals, she would still have to work, have time to study, and be expected to fulfill family obligations. It is also evident from her response that she feels a sense of guilt for not living with her family to evade these expectations. As a student in community college

and a Dreamer, the funding that she received was only enough to cover her tuition but not

enough for her to cover her living expenses.

As discussed in the last section,since Yair did not have the support of his parents at

home, he lived with an older sister and her family while working full-time and going to school

part-time. He had attended a local community college for almost two years before he stopped

out. Yair shared that he stopped going to school since he was facing difficulties and did not

have support:

> I had a lot of problems at home. I didn't have financial help and I had to work. I had
> expenses in school and problems with my car. I had to pay gas, rent and I was
> independent…and with school I didn't know how to manage it. It isn't like I had my
> parents helping me, I don't even mean financially necessarily, but just someone there.
> I have my brothers and sister, but it is not the same as a parent.

Once Yair stopped-out he needed to find full-time employment and having limited

employment options he began working in the fields. Due to the nature of the work and hours

he found himself unable to continue going to school. His response also showed how not

living with or having the support from a parent negatively impacted his financial situation and

housing. Also not having the personal parental encouragement led him to become

disillusioned. His situation demonstrates what Terriquez (2015) asserted regarding the needs

of undocumented students tending to be extreme due to their precarious legal status. Similar

to Lupe's situation, receiving free tuition was not enough to cover living expenses leaving

them with very little financial recourse.

Alba's situation was unique in that she finished her Associates degree with a 3.8 GPA

and was ready to transfer. She had planned on majoring in Spanish with the goal of becoming

a high school teacher and helping incoming undocumented students who were also English

Language Learners like she had been. However, she decided to take a break after graduating

from community college and at the time of the interview, which was a year after she had finished her coursework, she had not returned to school. When asked if she planned on returning, she stated: "Yes, but I am afraid of what's out there. It's like being afraid of the unknown." She stated that since she is a Dreamer the idea of financing her education made her anxious: "I don't want any debt, I want to avoid that at all costs because I don't like debts and even more so if it had to do with my education, I would be stressed out if I had owed anything." During the interview she became very serious and mentioned that she feels shame about not continuing her education but is very worried about not receiving enough financial aid to cover her tuition and she would still have to work. While in community college her living situation also changed. At the time this dissertation was being written, she had gotten married and moved out of her parent's house and was currently living with her partner in a studio apartment while working full-time in a fast- food restaurant.

For these three students, being undocumented themselves and having undocumented parents played a significant role in their educational persistence. As their families were undocumented, they provided significant supplemental support in addition to needing to work and pay for their own living expenses. While at a community college they had the benefit of not paying tuition through the California Promise, and the opportunity of being able to attend school part-time with courses in the evening while working full-time. However, this would not be the case once they transfer to a university where tuition would not be waived. They would only qualify for state grants and would also be excluded from federal Pell grants and loans. Also, for them to receive their maximum amount of financial aid award students must be enrolled full-time restricting them from having full-time employment outside of school.

A LatCrit framework takes into account how student's Indigenous immigration status, language, phenotype affected the Nacavi student's educational experiences. For instance, many of the Nacavi students were undocumented. However my findings show that in high school they received very little information specific to the challenges they would face in within higher education due to their legal status. There was even less mention regarding the resources available to them to help alleviate these challenges especially as it pertains to financial aid. Due to a lack of familiarity with supports for undocumented students and financial concern, Nacavi students who might have been eligible to attend a university chose to attend community college as the most cost-effective option.

This section illustrates the financially vulnerable positions of low-income and undocumented students in the California Community Colleges. While this is the most cost-efficient option for students there is still a wide gap between the financial assistance Nacavi students are eligible for and the unmet need necessary to cover their living expenses leaving them with little recourse than to work to supplement their household incomes.

Identities in Community College

As many of the Nacavi students worked and attended school in the evenings, their participation in the youth group decreased while in community college to accommodate to their class schedules and outside responsibilities. Also, interestingly I noticed that in general most Nacavi students did not refer to their Indigenous identity as frequently when discussing their community college experience as they did when they were in high school. There were a few noticeable exceptions, however, when some students would go on to become involved with clubs based on Indigenous identity.

Once students enrolled in community college, the identity that became more prominent was being undocumented. Students became increasingly conscious of their legal status as this restricted accessibility in various forms of funding and programs. This finding is in accordance with Gonzales' (2011), study which found that after high school, students move from the inclusivity of the K-12 system where they share many of the same legal rights as their US peers, towards a 'transition to illegality' where they essentially leave the safety of the school system as children and face legal challenges after they turn 18 due to their status. Gonzales explicitly stated:

> Undocumented children move from protected to unprotected, from inclusion to exclusion, from de facto legal to illegal. In the process, they must learn to be illegal, a transformation that involves the almost complete retooling of daily routines, survival skills, aspirations, and social patterns. (p. 602)

Thus, as students aged out of the public-school system, they became less protected and became more legally vulnerable as adults.

The Nacavi students were open about their status to varying degrees and some naturally felt high apprehension about disclosing their status. Due to the stigma of being undocumented, some students and their families concealed their legal status and did not speak of it openly even within their own families. For students who are Indigenous and undocumented, the social stigma was double. Claudia discussed how she indirectly found out as a child that these two identities were meant to be kept as covert:

> I didn't know, maybe until I was in fifth grade was when I found out that I was undocumented, that I wasn't born here, that my parents were from Oaxaca, and that we spoke another language, that's when I kind of started figuring things out. And I don't know why, or maybe I know why they hid it from us, or I feel like they wanted to avoid a lot of discrimination against us, and so we were very like, under the radar about that. So, it wasn't openly talked about, at home either.

Rosario spoke candidly about being careful with whom she chose to disclose her various identities. She insinuated that she did not fully divulge she was Mixteco since other people would assume that she was undocumented, which hindered her from looking for support or resources:

> With the whole being undocumented, I mentioned here and there to students that I spoke Mixteco, and then relatively, as it went on, it was just like another thing people knew about me. The identity that I held back the most was being undocumented. It was just very hard for me, just to even want to ask questions. Then, me not liking to ask questions didn't help me at all. I tried to find with what I could, but it was the very broad stuff. I couldn't apply for loans, because in order to apply for loans, you needed to be documented. Then, you can't ask for FAFSA, because the only people who have citizenship can apply for FAFSA. I didn't feel comfortable enough to be like, "I don't know how to go about this." Not only because, this is my first time ever, because I'm first-generation, but also because how can I feel comfortable? If I can't feel comfortable asking you about first-generation questions students ask, but also be comfortable enough to say, "I don't have citizenship."

Due to her status, she hesitated seeking help from school personnel instead, she later discussed that she felt more inclined to speak with other undocumented peers about their experiences and other community members who could offer her support and then proceed to seek out help on campus based on recommendations of staff who were sensitive to the needs of Dreamers.

In contrast to Rosario's experience, Marissa shared how her older sister helped her navigate the higher education pipeline. Their household was mixed status where her older sister who had attended college is documented. When asked if her older sister helped her or gave her advice when she was getting ready to attend school she answered:

> Yeah, she did. I would always talk to her about school and then she would always tell me to uhmm….because she is not undocumented and I am, she would always tell me, make sure you know that you're getting information on what can affect you because you're not from here. She would always tell me, "Oh make sure you go here because you do need a fee waiver and you don't apply to FAFSA, you apply to the dream act."

So, it's different, she would always let me know the differences of being undocumented since she's already been in that process.

Though her sister helped her understand the financial aid process by offering guidance, they still had very different college experiences since Marissa had much more restricted access to funding sources and program eligibility.

Despite the stigma attached with being undocumented, some students were more open about their status since they had been politically active within Nacavi and carried this activism with them into their education. Observing the need for a safe space, Miguel and Benjamin created the first Dreamers club at their community college to give undocumented students a voice. Antonio later joined the club as well. During their beginning, Miguel mentioned how he organized with other students to meet with the College's administration to ask for a Dreamers center:

> We would go speak to the superintendent to establish a center for undocumented students and had said yes. He even showed us the office, and in the end, he didn't do it and we were all very upset because we would always go talk to him about our experiences. We had a lot of meetings with the president of the college and the superintendent where we would tell our stories about being undocumented. The club would always meet even though we didn't have a space, we even collaborated with other clubs to organize together.

Benjamin, who had been an active student organizer in Nacavi, also became involved in various groups and organizations on campus:

> I was a big fan of the Geography and the Dreamers Club and so my circle basically was geography students and students who were active in advocating for undocumented students on campus. I was also involved with Assistant Student Government, the student body. You know, they'd asked for volunteers for tours to talk to incoming students and I would always go.

Both of these students had embraced their undocumented identity while in high school and felt responsible for raising awareness of their situation and not just forming a club with other

students, but through organizing they asked for accountability from the college for the establishment of a Dreamers center. Although Miguel mentions being upset about the center not being created when promised, it would eventually become incorporated a few years later.

As evidenced by the interview data, once students had started their higher education journey, the Nacavi students had embraced their indigeneity and openly identified as being Mixteco, Zapoteco or Purepecha. Some students also sought out spaces on campus to connect with other Indigenous students.

Antonio discussed going to MEChA, (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán), meetings. This was a Chicanx-based political organization, with clubs throughout the US. However, after the majority of club members transferred, there had not been regular meetings. During one of his math courses Antonio was encouraged by one of his professors to start an Indigenous club on campus. This professor's background was similar to the Nacavi students. He had grown up in Ventura County and was also from Mixteco background, although he did not speak the language, he understood it and his family still spoke it. Antonio established great rapport with him and at his suggestion made an effort to create a club similar to Nacavi on campus. His professor volunteered to become the club advisor and to help recruit students. At the time of the interview Antonio had invited his fellow Nacavi peer, Estrella, and was in the process of trying to enlist other students to join. Antonio discussed wanting to start an Indigenous based club on campus because he recalls feeling very isolated when he entered community college as an Indigenous student:

> When I came, I felt very alone and uncomfortable because I did not have any friends or people, I could talk to. And for that reason, I wanted to meet other Mixtecos in community college. After a while I met more people (Mixtecos) and I have seen more students entering. So, a way to help them feel less uncomfortable is to start a club. In this club we can bring students and help them in whatever way we can. I was asked to speak here (at the college) to high school students about my experience and I

expressed everything that has happened to me in life for being Indigenous and working in the field. That is when I realized that I was not the only one. A Mixteco girl in the audience heard me and said "I thought after graduating from high school I would start working in the field and that I wasn't going to have the opportunity to go to school because I am Indigenous." That was a great motivation for me. That's why I have tried to explain to professors that we have to motivate Indigenous students to continue with school.

Although Antonio had a difficult childhood and adolescence, he became very empathetic with other Indigenous students and he actively pursued validating spaces both to join as in the case with Nacavi, the dreamers club and the Indigenous students club. Fortunately, the affirmation he has received through school personnel and interaction with other students has empowered him to be proactive by advocating for under-resourced students.

Outside of school, Maelo was an organizer for the Oaxaqueño Youth Encuentro (OYE), along with various other Indigenous youth leaders. OYE was a yearly gathering of Indigenous youth that has taken place in different parts of California. The Oaxaqueño Youth Encuentro's goal was to "create a network of Oaxaqueño youth in order to build support for each other." This meeting takes place over a three-day weekend and has been held in different locations throughout California. Workshops and presentations on Indigenous-centered knowledge are facilitated by students and other Oaxaqueño community members to create a space for dialogue and reflection. Because Maelo was one of Nacavi's founding members, he initiated the youth group's involvement in OYE beginning from its first years. Since then Nacavi, members have continued the legacy of involvement with the event. Upon transferring to a university, Maelo continued being involved with student organizations that I will discuss in the next section.

Summary of findings: Barriers in Community College

This previous section discussed the most significant themes regarding the difficulties that Nacavi students faced as they attended community college. The obstacles they perceived were similar in many respects to the barriers faced in high school which centered on learning how to navigate the bureaucratic processes of community college, receiving proper guidance, and having high need with limited financial resources. At the community college level, the institutional obstacles the students faced were 1. The matriculation process at the community college level is complex and requires most of all its process to be completed online, even though some students may not have access to a computer and reliable internet connection; 2. Many students did not receive adequate and consistent counseling for their course planning which caused them to take unnecessary courses and increased transfer time; 3. Lack of rigor in high school affected students' academic performance, particularly in English courses; 4. Though tuition was free through the Promise Grant, high need students did not receive enough institutional aid to cover their living expenses, which led them to work long hours and in some cases, this contributes to stop-outs.

Supports networks in Community College

Parental support. The support that students receive from their parents continued onto their college experiences. Although parental involvement was not as direct as it was in high school, the Nacavi students discussed how they continued to receive moral support and encouragement from their parents. Also, much of the support they received from their parents came through the form of helping them with living expenses, such as allowing them to pay little to no rent and providing meals or when possible with financial support. Antonio stated that his parents told him: "the only thing we can help you with is food so you can keep going

to school. They also help us a little bit with rent." Miguel also stated; "They love me, but they can't support me financially, they give me a roof, and food but with money they themselves have told me they can't help me much." While this may not seem like substantial support, these were still meaningful ways that parents showed their encouragement. Immigrant students that come from low income households know that their parents do not understand how the higher education system operates in the United States and yet recognize the ways they show care.

Upon entering college Marissa was working about thirty hours a week while going to school, so her parents helped her buy a car and gave her half of the costs so she would not have to take public transportation. She also received a lot of guidance and encouragement from her older sister who had gone to college:

> Yeah, she tells me to go wherever I want because she was the first one to go to college and she really wanted to attend Long Beach and she did get accepted there but because she is the oldest, she didn't end up going, because she didn't want to leave my parents behind. That's why she didn't end up going but she's encouraging me because she regrets not being able to experience that and because of my status, she really encourages me to go. Also, because of my status, she kind of encourages me to go above and beyond and not just be like a local college student and just stay home. She wants me to take all of the advantages that are open to me. So, she kind of pushes me to kind of go and explore.

Marissa's older sister was documented and went directly to a university after graduation. However, since she was the oldest, she stayed and attended a local state college while also working. Since Marissa was a dreamer and faced restrictions due to her status, she received consistent motivation from her older sister to move away for school and to be high achieving so she can be eligible for merit-based opportunities.

Some students who are undocumented and facing high need may opt to attend local universities to continue living at home to reduce their living expenses. Ashley planned on transferring to a local state college to save money on rent:

> Yeah, I'm kind of scared because it sounds like, financial aid's not going to cover everything. Usually the Cal grants are up to $5,000 or just cover your tuition or stuff like that. I was like, "What if I... ?" I feel like I'm going to be really stressed because I'm going to pay for... If I don't stay in a dorm, because dorms are pretty expensive or if I go to live outside the campus, it's bad and you're still going to pay rent and stuff and other bills. And I'm kind of scared. How I might do that? So, I'm kind of like, going to stay in the county because I live here, and my parents can help me.

Fortunately, the local state school was nearby her home and there was an effective public transit system that could facilitate her transportation. Knowing that she was undocumented, Ashley knew that her financial aid would be limited and would not cover her unmet need, which restricted her from moving away from home.

When Herminio was accepted to a university after high school his parents went with him to campus. After a meeting with the financial aid counselor he realized that there would be a significant amount he would not be able to pay out of pocket:

> I felt like it was going to be too much because at the time they weren't even offering too much financial aid for me. So, I was like, "Oh, might as well just go to community college, and then that way I can save up money, and it's obviously going to be less. My parents said to go. They were saying that to go, like "we'll find a way how we can pay for it." But for me, I thought it was going to be too much, and then I thought just going to community college will be the same thing, then I can later then transfer.

Although he was accepted into a four year-school he did not want to place a financial strain on -parents, Herminio opted to attend community college to save money on tuition costs.

The Nacavi students continued to receive support and most importantly feel encouragement from their parents and families through their actions, whether it was through simple things such as providing meals, allowing them to live at home rent free up to providing the students with a financial allowance. However, the students continued to use this as

motivation to justify the struggles and sacrifices that their parents faced as immigrants to give them the opportunity for a better life through education.

Nacavi Youth Group support in Community College

As the students were attending college their schedules would vary widely each semester. As such, their involvement in the group waned to accommodate to their courses and other obligations causing their attendance to be less consistent than it was during high school. However, most students maintained participation and were involved with other programs Nacavi offered.

Nacavi Scholarship. Almost all of the Nacavi students continued applying for the Nacavi Scholarship, which was meant to assist Indigenous students from the local county pay for their educational expenses regardless of their status. One of the major benefits of the scholarship was not only to help support students with funding but also to give them an opportunity for them to become acquainted with the application process itself. For many students, this is the first time they formally applied for a scholarship for which they receive application support from the youth group coordinator through application workshops. Miguel echoed this sentiment when remembering all the times he was the recipient: "Nacavi has helped me the most with the scholarship and I was grateful to see that there were a lot of people who helped me with the application."

Additionally, as a number of Indigenous students are undocumented, the kinds of scholarships they are eligible to apply for become restricted, as many are only available to citizens and green card holders. The Nacavi scholarship purposely included inclusive language in its requirements to ensure that students understood that anyone can apply.

Rosario discussed how a graduate mentor sends her listings of scholarships for undocumented students:

> She's now a grad, and she sent me an e-mail of all of the fellowships and the grants and the scholarships I could apply to that don't ask for citizenship. I've gotten those. But the ones with those, is they're really restrictive. Because it's very, in order to use your scholarship, you have to use your own money. Then, from there, you get recompensated through receipts, and stuff like that. That's where I've been restricted.

The Nacavi scholarship was handed out to recipients in forms of a check directly to students, thus bypassing the ways that other scholarships work where funds were often sent to the educational institution and was then given to the student after the school deducts any fees. In essence EPIC hands out the funds directly to students with the understanding that the monies go directly toward living expenses.

Students were welcome to reapply each year as long as they continued to meet the eligibility requirements. There have been several students who have received the scholarship consecutively for years and have credited the Nacavi scholarship for being a major source of funding throughout their education. Recently, EPIC has received generous donations by Edison for any student pursuing a STEM degree.

Program Support at Community College

      Extended Opportunities Program and Services (EOPS). The most substantial programmatic support that Nacavi students received during community college was through EOPS (Extended Opportunities Program and Services). Nine of the fifteen students interviewed had been a part of the program. EOPS was a program that provided several services to low income and economically disadvantaged students. This program was established in 1969 as a part of an affirmative action program that was designed to simplify access to resources for students by helping them with financial and technical support to assist

with their completion of their educational goals (Chacon, 2013). The program's mission was to: "encourage the enrollment, retention and transfer of students handicapped by language, social, economic and educational disadvantages, and to facilitate the successful completion of their goals and objectives in college" (California Community Colleges Extended Opportunity Programs and Services Association, 2018). The program offers a great number of benefits to those in the program such as personalized counseling services, priority registration, EOPS grant funding, book grants, school supplies, tutoring, computer labs, amongst various other services unique to each campus.

As this program targeted under-resourced students, the EOPS program served many Latinx students in community college. According to the California Community College Chancellor's Office, Latinos/as make up the largest group of students being served by the EOPS program. Chacon reports that "while Latinos/as are 30% of total California community college students they were 40% of enrollees in EOPS statewide" (p.210). Thus, students who were high need are the biggest beneficiaries of the program.

This program helped to alleviate one of the biggest challenges that was identified for students, which was the lack of adequate counseling. EOPS had their own counselors who were exclusively designated to help students within the program. As a mandatory requirement, students had to meet with a counselor at least three times a semester. In addition, another major benefit for students was priority registration, which guarantees students a space in the class. This was crucial for students since this allows significant pre-planning of their schedules. Otherwise, some in demand courses may fill up quickly and students are often left to be placed on waitlist or 'crash' a course for weeks without knowing if they are guaranteed a

space until registered students drop the course. These situations are very common and put

students in precarious situations, compromising their enrollment for the semester.

When I asked the students what they perceived to be the biggest benefits of the

program their responses centered around priority registration and counseling:

> Claudia: So, I get counselor visits and then, so I don't have to wait three hours in line
> to see a regular counselor, I can go in, have an appointment, and then go in right away.
> We get book credits and, oh yes, early registration. So, we can enroll into their classes
> and professors ahead of everyone else, and that's how we get better hours and better
> professors.

> Ashley: I think keeping me on track with my stuff because I usually procrastinate and
> stuff. They do three visits, mandatory and stuff, and I have to go by force, even if I
> don't want to. And I think it helps a lot because I go and then I get updates or things
> that are happening there. Or the counselors they're like, really cool, they're like,
> "There's this event and stuff." And I'm like, "Okay."

> Rosario: For EOPS, I get priority registration for classes. That's one of my main
> things, too, is making sure that my classes are set. They have set aside counselors for
> just EOPS students, so rather than the general counselors who basically go through the
> whole school, we have our own counselors. They guide you through the Assist
> Program, making sure that your classes are following through what school you're
> planning to transfer to, as well as tuition to cover for books.

Students who were in the program planned their courses with the certainty that their

schedule was established. Rosario also mentioned the Assist Program, a course tracking site

that allowed a student to track their progress toward transferring and helping to cross

reference their transfer plan.

The students also mentioned receiving financial assistance through book grants and

special ceremonies for students with a high-grade point average and assistance with buying a

cap and gown for graduation. Alba also mentioned how they helped her pay for her

graduation regalia and chose her to attend a summer immersive experience at one of the UC's.

> Alba: They helped financially they gave us money to buy book too. When I
> graduated, they helped me with my cap and gown and everything that I needed. They
> also had special ceremonies to recognize the students who got good grades and they

have us certificates. They also selected a few students in the program to go to a UC for a few days during the summer and they chose me. We stayed on campus, they have us a tour and we visited classrooms and they explained what a day at the university would be like if we transferred there.

Antonio and Benjamin highlighted how receiving a book grant and, participating in a dinner and receiving recognitions was also highly motivating.

> Antonio: Having a counselor there to help you for those of us who are in EOPS is great because we have the opportunity to register first before any other student who is not in the program and it is an obligation to go three times a semester. At the end of the semester they give us like fifty dollars or something to help us with books.

> Benjamin: Through EOPs, early registration, a book grant. You know, we had a small dinner afterwards. Oh, you got a 3.8, a 3.9, a 4.0, they would have a small dinner and you would go celebrate with them. Then we had field trips out to the colleges around the area.

> Another important theme that emerged was establishing rapport with counselors. For

under-resourced, undocumented students being able to find school personnel they can trust is

important due to their vulnerable legal status. Miguel and Rosario both shared how they

would go seek a specific counselor:

> Miguel: They would give me funds to buy books and also to register early because you get if you are in the program you get priority. I also liked all the people at EOPS. I had a counselor that I liked that I would always go see, he spoke Spanish and I would only go to him.

> Rosario: Yeah, one specific one. Because they usually do this thing where it's like whoever's sat there. But I always make sure to like, "Okay, is xxx here?" He's one of the counselors there, he's the one I feel most comfortable talking to, out of all of the counselors. For the EOPS guidelines themselves, you have to see a counselor three times, at least, a semester but I try to go at least five times Or update him on what I'm doing outside, not only like school-related, but outside of school.

> Being a part of the EOPS program was one of the biggest benefits for those who were

involved. EOPS helped students establish social and navigational capital as a transfer focus

support center. It is also important to highlight that students discussed establishing great

rapport with counselors in a way that was culturally relevant for them. Additionally, eligibility is open to students regardless of their legal status.

However, program participation is not open for all students. To qualify for the program students must be considered full-time with a minimum of a 12-unit courseload, have less than 50 degree units, and be eligible for the California College Promise Grant (A or B), which has strict low-income guidelines. A draw back of the program is that it neglects students who may be already experiencing a lack of support such as part-time students who work full-time and continuing students who need more direct guidance and reliable counseling. Also, despite the crucial support it provides to students, the program has unfortunately undergone major state budget cuts. In 2009 there was a 40% budget cut and then there was another cut of 16% in 2010 (Chacon, 2013).

Departmental Support. In addition to institutional programs on campus such as the EOPS office and the counseling center on campus, some students also found substantial support through their departments on campus through participation in clubs and opportunities they were nominated for by faculty in the students' majors. For example, as engineering majors Antonio and Herminio were involved in the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE) a national organization meant to create leadership opportunities amongst Hispanic students and which has chapters in various colleges and universities within the country. Through this club the students began to network with other professionals, attend conferences and make connections with other chapters in different universities.

Antonio was also highly active in his discipline on his campus. While helping to create the Dreamers club and the Indigenous students club, he was involved with SHPE, the

Chemistry Club and the Engineering Math Physics (EMP) Club. Additionally, he worked in

the tutoring center for Chemistry, Calculus and Physics. He was nominated by two of his

professors for an

Academic Excellence Award in Engineering which included a $500 award. He has also been

on the Dean's list for the last three years.

As a STEM major, Herminio also received major focused support on campus through

being a part of a club and through a program. Like Antonio he was also part of SHPE, which

he began attending in community college but became much more active once he transferred to

a four-year school. Once he transferred, Herminio continued to be involved in SHPE at Cal

Poly Pomona:

> SHPE is pretty well known throughout the whole country. In community college it
> wasn't really active. They would have meetings here and there, but it wasn't too active
> as compared to in university. They're really active there, there's a lot of events that
> they host and everything.

Although he was not a part of EOPS, he did receive similar support services through the

Mathematics, Engineering and Science Achievement (MESA) program which was available

on his campus. The program offered tutoring, specialized counselors, assistance with

financial aid forms, educational planning, a study center, internship opportunities and student

services. They also held special support meetings for students as they were ready to transfer.

Herminio stated that this program helped him with his support services and with his personal

statement when it came time to transfer:

> It was mostly just an outreach program. They provided tutoring services, they had their
> own space within the community college so we can go there, and if we had any other
> questions, they can also help us out, like Financial Aid again. I think when you were
> going to renew it. Yeah, they had counseling. If you had questions with your classes
> or what road to take, and everything. They helped me with my college applications
> too. They helped me revise my essays, and helped me fix it, and everything.

This program was not available at all community colleges within the county and was especially designed to help first generation students with demonstrated financial need. To be eligible students needed to declare a calculus based major in a STEM field and it was open to students regardless of their immigration status. The program also had partnerships with several STEM based clubs on campus such as SHPE and local universities and companies that offer internships.

Antonio and Herminio received support through their involvement in STEM based clubs, organizations and departments. These programs offered students significant support by establishing strong relationships with professors who helped these students with recommendations and nominations for awards. Additionally, they also expanded their networks off campus and as in Herminio's case continued to look for support through clubs on campus once he transferred.

Transferring to a University

This study was designed to document student perspectives of their experience in community college at different junctures of their educational journey. During the time the interviews were being conducted, five of the Nacavi students had transferred to a four-year school including: Miguel, Benjamin, Roman, Maelo and Herminio. When I interviewed Benjamin and Roman, they had both just enrolled at their university and therefore could not discuss their experience any further. The latter two had already graduated with bachelor's degrees and had begun working. Going forward the following section will mostly focus on Miguel, Maelo's and Herminio's experiences with transferring to a university.

Transfer Support. As discussed in previous sections, applying to a university can be a very daunting task that does not become easier even for transfer students. Since many of the

Nacavi students applied directly to community college, they remained unaware of the various aspects and preparation involved with applying to a four-year school. Applications themselves can be very involved and tedious especially as everything is completed online and must be precise. For instance, if a certain part of the application is filled out incorrectly it may prevent the student from advancing onto the next sections of the process. Applications also require the gathering of materials such as school records, transcripts, and financial documents. In particular, UC's and/or private universities ask for personal statements, which require various drafts and revisions. Personal statements are an especially crucial part of the application process, which ask focused questions that require the responses to be precise and crafted meticulously to meet specific word limits. Furthermore, if a student is applying to a university with an impacted major the department may require supplemental information.

The five transfer students reported receiving direct help through programs to help them fill out their university applications. Miguel and Benjamin received help from the EOPS office and the Nacavi coordinator. Since both students had been a part of EOPS, their counselors advised them when they should begin applying for schools as they were about to complete their educational course plans. Once they began the application process, they met with the Nacavi coordinator where they worked on the personal statement. After the draft of their personal statements were finalized, the coordinator met with both of them to go over the application before submission.

Benjamin applied to both CSU's and UC's:

I applied to UCLA, UCSB Davis and Berkeley. Of those four UC's, I was accepted in all four of those. At the CSU level, I was accepted into CSU Channel Islands, CSU LA. I never heard back from Northridge, and I was disqualified from San Jose because they had a prerequisite.

He accepted admission to UCLA where he enrolled as a history major. However, after some family emergencies and other personal difficulties, he did not finish his first quarter and eventually left the university and re-enrolled at a state college closer to his home that he was planning on attending later in the year. Therefore, his experience at a university could not be discussed any further during the interview.

As a history and linguistics major, Miguel applied to UC Santa Cruz, UCLA, UC Santa Barbara and UC Berkeley. He was accepted to all schools, however he chose to go to UC Santa Barbara. When I asked him why he chose that school he stated:

> To be honest…I wanted to work with a specific professor and…not because it was closer, but I knew people there. It was also the first university I ever visited, and I remember when I was younger, we walked by the library and I think I chose it at that moment.

Through EPIC, Miguel had worked with professors and graduate students who had approached the organization to conduct research and work with some of the programs that Miguel had facilitated with the organization while he was a student in community college. Due in part to this exposure, he chose to major in history and linguistics as an undergraduate. He discussed his reasoning with choosing his major:

> It is not a very revolutionary idea, but I want to see my people be proud of themselves. I am not saying better than others but I want them to be proud of where they are from. I took a Latin American history class and I really liked it. During that time, I thought about what I am and talked with professors. I thought about studying more about what I am, my culture…not to study it but to showcase it proudly. This is also why I want to study linguistics because I want to know more about Mixteco linguistics.

Through this network, he also became more acquainted with graduate work and academic research which would later influence his decision to pursue graduate school. Miguel also made it a point to mention that he wants to pursue this major to proudly display his language as being worthy of academia.

Maelo received transfer support through a relationship with a counselor that was discussed in the previous section. After taking a martial arts course with an instructor at the college who was also in the counseling department he was able to receive guided support from her and she also helped him write his personal statement and apply to an out of state university where he majored as an Agricultural Bio Technician. After working as a fieldworker for years during high school and into college he discusses why he chose his major and why he went out of state.

> I knew I wanted to do agriculture, but I wanted something to do with the science. So, I was looking, and I just googled "agriculture ag biotech universities in the United States." And then Washington State popped out. And I started researching more about it, like learning more about it and I'm like, "I want to go to this school." And I applied and I thought "If I get in. I get in. If not, I'm just going to go like Chico State or San Luis Obispo." And I applied, and I got an acceptance letter, and I was very happy, and I took a tour, I scheduled an orientation and I went, and I got in, and I really fell in love with it.

By the time he was ready to transfer he had received permanent residence thus he was eligible to receive more forms of financial aid, which was a major factor in deciding to move out of state.

Herminio credited the MESA program for helping him fill out his college applications and write his personal statement. "When it was time to transfer, the person that I would go to was mostly the MESA Center, they helped me with my statement and everything." As an engineering major he applied to multiple schools within the CSU and UC system and was accepted in UCSB, UCSD, Northridge, and Cal Poly Pomona. He chose to attend the latter. He stated: "I would hear that they had a good engineering program, so that was one of the reasons why I decided to go to Cal Poly. Another thing, I wanted to leave my hometown because I wanted to explore and be in a different city." Since he had originally declined to

attend CSU Northridge to attend community college, he took this opportunity to enroll in a competitive program and move to another city.

When I interviewed Roman, he had begun his first semester at a state school, so we did not have the chance discuss his experience at a university at length since he had just started attending. However, we did discuss the supports he received that helped him to transfer. As a part of EOPS on his campus, Roman received application support through this program and applied to CSU Bakersfield, San Jose, Northridge and Channel Islands and was accepted to all four. He transferred with a 3.4 GPA. When I asked him if he had considered applying to one of the Universities of California he responded:

> I did think about applying but they didn't offer better programs for the major I wanted, and I thought it would be easier to go to a CSU since they focus more on business. The UC's focus more on those who want to be doctors, medicine, and biology. There are some programs that offer business too but I had a job here so I couldn't move too far so my only option was the closest CSU.

He later mentions his first choice was CSU San Jose but he did not have any family or relatives there and as an undocumented student, the possibility for maintaining a steady job while living at home to save costs led him to make the practical decision of attending a local school.

All students who transferred reported to have received direct support through a program either through Nacavi or on their campus. This finding highlights the importance of having college application assistance available to transfer students, especially those who are first generation that might not otherwise have a reliable peer, adult, or relative that is familiar with the process to help direct them.

Academic difficulties at a University

The biggest academic struggles that seemed to follow the students throughout their education from high school to the university were English and writing. Miguel and Roman graduated high school as English Language Learners, hence they did not receive college preparatory courses until they went to community college. They both stated taking remedial courses before their English transferable course. However, depending on their majors, students are usually only required to take one or two English classes to be eligible for transfer, which may not offer enough meticulousness and practice with college level analysis and writing. Once he transferred Maelo recalled still having difficulty with his writing:

> I didn't feel prepared, I still had a lot of challenges during the four-year class, just understanding how to do citations. At community college, I didn't get to do a lot of citations, a lot of research-style work, so I had to learn that on college at a faster pace. They were asking about APA, MLA, and Chicago-style. And I had to Google and research a lot of that. And going to a lot of the centers on campus and again with the brotherhood I was with, they really helped me out a lot to understand. And they understand that unit too, like how heavy the work, how much of it affected your GPA.

Miguel also discussed having difficulty writing at an academic level once at a university and continued seeking help on campus through the writing center and meeting with professors during office hours and asking his peers for help with proofreading term papers.

Although he did not state he had difficulty with writing, Herminio discussed that he failed some courses during his first year at Cal Poly as he was unfamiliar with the university system and did not give himself time to adjust to these new schedules and pace his courses.

> Since I transferred from community college to a four year, my first quarter there I took I think 18 units. That's something I shouldn't have done because obviously I didn't perform well, because my first quarter there I did fail two classes. That's something I could've avoided if I had taken it more lightly. That's one of the things that I do know now. For me, when I was signing up for my classes I was excited again, I was one more step closer to my goals, so I took a bunch of classes in my first quarter. That was bad. Obviously, the classes were a lot harder, they're more demanding, at least in the first two years that I was there, because they're on run the quarter system. My last year there, they decided to switch to semester. That one was like, "Oh, I was getting used to

the quarter system, but now we went back to semester." So, that felt kind of like a drag.

As a student in community college, Herminio had received good grades and assumed that he could keep this same pace while taking on a heavy course load. Transitioning into the university system however, requires time for adaptation especially in the cases where students are changing between semester and quarter systems.

Financial challenges after transferring

As Maelo, Miguel, Herminio, and Benjamin moved out of their parent's homes to attend their universities, they sacrificed working to prioritize their coursework, which brought about financial challenges. All four students were low income students who faced high need. Two of these students entered the university as Dreamers, restricting their funding. However, all four students had parents that were still working within agriculture. Roman was the only transfer student who purposely chose a local school so that he could continue living at home while keeping his job at his parents flower business, which gave him the opportunity for a flexible schedule.

Miguel had a very difficult time financing his education at a university, since as a Dreamer he received little financial aid that covered his living expenses. To save money on rent, he lived in a co-op where he received a small stipend. He did not have DACA which meant that he did not have work authorization. He applied to scholarships, looked for odd jobs to help supplement work, and used the summer to work full-time and saved his earnings.

> For people like me, I have to go under the table. I was working at a neighbor's restaurant for a bit, but you need to have a contact. Right now, I am not working. I was working with EPIC, but I couldn't go anymore because it's too far to go everyday. Sometimes I look for paid internships, but I don't qualify, and I haven't seen anything. I am not working on the weekends either because I am focused on school. I work in

the fields in the summer and try to save what I can. Of course, the EPIC scholarship has helped a lot.

Since his opportunities for funding were limited, he was very pro-active about searching for and applying for scholarships that he was eligible for. He could not receive support from his parents as they began having a difficult time finding affordable housing and he was also no longer contributing to the household since he was in school. His family eventually moved out of the county to another area that offered more dependable agricultural work year-round and the housing was less expensive.

Despite not being able to support him financially, his parents continued to encourage and motivate Miguel to continue with graduate school:

> I want to go to graduate school, to get a doctorate. Because the truth, my mom and a lot of people tell me not to stop here, maybe because we are poor but I want to continue, because I believe that this career can help me financially but also to develop what I am. To do more investigations, create the idea that we are badasses, that we are people who also have ideas, we have perspectives. Maybe they exist, but I believe that I have to put forth the effort so that this can persist.

His persistence and diligence led him to work on a senior thesis and apply to graduate schools.

While Maelo was in community college he worked full-time and had shown a pattern of stopping out. However, after six years he was able to transfer. Since he attended an out of state school his parents offered to support him in school financially and advised him not to work full-time so that he could concentrate on his studies. He discussed how his parents raised money to help him:

> No, that's one thing that my parents were very supportive, they told me focus on graduating, and we'll cover the rest. And I was able to connect with a lot of people there. And my mom would like, because I had my room back at home, and she would rent my room, and that was my money that she would get if I needed more. Like she would do her mole sales, or some kind of sale. And then a lot of my church really did support me, after I left, they raised an offering and it like really helped when I got there.

152

Since he was not living at home his parents rented out his room and sent him that money as a monthly allowance. His mother also had food sales on the weekends to gain extra income. He and his family were also members of a church that held a special offering to raise money for him before he left for the university. Though they did not have a formal education themselves, Maelo's parents' efforts are prime examples of the ways that immigrant parents show support for their children in a way that is relevant for them.

In a similar effort once Herminio transferred to a university, his parents supported him by helping him with his living expense so that he would not have to work.

> I did get financial aid, but it was very limited, it was mostly the tuition. The financial aid that they offered me was mostly towards my tuition, and then I had to pay for the parking, and obviously the rent for me to rent a room. My parents were the ones that helped me out to pay for my parking, the books, and food, and stuff like that. They were my main motivation to keep going because at times it was hard. I always kept my parents in the back of my head because they always worked hard towards to provide us for better opportunities. I thought this is one way I can repay them for all the struggles that they've been through. My parents always kept me motivated to continue.

Recognizing the sacrifice his parents were making by contributing towards his living expenses, Herminio persisted towards finishing his degree despite facing difficult moments in school. He also made an effort to finish sooner and mentioned attending summer school to graduate so that he can begin working and helping his parents by going back home and getting a job.

Although Maelo, Miguel and Herminio, faced difficult financial circumstances at their universities, the support their families offered them whether financial or moral was especially needed and meaningful as they were on the cusp of achieving their goal of becoming university graduates.

Nacavi affiliation while at the University

After transferring, all three students continued to maintain connection to the Nacavi youth group where they became seen as mentor figures. Maelo would visit the group frequently during the summer and breaks from school to talk to new and incoming Nacavi students about his research, and his previous experiences as a founder of the group. Miguel also continued to work with the youth group and EPIC through his work with projects and translation work. During one summer, the Nacavi coordinator invited Maelo, Miguel and Herminio to a meeting for a panel session where they discussed their undergraduate experiences at a University. They provided advice to the incoming younger generation about asking for help and stressed that although it is difficult, going to college is a possibility and offered themselves as support for anyone needing help.

They also continued receiving the Nacavi Scholarship once at the university and were invited by the scholarship committee to be guest speakers during the yearly banquet ceremony. The scholarship provides the most financial award to students who are at a four-year university, which for these students who face high need was a major source of support.

Identities at the University

As the students moved out of their home communities and began attending universities, the students mentioned feeling overwhelmed by being in a new area and not having friends or knowing anyone. Herminio mentioned making a two-and-a-half-hour drive back home almost every weekend during his first semester:

> In the beginning, it was a little bit challenging because of the courses and being away from home. It was my first time ever leaving and being away from my family made it more challenging. One of the hardest parts is adapting to a whole different new environment since you're used to something, but then once you transfer, the same thing if you're away from home, I think you kind of get homesick. That's one

challenge, and then because you're in a whole different new environment trying to make new friends.

Since all three students moved away for school, they looked to build support systems by becoming involved with campus life and becoming a part of different clubs. All three students who were living on campus became involved in various clubs and organizations at their school based on their majors and ethnicities.

Herminio continued his participation with SHPE the (Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers) that he had started while at community college:

> Yeah, again, I was part of SHPE. I was part of that club, and then I was part of another club called ASHRAC, the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning club. I was able to meet friends, but I felt like I met more friends in the SHPE one because we shared similar backgrounds, so I felt more connected with them.

Although this organization is more of a professional affiliation and not based on an Indigenous identity, it is important to acknowledge that he felt more validation through SHPE since it focused on 'Hispanic' students within STEM based careers.

To make friends and meet people during his time at the university, Maelo became a part of multiple clubs. He stated having been a part of a Christian club, entomology club, the agriculture club and another club based on Indigenous identity. Since he was a founding member of Nacavi, Maelo always kept a connection with the group and sought to connect with various other Indigenous groups. The club he was most involved with, called "the brotherhood" which was based on Mexican Indigenous identity. He stated that he did not connect with any of the fraternities: "Well I didn't really identify with the Greek... there was always clash with my core." He felt more connected with other Mexican Indigenous youth on

155

campus. He explained that he felt attracted to this group because they were mission driven

and they aligned with his values.

> Basically, we have four pillars, which is culture, empowerment, wisdom, and
> carnalismo, what we call it, which is like culture understanding, your culture,
> understanding your background. Empowerment, like empower through the
> organization to help other members to graduate and use the resources that are available
> there. Wisdom to understand from your past mistake or from other people. Then
> knowledge and carnalismo, which is the friendship that we will build with the other
> students. So, the class that I became a member of the brotherhood, were really
> supportive, and they really helped me get established in Washington. I didn't feel
> lonely anymore. I felt like I had a community with them. And they really pushed me to
> take leadership within the university and connect with other friends.

Additionally, the organization provided more than just socializing. For Maelo, being part of

the organization gave him a sense of purpose and helped him build community. He goes on to

discuss how they created a sense of family for him:

> Well, they were like building my... family. Just a group of people to be there for me
> when I would break down or when I needed emotional support. Which I did find after
> joining the brotherhood. That's when I finally felt in place, I felt like I was part of the
> university and not just like another student, because I flew in there from California
> without really, no connection. And just kind of rented a room from craigslist, and
> started working and building my connections there.

Miguel was also very active on campus groups that were based on identity and legal

status. While in community college he helped to create a Dreamers club and he also

continued his affiliation with a similar group that supported undocumented students at his

university. He was an active participant in this group since the beginning of his time there

until he graduated. In addition, he had been a part of Mecha, which is based mostly on a

Xicanx centered perspective. However, as he began to interact with different students on

campus and through clubs he began to see a need to create another club that spoke directly to

the experience of being Indigenous. He along with other students who identified as Mexican

Indigenous formed their own club:

The majority were Zapotec, Mixtec, and Triqui and we formed a collective on campus to occupy for people who were Native and Indigenous. Well, I left but the rest continued meetings and the group became more formal. The group was focused more on native people in the diaspora.

Both Maelo and Miguel honed their leadership skills within Nacavi as members who were very active advocating for social justice amongst the projects that the group was involved with. They continued to take these learned skills with them as they advanced in their education by participating and creating clubs and building community through shared Indigenous identities.

Graduation and beyond

During the time that I was collecting interview data, Maelo and Herminio had graduated with Bachelor's degrees from their universities.

Herminio had graduated from school a few months prior to our interview and he commented on how he felt indebted to his parents for supporting him through graduation. Reminiscing on his graduation day he recalled:

> Oh, I feel like it was a good feeling . I feel like both for my parents and I, it was kind of like we did it. Because obviously I didn't do it myself, it was through the support of both of my parents, that's the reason why I was able to graduate. They were always helping me out.

Whether it is through financial support or moral encouragement, his sentiments reaffirmed the finding that the role of parental support is a fundamental motivating factor for students.

When asked about pursuing graduate school he responded:

> I thought about it, but since you have to pay for your own school now for graduate level, I feel like it's a lot more kind of pricey. I know that in the current place where I'm working now, they do offer assistance for you, and to pay for your school. I am considering probably going to school, maybe in a couple of years.

As a final question I asked him what he thinks community colleges can do to support

Indigenous students. He responded:

> I feel that if people can't really speak Spanish or English, maybe have an interpreter. That way they can understand, and they can also take their parents. That way their parents can understand what's going on, what's the process like. That's one way the community colleges can help them. Then maybe have more sessions throughout the whole school year that they can attend, and then that way they can see whether they're on track or not.

Herminio's comment here identified that there should be more involvement of parents on the

part of the educational institutions. As shown in the findings, many students themselves had a

difficult time understanding and navigating community college, which can seem even more

abstract for immigrant parents who are not familiar with the higher education system in the

United States.

When Maelo graduated from his university he chose to stay and applied to a graduate

program in agriculture. However, after a family emergency he returned to his parent's home

to provide support for them. When I asked him what community colleges can do to help

support Indigenous students his response centered on providing more guidance to incoming

students about the transfer process, having Indigenous staff and overall support for part-time

students:

> There's still a lot to be done with the colleges in how they address students, because they're expecting that every student already knows what to do. So, they don't target students that are in those classes that are not transferrable. A lot of those remedial classes are the first students take that really don't understand about transfer classes... or understand about universities. I wish they would target more in general, in the freshman year…So they will know which class to take. If they target certain students at the freshman year income, freshman year classes, always remind them about college classes. And just always bring people there that identify themselves as Indigenous and can speak their language. And more options for more outlet to go look for support. Or more options for those that were like, not just full-time students but those students that worked. Or more access to a specific counselor.

His response underscored the difficulties he faced as a community college student where he spent almost six years taking courses before transferring and having support for part-time students who are often neglected by programs due to their status. Lastly, both he and Herminio discuss the need for culturally competent staff on campus that is sensitive to the needs of Indigenous students and their families.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This final chapter will discuss the findings of the current study with a brief overview, a summary of the findings situated within a Critical Race Theory and Latino Critical Theory framework and then move into a discussion of the implications of this study for research and practice.

The objective of this study was to identify the institutional and personal barriers Indigenous immigrant students face as they move forward on the educational pipeline from high school through community college as well as identifying the supports and resources they used to overcome those barriers as they navigated through higher education. I completed semi structured interviews with 15 students who had been a part of the Nacavi youth group.

Research questions

The questions that guided my study were:

1. What are some of the institutional and direct barriers that Indigenous immigrant students face that limit their opportunities for higher education in high school and in community college?

2. What are some of the personal and institutional supports that Indigenous immigrant students use to overcome challenges encountered on their path in higher education?

This study adds to the dearth of literature of the educational experiences of Mexican Indigenous immigrants in higher education. The existing literature on Indigenous immigrant students focuses mainly on the role of identity within education; however, the experiences of this population's journey from high school to community college is understudied. My dissertation's findings provide insight into the challenges these students face and ways that educators and institutions can serve this unique student population.

Summary of major findings

My findings illustrated that high schools are ill-equipped to service the needs of Indigenous students and their families. My data showed that a disproportionate number of students were placed in English Language Development courses at some point in their education where students are instructed in Spanish as they learn English. However, many of the students and their families had limited Spanish fluency and in essence were learning two languages both English and Spanish, simultaneously. As students advanced to high school, these courses did not meet college preparation requirements as they were considered remedial. Students in these courses were also less likely to receive adequate college counseling which affected their preparation to enter a university upon high school graduation. Furthermore, schools did not provide a welcoming environment to the parents of the Nacavi students. None of the students mentioned that their high schools provided a translator for meetings, back to school nights or teacher conferences, which kept many parents uninformed about the process of higher education. Lastly, as many of the Nacavi students were from low income backgrounds and/or undocumented they chose to attend a community college as a cost-effective option.

Most all of the Nacavi students reported receiving college preparation and support through program interventions such as Nacavi, Migrant education, the EAOP program or through community college representatives directly. In addition, all the students mentioned that their parents' expectations and encouragement were the prime motivator in pursuing higher education.

Once in community college students faced various challenges that affected their persistence such as maneuvering through the complex matriculation process and lacking

effective counseling regarding their educational course planning. Another significant finding was that students who had not received rigorous English courses were affected by taking remediation courses extending their time in community college. The biggest barrier, however, were students reporting financial challenges due to their undocumented status and the need to balance school and work.

Parallel to the supports in high school, students in community college who were involved with programs that included consistent counseling were more likely to transfer as these provided guidance on taking the appropriate courses and staying on their educational plans, as well as help with the preparation of university applications. Financially, parents helped supplement their students' living expenses by allowing them to live at home, providing meals and financial support when possible, as well as continuing moral encouragement. The Nacavi youth group also provided continued support through the annual scholarship as well as hosting transfer workshops and personal assistance with college applications.

Upon transferring to a university, the financial challenges for students continued as the students reported that their financial aid awards were not always enough to cover their living expenses, which were higher as they moved away from their parents' homes. This was further exacerbated for undocumented students who did not have work authorization making it more difficult to cover their expenditures. Also, students discussed the persistence of facing the challenge with English and writing at the university level especially as it pertained to writing extensive research papers. Personally, the students encountered feelings of loneliness and frustration while acclimating to their college campuses. However they countered this by joining clubs and organizations based on their major and ethnic identities, which offered peer support that helped them navigate academically and socially.

Despite these obstacles the students were incredibly resilient and managed to graduate with their bachelor's degrees from their respective universities. The students' parents supported their children financially when possible going as far as renting their rooms, selling food and helping to cover rent. The Nacavi students also mentioned applying to scholarships to help compensate for financial need. Also, to create a sense of belonging on campus, all of the students at the university mentioned joining clubs on their campus based on ethnic and career affiliations.

Relation to the literature

Indigenous Students in Higher Education. To date, there is a very limited amount of studies that have analyzed the experiences of Indigenous Mexican youth in post-secondary education within the context of the United States (Casanova, 2012; Kovats, 2018; Nicolas, 2012). This study shares similar parallels as these studies pertain to ethnic identity and the role it has on the success of Indigenous Mexican students in college. The commonalities center around four central themes 1. education that provides critical reflection on the marginalization of Indigenous communities, 2. the affirmation of ethnic identities, 3. civic engagement activities and 4. having a positive self-perception of their Indigenous identity. Nicolas' (2012) study highlighted the impact that participation in cultural activities in conjunction with taking social science courses in college had on the political involvement of her participants. The students in her study reported to have been involved with cultural festivities related to their hometown in Mexico. However, their identities began to solidify as they entered the university. Within higher education, students had the opportunity to learn about the shared themes of colonization of Indigenous communities throughout Latin America. This prompted students to become politically active within their community and

163

served as a motivator for students to begin identifying as Zapotec. As a result, students in her study began displaying pride in identifying as Indigenous. Similarly, Kovats (2018) reported how students negotiated public vs. private Indigenous identities due to negative experiences with their peers. However, taking validating courses in college, working with supportive faculty, and joining peer groups based on Indigenous identities, served to 'reaffirm' students sense of indigeneity and publicly display it.

My research adds to these studies by asserting the crucial impact that developing a positive Indigenous identity has on resilience. Phinney's work (1993) on ethnic identity shows that those who have reached 'complete' ethnic identity achievement manage to detach from the destructive stereotypes regarding their ethnic groups thus impeding negative internalization. As these studies have shown, Indigenous students encountered low expectations by school personnel and face substantial amount of discrimination by both white and Xicanx peers. Phinney's study also showed that despite the deficit attitudes experienced by Indigenous students, having a positive sense of indigeneity served as an asset toward resiliency. In my study, I show how this resiliency correlates with success in higher education.

Whereas the studies mentioned above examine the identity development of Indigenous students who are already in college, my study contributes new insights to the literature by analyzing students' post-secondary trajectories beginning in high school and investigating both personal and institutional factors that affect their educational experiences throughout their attendance in community college and university.

Many students had been active in different campaigns throughout their time with the group, most notably with "No me llames Oaxaquita". The Nacavi youth group gave

Indigenous students a safe space to socialize with their Indigenous peers and openly express their identities and speak their languages without fear of discrimination or hiding their 'private indigeneity'. As many students stated in the findings section, they related Nacavi to a sense of family where members had a shared sense of identity and in many cases did come from the same hometowns in Mexico creating a very real sense of kinship in the group.

Particularly, my participants are unique in that they were all in high school when they became members of a youth group based on Indigenous identity. It is important to highlight that as high school students their participation in Nacavi was at a very important determining juncture within their education and as developing adolescents. As high schools underserve Indigenous youth academically and by failing to acknowledge their identities, I argue that the Nacavi youth group served as a vital catalyst for the student's academic success in higher education by allowing a space for positive identity development, and political consciousness of its members and also helping to create a college-going environment through the provision of academic support and information. The youth group exposed students to critical perspectives about their history and also to contemporary socio-political issues within their community. The importance of the Nacavi youth group is that it gives students the insight to understand these colonial processes that have relegated Indigenous communities to the margins. This understanding allows them to shift internalized deficit perspectives that have been placed on their identities and capabilities towards a more critical consciousness and a stronger cultural identity.

Critical Race Theory Analysis

As discussed in the framework section I have utilized Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) to examine the educational barriers of Indigenous Students. I

will expand on the following tenets of CRT and principles of LatCrit to show how these theories inform my findings. According to Solorzano (1998), there are five themes, or tenets, that form the basic perspectives, research methods, and pedagogy of a critical race theory in education: (a) the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism; (b) the challenge to dominant ideology; (c) the commitment to social justice; (d) the centrality of experiential knowledge; and (e) the interdisciplinary perspective.

The first tenet the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism, makes visible the racialization of Indigenous students in high school as they are disproportionately tracked into remedial courses especially within English classes. Tracking students is one example that schools use as a social mechanism to construct racial groups into a hierarchical structure. Tracking assigns students to different academic levels and those correspond with varying degrees of privilege, discrimination and opportunities. Many of the Nacavi students were placed in remedial and English Language Learner courses thus placing them into lower tracks that did not meet college preparatory requirements. Therefore, they were not exposed to higher educational advising and preparation. Thus, schools act as gatekeepers where community college was the most accessible option.

In accordance with the challenge to dominant ideology, it is also important to acknowledge that the dominance of English only policies within educational institutions perpetuate the subordination of all other languages. Through the process of being placed into English Language Learner courses Indigenous students are essentially being racialized as Xicanx overlooking their own languages and the fact that they may have varying degrees of Spanish language fluency. By ignoring students' linguistic heritages schools are negating

their culture, epistemologies, social practices and lived experiences while further marginalizing Indigenous people and contributing to their erasure.

Another key theme in LatCrit is the impact of phenotype and language on the experiences of students of color. My study found that the Nacavi students faced discrimination from their peers based on phenotype, stature, Indigenous language and in some cases accent and lack of Spanish fluency. These instances of discrimination were the primary factors that led students to form the youth group. To hold schools responsible for anti-discrimination and bullying organizers worked with students to pass resolutions that would prohibit the use of the word 'Oaxaquita' and 'Indito'. This finding also resonates with both CRT and LatCrit that illustrates how people of color experience racism and normal and ordinary in their daily lives. This is especially significant as it is important for students to feel a sense of belonging in their learning communities. However, for those who are on the receiving end of overt racism and micro-agressions the perception of a hostile environment can negatively impact their desire, transition and persistence toward higher education (Solorzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000).

Although LatCrit is an important framework that extends the dialogue of race to highlight the racialized subordination of Latinx students in the US, it is important to acknowledge the amplified racialization experience of Indigenous immigrant youth within schools and the discrimination they face mostly from their Xicanx/Mexican peers. While CRT and LatCrit do center race, they have not directly challenged the complex racial dynamics that exist within Latinx communities and the ways in which colonialism manifests itself through daily practices and perceived attitudes against Indigenous students such as the peer to peer bullying by the use of derogatory terms like 'Oaxaquita' and 'Indito' and the

historical legacy of marginalization that Indigenous communities have faced both in Mexico and the United States. Thus, while LatCrit has an existing body of academic work that looks at a variety of issues that affect Latinx populations in the United States, these pan-Latinx studies fail to address the needs of Indigenous students, which can continue to perpetuate the invisibility of Indigenous populations.

Within high schools, Indigenous students are usually grouped with other students of Mexican decent thereby perpetuating the idea of a homogenous Mexican group. However, their cultural and linguistic heritage are distinct from their mestizo Mexican peers and do not always follow the same racial conceptions of what it means to be Mexican.

High School Barriers

As discussed in the literature review, some of the main barriers to college readiness out of high school include lack of counseling, no access to college prep courses and uncertainty in regards to funding (Chapa & Schink, 2006; Crisp & Nora; 2010; Fry, 2002, 2004; Pascarella, Wolniak, Pierson, & Terenzini, 2003). My findings also correlate with these studies and, I found that many students did not have consistent counseling in high school. In accordance with the data from the campaign for college campaign (Zinth, 2015) high student-to-counselor ratio in Ventura County was 1:384 leaving academically vulnerable students like Indigenous Mexican students without individual counseling and thus dependent on outside sources for college advising. Moreover, consistent with Callahan's (2005) investigation, Indigenous Mexican students who are placed in ELL courses, were less likely to complete college preparatory courses, receive academically rigorous instruction and information related to college.

The majority of Xicanx students begin their post-secondary education in community college with the intent to transfer (Ornelas & Solorzano 2004). However, my findings complement a previous study by Gandara, Driscoll & Orfield (2012) which showed that high schools are relying on outside agents to provide students with information on the community college process. This indicates that there is a disconnection between high schools and the lived reality of students. By failing to adequately counsel students about community college as a viable pathway towards higher education, high schools are putting already vulnerable students in a more precarious situation, which can affect their persistence toward higher education. My findings suggest that high schools need to include an emphasis on community college enrollment in their college preparatory advising.

Supports in high school

The supports that my study found primarily focused three main sources: parental encouragement, the Nacavi youth group and program interventions. The foremost reason students chose to seek higher education was because of the parental encouragement that students received from their families. All the students who participated in this study mentioned that their parents had an expectation for them to go on to college although they themselves had very little formal education. This is an example of Yosso's (2005) concept of aspirational capital among families of color as the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers. This study also found that the Nacavi students wanted to honor their parent's initial sacrifice of leaving their homes in Mexico and migrating to the United States to have a better life but also to compensate for the years of strenuous work they endured working in the fields. Further, the students mentioned that their

success in college went beyond themselves as individuals, but a motivating goal was to be financially stable enough to have their parents retire from working in agriculture.

Essentially this finding of parental encouragement also upholds the principles of CRT and LatCrit, which challenge dominant ideologies and disprove majoritarian stories that have been used to rationalize inequality concerning under-achievement and cultural inferiority of Mexican families. Primarily this counters the deficit perspective that Mexican parents did not value higher education, which I discussed earlier in the literature review section.

Secondly, all of the students mentioned the importance of the role that the Nacavi youth group played in multiple ways; providing information regarding higher education, scholarships, the opportunity for college credit but also the development of their identity and their political formation. The founding members of the group identified a need to provide information for Indigenous students who were not being exposed to college preparation in their high schools. As a result, this became one of the group's objectives and the EPIC organization prioritized hiring a coordinator who could arrange college prep workshops, arrange campus visits and act as a liaison with local colleges and institutions for the youth. Many of the students worked directly with the youth coordinator to fill out their college applications and found help with the matriculation process. Also, as EPIC grew and new partnerships formed, the Nacavi youth group students were able to receive college credit courses with a sociolinguistic focus on Indigenous languages, which served as a validation for many students who had not been exposed to writing their own Indigenous languages and seeing it within an academic discipline in higher education.

Another major benefit Nacavi offered was the scholarship opportunity for students that was specifically designated for Indigenous students within the county and did not consider

170

legal status. The application was also intended to give the students an opportunity to become

acquainted with the scholarship process, which for many students was the first time they had

ever applied for one. It also provided much needed financial support for students to cover

their personal and unmet needs as it was given to the students directly and not deposited into

their accounts through their school's institution as a third party. The recipients were then

invited to an annual Oaxacan themed banquet celebration where students were invited attend

with their parents and presented with certificates. This is particularly significant because for

many families this is perhaps one of the only instances where students' educational

achievements are publicly recognized through a culturally relevant Indigenous celebration.

The importance of intervention programs was another salient finding in this study.

Since high school counselors do not place a high priority on community colleges, students are

often left without the practical information and must often find other sources of guidance. All

of the Nacavi students mentioned receiving support through a program; the Educational

Opportunities Advancement Program (EAOP) in high school, the migrant education program

or directly from community college representatives themselves. Published studies

(McDonough, 2004; Teranishi, Suarez-Orozco, and Suarez-Orozco, 2011; Tierney, et al.,

2009) discuss the importance of having school based programs in high school that serve as

advocates and also help students understand the complicated college application process.

Correspondingly, the students that did receive application support with matriculation and

financial aid applications as high school seniors enrolled in community college after

graduation.

Matriculation

The lack of consistent counseling following students from high school to community college was a major finding in this study. As students transitioned into community college my interview data showed that upon matriculating to a community college, students faced difficulty with their English and writing for courses. Additionally, they also had a lack of adequate counseling and course planning, which hindered their time to transfer. As demonstrated in the literature, (Dougherty, 1992; Gandara, Driscoll & Orfield, 2012; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004) students who did not get proper guidance upon enrollment risk not aligning with an educational plan that leads to transferring, taking unnecessary courses. To transfer, students must one follow one or two educational plans depending on whether they want to transfer to a UC or a CSU. However, some students were unfamiliar with the specifics of these plans and did not receive proper guidance regarding what courses were applicable for transfer. The data from my study showed that students who were not enrolled in a program that offered advising or had rapport with a mentor took courses that were often unnecessary or faced confusion about pre-requisites and required courses needed for their major. As a result, students who did not have consistent counseling took longer to transfer or stopped out at various periods of their education affecting their persistence.

Secondly, many of the Nacavi students reported facing challenges with their English courses and were required to take remediation classes as pre-requisites before taking transferable courses. The data showed that the students who took remediation courses or struggled with their English coursework was due to not having exposure to a strong academic curriculum in high school. Those who had been placed in English Learner Language (ELL) courses in high school took a few English remediation classes and stated facing difficulties in

172

the classes since they had not been sufficiently prepared for college. These results mirror Bunch's work (2008, 2009) on ELL students in community college that illustrated how placement exams were not an effective measure for students that come from language minority backgrounds. However, other students who did take college preparatory classes also reported being negatively affected when writing course term papers feeling that they lacked extensive practice. It can be inferred then that the insufficient English preparation received in high schools continued to affect students' academic success throughout college.

These results correlate with the articles cited in the literature review that highlight the disparity of students of color in developmental courses. Particularly, Mejia, Rodriguez, and Johnson (2016) found that not only were Latinx students overly represented in remediation courses, but also that a disproportionate amount of these students were also likely to come from low income backgrounds. In addition, the work by Hagedorn, & Cypers, (2008) showed that the remediation process extends the time to transfer increasing the risk of premature stop out. Given the existing literature on the disparity of Latinx and particularly Xicanx students enrolled in developmental courses along with the findings in this study, make it difficult to ignore the racialization inherent within remediation courses and its impact on the educational experience of Indigenous students.

Financial Need & Legal Status

The importance of community college as the entrance for low-income first-generation students cannot be understated. In his work Perez (2010) showed that affordability is one of the main factors that attract undocumented students who do not qualify for federal financial aid. Similarly, Ngo & Astudillo's (2019) study showed that the CA Dream Act "raised the overall attempt and completion outcomes of Hispanic undocumented students who received

aid to the level of their U.S. citizen peers who received aid" (p.10). Their study also showed that

prior to the Dream Act, undocumented students were not enrolling in the same number of

units as compared to their peers who were documented US citizens.

Although the Nacavi students in my study stated that they chose to attend a

community college as the most cost-effective option, all the Nacavi students came from low

income homes and still faced great financial need even after free tuition. For those who were

undocumented they faced greater restrictions as they did not qualify for federal financial aid or

loans.

Due to their high need circumstances, all the Nacavi students worked while the

majority worked at least part-time to cover their living expenses. For some students this led to

prolonged time to transfer and the stop out for those who had to work full-time to support

themselves and their families. The Nacavi students' circumstances reflected the findings from

studies which showed that working full time was a high-risk factor for not transferring (Crisp

& Nora, 2010; Fry 2002, 2004; Saenz, 2002; Zarate & Burciaga, 2010).

It is important to emphasize that at this point in their educational careers,

undocumented students became critically aware of the impact that their legal status had on

their lives. They shifted from being a minority within the safety of high school where their

status had little impact on their educational accessibility to becoming adults where they lose

all protections and face restrictions as they enter an 'illegal' status. One of the major

limitations discussed was access to financial aid and availability of employment. Although

some students felt discouraged due to their status, others felt motivated to become politically

engaged on campus to advocate for other Dreamers. Despite facing high need and

restrictions, the Nacavi students displayed an enormous amount of resilience as they navigated through their education.

Transfer Support

Students that did not have efficient counseling in community college had more difficulty applying to a four-year school due to being unfamiliar with the transfer process and not having a reliable source of support. This was especially true for students who wanted to apply to UC's and private schools, which had a more involved application process. The data showed that students who transferred relied heavily on program support with the university application process. This shows that the dependence on support is especially crucial for first generation students. As referenced in the literature review, being a first-generation student is a risk factor for not transferring since many of these students do not have college educated parents who can offer assistance (Pascarella, et. al., 2003). Specifically, studies have also found that the competitive transfer process works to the advantage of whites and those who have higher income levels and have access to college going cultures (Chapa & Schink, 2006; Saunders & Serna, 2004). Analyzing this finding within a framework of CRT and LatCrit, aids in highlighting the inequities of educational accessibility and challenges the ideologies of educational institutions being objective and meritocratic to reveal the continued privileges of dominant groups.

Financial challenges at a University

As my results showed, attending a university posed a great financial weight for students and their families. Even students who were documented discussed how their financial aid awards were often not enough to cover all their living expenses. Since the

175

Nacavi students came from very low-income backgrounds and faced high need, this was aggravated for students who were Dreamers and had less access to financial assistance. It is important to mention that although some of the Nacavi students were citizens born in the US, they came from mixed status homes where some of their family members were documented and others were not. It is especially difficult when a parent is undocumented affecting the families' socio- economic status limiting the possibility for them to provide financial support in college.

A LatCrit perspective takes into consideration the negative subordinating impact of legal status on undocumented Indigenous students' access to post-secondary education. The political discourse surrounding undocumented students delivers a message that they do not belong in higher education through the restriction of financial assistance, the ways they are represented in media and restriction of opportunities. Consequently, undocumented students and/or their families are treated as 'others' who are undeserving of opportunities. Without sufficient financial assistance, legal employment or access to resources students face major barriers in attaining higher education making it difficult to achieve upward mobility and thus perpetuates the marginalization of undocumented students.

Areas for future research

The existing research on the experiences of Indigenous Mexican students in the US is limited, especially in relation to their experiences in higher education. There are many areas for future research development. For instance, all the participants in my research study were recruited directly through the Nacavi youth group. One area for future research is to analyze the experiences of other Indigenous students who are not in an ethnically based organization. My study has shown how Nacavi served as an important medium for students to develop their

Indigenous identity, advocacy and as a support for higher education. However, the Nacavi youth group holds a particular space that is unique to the area and also in that it is a subsidiary of a larger non-profit organization that wields resources to hire college educated staff to serve as coordinators, and grant writers to help fund the youth group and the services it offers. Specifically, it would be important to look at the experiences Indigenous youth in high school who are not in Nacavi or a similar program to examine how they perceive their Indigenous identity, their educational aspirations and the supports that help them navigate their post-secondary education.

Also, as this study has shown, the development of a positive ethnic identity and receiving validation from supportive educators correlates with academic success. Although the central coast has a significant Mexican Indigenous population, schools particularly within the K-12 system, have failed to set up a process that identifies Indigenous Mexican students thus ignoring their linguistic and cultural differences. Mixteco and Zapoteco have been added to the California Department of Education's language survey however, it does not identify which variants. Despite these linguistic differences, Indigenous students continue being placed into ELL classrooms with other non-native English speakers. This practice enforces subtractive bilingualism in which one language is learned at the expense of their heritage language. One area for future research is to discuss ways in which students who are more dominant in their Indigenous languages become instructed through a pedagogy that is more culturally relevant to become competitive with other college ready students.

Additionally, none of my participants mentioned ever having their ethnic identities mentioned or recognized within their education. There was a limited availability of ethnic studies courses within the in the local high school district and the few students that did take

these courses took Xicanx studies, which centered on Aztec history and Mexican nationalism. These courses did not include Indigenous groups outside of central Mexico, ignoring the histories of Mixteco and Zapoteco students and they also did not discuss the contemporary issues of Indigenous communities. Hence, Indigenous students were absent from the curriculum. Future research especially within the field of ethnic and Xicanx studies, could incorporate the histories of other Indigenous groups while also discussing current issues that these communities face today. An ethnic studies course with a focus on the historic disenfranchisement of marginalized population would serve as an intervention to address injustice, privilege, and power.

This study only included Nacavi students that began higher education at a community college. Although some of the students in my study were eligible to attend a university out of high school, there were various other factors that influenced this decision. In contrast there were also a number of other Nacavi students who chose to attend a university after graduation. Another area of research could include these students' experiences in a comparative study to examine their educational experiences, planning and circumstances in high school that led them to attend a university.

Also, the number of participants in the studies concerning Indigenous Mexican students at a university that I have referenced in my literature review and my own study have been limited to a small number of participants averaging less than twenty. Increasing the sample size and completing a longitudinal study of the student's trajectories at a university could provide much more detailed insight into the experiences of these students. Specifically, it would be of interest to see how their identities shift, how they become involved on campus with other Indigenous students and how they relate to other mestizo organizations.

As legal status and its impact on students' access to financial resources was a major recurring theme in my study, future research involves keeping up with the changing policies concerning immigration policies especially as it pertains to educational financing and career prospects of undocumented students. In this study the two students who graduated with bachelor's degrees were documented and working within their respective fields. However, there were many other participants who were undocumented. It is unclear what the political climate will be like for these students as they graduate from universities. The Biden administration has spoken out about several reforms in relation to immigration, citizenship for Dreamers, and the restructuring of funding within higher education. At the time of study there had not been any significant changes to policies yet and the impact of these proposed reforms remains to be seen.

Recently the work of Blackwell, Boj Lopez, and Urrieta (2017) has attempted to provide a framework that adequately captures the nuanced position of Indigenous populations within the Latinx community by the introduction of 'Critical Latinx Indigeneities'. This conceptual model is derived from literature that has analyzed Mexican Indigenous migration to the US (Kearney 2000; Fox and Rivera-Salgado 2004; Velasco 2005; Stephen 2007) to "problematize and engage how intra-Latinx racism positions Indigenous migrants from Latin America as the invisible or inferior Other within the larger Latinx population, especially within issues of labor, health care carceral policing experiences and struggles of Indigenous migrants" (p. 129). This burgeoning theoretical model is being informed by the work of Indigenous Purepecha scholar Dr. Luis Urrieta an expert in the field of cultural studies in Education. While this framework is not exclusive to an educational setting it posits itself as a "lens for understanding the ways indigeneity, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, class and other

intersecting oppressions are produced over multiple contexts" (p.130). Thus, a future area for additional research is the incorporation of this perspective as a theoretical intervention which would serve to further deconstruct the diversity that exists within Latinx Indigenous communities.

Implications

Suggestion for High School Institutions

Considering the findings from this study there are several implications that can be advised to improve the persistence of Mexican Indigenous Students towards higher education. My suggestions center around the following areas: 1. Providing education spaces that encourage positive identity development 2. Culturally sensitive support programs for students and their families 3. Academic support for English Language Learners 4. Access to financial resources for undocumented students.

The most salient finding from this study reinforced the importance that developing a positive sense of ethnic identity had on Mexican Indigenous students' success in college. My study showed how Nacavi was instrumental in this development. However, other studies (Nicolas, 2012; Kovats, 2018; Vasquez, 2012) have also shown that ethnic studies courses, participation in cultural events, and peer networks also have similar effects on identity development. As an institution, high schools should serve as sites where Indigenous youth explore their identities by having a space to gather and also incorporating history into their curricula. Additionally, schools should also use the students' cultural capital and involve parents and Indigenous elders to incorporate communal ways for Indigenous students to be successful.

The importance of identity affirming spaces for Indigenous students has been evident at every point within students' education and goes further beyond high schools. Throughout the study Nacavi students emphasized the importance of feeling validated and having safe spaces on campus leading them to form clubs based on their identity and legal status. Although these spaces may exist at a four-year school, colleges at all levels should incorporate a space and resources for marginalized students within their support services. Designating a space for students to gather is a meaningful action for the inclusion of historically underrepresented students. Carter-Andrews (2007) discussed counter spaces and stresses the significance of peer networks and identity affirming spaces that serve as sites of affirmation and connection whereas in other areas racially marginalized students encounter neglect.

Another suggestion for high schools is the need to make curriculum more equitable for English Language Learners. As noted in studies regarding ELL students in high schools (Callahan, 2005; Callahan, Wilkinson, & Muller, 2010) these classes are not meeting college preparatory requirements and are not exposing students to the critical skills necessary to be successful at a university level. Thus, a suggestion would be towards having a more adaptive curriculum to the needs of ELLs, which could scaffold them into more rigorous curriculum.

College planning and counseling needs to be consistent and accessible throughout the progression in high school for students and their families. My data showed that many students did not receive information about college readiness until they were juniors or seniors in high school which for many was too late to complete college eligibility requirements. There were also almost zero attempts of schools involving Indigenous parents into a dialogue regarding higher education. The data also showed that students were unclear about the different pathways toward higher education. Further, several of the participants mentioned

that they did not receive information related specifically about community college and the transfer process from their counselors. Despite this oversight on behalf of the counselors, a major support was provided through programmatic interventions.

A major benefit for students is the creation of an outreach program at the high school level that is a direct partner of local community colleges, which could serve the following functions for Indigenous students to ease the transition into college: 1. Establish rapport with students and their families 2. Provide culturally relevant information on the college process for Indigenous students and their parents 3. Directly assist students with the matriculation process and financial aid 4. Discuss the implications of legal status on the college process and financing. Staff in this position would serve as a contact person for students and families and would also disseminate information consistently throughout their attendance in high school. As many of my participants explained in their interviews, students enrolled in community college as a default option since they were uninformed or unprepared. College planning activities were not evenly distributed amongst all students and a program such as this could aid the college readiness process targeting the most vulnerable students.

To establish a transfer culture within community colleges, there should be more support to expand resources and programs such as the EOPS and MESA for 1st generation and low- income students. The effectiveness in these programs lies in connecting students with peers, counselors, instructors, and financial resources for students. My participants mentioned the great benefits received, particularly by EOPS, regarding the establishment of rapport with counselors and educational planning provided. One of the program's major drawbacks is the requirement for students to be enrolled full-time. As many of the Nacavi students worked full time and attended school part-time this made them ineligible for the program. Paradoxically,

many of these students would have benefitted the most from the program's resources. Thus, not only should community colleges expand this program, but they should make wider resources available to part-time and evening students as well.

There is also a crucial need to improve campus services which focus on facilitating the success of undocumented students. In my study Miguel, Benjamin and Antonio were involved with starting a Dreamers club on their community college campus indicating the need for a meeting space for students where they advocated for support. Fortunately, the creation of a resource center was created on campus. However, the dialogue must also go beyond this office and incorporate training for staff and faculty. For colleges to better serve undocumented students it is fundamental that institutions understand current legislation and restrictions and its impact on the lives of undocumented students. In their work, Pope and Mueller (2005) stated that: "student affairs practitioners need to be more multiculturally competent in all aspects of their work, it is vital that diversity issues be effectively and systematically infused into preparation programs" (p. 697). Colleges should also provide professional development to discuss the educational and legal challenges that Dreamers encounter and could potentially hinder their degree attainment.

In addition to these services, Dreamers need to receive extra financial support. Since they are not eligible to receive federal government aid, it is necessary to provide financial advising to help them find outside support through private scholarships. There are also private schools who have more discretion to their funding than public schools and are providing full scholarships for undocumented students, though they may be uninformed of this option. Also, although there are organizations such as 'Immigrants Rising', which has a database of scholarships that do not require citizenship, many students are unaware of these

resources. As such it is important for financial aid offices to have specialized information and or counselors who are knowledgeable of support availability for Dreamers.

This aim of this study was to center the voices of Indigenous immigrant students on their pathway toward higher education and to examine what they perceived to be the supports and barriers that they encountered as they transitioned from high school to a university. The findings of this study add to limited research that analyzes the educational experiences of Indigenous communities in the United States. It is my hope that this study can provide insight into their experiences and help inform educational practices.

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Appendix A:
Survey questions

Home and Culture
1. Where were you born?
2. How long have you lived in Ventura County?
3. Where are your parents from?
4. How many languages do you speak?
5. Do your parents speak an Indigenous language?

High School and College Encouragement
1. When you were in high school what colleges did you want to apply to?

2. What do you want to study?
3. What are your career goals?
4. What kinds of grades did you have in high school? What was your GPA like?
5. Did you meet all of the A-G requirements in high school?
6. What were the highest levels of Math and English classes that you took in high school?
7. Did you ever take any college credit courses in high school?
8. Were you involved with SKILLS?

College Preparation
Enrollment process
9. Did anyone help you with the enrollment process at Community College?
10. When you enrolled at Community College did you take the placement tests in Math and English?
    a. What classes did you get placed into?
11. What classes are you taking now?
12. Who helped you decide what classes to take?

Educational Planning and Objective
13. What are your educational goals in community college?
14. When did you meet with a counselor?
15. How long do you estimate it will take you to transfer?
16. What four year schools are you planning on applying to in the future?

Educational Financing
17. How are you financing your education? What kind of aid have you received?
    a. Have you filled out the FAFSA or Dream Act?
18. Aside from school financial help, what other kinds of help are you getting?
19. What scholarships have you applied to?

Employment
20. What kind of job do you have now?
21. How many hours?
22. Do you provide support for your family?

Appendix B:
Interview protocol

Interview #1 Questions

Participation in Nacavi
1. How long have you been involved with Nacavi?
2. Why do you come to Nacavi?
3. What kinds of things have you learned in Nacavi?
4. What are some of the things you like about Nacavi? Are there some things that you dislike?

High School and College Encouragement

5. Tell me about your High School experience
6. During high school were there specific people that really motivated you or helped you? How so?
7. How was your family involved during your education?
8. Have you ever felt excluded from college like it wasn't for you based on your ethnicity?
9. When you were in high school did you work? If so, what was it like working and going to school?
10. What motivated you to go to college?
11. In what ways did your family encourage you to go to college in high school?
    a. What did they say when you told them you wanted to go to college?
    b. How did they help you?
12. In what ways did you feel prepared to attend college after high school?
13. Can you tell me what kinds of information you received about college?
14. Did anyone help you with your college applications?
15. How aware were you of the requirements between UC's, CSU's and CC's?
    a. How familiar were you about the A-G courses in high school?
    b. What kind of information did you receive about the SAT/ACT? Did you take it?
16. How much information did you get in high school about financial aid for school?
17. What challenges do you feel you have faced, if any in applying to and attending a college?

College Preparation

Enrollment process
18. What school are you going to now?
19. What other colleges did you apply to?
20. What schools were you accepted into?
21. How many classes are you planning on taking each semester?
22. Was there anything that surprised you about applying to and enrolling in community college?
23. What are the biggest concerns you have about starting community college?
    a. Are there any specific academic concerns?
24. What issues have you had enrolling in the classes you need?

Educational Planning and Objective
25. What are your professional and personal goals in life?
26. Where would you go to get academic help on campus?
27. What supports if any do you have that can help you during college?
    a. How much support do you have outside of campus?
28. What friends or family members can ask for help with college?

Courses/Academics
29. What level Math and English courses are you taking now?
30. Are the classes harder/easier than you thought?

Educational Financing
31. What concerns do you have about financing your education?

Peer and Social support
32. How many friends do you have that are also going to your community college?
33. How many friends or family members do you have that are currently in college?
    a. Did any of them transfer from a community college?