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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO
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Latino/a/x Student Success: A Review of Institutional Practices to Better
Understand and Support Students' Multiple and Intersecting Identities in Higher Education

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree Doctor of Education

in

Educational Leadership

by

Adan Quetzalcoatl Sanchez

Committee in charge:

University of California San Diego

Professor Frances Contreras, Chair

California State University San Marcos

Professor Annette Daoud

Professor Patricia Prado-Olmos

2019

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Chair

University of California San Diego
California State University San Marcos

2019

DEDICATION

This doctoral journey and product is dedicated to my family who continues to inspire me, encourage me, and support me in all aspects of my life. My parents made tremendous sacrifices for as long as I can remember to provide a better future for their children and grandchildren starting by immigrating from Mexico to the United States. They role modeled to be hard workers and reminded us that education was a priority as they believed that it opened doors to a better life not only for ourselves but for our future generations.

In particular, I am grateful for Amélie Xochiquetzal, Diego Huitzilopochtli, and Diana for letting me take the time to complete this academic achievement. Their sacrifices and encouragement kept me focused and motivated. Amélie and Diego are my biggest fans and a big influence in my research focus. As twins, they share many identities and are different in many others. Their development will be influenced by the world around them and I hope that when they advance in their education, they attend institutions that are ready to support their multiple and intersecting identities to ensure their overall success. Most importantly, Diana who for almost 20 years has been the best life partner who pushes me to grow, keeps me accountable, lifts me up, and proudly celebrates my educational and professional milestones. I have learned so much from her but primarily the essence of dedication and passion to make a positive difference, the need to make sacrifices for a greater good, and to be efficient and always work hard to persevere in anything we set our minds to as we pave the way for our twins. Gracias amor and I look forward to celebrating your own doctoral accomplishment.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SIGNATURE PAGE	iii
DEDICATION	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
LIST OF TABLES.....	x
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	xi
VITA.....	xii
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION.....	xiii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY	1
Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem	2
Purpose of the Study	7
Definition of Terms.....	8
Theoretical Framework	10
Research Questions	10
Significance of Study	11
Organization of the Study.....	13
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	14
Introduction	14
Institutions’ Role in Supporting Students of Color.....	14
Hispanic-Serving Institutions.....	15
Inclusive Curricular Experiences	16
Intentional Co-Curricular Programs	18
Institutions’ Role in Supporting Latino/a/x Student Intersectionality	20
Latino/a/x Students Treated as Monolithic Group	21
Latino/a/x Students’ Contextualized Identities.....	25
Theoretical Framework	27
Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity.....	27
Gap in Literature.....	30

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN.....	32
Review of Purpose of the Study and Research Questions.....	32
Research Methodology.....	33
Research Site	33
Research Participants	35
Research Design.....	36
Secondary Demographic Data	37
Archival Records	37
Direct Observations.....	37
Documentation.....	38
Audiovisual Materials	38
In-person One-on-One Interviews	38
Data Collection and Analysis.....	39
Pre-Research Study.....	40
Phase I	40
Phase II.....	41
Phase III.....	41
Limitations	42
Methodology Constraints	42
Generalizations	43
Validity	43
Positionality	44
Significance of Study.....	45
CHAPTER FOUR: DEFINING LATINO/A/X STUDENT SUCCESS AND ITS INFLUENCE ON CAMPUS CULTURE.....	46
Introduction	46
Relevant Literature.....	47
Institutions’ Role in Supporting Students of Color.....	48
Hispanic-Serving Institution Designation	49
Research Methodology and Design.....	49
Research Site	50
Research Participants	52

Data Collection.....	53
Findings.....	54
Defining Student Success.....	54
Defining Latino/a/x Student Success.....	56
The Influence of HSI Designation.....	57
Latino/a/x Student Success Efforts & Influence on Campus Culture.....	61
Discussion.....	65
The Need for Individualizing Student Success.....	65
HSI Designation Treated as a Colony of the Larger College.....	66
Hierarchical Structure Limits Contributions to Change.....	67
Implications for Future Practices.....	68
CHAPTER FIVE: HIGHER EDUCATION’S ROLE IN ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF LATINO/A/X STUDENTS’ MULTIPLE AND INTERSECTING IDENTITIES.....	69
Introduction.....	69
Relevant Literature and Theoretical Framework.....	71
Latino/a/x Students Treated as Monolithic Group.....	71
Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity.....	72
Research Methodology & Design.....	74
Research Participants.....	74
Research Design.....	75
Data Collection.....	76
Findings.....	76
Structure of Latino/a/x Student Success.....	77
Basic Understanding of the Latino/a/x Student’s Multiple Identities.....	79
Minimum Knowledge How Latino/a/x Students’ Identities Intersect.....	82
Creating an Empowering Professional Development System.....	85
Discussion.....	88
Clarifying the College’s Structure to Build Meaning-Making Filters.....	88
Professional Development as a Form to Build Meaning-Making Filters.....	90
Implications for Future Practices.....	92
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION.....	93
Appendix A: Recruitment Invitation E-mail for Title V Director.....	97

Appendix B: Recruitment Invitation E-mail for Administrators, Faculty and Staff Members 98
Appendix C: Participant Consent Form..... 99
Appendix D: Participant Interview Guide102
REFERENCES.....104

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Fall 2007 college enrollment and graduation rates across the U.S. by racial/ethnic groups	3
Figure 2: Fall 2007 college enrollment and graduation rates across the U.S. for Asian students in comparison to other racial/ethnic groups	4
Figure 3: Latino/a/x college student enrollment in California state colleges and universities in 2010	5
Figure 4: Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity	28
Figure 5: The Core Sense of Self and the Multiple Identities from the Conceptual Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity	29
Figure 6: Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity	73

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Initial Overview of the Proposed Research Site and its Counterpart in the Two College District	34
Table 2: Alignment of Research Design with Research Questions	37
Table 3: Overview of the Research Site and its Counterpart in the Two-College District	51
Table 4: Overview of the 14 Research Participants by Alphabetical Order	52
Table 5: Overview of the Research Participants	75

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Lastly, I want to acknowledge that as scholar-practitioner, I now carry more privilege and responsibility to advocate and work to develop proactive, intentional, and equitable student success efforts that will sustain educational environments to better support our students' lived experiences influenced by their multiple and intersecting identities.

VITA

- 2004 Bachelor of Arts, Spanish, University of San Diego
- 2006 Master of Arts, Leadership Studies, University of San Diego
- 2019 Doctor of Education, Educational Leadership, University of California San Diego and California State University San Marcos

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Latino/a/x Student Success: A Review of Institutional Practices to Better Understand and Support Students' Multiple and Intersecting Identities in Higher Education

by

Adan Quetzalcoatl Sanchez

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

University of California San Diego, 2019
California State University San Marcos, 2019

Professor Frances Contreras, Chair

There is an increase of Latino/a/x students enrolling in higher education in the United States. Yet, Latino students' retention and graduation rates continue to be significantly lower compared to White students (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). In part, this problem stems from how higher education institutional practices have maintained one-size-fits-all models to support Latino/a/x students without considering the diversity within this complex group defined by their multiple and intersecting identities. Research shows that underrepresented students, such as Latino students, struggle in college and in their transition for different reasons (Carter, Hurtado, & Spuler, 1996; Harackiewicz et al., 2014; Hurtado, 1994). Therefore, higher education institutions must create a college community that promotes social and intellectual integration to strengthen student commitment (Gentry, 2014) and sustain updated efforts by

dedicating time in collaborating with students (Espinoza & Espinoza, 2012) since both student and institutional variables influence college persistence (Titus, 2004). Since there is a lack of research and understanding of Latino/a/x students' within-group differences, this study examined higher educational institutional practices aimed to support Latino/a/x students' multiple and intersecting identities to identify how to enhance institutional efforts to ensure Latino/a/x student success. In particular, California Community College system was central to the study since the vast majority of Latino students enroll in these higher education institutions (California Postsecondary Education Commission, 2018a). The aim of this study was to argue that the relationship between student and institution must be intentional and well-coordinated since current higher education institutional practices designed to support the needs of students of color such as Latino/a/x students may not be fully supporting their multiple and intersecting identities. This dissertation stresses how critical it is for an institution to dig deeper into the Latino/a/x students' lives to understand and validate their diverse experiences in order to provide intentional and sustainable practices where students can explore their complex identities and ultimately meet their holistic needs. Doing so can lead a higher education institution to proactively understand their Latino/a/x student population and improve institutional practices that may contribute to an overall student success including higher retention and graduation rates (Hurtado, 1994).

Keywords: institutional practices, Latino/a/x students, multiple identities, intersectionality

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Under one institution, there are many complex structures, policies, and guidelines that in many cases lack a direct connection to each other and still drive the work of the institution. In a similar way, college students like Latino/a/x¹ students and their experiences are comprised of individual and complex stories. These experiences are unique to the student based on their² background and social identities, which include race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religion, ability, and age—to name a few. In addition, Latino/a college students have other roles and identities that impact their transition and experience such as being the first in their family to attend college, learning English as a second language, holding multiple jobs, and/or having dependents (Carter, Hurtado, & Spuler, 1996; Harackiewicz et al., 2014; Hurtado, 1994; Hurtado & Gurin, 1987). Each one of these identities is a social category an individual is associated with and can create an authentic sense of self (Shields, 2008). College students of color, like Latino/a students, struggle with these varying identities and their meaning during their college experience (Hurtado & Gurin, 1995; Torres, 2003; Torres & Baxter Magolda, 2004), especially when exposed to daily microaggressions.

¹ The author of this dissertation has chosen to use Latino/a/x to show the chronological evolution from Latino to Latina to Latinx. These terms will be used individually and as a group to “honor self-identity [as] a personal choice” (Batista, Collado, & Perez II, 2018) and respect the authors’ own identifiers in their research included in this dissertation.

² The author of this dissertation has chosen to use the third person plural pronouns “they,” “them,” and “their” to function “as third-person singular pronouns to model a common technique used to avoid” (American Psychological Association, 2015) misgendering people, especially the authors and research participants included in this dissertation.

Higher education institutions maintain a decision process based on their understanding of large groups of student populations such as students of color and disregard their unique stories by not accurately looking at individual ethnic group's progress and challenges (Contreras & Contreras, 2015). This process inhibits higher education institutions across the United States (U.S.) to add depth in their overall practices to support minoritized student groups like Latino students (Hurtado, 1994). Higher education institutions are disinterested and/or limited in proactively supporting Latino/a/x students' multiple identities and their development, which impact to some extent how they experience college depending on the visibility, privilege, and saliency of each identity (Jones & McEwen, 2000). The lack of attention, priority, or willingness to implement intentional institutional practices does not offer the opportunity for [Latino/a/x] students to explore their multiple identities (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007) and impedes them from fully flourishing holistically. Therefore, a review of current higher education institutional practices aimed to support Latino/a/x students was needed to understand the gaps and opportunities to intentionally enhance these efforts to better support the development of their multiple and intersecting identities in their journey toward college success.

Statement of the Problem

There is a disconnect between college enrollment and graduation rates for students of color even though all are equally important when examining student success. College enrollment for students of color was projected to increase at the turn of the new millennium but graduation rates were still not expected to close the gap in comparison to White students (Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998). Data continue to illustrate that students of color remain underrepresented in higher education. Figure 1 shows a study in 2013 highlighting that across

the U.S., 62% of Asian, 42% of White, 34% of Black and Hispanic, 33% of Pacific Islanders, and 32% of American Indian/Alaska Native 18- to 24-year-olds enrolled in college (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). Yet, graduation rates for these student groups show that only a fraction of the enrolled students actually completed their higher education.

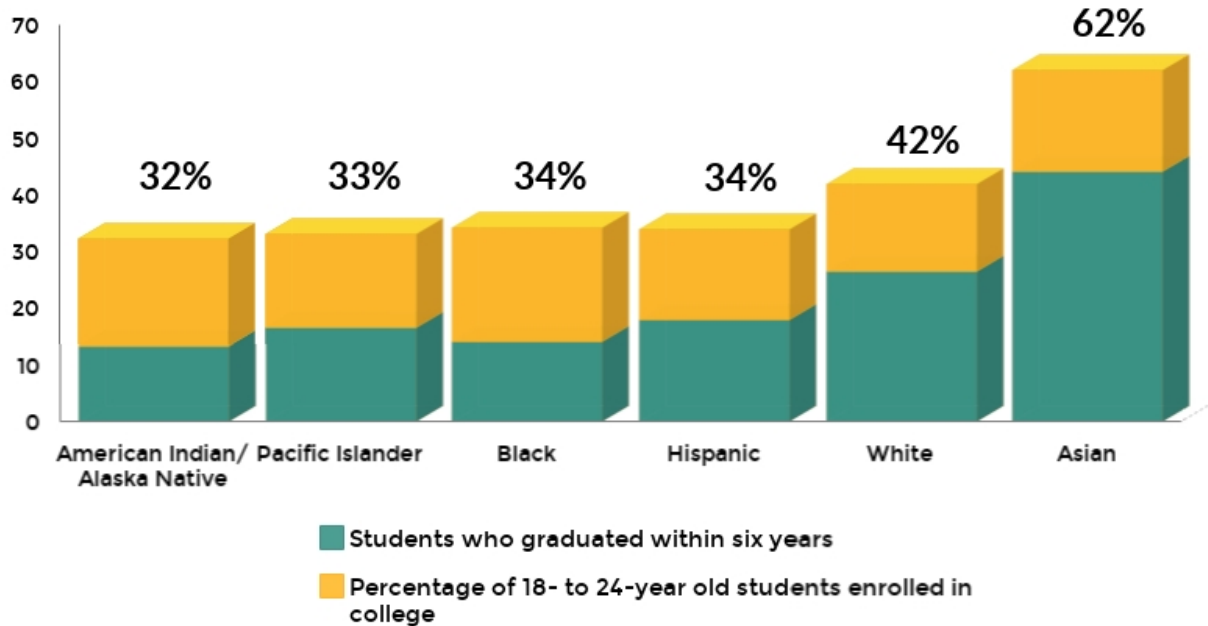


Figure 1: Fall 2007 college enrollment and graduation rates across the U.S. by racial/ethnic groups (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016).

Hispanic and Black students had the largest college enrollment increase from 1990 to 2013, but for the fall 2007 cohort, Hispanic students only had a 53% six-year graduation rate and Black students had 41% six-year graduation rate—reflected by green section in Figure 1. Comparably also in Figure 1, American Indian/Alaska Native had a 41% six-year graduation rate, while Asian students had the highest rate at 71%, White students had 63%, and Pacific Islander students had 50% (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). Part of the problem is knowing that college students from underrepresented backgrounds such as first-generation, low-income, and ethnically diverse face a number of challenges that lead to lower retention and graduation

rates (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Furthermore, Figure 2 shows the additional concern of the disparity among students of color by showing that the 44% of Asian students who graduated within six years (represented by horizontal green line) is greater than the actual number of students initially enrolled in any of the other racial groups (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). This is an example of the difference among student groups, especially for students of color, in college enrollment and graduations rates that emphasizes the need for a personalized and intentional approach to positively influence their college experience with the ultimate goal to improve these rates.

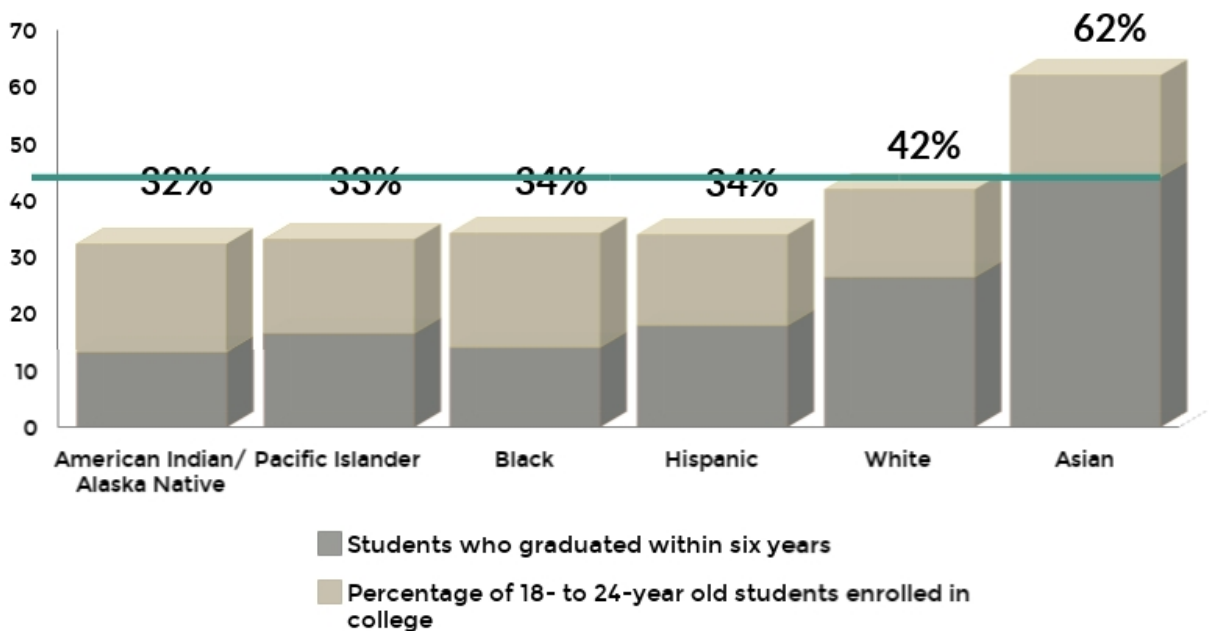


Figure 2: Fall 2007 college enrollment and graduation rates across the U.S. for Asian students in comparison to other racial/ethnic groups (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016).

In California, Latino/a/x students are highly impacting the college enrollment rate in the higher education systems. Of the 2.34 million students enrolled in California state colleges and universities in 2010, 31% were Latino students, second only to 33% of White students. Within this Latino student population of 31% of roughly 725,400 students, Figure 3 shows the

disparity among California’s higher education systems in college enrollment. About 4.9% of Latino students enrolled in the University of California (UC) system, about 15.5% enrolled in the California State University (CSU) system, and the remaining 79.6% enrolled in the California Community College (CCC) system (California Postsecondary Education Commission [CPEC], 2018a). This means that in a sample of 100 students enrolled in California state colleges and universities, 31 were Latino/a/x and approximately two of them attended the UC system, five attended the CSU system, and 24 enrolled in the CCC system. Latino/a/x students in California continue to enroll in college at higher numbers than previous years and the majority are enrolling in the CCC system (CPEC, 2018a). This high number enrolling in the CCC system is in part because of the perceived benefits such as being close to home, less expensive, and opportunity to build foundation before transferring to a four-year institution (Evans, 2009).

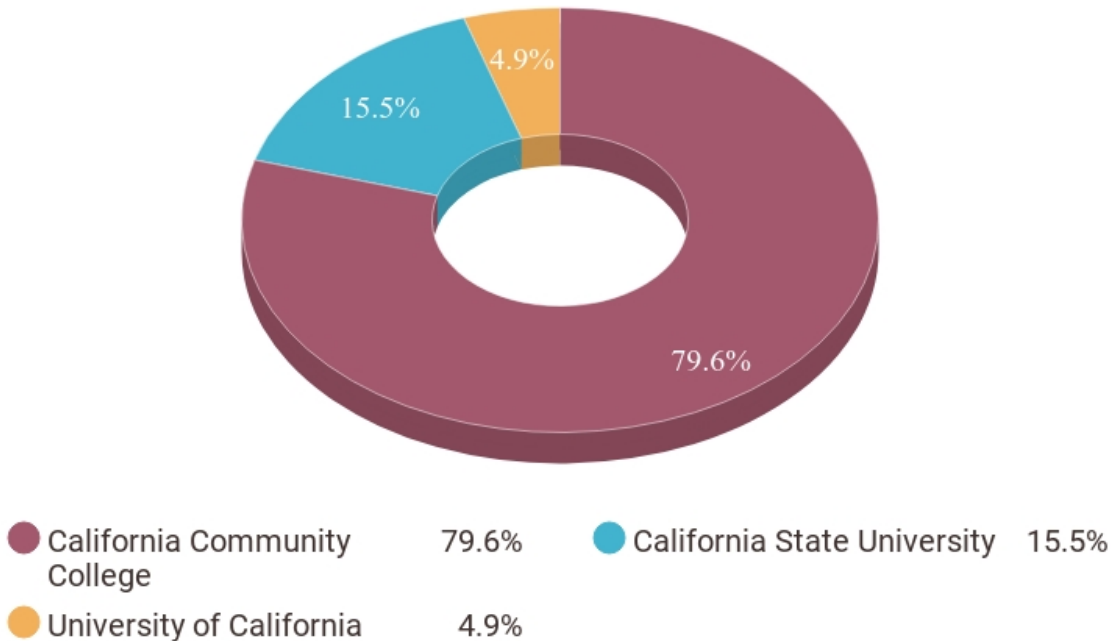


Figure 3: Latino/a/x college student enrollment in California state colleges and universities in 2010 (CPEC, 2018a).

Furthermore, four-year California state colleges and universities have low graduation rates of Latino/a/x students. For example, those who started in 2001 had a 73.1% six-year graduation rate in the UC system and a 40.3% six-year graduation rate in the CSU system (CPEC, 2018b). The aforementioned small number of Latino/a/x students enrolled in four-year California state colleges and universities then shrinks to the Latino/a/x students who actually completed their higher education per the six-year graduation rates. It is evident that college enrollment of Latino/a/x students have improved over the past decade but their graduation rates remain constant even when institutional efforts to support Latino/a/x college students have been implemented at the federal level.

Federal funding was secured to help higher education institutions with the growing number of Latino/a/x students and the U.S. government classifying them as Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs). HSIs are commonly known as two and four-year higher education institutions with a student body of at least 25% Hispanic students and at least half of those students must qualify as low-income (Espinoza & Espinoza, 2012). In 2008, there were 54 community colleges and 19 four-year institutions with the HSI designation in California (Contreras, Malcom, & Bensimon, 2008). These numbers grew in 2013 across California with four UCs and 14 CSUs as well as 42 CCCs just in Southern California (Contreras & Contreras, 2015). The HSI designation continues to grow across the U.S. and funding has been available for over two decades but Latino/a/x student retention and graduation rates are still low when compared to their peers. Federal funding is available to implement supporting efforts for Latino/a/x college students and yet something else is happening at higher education institutions that limits a growth in Latino/a/x retention and graduation rates.

Purpose of the Study

There is significant research on the Latino/a/x student population and their experience in higher education (Carter, Hurtado, & Spuler, 1996; Hurtado, 1994; Hurtado & Gurin, 1995; Torres, 2003; Torres & Baxter Magolda, 2004). Yet, there is a lack of research and understanding of Latino/a/x students' within-group differences to better develop and implement institutional practices as well as how are institutional practices aimed to support Latino/a/x student success impact their multiple and intersecting identities. The purpose of this study was to examine to what extent higher education institutional practices support intersecting identity development to further Latino/a/x student success. The study focused on Latino/a/x students in California since it is one of the states with the highest Latino college enrollment and more specifically in the community college system since the majority of them enroll in this higher education system over the UC and CSU systems (CPEC, 2018a).

The literature review in this dissertation draws a connection between current higher education institutional practices for students of color and the need to better understand the diversity and complexity of the Latino/a/x college student population. The literature review sets a foundation on the Latino/a/x student population and some of its sub-groups but did not analyze their college experience. This study did not aim to focus on student characteristics that have been used to blame the “victim” and instead focused on understanding the real obstacles that higher education practices present (Evans, 2009). In particular, this dissertation described institutional practices intended to positively impact Latino/a/x students and students of color to highlight best practices aimed to support their curricular and co-curricular experiences.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined for the purpose of this study and used throughout the dissertation. Definitions were included at this point within the first chapter to better understand the terminology in future sections. Additional terms minimally used will be defined within their respective sections.

- *First-generation student*: Traditionally includes a student who is first in their family to attend college (Davis, 2010).
- *Gender*: An umbrella term including gender identity, gender expression, and gender roles commonly used in binary (from man to woman or masculine to feminine) system (Jourian, 2015).
- *Hispanic*³: Person who has origins in Spanish-speaking countries (Ponce, 2017) such as Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Central or South America, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016).
- *Hispanic-Serving Institution*: Higher education institutions that have eligibility (received designation through application process) and “has an enrollment of undergraduate full-time equivalent students that is at least 25% Hispanic students at the end of the award year immediately preceding the date of application” (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).
- *Identity*: A social category an individual is associated with and can create an authentic sense of self (Shields, 2008).

³ The terms “Hispanic” and “Latino/a/x” will be used interchangeably due to the way data was collected and presented in previous research included in this dissertation.

- *Latino/a/x*: A term to represent a person from all genders who has origins in Latin American countries (Ponce, 2017).
- *Microaggression*: Intentional or unintentional interaction in which individuals communicate covert bias to members of marginalized social groups (Sue et al., 2007).
- *Minoritized group*: “[S]ocial group that is devalued in society and given less access to resources...not necessarily related to how many or few of them there are in the population at large” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p. 5).
- *Sex*: Also referred to as assigned sex or biological sex, “is a medically assigned identity based” primarily on visible genitalia at birth treated as binary from male to female (Jourian, 2015, p. 466).
- *Student of color⁴*: Student who identifies as Asian, Black, Latino/a/x, Native, and/or Pacific Islander.
- *Student success effort*: Activity, program, and structure designed to support the academic, social, cultural, and well-being components of the whole student for an overall success.
- *Student success metrics*: Available data to show “how well colleges are doing in remedial instruction, job training programs, retention of students and graduation and completion rates” (California Community College Chancellor’s Office, 2018a).

⁴ The terms “Student of color,” “Underrepresented,” and “Minority” will be used interchangeably due to the way students were described in previous research included in this dissertation.

Theoretical Framework

The reviewed literature first highlights institutional practices aimed to support Latino/a/x students and students of color. The literature review also includes several examples of Latino/a/x student experiences to highlight the multiple and intersecting identities within this diverse population. The theoretical framework then guides the study to connect the institutional practices with the Latino/a/x student experiences. The Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity then provides the importance to separate the core and multiple identities from the student's contextual influences. This model emphasizes that a student's self-perception of their multiple and intersecting identities is a product of their contextual influences passing through a meaning-making filter. Therefore, to seek a holistic student success, higher education professionals need to enhance opportunities for students to develop complex meaning-making filters through individual and group experiences (Abes, Jones & McEwen, 2007).

Research Questions

As mentioned earlier, the purpose of this study was to examine higher education institutional practices designed to support Latino/a/x students to identify gaps and enhance these efforts to proactively shape the development of their multiple and intersecting identities during their college journey to ensure student success. The overarching question that guided this study was:

- What do higher education institutions prioritize when implementing institutional practices designed to support Latino/a/x student success?

In addition, the study included two supplemental questions:

- How, if at all, are higher education institutional practices structured to address the needs of Latino/a/x students' multiple and intersecting identities?
- How does the presence of institutional practices for Latino/a/x student success influence campus culture?

Significance of Study

The historical practices of exclusion from higher education institutions continue to influence the campus climate (Hurtado, 1994). In particular for Latino students, they have a history of discrimination in the educational system and organizational structures that are largely unchanged sustain the inconsistency in retention and graduation rates in higher education when compared to White students (Garcia & Okhidoi, 2015). Moreover, a lack of institutional accountability perpetuates a negative message for “students of color who often feel that schools reject their ways of knowing and being” (Zamudio et al., 2011, p. 40). As the Latino/a/x population continues to grow, its complexity will expand. It is critical to take the time to understand understudied and growing populations to effectively facilitate their success (Hurtado, 1994; Morales, 2012). Something is happening for Latino/a/x students in higher education institutions that is impeding for graduation rates to grow at a similar rate as their college enrollment.

Higher education institutions have the opportunity and responsibility to transform the educational system to customize and highly impact the Latino/a/x student experience. An increase of Latino students on college campuses is not sufficient to address diversity issues (Hurtado, 1994) or meet their needs. Institutions must hold themselves accountable to evolve and better meet their students' needs rather than expect for Latino/a/x students to adapt to their general higher education practices. Key institutional practices have been designed to

support underrepresented student populations since educators understand deeper examples of race relations and inequities (Zamudio et al., 2011). However, with low percentages of Latino faculty and administrators in key leadership roles, there is a lack of deep understanding of the Latino community and its history in the U.S. (Contreras & Contreras, 2015). Educators across the U.S. need help understanding inequities in the educational system (Singleton, 2015), which limits their awareness of Latino/a/x students' multiple identities. There is a need for higher education institutions to engage in honest reflection of their practices aimed to support Latino/a/x students to truly assist in the development of the whole student. The reflection and conversation must include moving away from deficit models connected to Latino/a/x students' marginalized identities. By only scratching the surface of systematic oppression, educators are unable to implement updated, intentional, and sustainable higher education institutional practices to ensure Latino/a/x student success.

In particular, since California is one of the states with the highest Latino/a/x student enrollment, higher education institutions have the opportunity to proactively be part of the solution to enroll, retain, and ensure the students meet their educational goals. Higher education institutions can also reflect on whether success for Latino/a/x students means persistence, degree completion, satisfaction with their college experience, and/or other outcomes. In particular, because six-year transfer and completion rates are not adequate measures to represent "student success" (Contreras & Contreras, 2015). Not having set outcomes hinders institutions from creating an intentional infrastructure of support systems from beginning to end of their college experience. Latino/a/x students should arrive to college knowing the institution has taken the time to create intentional supporting structures and policies to provide equitable resources and services. Higher education institutions must

personalize practices to create a sense of belonging with their university parallel to belonging to a family, which could provide a frame of reference for minority students to understand the positive effects of campus engagement (Musoba, Collazo, & Placide, 2013). If institutions do not evolve, they may continue to fail Latino/a/x students and do a disservice to their education and ultimately to our society's future.

Organization of the Study

Chapter one built a case for the study to examine higher education institutional practices designed to support Latino/a/x students since their efforts are still not closing the achievement gap or supporting their multiple and intersecting identities for a holistic student success. Chapter two includes three sections of literature review: (a) description of current higher educational institutional practices aimed to support Latino/a/x students and students of color, (b) examples of Latino/a/x student identities and the within-group differences, and (c) illustration of the theoretical framework that guided the study to connect the institutional practices with the Latino/a/x student experiences. Chapter three shares the research methodology and design as well as the limitations within this study. Chapter four and five are structured as articles with publishing potential. Chapter four focuses on what do higher education institutions prioritize when implementing institutional practices designed to support Latino/a/x student success and how does the presence of those practices influence campus culture. Chapter five focuses on how, if at all, are higher education institutional practices structured to address the needs of Latino/a/x students' multiple and intersecting identities.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature review consists of three main sections: institutional practices, Latino/a/x student experiences, and theoretical framework. The first part focuses on highlighting institutional practices with established curricular and co-curricular strategies and systems to support Latino/a/x students and students of color as a whole. The second section on Latino/a/x student experiences serves to highlight multiple and intersecting identities within this diverse student population. The last section introduces the theoretical framework in this study and links the first two sections by emphasizing the role institutions have in shaping the students' sense of self in relation to contextual influences. As a whole, the literature review paints a picture featuring the relation between higher education institutions and Latino/a/x students' multiple and intersecting identities to ensure Latino/a/x student success.

Institutions' Role in Supporting Students of Color

Institutions have a critical role in creating and sustaining a welcoming and inclusive environment on a college campus. An intentional approach to establishing institutional practices to support students of color can improve Latino students' perception of the campus climate (Hurtado, 1994) and how they feel as members of the college community. Some higher education institutions already employ institutional practices that seek to understand and validate the experiences of students of color. However, these institutional efforts may be overshadowed by the institution's competing priorities (Contreras & Contreras, 2015). This section of the literature review summarizes institutional practices and recommendations to better support students of color both in and out of the classroom. The implementation of these

intentional practices to support the curricular and co-curricular experiences of students of color can lead to positively impacting their retention and graduation rates.

Hispanic-Serving Institutions

One of the most familiar institutional practices to support Latino/a/x students in higher education is the designation as a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). HSIs have been an essential point of access to higher education since they now enroll 60% of all Latina/o college students (Garcia & Okhidoi, 2015). HSIs are commonly known as two and four-year higher education institutions with a student body of at least 25% Hispanic students and at least half of those students must qualify as low-income. This nature of HSI student population, serves substantial numbers of first-generation college students in addition to the high enrollment of low-income students (Espinoza & Espinoza, 2012). In 2008, there were 242 HSIs across 13 states including 54 community colleges and 19 four-year institutions in California (Contreras, Malcom, & Bensimon, 2008). By 2013, there were four UCs and 14 CSUs across California while 42 CCCs just in Southern California (Contreras & Contreras, 2015).

The HSI designation also comes with unique challenges. Institutions can lose their HSI designation from one year to the next if the minimum requirements are not met creating doubt on how much the HSI designation is truly connected to the core of the institution (Contreras et al., 2008). If there are no institutional funds, campus resources and the student experience can quickly shift from one year to the next. Also, HSIs have been criticized for strictly focusing on enrollment rather than supporting Latina/o students to persist and graduate successfully (Garcia & Okhidoi, 2015). In addition, many colleges use the federal funding for campus-wide improvements rather than specific infrastructures aimed to support Latino students (Contreras & Contreras, 2015). Even within HSIs, institutions hold practices that do

not account for things that minority students do not know such as financial aid options, course enrollment information, and university deadlines can be perceived as barriers rather than resources and thus create friction between the student and perceived “uncaring” institution (Musoba et al., 2013). Furthermore, HSI administrators face a particular challenge to “build excellence and cultivate prestige, while also effectively responding to the needs of their unique student bodies” (Espinoza & Espinoza, 2012, p.33).

Inclusive Curricular Experiences

The initial experience inside a classroom, particularly for underrepresented students, can be the key to a successful journey in higher education. A strong introduction to the students’ academic life may influence the selection of their desired major as well as set up a positive experience for the rest of their academic career. For example, when first-generation students have a positive experience in their first set of courses like biology, students tend to have a higher interest in pursuing a track for the biology major (Harackiewicz et al., 2014). Faculty members can use their structured opportunity in the classroom to create the space to challenge and support through authentic care and high expectations. Students of color are more likely to accept their support when faculty members show this type of authentic approach (Wood, Harris, & White, 2015).

Faculty members have the opportunity to invest in their students to truly create a welcoming and inclusive classroom experience. They can create inclusive environments by taking the time to understand who their students are and what challenges they face. In addition, faculty members need to be aware of how others may perceive students of color as that may also impact their college experience (Wood et al., 2015) by being aware of stereotypes associated with certain student groups to limit potential microaggressions that

may arise in the classroom. Students have the ability to succeed but need consistent positive reminders and empowered teachers to create inclusive spaces to meet the needs of the whole student (Gentry, 2014).

This level of commitment by faculty members to create inclusive curricular experiences can evolve into an institutional culture that can organically flow across academic departments and courses to foster its continuity. Faculty members of any cultural background can adopt key strategies to engage with and build strong relationships with students of color by minimizing microaggressions. Faculty members can engage student behavior by criticizing privately and praising publicly to counterbalance the negative messages men of color have received throughout their educational journey as well as establish ongoing touch points that will show they care (Wood et al., 2015). This type of engagement encourages students to invest their time in the institution's services and the relationships that come with them including intrusive interventions. Intrusive interventions may include taking the initiative to approach students first, check in frequently about their academic and overall college experience, as well as connecting students directly to colleagues instead of simply referring students to a support resource (Wood et al., 2015). Students need to know one cares for them, not only during business hours, but truly care about them like family (Duncan-Andrade, 2011). Faculty members can create a space of motivation and empowerment where students will learn to be active participants, connect with others, and gain confidence in their own abilities (Kohn, 2011). These strategies can lead to building a partnership between faculty and students, which must be present in the classroom to enhance persistence and achievement (Gentry, 2014).

Empowering curricula. With the right course content, students of color can relate and feel empowered to share their own story as they feel “a sense of being freed from ideological and moralistic limitations and constraints they often only realized they had only after beginning to move away from them” (Morales, 2012, p. 504). Many students of color grew up in a family environment hearing stories about their elders or other family stories which have formed their cultural identities. A similar structure can be done in the classroom where faculty members can modify the curricula to empower students of color. Faculty members can incorporate curricula that reflect lived experiences of students of color, especially when working with men of color. Curricula can include authors and guest speakers who mirror their [Latino/a/x] identities and experiences as well as diverse topics that may deconstruct social expectations as a way to re-identify themselves (Wood et al., 2015). Taking this further, other inclusive curricular experiences can include (a) adding ethnic studies courses as part of graduation requirements, (b) creating an ethnic studies department, and (c) encouraging other departments to offer courses that address multicultural topics within the academic programs (Garcia & Okhidoi, 2015). As a result of this kind of effort, an institution demonstrates support toward the academic success of students of color.

Intentional Co-Curricular Programs

Experiences outside of the classroom for students of color are as imperative as curricular experiences when transitioning to college life especially in the first year (Nosaka & Novak, 2015). A positive experience in their first semester leads students to see the possibility for more (Musoba et al., 2013). First-year experiences such as learning communities, however, have been criticized by having an impact on second-year retention without a consistency through graduation (Nosaka & Novak, 2015). First-year programs are key to

support the transition of students of color but institutions must mainstream support services by providing support from day one through graduation to increase the retention and persistence of all students (Garcia & Okhidoi, 2015). Moreover, these special programs must limit the exposure to overall college experience and focus instead on connecting the students with dedicated staff who serve as first responders and can help students navigate the institution and their college life (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Students do not want handholding but instead want an ongoing individual connection to answer questions along the way and affirm they belong (Musoba et al., 2013). If all community members at higher education institutions adapt this type of behavior to serve as an ongoing resource, together they can create an empowering space for students to engage in their college community and strive to complete higher education successfully.

Identity-specific centers. Identity-specific centers such as Women’s Centers, Chicano Centers, Black Student Resource Centers, and Pride Centers, some of which have been opened since the 1960s, were created to provide resources and support for marginalized and underrepresented students in higher education institutions given the increase of student diversity and disparities in retention and graduation rates (Welch, 2009). These centers were primarily demanded by students of color to support and validate their presence and lived college experiences (Pittman, 1994). As these centers focus on “identity, meaning making, practice, and community” (Welch, 2009, p. 4), they are able to provide efforts throughout their college journey to increase students’ sense of belonging, help them explore social identities and social (in)justice education, as well as empower them to advocate for themselves.

Similarly, California higher education has responded to supporting undocumented students and their unique needs. Staff members were hired to work in newly built resource centers since California has almost a third of eligible youth to DACA program (Pérez Huber, Pulido Villanueva, Guarneros, Vélez, & Solórzano, 2014). In 2015, there were four Dreamer Centers in the CSU System and four in the UC system where staff primarily help students complete the California Dream Act application for financial aid and assist with scholarship applications (California Universities Full of DREAMers, 2015). Since then, there has been more support for undocumented students and there are now more centers and assigned coordinators across the CSU and UC campuses.

Even the ongoing support from identity-specific centers for students of color limits the validation students need to feel supported as a whole person. Many of these centers continue to primarily focus on one of the students' identities such as being a woman, Latino/a/x, Black, LGBTQ+, undocumented, etc. However, there is not enough visible evidence that identity-specific centers are proactively supporting students' multiple and intersecting identities on their own or in collaboration with other identity-specific center. Unfortunately, the lack of research on identity-specific centers cannot confirm this perceived limitation.

Institutions' Role in Supporting Latino/a/x Student Intersectionality

The term "Latino/a/x" is used throughout the dissertation because it underlines the intersectionality of this community and emphasizes how social identities overlap, inform each other, and are actively engaged especially when interacting with others (Shields, 2008). The way Latino/a/x students describe themselves using some of their identities reflects how they present themselves. However, these descriptions may not be aligned with how institutions

categorize them within their student records, especially for tracking retention and graduation rates.

This section of the literature review includes examples of Latino/a/x student experiences presented in key subgroups to shed some light on their multiple and intersecting identities and their college journeys including access, enrollment, and graduation information. Research shows there are differences in college enrollment for Latino/a/x students depending on their country of origin or gender (Musu-Gillette et al, 2016). Also, for example, there are also differences in college transition especially for first-generation Latino/a/x college students (Boden, 2011; Harackiewicz et al., 2014). This overview emphasizes the different institutional needs and support systems that Latino/a/x students multiple and intersecting identities require to engage and succeed in higher education. In addition, this section will highlight that by taking the time to understand the multiple identities of the Latino/a/x student population, an institution can create a campus culture that decreases the racial microaggressions Latino/a/x have to constantly face in the form of “verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights” (Sue et al., 2007, p. 273).

Latino/a/x Students Treated as Monolithic Group

Higher education institutions provide support services for Latino/a/x students across the U.S. without considering the multiple identities each student holds nor how these identities intersect on a daily basis on a college campus. The Latino/a/x student population as a minoritized group is placed in a large box of support services that lack a depth and understanding of the within-group diversity. Even though there is a significant connection with the Latino identity, within-group differences not connected to race shape their college

experience differently and also similar in others (Stewart, 2013). Students with similar salient identities may experience college in a parallel way such as two Latino males who grew up in a low-income household. However, these three identities (Latino, male, and low socioeconomic status) are not all that makes their whole person. The two Latino students are likely having a unique experience from each other due to the layers of their other identities. Individual Latino/a/x students present themselves based on their own experiences and identity saliency.

One of the main differences within Latino/a/x students is how they describe themselves based on some of their identities. Some students may identify with their country of origin by sharing they are “Mexican” or “Cuban.” Some students may identify as “Hispanic” because of the connection to their Spanish-speaking country of origin. Some students may identify as Latina or Latinx by combining their Latin American origin with their gender identity. The term Latina stresses the importance of the intersectionality with Latino background and being a woman—two identities connected to oppression (Stefancic, 1997). Latinx is a relatively newer gender-neutral term where the focus rests between the Latino identity and its intersection with female, male, transgender, gender queer, and gender nonconforming individuals (Castro & Cortez, 2016). In these last two examples, Latina and Latinx students capture the multiple ways their cultural background intersects with other identities of oppression like gender and sexual orientation (Zamudio, Russell, Rios, & Bridgeman, 2011).

Some Latino/a/x students also have an additional component of intersectionality as biracial and multiracial students, which impacts their campus involvement similar to other minoritized student groups (Stewart, 2013). There may be an additional disconnect for these

students from the racial groups they belong to if physical attributes and experiences are perceived to be different from the “common” narrative and experience. For example, a Latino/a/x student who identifies as Black will have a different college experience than a Latino/a/x student who identifies as White. This identity complexity leads some students to not even directly state their connection with the Latino/a/x communities, yet institutions will track these students’ retention and graduation rates under the Latino/a/x category in their database if originally identified as such in admissions paperwork. For this reason, there must be a need to consider Latino/a diverse within-group differences to address retention strategies for subgroups (Espinoza & Espinoza, 2012).

Latino/a/x Students by Country of Origin and Gender⁵. Between 2008 and 2013, there were increases for many subgroups of the 34% Hispanic 18- to 24-year-old students enrolled in college. In particular, Latino/a/x students have shown significant differences in college enrollment linked to their country of origin and gender. Some subgroups like Guatemalan and Honduran students enrolled at 25% and 26% respectively, Mexican is towards the middle at 32%, while Peruvian enrolled at 60% and Venezuelan at 62%. Regarding the binary gender, 39% of Hispanic females enrolled in college in 2013 while 29% of Hispanic males did. This 10% gap between Hispanic females and males only decreased from the 11% difference in 2003 where 29% of Hispanic females and 18% of Hispanic males enrolled in college (Musu-Gillette et al, 2016). The percentage of Hispanic students enrolled in college disaggregated by these two genders between 2003 and 2013 is worth noting as

⁵ The terms “Gender” and “Sex” are mistakenly often used interchangeably, similar to the terms “Woman” and “Female” creating a direct connection between the two without considering “someone who is female assigned at birth and one who identifies as a girl or a woman” (Jourian, 2015, p. 461).

positive growth even though the 10% gap remained the same between the two groups after ten years.

Latino/a/x LGBTQ+ Communities. Higher education institutions usually reinforce gender roles and expectations through campus culture and policies providing additional barriers to students who identify within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and plus (LGBTQ+) communities as they transition to college life (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2009). The Latino/a/x identity may shape individual experiences differently even within this subgroup of LGBTQ+ students. Depending how the Latino/a/x student identifies within the LGBTQ+ communities, their interactions and overall college experience may be impacted differently as they are also taking the time to explore their gender identity and selecting their majors and career paths might take longer (Evans et al., 2009). In addition, their interactions may be impacted by how others choose to treat them based on their own perceptions of someone's gender expression, which is one's outward expression or performance of gender and can differ from one's gender identity referring to one's internal sense of self of gender (American Psychological Association, 2015). On the other hand, some LGBTQ+ students who fit cisgender⁶ expectations may not have to worry about how others perceive them since they follow "standard" societal norms. LGBTQ+ students who do not fit cisgender expectations may also experience dissatisfaction on academic and career choices (Schneider & Dimito, 2010) adding layers of challenges they face while in college. Moreover, the college experience of Latino/a/x LGBTQ+ students may be different depending on the

⁶ Term "used to describe individuals who possess, from birth and into adulthood, the male or female reproductive organs (sex) typical of the social category of a man or woman (gender) to which the individual was assigned at birth" (Aultman, 2014).

type of support they have at home as well as at their institution about being themselves and out to their family and friends.

Latino/a/x Students' Contextualized Identities

For the purpose of this dissertation, contextualized identities are those identities of a person connected to the context of where they were born, to whom and who raised them, and where they attend college. Latino/a/x students who identify as first-generation, undocumented, and/or transborder students have a unique approach to college access, transition, and experience depending whether they hold one or multiple of these identities.

First-Generation Latino/a/x Students. Two identities that may be wrongly recognized as one experience are being Latino/a/x and a first-generation college student. These two identities shape the student experience and impact the reason to attend college and completing their college degree (Harackiewicz et al., 2014). First-generation Latino college students may encounter additional and more complex challenges when transitioning to college. Many of these challenges may hinder the students' perception on being academically prepared and limit a successful transition to college (Boden, 2011). The challenges associated with first-generation students and the discrepancy between college enrollment and completion rates have traditionally focused on academic preparedness. However, studies have shown that other factors like learning English while learning multiple subjects may pose an additional challenge to Hispanic students from non-English-speaking backgrounds. In the same way, other identities and elements like family's structural dynamic, educational background, and socioeconomic status also play a role in students' future academic outcome (Llagas & Snyder, 2003).

These two identities and experiences that shape the Latino student experience add challenges to the already potential setbacks since they “are more likely not to be placed in college-preparatory courses because of ‘tracking’ policies, identification of students as English Language Learners, or personal perception of the students’ potential” (Nevarez & Rico, 2007, p. 7). These personal and systemic challenges are likely to impede first-generation Latino/a/x students to succeed.

Undocumented Latino/a/x Students. Similarly, immigration status is another identity that in recent years has played a big role in college access, enrollment, and experience. Significant changes took place in 2012 after the launch of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) initiative by President Obama’s administration. Within three years of the program, nearly 700,000 undocumented youths and young adults had obtained DACA status (Gonzalez, 2016). The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services accepted DACA applications from populations that primarily come from Mexico (77.3%), El Salvador (3.8%), Guatemala (2.7%), Honduras (2.4%), and Peru (1.1%) (Hipsman, Gómez-Aguñiga, & Capps, 2016).

Many DACA recipients took this opportunity to enroll in college but the number of enrollment is unclear because institutions may classify them differently such as international or out-of-state students within their database. Such confusion misinforms both the institution and the undocumented students causing communication challenges between the two. In addition, undocumented students do not have the privilege to be eligible for financial aid, travel including studying abroad, or even employment impacting their college experience. Undocumented students then need ongoing support and motivation to complete college due to

potential anxiety of not been able to get a good job because of their immigration status (Aramburo & Bhavsar, 2013).

Transborder Latino/a/x Students. Transborder Latino/a/x students hold another complex identity that shapes their lived experiences, values, and lens of their world. The term “transborder” refers to those “whose lives have centered on navigating borders” (Kleyn, 2017, p. 77). Transborder students explore their identity from the messages they receive from both Mexico and the U.S. as well as the combination of both. They find themselves with benefits and challenges on both sides of the border leading to feeling a lack of sense of belonging from both (Kleyn, 2017). They also take on different roles within their family including as translators for family and friends (Mangual Figueroa, 2012).

Theoretical Framework

As people with intersecting identities, Latino/a/x students must learn how these identities individually and collectively influence daily behavior when interacting with others and how others may perceive them. As more research is available on the Latino/a/x student experience, there is an opportunity to deeper understand their multiple identities and the influence of their intersectionality in higher education institutions. The theoretical framework of this study is the Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007), which will highlight the key role of institutional practices in supporting and challenging Latino/a/x students’ multiple and intersecting identities to ensure a holistic approach to their success.

Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity

The Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity has a key feature of the meaning-making filter, which links the student’s contextual influences from their core and

multiple identities (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007). Figure 4 emphasizes how the contextual influences impact the student's self-perception of their multiple identities only after passing through the meaning-making filter.

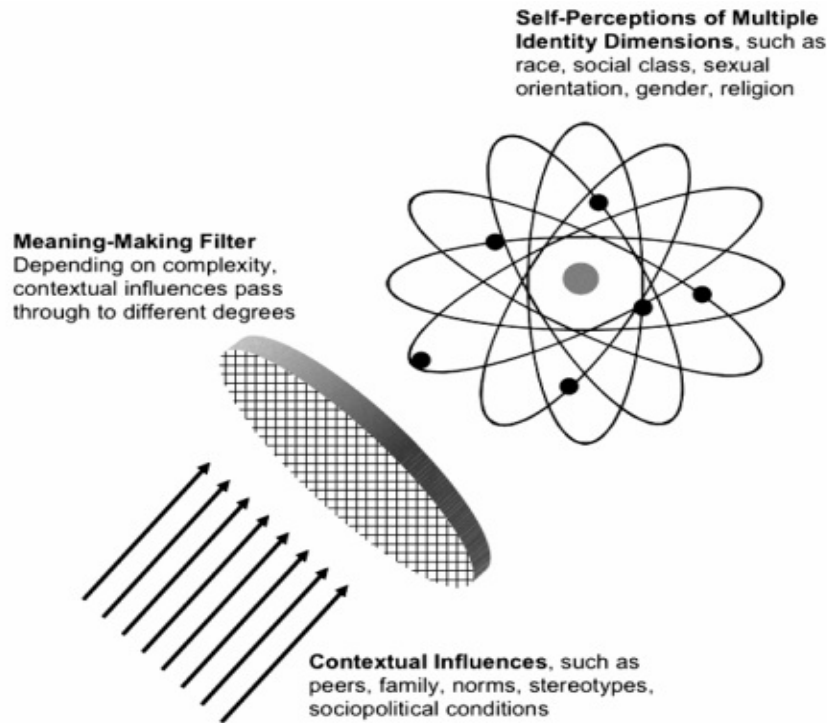


Figure 4: Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007).

The meaning-making filter is categorized in formulaic (minimal filtering), transitional (emerging complex filtering), and foundational (complex filtering) capacity.

How contextual influences move through the filter depends on the depth and permeability of the filter. The depth (thickness) and permeability (size of openings) of the filter depend on the complexity of the person's meaning-making capacity. To illustrate complex meaning making, the filter would be drawn with increased depth and smaller grid openings; less complex meaning-making capacity would be illustrated through a narrower filter with wider grid openings. Regardless of differences in meaning making, context influences identity perceptions; differences in the depth of the filter and size of the grid openings incorporate contextual influences in qualitatively different ways (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007, p. 6)

Therefore, the capacity of the meaning-making filter determines the type of effect the contextual influences have on the students' multiple identities and their core sense of self. The core identity is "their 'inner identity' or 'inside self' as contrasted with...their 'outside' identity or the 'facts' of their identity" at a specific time (Jones & McEwen, 2000, p. 408). Figure 5 shows the core surrounded by the student's multiple identities including class, culture, gender, race, religion, and sexual orientation. The dot within each identity's ring "represents the particular salience of that identity dimension to the individual at that time" (p. 410). In addition, the model brings forth the importance of intersecting identities (rings) "to demonstrate that no one dimension may be understood singularly; it can be understood only in relation to other dimensions" (p. 410).

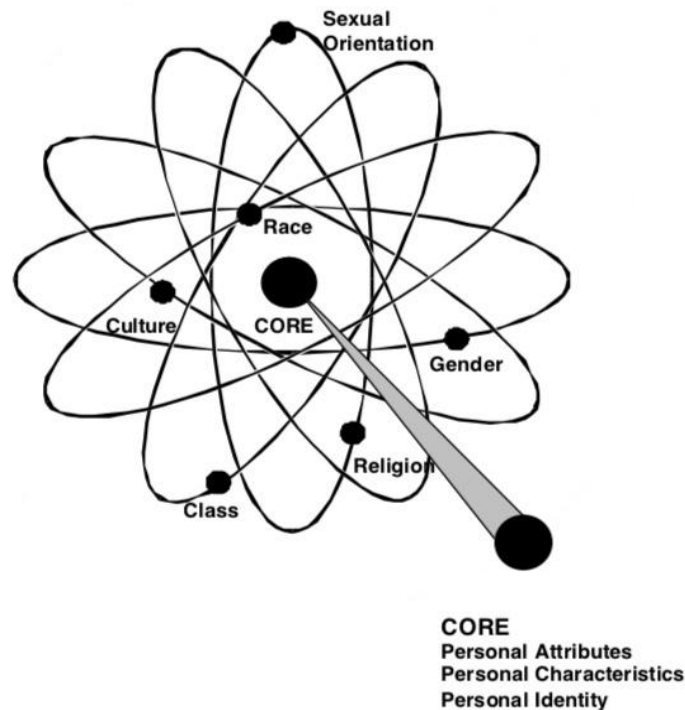


Figure 5: The Core Sense of Self and the Multiple Identities from the Conceptual Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (Jones & McEwen, 2000).

The core and the multiple identities are influenced by specific context such as structures, systems, and experiences the student is exposed to at that specific time. These

contextual influences shape the development of individual identities and also as a whole. However, self-awareness of how context influences each identity depends on saliency. Higher education institutions have the opportunity to proactively provide opportunities that will help students develop complex meaning-making filters, which can lead toward a holistic student success path.

Gap in Literature

The search for answers to improve Latino/a/x student success continues. The theoretical framework of this dissertation seeks to strongly link the institutional practices to the Latino/a/x student college experience to inform educators how to fill any structural gaps when supporting Latino/a/x students' multiple and intersecting identities. In addition, it provides the opportunity for an institution to better understand their student population and identify how the student needs should also influence the structure and implementation of their Latino/a/x student success efforts.

With the right understanding of the multiple and intersecting identities of Latino/a/x students, higher education institutions can set intentional proactive support systems. For example, Biden (2011) emphasizes that first-generation Latino students can improve their path to college by including a personal plan of action, a guide that will assist in mapping the action plan, sharpening key academic skills, and a will to succeed in implementing the action plan. Yet, higher education institutions are not putting the time and funding to research and learn about their student populations to better know who makes up their Latino/a/x students and what are some of their roles and responsibilities they have to support their college success: students who are English language learner and fluent English speakers; students who come from a single parent household and need to contribute financially, or they are single

parents themselves trying to obtain a college education. These few examples and other characteristics such as gender, generational status, and mental health status may also impact persistence factors (Espinoza & Espinoza, 2012).

Moreover, additional research can explore Latino/a/x students' expectations and goals and how they differ based on their unique identities. For instance, undocumented Latino/a/x students may have different career goals than U.S. citizens as a product of how they have uncertainty of post-graduation plans and feel that some career options are not feasible (Aramburo & Bhavsar, 2013). Similarly, first-generation students may have more interdependent motives like completing their college degree to help support their family (Harackiewicz et al., 2014). Even though undocumented students are often first-generation and economically disadvantaged (Aramburo & Bhavsar, 2013), these two identities do not completely define them or their college experience.

By gathering deeper data on student demographics, institutions can validate students' multiple identities and can pinpoint misinformed practices when working with large groups of student populations such as Latino/a/x students. This extra and more specific breakdown of data can strongly contribute to developing intentional services and programs that can offer information toward higher retention and graduation rates while addressing within-group gaps such as enrollment and graduation rates.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

Review of Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine to what extent higher education institutional practices supported intersecting identity development to further Latino/a/x student success. This analysis identified gaps and opportunities to enhance curricular and co-curricular efforts to positively influence the development of the students' multiple and intersecting identities as a key factor of their student success. The Latino population continues to grow in college enrollment (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016) as well as their complexity in experiences and backgrounds which impact how they experience college. However, Latino student retention and graduation rates are not closing the achievement gap when compared to their peers (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). This study looked to the institutions' structure and implementation of Latino/a/x student success efforts in an attempt to identify practices to enhance the students' overall college experience as well as measures of success such as retention and graduation rates.

As mentioned in chapter one, the following research questions set the perimeter of the analysis by primarily focusing on the institutions' practices and holding them accountable for their selected Latino/a/x student success efforts. The overarching question that guided this study was:

- What do higher education institutions prioritize when implementing institutional practices designed to support Latino/a/x student success?

The study included the additional two supplemental questions to examine:

- How, if at all, are higher education institutional practices structured to address the needs of Latino/a/x students' multiple and intersecting identities?

- How does the presence of institutional practices for Latino/a/x student success influence campus culture?

Research Methodology

In order to answer these research questions, the study employed a qualitative approach to describe a central phenomenon and explore unknown variables by using individual voices (Creswell, 2012) through a single-case study (Yin, 2014) of one California community college from purposeful sampling. In this study, the contemporary higher education phenomenon was explored through a review of their individual institutional practices to better understand the unique variables that influence Latino/a/x student success. The intentional use of a single-case study was to include an “in-depth” process of data collection and analysis through a triangulation of the multiple variables of interest (Yin, 2014). In each step of the research process, the individual voices captured the participants’ views to make larger meaning of the findings (Creswell, 2012) rather than focusing on metrics that should not be considered to truly capture student success (Contreras & Contreras, 2015). Furthermore, the multiple voices in the study painted a clearer picture of the institutional practices to better identify gaps and opportunities to enhance these efforts aimed for Latino/a/x student success.

Research Site

As mentioned in the “Statement of the Problem” section in the first chapter of this dissertation, the majority of Latino/a/x students are enrolling in the California Community College (CCC) system (California Postsecondary Education Commission [CPEC], 2018a). In addition, the majority of CCCs have the Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) designation (U.S. Department of Education, 2018) but hold one of the smallest representations of Latino/a/x people in key roles such as tenured faculty (15%), senior leadership (17%), and in academic

senate (14%) (Bustillos, Siqueiros, & Bates, 2018). This lack of proportion in Latino/a/x representation in CCCs highly contributed to the decision to focus the study in this particular higher education state system in California.

The single-case study focused on Southern California Community College (SCCC), pseudonym given to protect the research site’s identity, to explore its unique higher education institutional practices designed for Latino/a/x student success. As shown on Table 1, SCCC is a commuter⁷ HSI in the CCC system located in Southern California. The institution is part of a two-college district and both have similar percentages of their two largest student populations: SCCC has 41.5% White students and 33.7% Hispanic students (California Community College Chancellor’s Office [CCCCO], 2018c) while its sister college has 46.1% White students and 32.8% Hispanic students (CCCCO, 2018b). Table 1 includes an initial overview of both colleges in the district to set a basic understanding of the multi-college district.

Table 1: Initial Overview of the Proposed Research Site and its Counterpart in the Two-College District.

Characteristic	SCCC	Sister SCCC
Hispanic-Serving Institution	Yes	Yes
Commuter Campus	Yes	Yes
Total Number of Students	24,840	13,735
Full-Time Equivalent Students	12,747.2	6,337.9
Largest Student Population	White (41.5%)	White (46.1%)
Second Largest Student Population	Hispanic (33.7%)	Hispanic (32.8%)
Students 24-year-old or younger	65.7%	60.3%
Male Students	42.2%	45.0%
First-Generation Students	35.4%	41.6%

⁷ College does not provide on-campus housing.

Research Participants

The research participants included purposeful sampling of administrators, faculty and staff⁸ members from SCCC. A consent form was collected from each person before they participated in any activity connected to this research study. It was important to build a well-balanced rapport with participants (not too little and not too much) but more critical was to build the “kind” of rapport that provided deep and critical reflections without researcher reactivity to avoid influencing their experience to strengthen validity (Maxwell, 2013). The participants’ multiple voices, each with a different experience and lens in how they perceive Latino/a/x student success efforts, provided specific success stories, gaps, and opportunities to enhance them. The participants’ voices also enhanced the study to best learn from them (Creswell, 2012) what they perceived to be Latino/a/x student success efforts, their structure to address the needs of students’ multiple and intersecting identities, and the efforts’ influence in campus culture.

The Title V coordinator of SCCC whose responsibilities are directly connected to the HSI designation provided the list of potential participants, which included administrators, faculty and staff members who had some responsibility in actively supporting and/or implementing Latino/a/x student success efforts. It was important to include participants from academic affairs and student services to gather data from both curricular and co-curricular practices and enhance the contextualization of the study during the given timeframe. Number of years working at SCCC or in higher education did not play a factor in the participant selection to diversify the participants’ experience and lens of the Latino/a/x student success

⁸ To protect participant anonymity, the term “staff” will be used as a general term for non-faculty and non-administrator roles.

efforts. The final list of SCCC participants included five administrators, five staff members, three faculty members, and one participant with dual responsibilities as administrator and faculty.

Research Design

The study was designed for a qualitative single-case analysis of a higher education institution. The case study approach allowed the researcher to focus on one institution at the specific time of the research timeframe (Yin, 2014) to examine their priorities, structures, and implementation of services in relation to Latino/a/x student success. Extensive data from each institution was collected to address the complexity of the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012) through secondary demographic data, archival records, direct observations, documentation, audiovisual materials, and in-person one-on-one interviews. The research design was strongly connected to addressing the research questions of this study as shown on Table 2. The multiple sources facilitated the search of meaning understanding that an institution's environment and culture was not created by one person or activity (Geertz, 1973). The triangulation of these sources of data collection also served to strengthen validity in the research study (Maxwell, 2013).

Table 2: Alignment of Research Design with Research Questions.

Research Questions	SDD	AR	DO	D	AVM	PI
What do higher education institutions prioritize when implementing institutional practices designed to support Latino/a/x student success?	X	X	X	X	X	X
How, if at all, are higher education institutional practices structured to address the needs of Latino/a/x students' multiple and intersecting identities?	X	X	X	X	X	X
How does the presence of institutional practices for Latino/a/x student success influence campus culture?	X	X	X	X	X	X

Note. (SDD) Secondary Demographic Data; (AR) Archival Records; (DO) Direct Observations; (D) Documentation; (AVM) Audiovisual Materials; (PI) Participant Interviews

Secondary Demographic Data

Secondary demographic data from the institution included (a) campus structure and characteristics profile, (b) student, faculty, and staff profiles, (c) math and English remedial course and English as Second Language course participation rates, (d) persistence, transfer, and graduation rates, and (e) completion of educational goals.

Archival Records

Archival records of the institution included published documents on their mission and vision statements, current campus-wide strategic plan, current student equity plan, and current Title V grant application and implementation plan.

Direct Observations

As observer rather than participant, the direct observations were both from participating in formal and informal activities such as campus visits, meetings, and student programs at the institution. Sufficient time was allotted among all activities to gain a deeper perspective of the institution and its culture while remaining as “partial stranger” to maintain

distinct role as researcher (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). A changing observational role took place throughout the research study timeline due to comfort at the site and rapport with participants where some observations were experienced in the role of “participant observer” or “nonparticipant observer” (Creswell, 2012). Direct observations also included physical space characteristics and group dynamics among the institution’s members. Overall, the observations aided data collection in drawing inferences that could not be obtained from interviews (Maxwell, 2013).

Documentation

Documents included public and private records from the institution either printed or in websites (Creswell, 2012) such as administrative agendas, meeting minutes, and reports where Latino/a/x student success efforts were included. Also, news articles from the institution and its local community were included. A strong benefit of this type of data collection was that the documentation included the institution’s language and words (Creswell, 2012).

Audiovisual Materials

Audiovisual materials included photographs and videos from the institution’s printed materials and websites. These images contributed to data collection by having visual representation of other written research designs. Also included were audio recordings of activities described in “direct observations” section above where all participants completed the proper consent form.

In-person One-on-One Interviews

The in-person interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions giving the participants the liberty to share “their interpretations and opinions about people and events or

their insights, explanations, and meanings” (Yin, 2014, p. 111) of their institution’s Latino/a/x student success efforts. The audio of all interviews were recorded to transcribe for a deeper analysis (Creswell, 2012). The structure was a prolonged case study interviews which took one or more hours in multiple sittings and they took place in person to create a personal connection with participants hoping their role transitioned to an “informant” to provide stronger critical information to corroborate or share contrary evidence (Yin, 2014). However, there was a high awareness of potential reactivity with such relationship to prevent a lack of validity in the study (Maxwell, 2013).

The study included one-on-one interviews with the 14 participants representing academic affairs and student services to gather data on both curricular and co-curricular practices. The one-on-one interview format was ideal for this type of participant in hope that their roles and experience will allow them to not be hesitant to speak and share information comfortably (Creswell, 2012). The interview format allowed the researcher to ask participants to reconstruct their experiences and share any clarification giving them more control of what was more important and how they shared it (Seidman, 2006).

Data Collection and Analysis

The single-case approach set the study for a deeper analysis of the institution’s uniqueness and identify key patterns (Yin, 2014). The time frame included four sections scheduled between November 2018 and November 2019 including data collection in three different phases. Each phase incorporated a set of research designs with the purpose to first learn about the institution from the outside and secondly to learn from those within the institution directly connected with the Latino/a/x student success efforts. The length and structure of the multiple phases was to ensure quality time as field researcher and completing

thorough fieldnotes focused on what is happening rather than why it is happening (Emerson et al., 1995). Each phase also included analysis of its “data for description and themes using text analysis and interpreting the larger meaning of the findings” (Creswell, 2012, p. 26). In addition, research memos were written during and after each phase to strengthen validity and “develop tentative ideas about categories and relationships” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 105). The intentional steps during data collection allowed for an organic process from etic to emic themes in the analysis while also being open to letting go of any early promising categories (Seidman, 2006).

Pre-Research Study

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) request was submitted for approval at the University of California, San Diego. The External Research Approval form was also submitted to the Southern California Community College District (pseudonym), which oversees the requests to conduct research at Southern California Community College. After the approval of both processes, the research study and analysis took place in the following three phases.

Phase I

The first phase of data collection consisted of reviewing the secondary demographic data, archival records, and some audiovisual materials of the institution. This process built a foundation of the institution to learn and understand it from an outsider perspective. Even though some statistical data was collected through the secondary demographic data, the analysis for this first phase only served to set a foundation of the institution. The analysis of the archival records and audiovisual materials were meant to initially explore and describe the central phenomenon in the study through themes and categories (Creswell, 2012).

Phase II

The second phase of data collection included direct observations, review of relevant documentation and audiovisual materials, and in-person one-on-one interviews with research participants. The direct observations included formal and informal interactions to understand and analyze “relevant social or environmental conditions” (Yin, 2014, p. 113). Direct observations also included visiting the institution’s designated departments and physical spaces connected to Latino/a/x student success as well as meetings and events where agenda items and/or content include Latino/a/x student success efforts. The documentation and audiovisual materials aided analysis by providing depth to the prioritization and exposure of Latino/a/x student success efforts within their campus community. The in-person interviews included 14 administrators, faculty and staff members whose responsibilities include the support and/or implementation of Latino/a/x student success efforts such as having a connection to the HSI designation. The interviews included multiple voices with individual perspectives and perceptions to better learn about their own experience (Creswell, 2012) with Latino/a/x student success institutional practices. The direct observations, documentation, audiovisual materials, and interviews contextualized the study at the time of the research. At this point of the research study, themes and interrelation of themes surfaced (Creswell, 2012) by combining the analysis of the first two phases.

Phase III

The final phase of data collection included invitation to second meeting with participants from phase two. The administrators, faculty and staff members from phase two had the opportunity to review and clarify anything from their own interview transcript.

Limitations

This study had several limitations including methodology constraints, the importance to not generalize the findings and conclusions, and the researcher's positionality.

Additionally, the researcher's interactions at the site and the dynamic between researcher and participants might have influenced what and how data was collected (Geertz, 1973).

Researcher maintained a neutral behavior and avoided giving any positive or negative verbal or body language to minimize the limitations (Seidman, 2006). This initial and ongoing awareness of these limitations contributed to a stronger validity of the research study and a more honest and transparent research process, analysis, and report of findings and conclusions.

Methodology Constraints

The biggest limitation within the single-case approach was in the data collection. The archival records, documentation, and some audiovisual materials were critical in the analysis but in reviewing them was to understand that they were created "for a specific purpose and a specific audience other than [the] case study, and these conditions were fully appreciated in interpreting the usefulness and accuracy of the records" (Yin, 2014, p. 109). The interviews had limitations in providing information "filtered" through the interviewers' lens and the potential for them to share what they thought the researcher wanted to hear (Creswell, 2012). Even though the researcher has experience in facilitating one-on-one conversations and small group dialogues, the lack of experience in conducting interviews limited the researcher in their ability to maximize data collection. Lastly, the time to schedule the one-on-one interviews and follow-up communication also presented a challenge and limitation (Creswell, 2012).

Generalizations

Due to the research methodology and having only one research site, the findings and conclusions are limited in building generalizations (Maxwell, 2013) for all California higher education institution systems or even community colleges in Southern California. This research study included purposeful sampling of one commuter Hispanic-Serving Institution to describe the specific scenarios at the institution based on their own participants, practices, and context within the timeframe. The single-case approach allowed for a deeper analysis of the institution but it was not intended to create generalizations of community colleges in the Southern California region or across California.

Validity

A reflective approach to the different components included in the dissertation, awareness of positionality, and the plan to use several validity strategies strengthen the overall validity of the research study (Maxwell, 2013). Even though the timeline of the study was about a year and only captured segments of the regular academic year, there were other strategies to strengthen validity. As mentioned in previous sections, researcher had to be mindful of building enough rapport with participants to gather rich data and avoid having any researcher reactivity on their experiences or contributions to the study. Respondent validation was also included in the study by asking the research participants to review their interview transcript to clarify any of their recorded comments. The triangulation of multiple sources of data collection also strengthen the study's validity as well as the multiple roles, years of work experience in higher education, and overall perspectives of the participants. Furthermore, the reflective memos throughout the study kept the researcher accountable to minimize bias of the

participants and the institution. Lastly, the single-case approach of the study added validity by taking the time to deeply analyze the findings of the research site.

Positionality

My positionality was immersed across the study from the selection of the Latino/a/x student population as the core population of the study to the selection of the research site and parameters of the research questions. Also, some of the researcher's own identities were included within the ones added in the literature review. The researcher's multiple and intersecting identities provided a strong sense of knowledge and awareness of the Latino/a/x culture and the Latino/a/x college student experience. However, researcher had to maintain an awareness of their positionality and the amount of influence they could have brought to every step of the research study. In addition, as someone who identifies with and understands the lived Latino student experience in higher education, researcher had to be sensitive to the way their own experience and interest in this student population and type of institution for the study to not affect the participants (Seidman, 2006). Researcher was also aware of the subjectivity they hold and was not able to fully remove (Peshkin, 1988) to minimize its influence during observations and interviews. Researcher also transcribed the interviews verbatim and wrote memos during each phase of the study to reflect on their positionality and research bias to strengthen its validity (Maxwell, 2013). Researcher also had to be aware of their bias with the California Community College (CCC) system since their experience as CCC student was limited and nonexistent as an employee. These multiple strategies limited the influence of the researcher's positionality in the data collection, analysis, and reporting of findings and conclusions.

Significance of Study

Latino students are enrolling in college at a growing pace but their retention and graduation rates are not closing the achievement gap when compared to their peers (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). In addition, 79.6% of Latino students in California are enrolling the community college system (California Postsecondary Education Commission, 2018a). The study examined one California community college's institutional practices designed to support Latino/a/x students to identify gaps and enhance these efforts to proactively shape the development of their multiple and intersecting identities during their college journey to ensure student success. The theoretical framework guided the study to connect the institutional practices with the Latino/a/x student experiences in an effort to examine the institutional practices designed for Latino/a/x student success and shed light on why Latino/a/x students are yet to meet their educational goals at a similar rate to their peers. The study identified key practices and challenges in implementing institutional efforts that proactively understand, validate, and support Latino/a/x students' multiple and intersecting identities to ensure their overall student success. In particular, (a) identified what the California community college prioritize when implementing Latino/a/x student success efforts, (b) how are the efforts structured to support their multiple identities, and (c) how do these practices influenced campus culture, in order for other higher education institutions to potentially duplicate Latino/a/x efforts as they also seek to proactively improve the college experience of their own Latino/a/x students.

CHAPTER FOUR: DEFINING LATINO/A/X STUDENT SUCCESS AND ITS INFLUENCE ON CAMPUS CULTURE

Introduction

Retention and graduation rates are driving factors for higher education institutions to define student success. As Solórzano and Villalpando (1998) projected, college enrollment for students of color increased at the turn of the new millennium but graduation rates have not closed the gap in comparison to White students. A study in 2013 showed that college enrollment in the United States (U.S.) for the incoming class of 2007 included 34% of Hispanic 18- to 24-year-olds in comparison to 42% of White 18- to 24-year-olds (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). Even though Hispanic students had one of the largest college enrollment increases from 1990 to 2013, the fall 2007 cohort only had a 53% six-year graduation rate (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). As Latino/a/x⁹ college enrollment continues to grow but not having the graduation rates to match that rate, federal funding was offered to institutions when designated as a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). The number of higher education institutions with HSI designation has grown in the last two decades but in that same timeframe, retention and graduation rates for Latino/a/x students have stayed the same as previously stated.

In California, the majority of Latino/a/x college students are enrolling in the California Community College (CCC) system (California Postsecondary Education Commission [CPEC], 2018a) in part because of the perceived benefits such as being close to home, less

⁹ The author of this article has chosen to use Latino/a/x to show the chronological evolution from Latino to Latina to Latinx. These terms will be used individually and as a group to “honor self-identity [as] a personal choice” (Batista, Collado, & Perez II, 2018) and respect the authors’ own identifiers in their research included in this article.

expensive, and opportunity to build foundation before transferring to a four-year institution (Evans, 2009). Higher education institutions are lacking a depth in their practices to better support minoritized student groups like Latino students (Hurtado, 1994), which can stem from their understanding of large group of students of color disregarding their unique stories, progress, and challenges (Contreras & Contreras, 2015). Scholars and practitioners alike have questioned the influence of HSI designation in truly improving student success, especially when the institutions continue to use common measures of student success such as retention and graduation rates. Therefore, a review of current higher educational institutional practices aimed to support Latino/a/x students was the focus of this study to understand the following research questions addressed in this article:

- What do higher education institutions prioritize when implementing institutional practices designed to support Latino/a/x student success?
- How does the presence of institutional practices for Latino/a/x student success influence campus culture?

Relevant Literature

The literature review highlights higher education institutional practices intended to positively impact the Latino/a/x student success. Higher education institutions have developed and implemented some practices to support students of color both in and out of the classroom. However, some of these efforts may be developed and implemented in small pockets of the institution without being truly orchestrated by the institution and overshadowed by the institution's competing priorities (Contreras & Contreras, 2015). Moreover, these institutional practices may be limited as campus members try to balance those competing priorities with student needs (Espinoza & Espinoza, 2012).

Institutions' Role in Supporting Students of Color

Within the classroom, faculty members have the opportunity to create the space to challenge and support students through authentic care and high expectations (Wood, Harris, & White, 2015). By truly caring for students like family (Duncan-Andrade, 2011), faculty members can empower students to be active participants, connect with others, and gain confidence in their own abilities (Kohn, 2011). In addition, faculty members can set students for success by creating an inclusive space to meet the needs of the whole student (Gentry, 2014) and taking the time to understand their student stories to learn about who they are and their current challenges (Wood et al., 2015). The course content can also aid this process to share their own story by including curricula that reflect student of color lived experiences (Wood et al., 2015).

In particular for students of color, positive experiences outside of the classroom are as imperative as curricular experiences (Nosaka & Novak, 2015). Welcoming and first-year programs have been a key to support students in their transition to college but there is a higher need to mainstream support services throughout their college career to truly increase retention and persistence, especially for students of color (Garcia & Okhidoi, 2015). In addition, institutions must keep in mind that students do not want handholding and rather have an ongoing individual connection to affirm they belong (Musoba et al., 2013), which can be accomplished by connecting them with dedicated staff who serve as first responders (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Such staff can be from those who work in identity-specific centers since these spaces were created to support the college experience of marginalized and underrepresented populations in higher education institutions to validate their presence and experience (Pittman, 1994; Welch, 2009). These individuals who may share some of the students'

identities, can serve as the bridge between the student and the larger institution to support them on how to navigate the institution and their college life (Engle & Tinto, 2008).

Furthermore, these centers can provide the space for ongoing experiences to increase their self-awareness and sense of belonging to empower them to advocate for themselves (Welch, 2009).

Hispanic-Serving Institution Designation

Particularly in California, the majority of community colleges have the Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) designation (U.S. Department of Education, 2018), meaning they have a student body of at least 25% Hispanic students and at least half of those students must qualify as low-income (Espinoza & Espinoza, 2012). HSIs have been critical to Latina/o student college enrollment since they account for 60% of all Latina/o college students and yet criticized for focusing too much on enrollment rather than the support they need to persist and meet their educational goals (Garcia & Okhidoi, 2015). Because the HSI designation can be lost from one year to the next based on minimum enrollment requirements, some institutions lack a connection between the HSI designation and the core of the institution (Contreras, Malcom, & Bensimon, 2008). This disconnect and campus culture may also lead to using the HSI funding to address campus-wide improvements rather than specific infrastructures aimed to support Latino students (Contreras & Contreras, 2015) as administrators try to balance their institution's excellence and prestige with meeting their students' unique needs (Espinoza & Espinoza, 2012).

Research Methodology and Design

The study included a qualitative approach to describe a central phenomenon and explore unknown variables by using individual voices (Creswell, 2012). The study explored

the institution's structure and messaging in an attempt to identify what does the higher education institution prioritize when implementing Latino/a/x student success efforts. A single-case study of one CCC from purposeful sampling served for an "in-depth" process of data collection and analysis through a triangulation of the multiple variables of interest (Yin, 2014). The individual voices of the administrators, faculty and staff¹⁰ members captured the participants' lens and perspectives on the Latino/a/x student success efforts, which led to a larger meaning of the findings (Creswell, 2012) rather than only focusing on specific metrics that should not be treated as an independent source to truly capture student success (Contreras & Contreras, 2015).

Research Site

Since the majority of Latino/a/x students are enrolling in the CCC system (CPEC, 2018a) and the majority of CCCs have the HSI designation (U.S. Department of Education, 2018), it was a natural decision to focus the study in a CCC. The name of the college under this study to protect its identity is Southern California Community College (SCCC). In addition, since CCCs have a small representations of Latino/a/x people in key roles such as tenured faculty (15%), senior leadership (17%), and in academic senate (14%) (Bustillos, Siqueiros, & Bates, 2018), the study will compare SCCC's Latino/a/x personnel to the CCC data.

SCCC is a commuter-only campus¹¹, member of a two-college district, and close to 25,000 total number of students. SCCC is located in Southern California with its top two

¹⁰ To protect participant anonymity, the term "staff" will be used as a general term for non-faculty and non-administrator roles.

¹¹ College does not provide on-campus housing.

student populations White (41.5%) and Hispanic students (33.7%) which is comparable to its sister college as shown on Table 3. Also, SCCC currently serves 42.2% male students and 35.4% first-generation students (California Community College Chancellor’s Office [CCCCO], 2018c).

Table 3: Overview of the Research Site and its Counterpart in the Two-College District.

Characteristic	SCCC	Sister SCCC
Hispanic-Serving Institution	Yes	Yes
Commuter Campus	Yes	Yes
Total Number of Students	24,840	13,735
Full-Time Equivalent Students	12,747.2	6,337.9
Largest Student Population	White (41.5%)	White (46.1%)
Second Largest Student Population	Hispanic (33.7%)	Hispanic (32.8%)
Students 24-year-old or younger	65.7%	60.3%
Male Students	42.2%	45.0%
First-Generation Students	35.4%	41.6%

There are also some of SCCC’s current metrics worth noting to contextualize the study. For first-time students in 2011-2012 who enrolled in their first three consecutive terms, SCCC had 80.7% six-year persistence rate for college prepared¹² students (N=467) and 78.7% six-year persistence rate for unprepared for college¹³ students (N=2,335). For the same cohort, SCCC had 67.9% six-year completion¹⁴ rate for college prepared students and 44% six-year completion rate for unprepared for college students. Moreover, 51.7% of students who first enrolled in remedial English (N=2,672) completed an English college-level course and 55.1%

¹² Student’s lowest course attempted in Math and/or English was college level (CCCCO, 2018c).

¹³ Student’s lowest course attempted in Math and/or English was remedial level (CCCCO, 2018c).

¹⁴ Completion is defined when students meet degree, certificate, or transfer-related outcomes (CCCCO, 2018c).

of students who first enrolled in English as second language course (N=485) completed an English college-level course. Lastly, 45.6% of students who first enrolled in remedial math (N=1,775) completed a math college-level course (CCCCO, 2018c).

Research Participants

A purposeful sampling of the 14 research participants included administrators, faculty and staff members who have responsibilities that include the support or implementation of Latino/a/x student success efforts. They participated in a one-on-one interview with semi-structured and open-ended questions and the three types of roles allowed the process to gain insights from both curricular and co-curricular perspectives. Also, all participants were given a pseudonym either chosen by participant or researcher to protect their identity and signed a consent form to have the interview’s audio recorded to transcribe for a deeper analysis (Creswell, 2012). Table 4 shares an overview of the 14 participants who hold formal positions in either academic or student services listed in alphabetical order by pseudonym.

Table 4: Overview of the 14 Research Participants by Alphabetical Order.

Pseudonym	Role	Sex	Race/Ethnicity	Years in HE
Bob	Admin/Faculty	Male	Latino	18
Chris	Staff	Male	African American	3
Diana	Staff	Female	Latina/Mexican American	5
Dulce	Staff	Female	Latina	4
Erin	Administrator	Female	White	11
Joyce	Administrator	Female	African American	15
Laura	Administrator	Female	Middle Eastern	14
Maria	Faculty	Female	Filipino	23
Mario	Staff	Male	Latinx	12
Nina	Faculty	Female	Latina	19
Priscilla	Faculty	Female	Latinx	29
Robert	Administrator	Male	Middle Eastern	30
Simon	Administrator	Male	Mexican-American	12
Veronica	Staff	Female	Latina/Mexican American	9

The multiple voices and roles present in the participants enhanced the study to best learn from them (Creswell, 2012) as they each shared their¹⁵ individual interpretation and opinions to make meaning (Yin, 2014) of the Latino/a/x student success efforts and their influence on campus culture. Additionally, data was collected from secondary demographic data, archival records, direct observations, and documentation including audiovisual materials.

Data Collection

Data collection took place from November 2018 through November 2019 in three different stages where each included a set of research designs to build from previous one. In addition, the length and structure of each stage is to ensure quality time as field researcher to focus on what is happening rather than why it is happening (Emerson et al., 1995) to later triangulate the collected data with the reflective memos on the formal and informal interactions as well as from the researcher's observations. The first stage was set to collect secondary demographic data, archival records, and audiovisual materials of the institution to build foundational knowledge of SCCC from an outsider perspective. The second stage included direct observation from formal and informal interactions to understand and analyze relevant social and environmental conditions (Yin, 2014) as well as the in-person one-on-one interviews with administrators, faculty and staff members. The last stage included follow-up communication with participants from stage two to give them the opportunity to review and clarify anything from their own interview transcript.

¹⁵ The author of this dissertation has chosen to use the third person plural pronouns “they,” “them,” and “their” to function “as third-person singular pronouns to model a common technique used to avoid” (American Psychological Association, 2015) misgendering people, especially the authors and research participants included in this article.

Findings

The 14 individual interviews with administrators, faculty and staff members provided a wide range of themes even when describing similar aspects of Latino/a/x student success efforts at SCCC. The following themes present the participants' understanding of the underlying messages of the institution regarding student success and the influence of the institution's Latino/a/x efforts on campus climate.

Defining Student Success

When asked to define student success, the majority of the participants (eight of the 14) defined SCCC student success in relation to traditional quantitative measures of success such as retention, persistence, graduation, and transfer rates. Simon, one of the administrators, described this as basing "off what the [CCC] system expects, Management Information System, and those are certain metrics that as a college we report to the state on student success." Across participants, they described the need to check students' progress in passing courses, grades in those courses, overall grade point averages, and checking if students are completing their educational goals in a timely manner.

Erin, an administrator, and Bob, the only participant with dual role of serving as administrator and faculty member, referred to SCCC's mission "Education revamps student lives¹⁶" to frame their student success definition. Moreover, Bob and Laura, another administrator, framed their definition by referring to outreach, engagement, and retention as the three priorities within the strategic plan (SCCC Strategic Plan, 2016). As a researcher, there was already familiarity of both the mission statement and strategic plan since they were

¹⁶ SCCC mission statement was edited to protect the research site's anonymity while trying to maintain its original meaning.

two key pieces heavily reviewed prior to conducting interviews. Four of the five staff members described measuring student success based on their units' efforts or familiarity with other student services units. Diana and Veronica, two of the staff members, shared that student success can be individually tracked by the students' Comprehensive Educational Plan, which keeps course summary and list of courses they need to fulfill their individual educational goals. Chris and Dulce, two other staff members, referenced unit reports and student surveys to check on service satisfaction and goal progress.

In addition to the structured key performance indicators, all five administrators and Bob, who has the dual role, shared that student success included how do students perceive their own student success and taking charge of their educational trajectory. Collectively, there was a sense of understanding that student success looks different for every student. Joyce, one of the administrators, shared that "while we do have a definition of student success, the most commonly embraced is one that allows the students to define themselves." Robert, another administrator, added the need for students to not solely focus on "pursuing [educational] goals anymore but identifying and pursuing their potential."

Furthermore, four of the five administrators shared that the quantitative metrics only tells part of the students' stories. Even now that student data are being analyzed through an equitable lens and disaggregated to look at subgroups of students' educational progress, there is acknowledgement that as an institution, they may miss the mark in truly evaluating student needs and therefore miss the opportunity to better support their college path and overall success. Joyce captured this newer approach when sharing that as an institution, they are "starting to look at measures that consider what the students' experience really is and what

factors may be contributing to the success cards or performance indices that we currently track.”

Defining Latino/a/x Student Success

When the conversation shifted to defining Latino/a/x student success, if there was any difference from the general definition of student success they had already shared, all 14 participants generally stated that there was no separate definition. Some participants named the same quantitative metrics of student success while adding that to address equity gap, Latino/a/x student data are compared with other racial/ethnic student groups. Mario, a staff member, stated that:

Latinx is one of our demographics [that is disproportionately impacted]...but other aspects of the demographics are like our Black students, Asian Pacific Islander students, former foster youth students, and then we are also looking at homeless or home insecure and food insecure students. So these are like the different types of students that we're looking at,...so the success really does come in when we're disaggregating that data and looking at a certain percent of students that are Latinx, that are not continuing or are not passing those gatekeeper courses.

There was a general consensus that Latino/a/x students are disproportionately impacted at SCCC and nine of the participants acknowledged the existence and need to provide equitable support for Latino/a/x students; however, only two used the word “equity” to describe such approach in student success efforts. Robert described the current state at SCCC as a “multi-year conversation to distinguish between equity and equality.” Joyce mentioned that the focus on equity framework still creates a deficit perspective narrative by some SCCC members and hopes to see a shift to a strength-based perspective of the student experience. A few other participants brought up the term “equity gap” but did not use the term “equity” to describe the student support efforts during interviews or in other spaces through the researcher’s observations.

Unique to Simon's interview, Simon prefaced their answer by stating that SCCC does not know the difference between Hispanic and Latino/a/x students and therefore does not know how to define Latino/a/x student success. Simon continued that based on what the CCC system requires to report, SCCC reports Hispanic student success only and will continue this focus because it is connected to the HSI designation. Robert similarly stated that they, as an individual, use the term Hispanic as a federal technical term only, while Joyce mentioned they do not use the term Hispanic but one they do understand. The rest of the participants did not mention or recognize the differences and similarities between these two terms. However, four of the participants, Diana, Erin, Mario, and Robert, recognized the importance to better understand the Latino/a/x students to better understand and acknowledge their own success. Erin mentioned that as an institution, "we need to take the time to understand who are our Latinx students because that will help us get more information to really drive how we do the work." Diana added on the need to better understand students' goals since "college and society in general see the degree as the measure of success...but coming to college is already a success, completing their first year is a success."

The Influence of HSI Designation

Multiple participants shared funding as the first and main benefit in having the HSI, also known as Title V, designation at Southern California Community College. Maria, Nina, and Priscilla, three of the four faculty members, mentioned funding again in relation to the challenge of what will SCCC do when the Title V funding ends and wondered how will these efforts be institutionalized. After quickly highlighting funding, a common second benefit across participants is the message SCCC is giving to its own internal and external communities. Veronica described it as a message to let the community know what SCCC

stands for and both Veronica and Nina shared that as an institution, they made it a priority and are now committed and accountable to serving this specific student population. Joyce clearly stated that “it is a recognition that says you cannot deny that these students are here and growing.” Furthermore, Mario shared that SCCC used to invisibilize students of color and having the designation gave them the opportunity to clearly state it on marketing materials to expand the college’s branding. In a similar way, Diana shared that the designation has helped SCCC with outreach efforts as there have been a number of times when students and family members did not think they could fit in because they did not see people who looked like them. The participants’ comments on messaging were somewhat surprising since after reviewing the institution’s website, there was no acknowledgement of the HSI designation in the homepage, the quick links under the “About Us” web page, or the Office of the President’s web page.

On the other side of the spectrum, multiple participants shared that SCCC is located in a conservative area where color blindness and racism are present both on campus and its surrounding community. A few participants shared their concern about the influence from the current political climate and the negative messages on the Latino/a/x population which strengthens a closed and racist mindset toward this population. Diana shared concern on how are students going to feel comfortable to reach out to staff and faculty and how are they going to feel comfortable [at SCCC] if they already know that is the prevalent mindset of the local community. For example, the researcher observed a student with a black “Make America Great Again” hat sitting near the main student courtyard during SCCC’s “Undocumented Student Week of Action” designed to provide support and build awareness of undocumented students. Mario shared the example of having to disable comments on SCCC’s videos in

Spanish because of the racist language being posted. Both Diana and Mario shared that these negative messages and experiences impede the students' education.

Joyce and Robert described the HSI designation as an opportunity to participate in learning new practices to better support Latino/a/x students. Joyce talked about not embracing old ways of doing work and look at new paradigms to support students differently "because they're here, and they have a right to be here. And that's not going to change." Robert mentioned that it can also serve as a model to support other student populations since "they're practices that teach us how to learn about students and connect with them regardless of their background." Erin also highlighted the HSI designation as an opportunity to advocate for students at a larger platform since "there is strength in legislation and there's strength in this national movement."

Simon emphasized that the number of new programs and efforts coming out of Title V are both a benefit and a challenge. They are a benefit because SCCC has the opportunity to pilot new initiatives, especially cross-functional, that can eventually be institutionalized. The challenge is the time that takes to build the new initiatives and to do it under the current college structure and personnel responsibilities that limits the time people can allocate.

Bob added the challenge that SCCC is HSI enrolling but they're "not HSI, in terms of building the next generation. Not on purpose, at least." Bob shared this comment after talking about how SCCC is diverse in the entry-level positions "but as you go up to the further levels of leadership, we're pretty much absent, and that has a lot of problems because we're not really involved in that decision-making like we could be, to make a difference." Erin briefly touched on the same challenge when sharing that it is good that "they're coming in [but] they're not getting out, so we're doing a disservice."

Multiple participants mentioned that one of the challenges is the balance of the terms “Hispanic” and “Low-Income” connected to the designation. Priscilla shared that at the beginning of the grant arrival, marketing for new efforts out of the Title V funding did not state that the efforts were connected to the grant. This lack of connection to Title V sent the message that the efforts were open to all students but some campus members wanted the Title V funds to directly impact the college experience of Latino/a/x students. Simon added that SCCC wants to uplift all minority groups but can deviate from the “Hispanic” focus since grant states “and low income.” Simon and Priscilla shared the message they still hear on "yes, you can do this for the Hispanic students, but you have to also incorporate all low-income students." Simon described the ongoing conversation on reminding the campus community that the HSI grant requires 25% Hispanic students and not 25% low-income students as a reminder that the focus should first be the Latino/a/x student population. In addition, Simon added that they know the terms Latino, Latina, Latinx are more inclusive yet they are still using Hispanic because of the grant.

Laura touched on the challenge of limiting the scope of truly understanding the Latino/a/x student population. Laura stressed the importance of not having a tunnel vision when serving the Latino/a/x student population and making effort in understanding their intersectionality of identities. Laura explained that “it doesn't mean that they're all from the same country...and just because [of] their ethnicity, that does not mean that they come from the same socio-economic background, that doesn't mean that they have the same background and experiences, or the same lived experiences. It's very different.” Priscilla describes the same challenge by passionately stating that when they look at the Latinx population, they:

have to pay attention to the fact that our students are predominantly first generation, low income, the cultural things that come with the responsibilities they have with the family. And the services on campus are not really paying attention to all those non-academic pieces. Here's a mentor. Here's a success course, but where's the support for additional funding, emergency transportation. Did you eat today? Here's a lunch ticket. These are the pieces that I feel sometimes there's not enough attention being paid to that.

Laura continued to share the need to look at students from the asset minded approach versus a deficit approach. Laura wants to instill their cultural backgrounds and making it relevant to what they are learning so they can see themselves in the instruction and feel empowered as well as bring inspirational speakers from various backgrounds so students can see themselves in these professions.

Overall, all participants saw the HSI designation as a positive component of SCCC. Some of the participants, especially those connected to the HSI steering committee, shared the importance of having coordinated programs and communication on the outcomes of all efforts. Chris summarized that the designation “benefits us by our enrollment and trying to attract more of those students, letting them know that we have specific services for them, that we're here to celebrate them, and also here to make sure that they're successful in their education efforts.”

Latino/a/x Student Success Efforts & Influence on Campus Culture

The participants overwhelmingly shared they do see the Latino/a/x student success efforts positively influencing the campus culture at Southern California Community College. Some participants shared that in the time the current Title V director has been at SCCC, the Title V staff has brought key campus members together to ensure everyone is on the same page and strengthen cross-functional collaborations in addition to first cleaning the messiness from the early stages of the grant. At the same time, many shared the work is not done and

there are still a lot of campus efforts they need to pursue, develop, and implement with the ultimate goal of institutionalizing them to better support the Latino/a/x students and the growing diverse student population.

Some of the participants shared the positive influence of creating the space for Latino/a/x students to feel empowered to take on student leadership roles. Latino/a/x students serve as peer mentors to new students or in student government roles leading to a stronger sense of confidence and sense of belonging, which helps them retain Latino/a/x students at SCCC. Chris describes that also as student leaders, “they’re able to voice their opinions which is helping us change as a campus to meet the specific needs of the Latino group...They help us change our policies and procedures to help them with the challenges that they’re facing.”

Priscilla focused on the roadmap that SCCC took to ultimately focus on addressing equity gaps. They stated that because of Achieving the Dream¹⁷, SCCC was able to work on a vision for success in the form of Guided Pathways, which is framed “to ensure student success by integrating college-wide resources and mapping a highly-structured, clearly-defined program or ‘pathway’ for students to follow starting with an end goal in mind” (SCCC Guided Pathways, 2019). That process then influenced the development of the Student Equity Plan stating that since they had “a campus culture focused on student success [and] evidence-based decision making, conversations about equity and equitable outcomes [were] the next logical step for the college (SCCC Student Equity Plan, 2014, p. 4). However, Priscilla mentioned that the challenge “came with [the] understanding that these were the

¹⁷ Mission statement for Achieving the Dream (ATD) states that it “address[es] systemic inequities within higher education to increase social and economic mobility for all students and families...[by] leading America’s largest network of community colleges” (ATD, 2019).

populations that needed more support, but the college wanting to create support that would be available for all students.”

Some participants highlighted the influence of educating faculty, staff, and administrators on the Latino/a/x student experience. Veronica talked about the influence of the Latinx Alliance members in other meetings and spaces “because we understand where our students are coming from and we also understand what it takes to keep our staff and faculty motivated to continue helping that population.” Simon described the Latinx Alliance at SCCC as an entity “not associated with the college but supported by the president,” which, according to Diana, focuses on “address[ing] the needs of Latinx students on campus.” As members of the Latinx Alliance, participants shared a sense of bringing that perspective to other conversations and contribute in other campus efforts. Moreover, Mario shared a proud moment when they witnessed a colleague talk about “well this is why we’re doing it” in regards to better supporting the Latino/a/x student experience at one of the senate meetings. Mario continued to say that collectively they are slowly creating ripples and moving the needle. Diana and Nina shared that the student focus and student-centered approach is also allowing SCCC to better support students. Nina mentioned that they “always see student representation...and it’s taking into account their voices as we’re deciding how to move forward, how we can incorporate their needs into whatever decisions are being made at the college.”

However on the other side of the spectrum, the campus is faculty-driven and can feel divided as described by Simon:

you have half of the college [who] are innovators trying to think ahead of ways to better support the students, to maximize learning, to maximize outcomes, and they're willing to do the work [while the other] half of the college has a

‘we like it the old way. If they're not ready for us, then they shouldn't be coming’ mentality.

Priscilla shared the need to package the message differently because faculty have been hearing the term “student equity” for years now and can easily shut down. Joyce adds that this mentality from some of the faculty members who think of themselves as “gods [who] are imparting wisdom” and they are the “Harvard on the hill” creates an elitist mindset. One that allows SCCC to “still operate in that system that was never designed to support non-traditional students” and they instead need to find “clever and creative workarounds to help get more students through a system that is still very much a hostile, broken, [and] condemning.”

Joyce shared that they do not know yet what a true inclusive and empowering space may look like where students succeed because of the system and not in spite of the system.

Joyce continues by wondering what student success could look like:

What would it be like to have people presenting information to you in a way that is so contextually sound that you're now engaged completely intellectually, because you're not being challenged culturally, right? They're not hoarding information over you and making you feel less than because they haven't figured out or maybe they choose not to find a contextually sound way with which to present the information. So now you're struggling against not just the information itself, but how it's being presented, right? What would it be like? What is that? And then what would it be like to just know that it's okay to be you, in this experience? That to me would be the ultimate educational experience and the ultimate space. We're not there, not even close.

Erin touched on the same concern and mentioned that the annual reports SCCC creates allows them to recognize how much progress they are doing as well as identify gaps for ongoing and future efforts. This progress analysis allows primarily administrators to strengthen relationships with each other to have a unified approach with consistent message, especially

in a politicized environment as described by Laura where a revolving door of key leadership roles impacts the among campus members and with the institution as a whole.

Discussion

The participants' voices shared a glimpse of the underlying messages SCCC shares with its stakeholders which have created a sense of hope and a self-awareness by the SCCC members to hold themselves and the college accountable for its decisions and direction to better support Latino/a/x students. The following topics highlight the institutional practices the SCCC members envision as a foundation for true systemic changes and equitable approach to Latino/a/x student success.

The Need for Individualizing Student Success

Even though student success was clearly and primarily defined by traditional quantitative measures, all six participants with administrative responsibilities touched on recognizing that each student's success is linked to their individual educational goal. Multiple participants recognized the need to learn more about their students, especially Latino/a/x students to understand how to support them. Robert mentioned that as an institution, they need to focus not only on what is their background but "how do we use an understanding of your background to reach a dialogue with you on what supports you truly need?" Additionally, Robert mentioned that an individualized approach to supporting students is extremely difficult with thousands of students "but just because it's hard, doesn't mean you shouldn't be doing it."

Another significant component of individualizing student success is recognizing and supporting milestone identifiers of student success. Diana who meets very often with students because of their role, mentioned multiple times the need to recognize that student success for

some students is showing up to classes or completing a semester. All participants recognized that Latino/a/x students are disproportionately impacted and experience non-academic challenges and yet the participants mostly focused on the quantitative measures of student success. Some of the participants shared they feel powerless in knowing they can only lend an ear and provide words of encouragement as a form to support them. Simon shared that with some subgroups of the Latino/a/x student population that they have limited experience with like transborder students, “I always provide an ear and I do my best to provide resources for them, but I know that the transborder Latinx students are struggling...and I don't know that our faculty really understand where these students are coming from.” Maria added that “it breaks my heart because I know they want to be there but they just can't balance it. So I'm like, ‘okay, come see me during office hours, go to the [tutoring] center. You gotta make this work.’”

HSI Designation Treated as a Colony of the Larger College

All participants were able to describe their perceived benefits and challenges of the HSI designation that can be compared to the way a colony functions as a member of a larger system. The HSI team at SCCC functions as an independent system of the larger college community since there is support from across the institution but most of the participants shared they only support HSI initiatives and do not actually contribute to the implementation. This structure leaves the work to be driven solely by the small HSI team since the current staffing structure does not allow for non-HSI team members to spend time and effort in HSI initiatives unless they are partnering with them through cross-functional collaborations. Also as mentioned before, funding was one of the primary factors participants recognized as a benefit of the HSI designation while some shared the challenges of the limited funds at the

end of the grant timeline. Not knowing what will happen to the efforts developed with HSI funds was a great concern for many of the participants highlighting the dependency of the HSI grant for the college to succeed in efficiently supporting Latino/a/x students.

Another factor that emphasizes the colony analogy is the issue that HSI is only addressing part of the Latino/a/x student needs and requires the resources and support of the larger college community to effectively address a holistic approach to supporting their college experience and success as well as the sustainability of such efforts after HSI funding runs out. As a colony, the HSI team depends on the resources provided by larger community college and its labor benefits the reputation and success of the larger community college.

Hierarchical Structure Limits Contributions to Change

Even though Chris was the only one to directly mention that goal prioritization “comes from our administrators on how our departments are achieving their goals and when,” many deferred decision-making to systems or groups of people within the community college.

Laura, Mario, and Veronica touched on the importance of shared governance as a way to include multiple voices at the decision-making table. Veronica mentioned that:

Now at every committee, there's a seat for faculty staff, students and I think with that we are able to really be mindful of our priorities and actually work towards them because when you have representatives from all over the college, everybody sees things very differently. So a faculty member notices different priorities than a staff member.

Laura added that the work today on the infrastructure and “hiring new people with different skill sets [will contribute] to see great changes in the next four to five years.” Many at SCCC still perceive a top down approach where administrators identify the initiatives, the timeline, and the evaluation process while others recognize SCCC is at a point where there is a cultural shift in decision-making to include more campus members’ voices and perspectives to

decision-making conversations. Until the cultural shift fully develops, each level of positions (staff, faculty, and administrators) seem to have their own perspective of how much they can contribute and positively influence the larger campus structure and climate.

Implications for Future Practices

Participants were able to share the need to individualize student success by better understanding who their students are and also what are their educational goals. These two efforts require time and commitment from members across the college and critical steps in truly creating a proactive supporting environment for Latino/a/x students to succeed. SCCC like many higher educational institutions have concrete answers to achieving student success but tend to fail at properly balancing the time spent on the day-to-day student needs and time required to work on the long-lasting systemic changes of the institution. As SCCC continues to benefit from the HSI efforts, it must start planning how to institutionalize the multiple programs piloted with HSI funds to ensure the momentum of Latino/a/x student efforts is not lost when federal funds expire. SCCC has the opportunity to integrate the Latino/a/x student success efforts by intentionally structure them in the proper unit but it is unclear who will make those decisions. Due to the independent and isolated structure of the HSI efforts, many will have an opinion on how to institutionalize those efforts and yet those voices may be in conflict with each other or missing at the final decision-making table.

CHAPTER FIVE: HIGHER EDUCATION'S ROLE IN ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF LATINO/A/X STUDENTS' MULTIPLE AND INTERSECTING IDENTITIES

Introduction

College students like Latino/a/x¹⁸ students have their own understanding of college access and continue to have a unique college experience influenced by both their social identities and the context of the higher education they attend. Individuals' social identities such as ability, ethnicity, gender identity, religion, and socioeconomic status contribute to creating an authentic self (Shields, 2008), which can also be influenced by the people around them¹⁹ and the context of their environment. The Latino/a/x college student experience has been well documented (Carter, Hurtado, & Spuler, 1996; Hurtado, 1994; Hurtado & Gurin, 1995; Torres, 2003; Torres & Baxter Magolda, 2004) mainly disconnected to the accountability of higher education institutions aimed to support their college success. Higher education institutions continue to implement support programs based on their understanding of the population as a large group disregarding their unique identities and stories by not accurately looking at individual ethnic group's progress and challenges (Contreras & Contreras, 2015) and other salient identities as a college student such as being first-generation and low-income knowing they face a number of challenges that lead to even lower retention and graduation rates (Engle & Tinto, 2008). The lack of priority or willingness to implement

¹⁸ The author of this article chose to use Latino/a/x to show the chronological evolution from Latino to Latina to Latinx. These terms will be used individually and as a group to "honor self-identity [as] a personal choice" (Batista, Collado, & Perez II, 2018) and respect the authors' own identifiers in their research included in this article.

¹⁹ The author of this dissertation has chosen to use the third person plural pronouns "they," "them," and "their" to function "as third-person singular pronouns to model a common technique used to avoid" (American Psychological Association, 2015) misgendering people, especially the authors and research participants included in this article.

such intentional institutional practices does not offer the opportunity for [Latino/a/x] students to explore their multiple identities (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007).

College students of color, like Latino/a students, struggle with the meaning of their multiple identities during their college experience (Hurtado & Gurin, 1995; Torres, 2003; Torres & Baxter Magolda, 2004), especially when their college transition includes being the first in their family to attend college, they learned or are learning English as a second language, hold multiple jobs, and/or have dependents (Carter, Hurtado, & Spuler, 1996; Harackiewicz et al., 2014; Hurtado, 1994; Hurtado & Gurin, 1987). More than the individual students' background, the institution can influence the students' college experience by positively acknowledging those identities and proactively supporting them. Higher education institutions have the opportunity to take the time to understand their students' multiple and intersecting identities to proactively create a student-ready environment. Such proactive approach to take the time to better understand student groups and provide intentional support strategies can potentially offer the opportunity for students to explore their multiple identities (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007) and address the achievement gap between students of color and White students that continues to be clearly defined. In particular, Latino/a/x students enrolled in college at a faster rate than other ethnic groups over the last two decades but their graduation rates are not matching the same pattern (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). Therefore, this study focused on the following research question addressed in this article:

- How, if at all, are higher education institutional practices structured to address the needs of Latino/a/x students' multiple and intersecting identities to understand the gaps and opportunities to increase their college success?

Relevant Literature and Theoretical Framework

The literature review highlights some of the Latino/a/x student sub-groups to better understand the complexity of this diverse population and the differences in how they may experience the college environment. Secondly, it summarizes the Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity to describe the relationship that higher education institutions have in the identity development of college students. This model also emphasizes the importance of separating the student's core and their multiple identities from the contextual influences to better understand identity development as well as promote the development of complex meaning-making filters through individual and group experiences to seek holistic student success (Abes, Jones & McEwen, 2007). The two sections create a link between the student and institution to emphasize the need for strong understanding of the real obstacles that higher education practices present (Evans, 2009) to engage in a collaborative approach to proactively and intentionally enhance Latino/a/x student success.

Latino/a/x Students Treated as Monolithic Group

Latino/a/x students, as a minoritized group, may experience college in a similar way, but for the most part, their within-group differences not connected to race shape their college experience differently (Stewart, 2013). The intersectional journey of Latino/a/x students emphasizes how their social identities overlap, inform each other, and are actively engaged especially when interacting with others (Shields, 2008). Also, intersectionality influences the way Latino/a/x students describe themselves using some of their identities, which reflects how they present themselves and experience college. Still, the ongoing approach to treat Latino/a/x students as a monolithic group impedes higher education institutions to fully understand, validate, and better support their multiple identities. Institutions must consider the Latino/a

diverse within-group differences to address retention strategies for subgroups (Espinoza & Espinoza, 2012) and better understand how these identities intersect on a college campus to enhance Latino/a/x student success.

Higher education institutions have the responsibility to address subgroup needs since there is research that emphasize Latino/a/x students' differences in college enrollment based on gender, country of origin, and citizenship status (Aramburo & Bhavsar, 2013; Musu-Gillette et al, 2016). In addition, students transition and engage differently with their college community based on their first-generation college student status (Boden, 2011; Harackiewicz et al., 2014), transborder student experience (Kleyn, 2017; Mangual Figueroa, 2012), or gender identity (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2009). Furthermore, other identities like English learners and elements like family's structural dynamic, educational background, and socioeconomic status also play a role in students' academic performance (Llagas & Snyder, 2003).

By prioritizing the time to understand Latino/a/x students' multiple and intersecting identities, higher education institutions can proactively create an empowering community where they do not have to face verbal, behavioral, and environmental microaggressions (Sue et al., 2007).

Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity

The Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007) serves as the theoretical framework of the study to emphasize the role higher education institutions play in supporting and challenging Latino/a/x students' multiple and intersecting identities to ensure a holistic success. The model focuses on a key feature named the meaning-making filter, which is categorized in formulaic (minimal filtering), transitional

(emerging complex filtering), and foundational (complex filtering) capacity. Figure 6 shows how the student's contextual influences shape the student's self-perception of their multiple identities only after passing through the meaning-making filter.

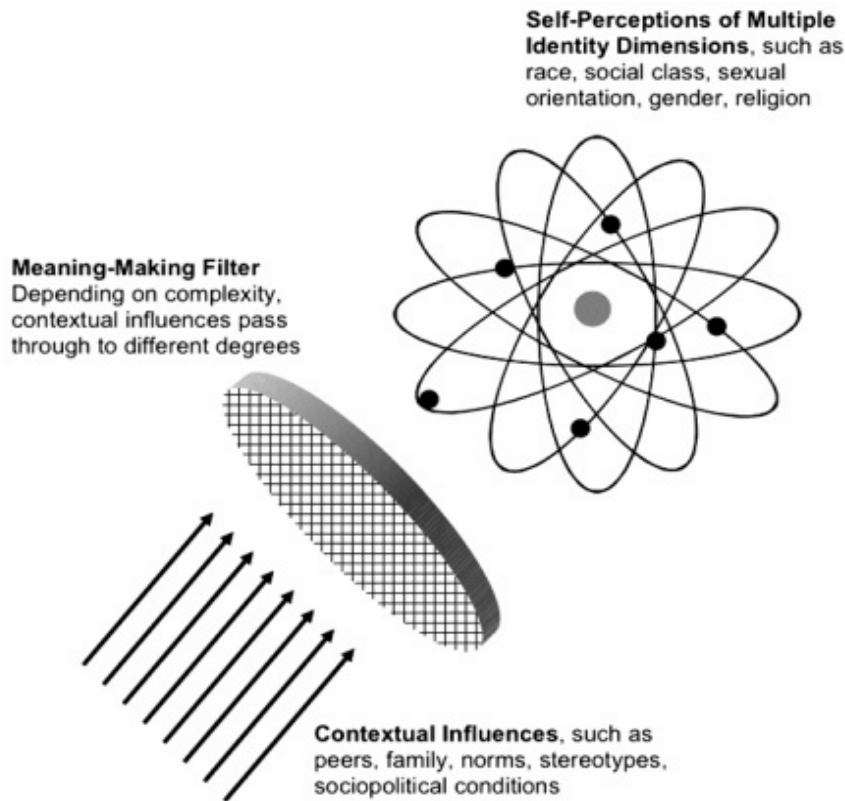


Figure 6: Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007).

Therefore, since the capacity of the meaning-making filter determines the type of effect the contextual influences have on the students' multiple identities and their core sense of self, higher education institutions have the opportunity to proactively provide opportunities that will help students develop complex meaning-making filters illustrated by increased depth and smaller grid openings. Through specific context such as structures, systems, and experiences facilitated intentionally by the institution, students will then be able to explore their multiple identities and core described as "their 'inner identity' or 'inside self' as contrasted with...their 'outside' identity or the 'facts' of their identity" at a specific time

(Jones & McEwen, 2000, p. 408). As the institution creates complex meaning-making filters, students will be able to develop their multiple and intersecting identities, which can lead toward a holistic student success path.

Research Methodology & Design

This study focused on how, if at all, are higher education institutional practices structured to address the needs of Latino/a/x students' multiple and intersecting identities to understand the gaps and opportunities to increase their college success. The study centered on a single-case study of one commuter California Community College (CCC) from purposeful sampling with analysis of multiple variables of interest (Yin, 2014). The CCC served as the research site since the majority of Latino/a/x students are enrolling in the CCC system (California Postsecondary Education Commission, 2018a) and students have an array of educational goal options such as complete associate degree or certificate program, transfer to a "traditional" four-year institution, or simply take a number of courses to improve a specific set of skills. To protect the college's identity, the name Southern California Community College (SCCC) was used in this article.

Research Participants

The qualitative approach included individual in-person interviews with administrators, faculty and staff²⁰ members whose responsibilities included the support of curricular or co-curricular Latino/a/x student success efforts to explore unknown variables of their voices to describe the phenomenon and meaning of the findings (Creswell, 2012). The participants were identified by the Title V Director, whose responsibilities are directly connected to the

²⁰ To protect participant anonymity, the term "staff" will be used as a general term for non-faculty and non-administrator roles.

HSI designation, as active members of Latino/a/x student success efforts and many of them serve in the Title V steering committee. Table 5 provides an overview of the 14 participants who serve as administrators, faculty and staff members at SCCC.

Table 5: Overview of the Research Participants.

Role	Total	Latino/a/x	Female	Speaks Spanish	Avg. Years in HE
Administrators	5	1	3	1	16.4
Faculty Members	3	2	3	2	26.25
Staff Members	5	4	3	4	6.6
Dual Role (Admin/Fac)	1	1	0	1	18

All participants signed a consent form to record the audio to transcribe content for a deeper analysis (Creswell, 2012). They were invited to participate in the study regardless of the number of years working at the college or in higher education.

Research Design

The interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions to share “their interpretations and opinions about people and events or their insights, explanations, and meanings” (Yin, 2014, p. 111) of their institution’s Latino/a/x student success efforts. Also, the interview structure allowed the researcher to ask participants to reconstruct their experiences and for any clarification, giving them more control of what was more important and how they shared it (Seidman, 2006). Additionally, the one-on-one interviews were prolonged case study interviews to allow for multiple sittings if needed. This format also allowed for participants to speak freely and share information comfortably (Creswell, 2012) from their individual perspective.

Data Collection

There were three stages of data collection that took place from November 2018 to November 2019. Each stage overlapped with the next one and each included a specific set of research designs, which allowed field researcher to spend quality time in understanding what is happening rather than why it is happening (Emerson et al., 1995). Also, in each state, researcher triangulated the collected data with memos after each interaction and observations at the research site. The first stage set a foundation for the researcher to be an outside participant by reviewing secondary demographic data, archival records, and audiovisual materials of the institution. The second stage included direct observation from formal and informal interactions to understand and analyze relevant social and environmental conditions (Yin, 2014) including the in-person one-on-one interviews with administrators, faculty and staff members. The third stage included follow-up communication with participants from stage two to give them the opportunity to review and clarify anything from their own interview transcript.

Findings

The combination of data presented a picture of the structure of Latino/a/x student success efforts while highlighting key gaps in understanding the Latino/a/x student experience to better support their multiple and intersecting identities. The following are themes that created a connection between the campus members and Latino/a/x students through the current institutional structures and efforts.

Structure of Latino/a/x Student Success

To better understand the structure of Latino/a/x student success efforts at SCCC, participants were first asked to identify the Latino/a/x success efforts they were aware of, partner with, or refer students to them.

All participants except Bob identified Title V as one of the main Latino/a/x student success efforts. In addition, Bob and three others (Maria, Robert, and Simon) did not mention Puente as another Latino/a/x student success effort even though it “is a national award-winning program aimed at increasing the transfer success of disproportionately impacted students...[and] integrate[s] LatinX literature into lessons, projects and activities” (SCCC Puente Project, 2019). Other efforts named by participants were Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) designed to support “students disadvantaged by social, economic, educational or linguistic barriers get the resources they need to enroll and succeed at any California Community College (California Community College Chancellor’s Office, 2019) and the Dream Center focused on “creat[ing] a safe space within SCCC that offers a support system for undocumented students” (SCCC Dream Center, 2018). These units were identified as resources that Latino/a/x students use but not necessarily specifically focused to support this population only.

When asked to identify the structure of Latino/a/x student success efforts, most participants were able to name student services but many shared the lack of communication and relationship among efforts since they report to different deans across SCCC. The disconnect was also reflected in SCCC’s websites where, for example, information on Puente was not accessible from the EOPS website and vice versa. Priscilla described her analysis and discontent of the current structure:

The programs, I don't know that they're efficiently managed, and the reason I say that is because I don't feel we have a very effective way right now of keeping each other informed as to who's in which program, what services are they receiving, what do they still need and so on. Puente reports to one dean, Dream Center reports to another dean, so I don't think it's very efficient.

Similarly, Joyce mentioned that “there's bumping of heads, if you will, because we're transitioning out of this deficit model and into a strengths-based perspective. What does that look like structurally and operationally is still something that the institution is defining as well.” Robert shared a different perspective to Priscilla and Joyce by focusing on the message that it is everyone’s responsibility at SCCC to support students since the strategic plan prioritizes outreach, engagement, and retention (SCCC Strategic Plan, 2016). Robert highlighted their motto of “we’re all all in” meaning that campus members are empowered to immerse themselves in supporting all aspects of students’ college experience regardless of their role and reporting structure.

When listing Latino/a/x student success efforts, eight of the participants mentioned the existence of the Latinx Alliance, which Dulce described its focus to “address the needs of the Latinx students on campus” and everyone who mentioned it clearly stated that it was not a formal entity of SCCC yet it was supported by the SCCC President. Researcher found no information of the Latinx Alliance anywhere on SCCC’s website and did not know about this entity until it was mentioned during interviews. The six participants (Chris, Diana, Joyce, Laura, Maria, and Mario) who did not name the Latinx Alliance as another key Latino/a/x student success effort are all part of the Title V steering committee which partners consistently with the Latinx Alliance. The informal connection to SCCC had two different sides of how participants felt about it and both sides showed passion in their stand as perceived by researcher through multiple interactions and observations with participants and

other SCCC members. Simon shared that SCCC, “as an institution, we're kind of missing the mark, because these efforts are really stemming from people who are passionate about the work and are putting themselves out there [and it's] not a systemic approach.” Robert, on the other hand, mentioned that the informal connection to SCCC meant:

they could do things and talk about things and direct their efforts in ways that an institutional body couldn't because as a committee of the college they would have to adhere to membership selection criteria and public accountability issues and so on.

Veronica added the symbolism of the president's support by sharing that when the president comes to the Latinx Alliance meetings, it is “very validating because it shows us that the president not only cares about our population or HSI title, but that he's also invested in the work that we do.” Others like Nina focused on the Latinx efforts like “bringing speakers and engaging students with different activities to promote and to encourage community activism.” The last part on activism was unique to Nina's interview even though some like Mario and Veronica talked about the importance of Latinx Alliance members, which includes students, using their experience and understanding of the Latino/a/x student population in conversations across campus initiatives.

Basic Understanding of the Latino/a/x Student's Multiple Identities

In order to understand how to better support the Latino/a/x student population at SCCC, there was a need to explore what faculty, staff, and administrators knew of its current Latino/a/x population. Most participants were able to name at least one other salient identity for Latino/a/x students. In addition, participants were able to describe perceived Latino/a/x students' strengths and areas of growth. It is important to recognize that the following data highlights a small sample to the large percentage of Latino/a/x students at SCCC based on the unique experiences of the participants in the study.

A few of the participants named immigration status as another salient identify for Latino/a/x students. Some connected immigration status to their role as caretakers whether they care for their parents, siblings, or their own children as some students are part of mixed status families, meaning they have to work since they have formal documentation or United States (U.S.) citizenship and may have better paying jobs than other family members who are undocumented. Another factor to consider of mixed status families that Joyce mentioned is having the worry whether the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement “is going to show up and take them out of class or do something to their families” while they are in class. On another point of the immigration status spectrum are transborder students, which Simon shared is a small number since they are pretty far from the international border. However, for the small number of transborder students, their commute is a burden for them since “they're getting to our classes and they're tired; they have very long days. Most of them will also stay in [local region] and they have a job, and then they go back, and then the next morning, they're back at it again” not knowing if faculty really understand their challenges as transborder students.

The participants also mentioned the first-generation college student identity and having the opportunity to be the first in their family to attend college. Robert mentioned how the students may have a “lack of knowledge of how to navigate a community college system [and] how to pursue an academic program.” Simon explained it more as a lack of support from SCCC where they are not “really providing systemic, equitable support for the Latino students.”

The pressure to provide for their families came up from multiple participants. Maria shared that based on their own experience, a lot of students are working multiple jobs to help

their families financially. Some students according to Diana have to lower their course load or take a semester off to work more hours. Also, Nina talked about some of the conversations with students who share they have to miss class because they have to pick up a sibling from school or take a grandparent to the doctor. Erin added that this sense of family is so important that “they will do whatever’s needed and if that means I don’t go to class today,” they will not to take care of the family’s needs. Priscilla talked about supporting the family as something of “nature of the Latinx culture—it’s very family oriented. You don’t just go about doing things for yourself. It’s always for the whole family.” Similarly, Dulce mentioned that when Latino/a/x students “see their families struggle, they struggle as well [and] it goes the same way, when they see their families succeed, they do well as well” to highlight that when working with this population, one must also consider the family’s experiences. Moreover, Diana emphasized that the Latino/a/x students low-income status is one of their biggest barriers because:

as much as they want to come to school, they can’t afford books, bus pass, gas, car...How can you be a full-time student and then be a full-time worker. It’s just very hard, and it’s hard mentally, physically, it takes a toll on the students.

Furthermore, Nina shared that many students cannot afford a computer and use their telephone to complete online assignments because they cannot make it to campus to use the computers accessible to them.

Robert was one of the participants who quickly shared that students fall within all sides of the spectrum “rang[ing] from first generation, low income, very poor family support for education...[to] students who just sail under the radar who are well prepared [and] have support from their families.” However, a few other administrators expressed that as an institution, their understanding of the Latino/a/x student experience is at the surface level and

they need to do more. Erin shared that “we need to do more. How we do that and how we get that information, those are things that we have to figure out. The state's not moving at that rate yet” and then adding that by not getting more accurate and deeper information ”we're doing a disservice to our students. That we're not really honoring the [students’] culture and who they are.”

Minimum Knowledge How Latino/a/x Students’ Identities Intersect

When asked “what role does intersectionality take in student development?” only four of the participants understood the question. All four were able to quickly share the need to use intersectionality to validate and support the students’ holistic experience. Veronica took the approach of empowering the students by ensuring “[they] understand that they are who they are and it's okay.” Mario talked about the need for SCCC to stop working under “one size fits all” because it is very incorrect and “when you put the different lenses to their needs, it becomes more student-tailored...it's more equity focused.” Laura took it further in the importance “to understand our history and understanding how systemic inequities exist, and how particularly for our students of color, how that has affected the way they are perceived and will be perceived throughout their lives.”

The rest of the participants asked for clarification on what was meant by the term “intersectionality.” In a memo after the first interview, the researcher quickly realized that the interview time and space may require to take time educating the participant on identity development and intersectionality. The researcher had to share some examples on how multiple identities intersect in order for participants to talk about their experience with supporting students’ multiple identities and overall campus support efforts. Some participants were able to speak on some of those identities and connect them to current programs like Title

V, Puente, EOPS, and Dream Center as well as with current efforts like food pantry and book vouchers. Robert mentioned that:

increasingly we're learning to think about basic needs: food, showers, housing. We have a food pantry...[because] students can't persist in college and learn if they don't know where they're going to sleep and don't know what they're going to eat. And that is another factor, along with cultural background.

However, as Dulce shared, there was not much awareness on the bigger institutional discussions about it. Bob added that there are different pockets doing it but there is no systemic approach emphasizing that “we have different individuals, but we don't have a thoughtful assessment plan that's laid out that really says ‘Here's the results we're getting out of this.’” Simon added that “as a college, I don't think that we've further disaggregated all that to identify those other groups. I'm mentioning [some of the other student identities] because I have experiences with them.” Also, Priscilla mentioned that even with multiple programs and efforts, it was not clear that all of them are enough to capture all Latino/a/x students. For example, Diana mentioned that the Dream Center can only work with 100 students but they know that number is only a fraction of the students who need their support since spots fill in right away. Priscilla also shared that it is important to coordinate outreach efforts to ensure students receive the type of outreach they need whether is high, medium, or low touch.

Joyce described SCCC in the “very beginning stages of understanding identities of any kind.” Joyce mentioned that “there's not a lot of that opportunity for diversity in the way [to] individualiz[e] the experience or looking at the eclectic and the uniqueness of the different students coming from different spaces [but] we're still not there yet.” Still, Robert recognized that it is important for SCCC to understand their students with more than their name and the race and ethnicity they checked in their application. Robert shared that it is important to ask questions in a sensitive way to confidently tell the student how they can support them and

which part of their particular experience they can help. Two of the participants shared that Latinx students, those who identify as gender non-confirming, are the most active students. Veronica mentioned that by providing a safe space and an inclusive approach to support students' Latino/a/x identity and gender identity during the "exploratory" stage allows students to first feel comfortable with themselves and then feel more confident when engaging with others. Mario mentioned that consequently the Latinx students "have stepped up to the plate and really had difficult conversations with administrators, faculty and classified employees."

Veronica explains that "[students] see themselves as veterans, but they're also Latinos. They're also queer. They're also [English learners], they're single parents or non-traditional students." Diana adds that "even within all those umbrellas, several of them intersect. Students fall into various groups. So it just makes it harder." Both Diana and Veronica shared that SCCC hopes to help the Latino/a/x students with the barriers they face through support programs and not tell them who they are but for them to find their identity as they grow and develop as a whole. Veronica added that this includes those "students who are Latinos but they're not necessarily connected or they don't feel that connection with the Latinx Alliance or with Puente or with Title V, which is completely fine because at that point in their life, maybe that's not their most salient identity [and] it could be something else." Robert describes the ideal environment where "whoever, whichever one of us touches a student, we do it with sensitivity, with an understanding that we need to figure out which part of their life we need to help with and not just make a whole package presumption about the student."

Creating an Empowering Professional Development System

Opportunities for professional development to better understand the Latino/a/x student experience was another aspect of the participants' experience that had a wide spectrum of perspectives. Simon shared that some Title V funding was used for "professional development training series for faculty in English right now, for them to be more reflective on their pedagogy so that they can develop culturally responsive strategies in their teaching." However, Simon added they were unaware of any other funding structure to provide professional development specifically focused on the Latino/a/x college student experience. Simon mentioned that as an institution, professional development focused "around equity, and equity encompasses all ethnicities and races identified here, but specifically towards better understanding the Latino students, and particularly faculty," there was not much they could answer as specific example. Researcher found presentation slides and video presentation with the "equity" focus Simon mentioned but no content available from the current or the previous two years (SCCC Professional Development, 2019). Laura added that SCCC's "heavy focus is on having a shared understanding of what does it mean to serve a diverse population? We're not there into this specific identity [of Latino/a/x student experience]. I think we should be; we should be thinking about that too" since it is the majority of students at SCCC.

Some participants shared that at the beginning of the school year, there is professional development week but as Maria mentioned, "unfortunately, it's always the same people going to these workshops" since they are already invested in supporting underrepresented student groups like Latino/a/x students. Diana mentioned the professional development tends to be conference style allowing people to "choose which workshops to attend and which not to [and that currently]...there isn't a mandatory Latinx culture workshop or come learn about student

experience” option. Under the professional development web page, researcher found a schedule of professional development focused primarily on onboarding new employees without a clear introduction of SCCC’s diverse student population or equitable student success efforts. Erin would like to see specifically faculty members in this type of professional development so they can be flexible with some rules or to proactively reach out to understand why some students miss class when it is family related. However, a big challenge with the large number of adjunct faculty is that they cannot commit to spending time at SCCC since like Maria experienced, they could be in “three different campuses before [getting their] full-time job.” Maria added that there could be “some kind of incentive...to attend a lot of these workshops so that [they]’re more familiar with our students” but as Simon mentioned, “adjunct faculty are highly disregarded with professional development.”

Priscilla focused on using academic senate since it is a place to have faculty’s full attention to give presentations about what they can do in the classroom, “this is where we talk about the curriculum, the syllabus, what kinds of messages are you sending to your students that may not be welcoming?” Priscilla added that good work has been done at the “campus level [and] at a district level [but] now we’re trying to get into the classroom.”

Robert referred to professional development as a way to keep the college accountable for the success of all of the students by stopping to highlight “the one student who transfers to a highly selective institution every year and [instead] look at the hundreds of students who historically haven’t persisted past their first semester.” Robert added the importance to be student ready and “not just demanding that the students be college ready” acknowledging that it is “a way of being in our education world that takes time to develop.” This potential long

journey of professional development was shared by others like Joyce who believes SCCC has a long way to go. Joyce described the SCCC culture as:

we're still trying to get you to identify respectfully, who we are, and pronounce our names correctly, right? We're still trying to get you to a place where you can entertain the idea that [people of color] have the right to be here.

Joyce also recognized there are some safe spaces on campus and individuals doing great work but “our students are having to scramble to identify those pockets of safety.” Multiple participants mentioned the same units (EOPS, Dream Center, Puente, Title V) as examples where students find a sense of belonging and safe space to be themselves since they will interact with administrators and staff who understand their identities. Some participants also mentioned the Latinx Alliance members who represent many other areas from across campus. However, they also mentioned the need to focus on working with faculty members as classrooms tend to be the spaces where students felt the most vulnerable and unsafe, and yet, faculty members are generally the group that is less likely to participate in professional development opportunities focused on diversity topics. Dulce, for example, shared about optional opportunities where campus members are invited to learn about a specific student population that is traditionally marginalized but “no one is forced to go to those. So there are things here and there that...do attempt to access equity and diversity, including Latinx...[but since they are not required to attend, anyone] that is closed minded, they have no reason to go, then they wouldn't go and that continues the cycle.”

The process of allowing SCCC to at least engage in the work is one that Joyce applauds but said that if they are:

going to applaud [SCCC, they are] really going to applaud our state chancellor's office and the California Community College system for saying this is the vision for success, these are the expectations associated with this

vision for success, and we have to look at the disproportional impact, and the inequities that many non-traditional communities face.

Robert similarly touched on the importance to recognize “this is a moment when we are transitioning, transforming our organizations, where we have funding supports, where we have legislative mandates, where we have regulatory supports and pressures” to truly transform the community college into an organization that is based on equity. SCCC’s professional development unit may have a lead into this transition since it “strives to provide comprehensive professional learning opportunities for the faculty, staff, and administrators of the college” (SCCC Professional Development, 2019) but none of the 14 participants mentioned the unit’s purpose or even the existence of it.

Discussion

The participants shared their own experiences and perspectives on what SCCC is currently doing to better understand the Latino/a/x student experience. Their voices and reflections highlighted key themes on what is currently limiting SCCC in creating the proper meaning-making filters to allow Latino/a/x students to grow and succeed.

Clarifying the College’s Structure to Build Meaning-Making Filters

Participants were able to identify multiple Latino/a/x success efforts but lacked to recognize their impact as a collective because of the unknown rationale of the college’s structure of such efforts. A stronger or better way to communicate with the campus community how Latino/a/x student success efforts are structured is a step that will improve the working relationships of key stakeholders.

The Latinx Alliance was an example of how it was started as a result of the lack of communication within SCCC. Erin mentioned that it “was created because [campus members] didn’t agree with what was in the Title V grant because they didn’t feel there was enough

focus on our Latinx students.” Priscilla provided the initial thoughts of some campus members by describing that:

The main reason for [stating the Latinx Alliance] was because [my colleague] was seeing that we were an HSI institution and none of us knew. We're like, "Oh, when did this happen? Who applied for it? So, what are they doing for our students? How come there hasn't been any presentation to talk about what that means at our college and what they're doing with it and so on?"

In addition, it is important for SCCC to revisit the significance of the informal structure of the Latinx Alliance to have everyone on the same page on understanding the benefits and challenges of this arrangement with the president. It was unclear whether all participants knew the key benefits of having the informal relationship with the college and why some showed frustration in having to spend time outside of their roles and work hours to contribute to the Latinx Alliance efforts. Simon shared this frustration by stating that “I feel it's very unfortunate that we have to go outside of our work area to get together and create those efforts, even though we're getting the support of the college to do it, I think the institution can do better in supporting [the Latinx Alliance].”

Furthermore, there was recognition that historical programs like EOPS have done strong work to support underrepresented students but were now being overshadowed by new initiatives and funding. Joyce described this as:

these are the programs that were the workhorses for decades, that put up the numbers to show that when you have high expectation and provide high support, and you match your expectation, and your support levels, that we have historically demonstrated success in serving Latino and Latina students, as well as others, but those programs still in my opinion get very marginalized and overshadowed for the good work that they've done over the years.

Priscilla provided additional context to these relationships by sharing that “when you look at a lot of the new policies that have been implemented to serve the students at the college, a lot of it has been copied from what EOPS has been doing for 50 years.” Priscilla also mentioned

that the relationship between programs has improved and “there’s more respect for what we [each] do” but it has taken time because “a lot of that had to do not just with people as whole but maybe one specific leader who doesn't work well with the department.”

Multiple participants shared examples of cross-functional initiatives now in place but there was a common theme among participants that the lack of knowledge on why certain programs were created or why they report to different areas of the college limits their ability to intentionally and collaboratively contribute to the student efforts. If the SCCC members take the time to clarify the purpose and rationale for Latino/a/x student success efforts, there could be a stronger approach to building meaning-making filters that collectively support Latino/a/x student success.

Professional Development as a Form to Build Meaning-Making Filters

With the proper structure of an intentional professional development system, SCCC has the opportunity to move the needle at a faster rate to build the meaning-making filters that will allow Latino/a/x students to engage with knowledgeable campus employees in an inclusive and safe campus environment. When SCCC members have a better understanding of the Latino/a/x college experience, it can lead to having a better support approach. Currently, this approach only takes place when individuals take the initiative to spend time to understand each of the students they meet. Priscilla shared that when meeting with a Latino/a/x student, they “have to first learn a little bit about their background to have a better understanding as to what are they bringing with them when they come to campus, because they're not all exactly the same.” If this were to be a standard practice across campus, employees can start to recognize the institution’s role in understanding and supporting the Latino/a/x students’ multiple identities rather than pointing the finger to students for not doing their part or trying

hard enough. For example, one staff member mentioned that Latino/a/x students need to improve in asking for help since “they’re afraid to answer that question in class or ask for help on directions because they’re ashamed to ask.” If campus employees like this staff member had more knowledge and awareness on how to create safe spaces for English learners to share their voice in class, there could be a shift from what students need to do to what type of support can SCCC members need to provide. This mindset may lead to creating the safe space for more Latino/a/x students to contribute in class conversations as they receive the support they need. In addition, having more information on the Latino/a/x student population can also help SCCC members shift from a deficit mindset to a strengths-based approach. Priscilla shared that “there is a wide range of students [from those] who are very self-driven and motivated all the way to not knowing what their future’s going to look like” adding that as a college, there has to be adjustments since “a lot of our students are coming out of high school with honors, having done community service, [and] received scholarships” but many campus members do not know that about the Latino/a/x students. A domino effect of this new mindset and behavior can lead to cultivating an inclusive campus culture rather than continue to have limited safe spaces spread out across campus.

As SCCC continues to engage its members in professional development, there is a need to move to the next level and start focusing on specific student populations like the Latino/a/x student experience. SCCC members are aware of their current professional development focus on equity and has taken advantage of the requirements by the California Community College system, but it is time to create a professional development system to empower its members to collectively create a space for Latino/a/x students to succeed.

Implications for Future Practices

Participants were able to describe or talk about at least one other identity when talking about Latino/a/x students. However, there was a lack of understanding how the students' multiple identities influence their everyday experiences both on and off campus. Also, the lack of knowledge on the term "intersectionality" in the context of student development showed the need to systematically provide professional development to educate all campus members about the diverse experiences of the Latino/a/x students. A proactive approach to educating the campus community can shift the mentality that many of the participants shared when they described Latino/a/x students as "hard working, determined, passionate, and resilient with many non-academic obstacles" to an updated mindset focused on what can the institution do better to provide equitable support based on the individual Latino/a/x student's needs that stem from their multiple and intersecting identities. In addition, this mindset can also influence the shift of how Latino/a/x students see themselves since Veronica, for example, mentioned that "a lot of [students] feel that it's their fault that they're on [academic] probation, their fault that they were dismissed, and they don't really see how their stories" affect their college experience. The equity framework at SCCC has worked to create a foundation on understanding traditionally underserved student populations but now it is the right time to develop an intentional and sustainable structure to better understand and support Latino/a/x students' multiple and intersecting identities as an entire campus rather than continue to depend on the great work of a few departments and campus members.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

The overall journey of the study from beginning to end led to summarizing key concluding thoughts on implications of practice for higher education institutions to improve equitable student success. Even though this study was focused on one community college in Southern California with the Hispanic-Serving Institution designation, the following recommendations (and in some case reminders from previous research) may be adapted to other higher education systems that take the time to create the right foundation for their own institutions. Some of the recommendations may be immediately implemented and some may require to be cultivated and cared for over time. Scholar-practitioners can review the following recommendations for student success and decide which ones fit their institution's structure, priorities, and context. This thought process can bring campus members together to collectively establish a culture of inquiry where they use data for critical analysis of equitable outcomes, take accountability on their own practices, and shift focus to institutional responsibility rather than student deficits when developing solutions (Witham & Bensimon, 2012).

The first recommendation has two sequential components: (a) disaggregate data of student population and (b) create an intentional and equitable approach to individualize student success efforts. At the very least through admissions materials, higher education institutions have enough information to disaggregate student data to proactively reach out and support students during pre-arrival and onboarding stages with intentional information and resources. It is clear that higher education institutions are disaggregating some student data as evident in development of student equity plans and success scorecards to create a sense of transparency and accountability on student progress and improvements on achievement gaps

(California Community College Chancellor's Office, 2018a). However, it is unclear whether each institution has been able to move its campus culture from knowing their student population's information to actually implementing inclusive practices. The Equity Scorecard is a symbolic model of this recommendation by serving as both a data tool and a process, that combines theoretical frameworks with practical strategies, meant to produce equitable outcomes for students of color (University of Southern California Center for Urban Education, 2019). A focus not only on the student demographics but on the application of practices can help higher education institutions appropriately welcome and retain their students by not putting them into large boxes of support services. Instead, institutions have the opportunity to truly acknowledge the students' multiple and intersecting identities by offering activities targeting specific identities and at the same time address student needs and inequities (Felix & Castro, 2018).

By understanding the institution's specific student populations, support can also be personalized and milestones can be celebrated as students move closer to completing their educational goal. For example, the college experience of a Latino/a/x student is a result of a combination of their multiple and intersecting identities such as being first-generation, English learner, undocumented, from low-income background, veteran, single-parent, and many others, which collectively influence their desired educational goal and timeline to complete it. Higher education institutions must keep in mind that some students need to be reminded that completing a semester of classes is a success, and for some students, even showing up to class every week is a success. Therefore, higher education institutions must prioritize to better understand cohorts of students as well as how to proactively support their individual collection of identities. This approach calls for campus members to find their

“actionable N” to contribute to the student success efforts from their own role as a way to identify “specific cohorts of students who are not being well served by current practices and policies” (Dowd et al., 2018, p. vi).

The second recommendation includes three complementary pieces that not only came up in this study but serve as reminders of what it takes to run a successful higher education institution: (a) cross-unit collaborations, (b) shared governance, and (c) transparency. Cross-unit collaborations allow for different voices and perspectives to address a need as well as lowers the time commitment and capacity of campus members who may feel overextended. In addition, cross-unit collaborations do not limit the work to depend solely on one unit, its team’s capacity, and funding source to ensure the efforts are sustained for years to come. As new research highlights the road to institutionalize support for Latino/a/x students as cohorts such as Latinos in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields (Bensimon et al., 2019), it is important to duplicate similar models to support other cohorts of Latino/a/x students and other minoritized groups. Shared governance as part of cross-unit collaborations facilitates a collective decision-making process. Bringing people together to collaborate is one thing but to function and make decisions through shared governance allows campus members to be invested in their work and be proud of their decisions. Shared governance also minimizes the perception of a top down approach and empowers campus members to influence the institution’s goals and priorities. Transparency is the third piece of this recommendation because like many successful organizations, it is imperative for the institution’s members to be aware of what is happening, how is it happening, and why are things happening. Cross-unit collaborations and shared governance can heavily contribute to

maintaining communication among participants, but transparency is as critical to share the information with the rest of the campus community to gain a larger support and their trust.

The last recommendation is to create an institutional policy that sustains ongoing mandatory professional development. This effort requires for all campus members regardless of their role to engage in mandatory learning opportunities that will emphasize the need to be student ready. This policy change will allow the institution to proactively prepare itself to support the needs of the students' multiple and intersecting identities. The professional development content should include student demographics, highlights, and trends, but most importantly, information, resources, and strategies to personalize the support based on the student's multiple and intersecting identities. Similar work is already happening across the United States and specifically for community colleges such as the work led by the Office of Community College Research and Leadership (OCCRL) heavily focused on professional development and "advancing guided pathways that support mobility for first-generation, underserved, and minoritized youth" (OCCRL, 2019). Instead of expecting students to fit the historical higher education practices, institutions need to proactively evolve and update its structures, policies, and guidelines to meet their current and future students' needs.

Appendix A: Recruitment Invitation E-mail for Title V Director

Dear [Title V Director's Name],

My name is Adan Sanchez and I am a doctoral candidate in the Joint Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership with the University of California, San Diego and California State University, San Marcos conducting a research study to examine to what extent higher education institutional practices support intersecting identity development to further Latino/a/x student success. I also serve as the Associate Director for the Center for Student Success at the University of San Diego.

I am contacting you as the Title V director of [Southern California Community College] for two reasons. First, I would like to extend an invitation to participate in an individual interview to last approximately 60 minutes scheduled at a time convenient to you in the next two to three weeks. During the interview, you will be asked questions about what you perceived to be the Latino/a/x student success efforts, their structure to address the needs of students' multiple and intersecting identities, and the efforts' influence in campus culture at [name of institution]. Secondly, I would like your support in identifying faculty members and administrators whose responsibilities include the support and/or implementation of Latino/a/x student success efforts in both curricular and co-curricular practices to also invite them to participate in an individual interview.

All participants will be made anonymous and given a pseudonym in the writing report. In addition, all data collected, including this interview, will be maintained in password secured computer files. A consent form will be provided to you which includes your permission to audio record the interview. There will be a second meeting with each interviewee to review and clarify anything from their own interview transcript. The responses will not be linked to their name or specific positions.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. I look forward to hearing from you and hope you will accept this invitation to the study. Please let me know by [deadline will be added upon IRB approval] if you accept and/or if you have any question. Feel free to reply to this email at [researcher's email address] or call me at [researcher's phone number].

Sincerely,

Adan Sanchez
Educational Leadership Doctoral Candidate
UC San Diego and CSU San Marcos
[researcher's phone number]

Associate Director
Pronouns: he, him, his
Center for Student Success
University of San Diego

Appendix B: Recruitment Invitation E-mail for Administrators, Faculty and Staff Members

Dear [Participant's Name],

My name is Adan Sanchez and I am a doctoral candidate in the Joint Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership with the University of California, San Diego and California State University, San Marcos conducting a research study to examine to what extent higher education institutional practices support intersecting identity development to further Latino/a/x student success. I also serve as the Associate Director for the Center for Student Success at the University of San Diego.

You were identified by [Southern California Community College]'s Title V director as a faculty member and/or administrator whose responsibilities include the support and/or implementation of Latino/a/x student success efforts in both curricular and co-curricular practices. I am contacting you to extend an invitation to participate in an individual interview to last approximately 60 minutes scheduled at a time convenient to you in the next two to three weeks. During the interview, you will be asked questions about what you perceived to be the Latino/a/x student success efforts, their structure to address the needs of students' multiple and intersecting identities, and the efforts' influence in campus culture at [Southern California Community College].

All participants will be made anonymous and given a pseudonym in the writing report. In addition, all data collected, including this interview, will be maintained in password secured computer files. A consent form will be provided to you which includes your permission to audio record the interview. There will be a second meeting only for you to review and clarify anything from your own interview transcript. Your responses will not be linked to your name or specific position.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. I look forward to hearing from you and hope you will accept this invitation to the study. Please let me know by [deadline will be added upon IRB approval] if you accept and/or if you have any question. Feel free to reply to this email at [researcher's email address] or call me at [researcher's phone number].

Sincerely,

Adan Sanchez
Educational Leadership Doctoral Candidate
UC San Diego and CSU San Marcos
[researcher's phone number]

Associate Director
Pronouns: he, him, his
Center for Student Success
University of San Diego

Appendix C: Participant Consent Form

Participant Consent Form UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Latino/a/s Student Success: A Review of Institutional Practices to Better Understand and Support Students' Multiple and Intersecting Identities in Higher Education

Adan Sanchez, under the supervision of Dr. Frances Contreras, Associate Professor in Department of Education Studies at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD), is conducting a research study to examine higher education institutional practices designed to support Latino/a/x students. You have been asked to participate in this study because you have been identified as a faculty member, administrator, and/or staff whose responsibilities include the support and/or implementation of Latino/a/x student success efforts in curricular and/or co-curricular practices at [Southern California Community College]. Hence, your permission is requested to participate in this study. There will be approximately eight to twelve faculty members and eight to twelve administrators/staff in this study.

The purpose of the study is to examine to what extent higher education institutional practices support intersecting identity development to further Latino/a/x student success.

If you agree to be a volunteer participant in this study, you will be asked to take part in an individual interview, which will consist of an in-person conversation to last approximately one hour, that will be audiotaped. Participant consent to audio recording is a requirement of the study since the audiotape will be used for transcription purposes. The audio recording will be deleted one year after the publication of the study scheduled for Spring 2020. During the one-on-one interview, you will be asked questions about what you perceived to be the Latino/a/x student success efforts, their structure to address the needs of students' multiple and intersecting identities, and the efforts' influence in campus culture at [SCCC]. You may refuse to answer any question during the interview. You will be assigned a pseudonym or fake name to protect your identity in this study. If you agree, I may ask you to participate in a follow-up interview at your convenience.

Participation in this study may involve some added risks or discomforts. There is a risk for fatigue or boredom during the interview, however, you are welcome to skip any questions that you do not want to answer or take a break if needed. Also, there is potential for the loss of confidentiality, however, researcher records will be coded so that your name does not appear with the study information. Moreover, the research information that is collected will be stored in a computer password and encrypted format.

Research records will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law. Research records may be reviewed by the UCSD Institutional Review Board. Under California law, we must report information about known or reasonably suspected incidents of abuse or neglect of a child, dependent adult or elder including physical, sexual, emotional, and financial abuse or neglect. If any investigator has or is given such information, they may be required to report such information to the appropriate authorities.

The alternatives to participation in this study are to not participate. Although participation in this research study may be of little benefit to you as an individual beyond personal reflection on your own experience, the data analysis and report of this study has the potential to benefit faculty members and administrators who support and implement Latino/a/x student success efforts as well as Latino/a/x students who participate in such efforts.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate, withdraw, or refuse to answer specific questions in the interview at any time without penalty. If you decide that you no longer wish to continue in this study, you will be asked to let the principal investigator (PI) know via e-mail. You will be informed if any important new information is found during the course of this study that may affect your wanting to continue. The PI may remove you from the study without your consent if the PI feels it is in your best interest or the best interest of the study. You may also be withdrawn from the study if you do not follow instructions given to you by the study personnel.

There is no compensation for your time and travel. As a participant, you will be responsible for any transportation and parking costs, and such costs will not be reimbursed.

This study has been approved by UCSD Institutional Research Board. Adan Sanchez has reviewed the consent form with you, explained this study to you, and answered any questions. You will receive a copy of the consent form and you may contact the principal investigator if you have additional questions at [researcher's email address] or [researcher's phone number], or Dr. Frances Contreras, Committee Chair, at [professor's email address] or [professor's phone number]. You may call the Human Research Protections Program Office at (858) 246-4700 to inquire about your rights as a research subject or report research-related concerns.

Your Signature and Consent

You have received a copy of this consent document.

You agree to participate.

Subject's Signature

Date

As part of this study, an audio recording will be made of you during your participation in the one-on-one interview. Please indicate below the uses of the audio recording to which you are willing to consent. This is completely voluntary and up to you. In any use of the audio recording, your name will not be identified. You may also request to stop the recording at any time or to erase any portion of your recording.

1. The audio recording can be studied by the research team for use in the research project. _____
Initials
2. The audio recording can be used for scientific publications. _____

3. The audio recording can be reviewed at meetings of scientists interested in the study of higher education institutional practices designed to support Latino/a/x students.

Initials

Initials

You have the right to request that the recording be stopped or erased in full or in part at any time.

You have read the above description and give your consent for the use of audio recording as indicated above.

Signature

Date

Witness

Date

Appendix D: Participant Interview Guide

NOTE: Semi-structured interview with open-ended questions. Based on initial analysis when reviewing secondary demographic data, archival records, and some audio visual materials, eight to twelve questions listed below will be used in the faculty/administrator interviews.

Introduction before recording:

- Thank you for your time and meeting with me
- I'm conducting this interview as part of a doctoral dissertation study
- The purpose of this study is to examine to what extent higher education institutional practices support intersecting identity development to further Latino/a/x student success
 - As the interviewer, I have chosen to use Latino/a/x to show the chronological evolution from Latino to Latina to Latinx. For the purpose of this interview, these terms can be used individually and as a group to “honor self-identity [as] a personal choice” (Batista, Collado, & Perez II, 2018, p. xx) and respect the participants' own identifiers
- I am interviewing eight to twelve faculty as well as another eight to twelve administrators whose responsibilities include the support and/or implementation of Latino/a/x student success efforts in both curricular and co-curricular practices
- Your voice will enhance the study by learning what you perceived to be the Latino/a/x student success efforts, their structure to address the needs of students' multiple and intersecting identities, and the efforts' influence in campus culture
- All participants will be made anonymous and given a pseudonym in the writing report
- All data collected, including this interview, will be maintained in password secured computer files
- The interview will take approximately 60 minutes
- We will meet a second time for you to review and clarify anything from your own interview transcript
- If you feel comfortable moving forward, please read and sign the consent form which includes your permission to audio record this interview
- We can stop at any time you want and cancel your participation in the study
- Give time for participant to read and sign waiver
- Once it is signed, turn on recording device

Complete the following information while participants reads consent form:

Interview Date:

Start Time:

Location:

Interviewee Pseudonym:

Role: (a) Faculty (b) Administrator (c) Both faculty and administrator

Keep in mind:

- What is the inner voice saying...or not?
- Follow up at the right moment
 - More general words/descriptions i.e. “They are very nice”
- Explore, not probe
- Ask to share a story where needed

Questions:

- 1) How does [Southern California Community College (SCCC)] define student success?
 - a) Can you describe how [SCCC] measures student success?
- 2) How does [SCCC] define Latino/a/x student success?
 - a) What does [SCCC] prioritize in implementing Latino/a/x student success efforts?
- 3) How does [SCCC] manage competing student priorities?
- 4) How are Latino/a/x student success efforts structured at [SCCC]?
- 5) What is your role with Latino/a/x student success efforts?
- 6) What has been your own experience like at [SCCC] with Latino/a/x student success efforts?
- 7) What have been the benefits of designation as Hispanic-Serving Institution?
 - a) What have been the challenges of designation as Hispanic-Serving Institution?
- 8) What characteristics would you use to describe Latino/a/x students at [SCCC]?
- 9) Under the Latino/a/x umbrella, what other identities are the most salient for the students?
- 10) What are the Latino/a/x students’ challenges at [SCCC]?
 - a) What are the Latino/a/x students’ strengths at [SCCC]?
- 11) How are Latino/a/x students multiple identities supported at [SCCC]?
- 12) What role does intersectionality take in student development?
- 13) How does [SCCC] support faculty/administrators in understanding the Latino/a/x student experience?
- 14) Can you describe the relationship between faculty/administrators and Latino/a/x students?
- 15) Can you describe [SCCC]’s campus culture?
- 16) How does the Latino/a/x student success efforts influence campus culture?
- 17) What makes Latino/a/x student success efforts unique at [SCCC]?
 - a) Is there a story that can represent that uniqueness?
- 18) Is there anything else you would like to share about Latino/a/x student success at that we have not covered?

Conclusion:

- Thank you for your participation in the interview
- Schedule next meeting to review transcript before leaving if possible
- Turn off recording device

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