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Exploring Persistence Factors of Latino Graduates of a Two-Year, Private, Career College

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EXPLORING PERSISTENCE FACTORS OF LATINO GRADUATES OF A TWO-YEAR, PRIVATE, CAREER COLLEGE

by

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband and son who have persevered long, tenuous days during this adventure. To my husband who filled in as mother, housekeeper, cook, and encourager while continuing to serve as a Godly father to our son. To my son who loved me even when I could not stop and listen each time he wanted to "talk to Momma", but just stayed in the room with me and supported my work.

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I would like to thank my dissertation committee, with special recognition to my major professor, for helping me to grow emotionally and intellectually.

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Abstract

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Latino college students face factors in their lives on a daily basis that affect their persistence in college. While the nation is seeing an increase in Latino enrollment in higher education institutions, the persistence rates of Latino students are not higher than other students, regardless of ethnicity. Several theorists such as Astin, Tinto, Pascarella, and Terenzini have studied specific variables affecting Latino college student persistence; however, Terenzini and Reason (2005) developed a model that combined the multiple forces affecting Latino college student persistence. This qualitative case study was guided by two questions that intended to explore the phenomenon of college student persistence factors: (1) How do college experiences affect Latino persistence to graduation? and (2) How do cultural factors promote or hinder Latino college persistence?

Findings produced six key themes: (1) Campus Influences, (2) Out of Class Experiences, (3) Curricular Experiences, (4) Teachers' Influences, (5) Influential People, and (6) Pre-college Preparation. The themes identify key components of student experiences before they begin college and while they are attending. These components work together as a force developing each student with skills that promote persistence in college such as student engagement, admission's criteria, cultural capital, and family support.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The pursuit for a better understanding of student college persistence continues to captivate the thoughts of educators, policy makers and researchers. Student persistence in higher education is the process students follow resulting in obtaining the self-identified educational objective that drove the student through the process (Winecoff, 2009). After years of implementing effective retention strategies developed by countless researchers, the higher education community continues to pursue a deeper understanding of college persistence. Institutions continue to search for the true essence of college persistence as they execute layers of various persistence strategies resulting in a disconnection on campus (Habley, Bloom, & Robbins, 2012).

Postsecondary institutions from across the spectrum actively search for an effective approach to enhance student persistence. Community colleges develop and implement research based strategies to improve student persistence (Williamson-Ashe, 2009). Many four-year institutions use first-year approaches to increase persistence to sophomore year or to graduation (Wycoff, 2014). Small, private universities specifically experience difficulty in student persistence just as any other college or university (Carson & Reed, 2015). Although research has provided a means to positively impact student persistence, students continue to struggle with completing their college degree.

Over the years, student persistence of all student groups was found to be a prevailing point in past research. Baum, Ma, and Payea (2007) presented data on specific racial/ethnic groups regarding persistence to completion of a bachelor's degree with the groups graduating at the following percentages: "Latino (48%); Blacks (55%); Whites (61%); and Asians (73%)" (p.

37). A 2006 United States Department of Education report found Latinos graduated at a lower rate than Whites and Blacks of about the same age (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). The 2012 U.S. Census Bureau reported that of the American adults over the age of 25 persisting through graduation completed bachelor degrees at the following rates: Asians (50%); Whites (33.3%); Blacks (20%); and Latinos (14%) (United States Census Bureau, 2012). Latino college persistence is affected by attrition and the lack of degree attainment. Research shows that Latino students in U.S. colleges and universities have some of the highest attrition rates (Castellanos & Jones, 2003). The high attrition rates result in Latinos having low degree attainment rates (Nunez & Crisp, 2012).

Latino college persistence is important to higher education institutions because just as the nation is seeing an increase in the Latino population as a whole, the institutions are also seeing an increase in Latino enrollment in colleges and universities. With Latino college persistence ranking lower than other racial/ethnic groups, the higher education institutions must gain a deeper understanding of the factors that promote college persistence (Habley et al., 2012). With the Latino community significantly changing, this presents opportunities and challenges for institutions of higher learning and requires practices to be continually reviewed to support Latino college students.

The 2015 U.S. Census Bureau Projections Report stated the Latino population would increase 115%, growing from 55 million in 2014 to 119 million in 2016. These census figures projected the Latino group to be 29% of the United States population (Colby & Ortman, 2015). The Pew Research Center continued to support the growth phenomenon by noting that over the past half century, foreign –born Latinos have increased 20 times over and U.S.-born Latinos have increased 6 times over during the same period (Stepler & Brown, 2015). In other words, the

continual increase in the Latino population created the need for institutions of higher learning to develop new methods or improve existing methods to aid Latinos in college persistence. Additionally, Latino college students need to be aware of how their cultural beliefs and values affect their college persistence. To gain insight on Latinos who did persist through graduation, the study focused on Latino persistence at a two-year, private, career college in West Tennessee.

Background of the Study

College completion is a national concern. The College Completion Agenda 2012 Progress Report shares that while college completion has increased slightly by two percentage points since 2009, the United States fell from 12th to 16th place in college completion among 36 nations from 2008 – 2009 (Hughes, 2012). Completion remains a distant goal for the nation and its colleges. Latinos are among the least educated group in the United States with reports showing only 11% earning a bachelor's degree or higher compared to African Americans at 17%, Caucasians at 30%, and Asian Americans at 49% (Schhneider, Martinez, & Ownes, 2015). Although many studies have been conducted, more research is needed on Latino college persistence to better understand how the societal, intellectual, and familial factors affect graduation rates.

Vincent Tinto's (1975) seminal work on retention created a foundation on which the Latino population has been evaluated regarding their emotional, cultural, social, intellectual, and psychological capital. His study was a longitudinal model about the influences that affect student decisions to leave an institution of higher learning. Two vital aspects of college that affect persistence are the academic and social worlds. A student who is not appropriately integrated into one or both of these worlds could fail to persist. For example, Latinos persist in college

because of their intrinsic motivation, self-determination, and academic achievement based on internal and external factors (Trevino & DeFreitas, 2014).

Further, theorists who studied career guidance and its effects on students prior to attending college found guiding students into appropriate careers promoted college persistence. Students had higher grade point averages after choosing a career based on their interests and abilities. The students who were interviewed regarding their career guidance experiences agreed that having a career goal prior to college motivated them to stay in school and perform well while there (Carson & Reed, 2015). Jackson and Suizzo (2015) learned that Latino participants in their study were more likely to persist in college when they had environmental factors that connected to their career planning activities prior to college.

Other research focused on the campus environment as a factor that influenced Latino college persistence. Aguinaga and Gloria (2015) conducted a study in a midwestern university with a population of less than 4% Latino. They found Latinos were less likely to persist in college if they had a strong Latino identity because the campus environment and their identity did not align. Those who were less Latino-identified found their campuses more welcoming. Further, Tinto's (1993) principles of effective retention support his belief that student college persistence is dependent upon their experiences while at college (Realista, 2013). Realista (2013) conducted a study at a predominantly white institution (PWI) with Hispanics as the second largest population on campus and stated a contributing factor of college persistence was faculty/staff informal interaction while on campus. Another study conducted in a college system where the majority of students were Hispanic supported the Chickering and Gamson (1997) finding that faculty-student contact was one of the best predictors of gains in college persistence (Abu-Ghazaleh, 2014). Bean and Metzner (1985) also considered the campus environment as a

factor that affected Latino college persistence. They believed that extracurricular activities on campus and social integration of faculty and students impacted persistence decisions (Mahan, 2010).

The numerous persistence frameworks that focus on Latino college persistence have integral parts that are to be considered in multiple settings such as the home, campus, and peer environments. The models developed by persistence theorists like Astin, Tinto, Terenzini, and Pascarella intertwine in a way that provide other researchers a map for studying persistence. Reason (2009) states the map is a way to help researchers find the forces (race/ethnicity, campus climate, individual experiences) that frame persistence. It helps pinpoint the obvious sets of constructs that may affect student persistence and offers possible causal connections between them. Reason (2009) believes this map to be conceptual and purports that researchers should explore students in multiple environments and should understand that they will participate differently as the environments change. Reason (2009) continues to argue that the constructs in this conceptual map provide numerous sources that influence college persistence such as student pre-college experiences, organizational context, student peer environment, and individual student experience. He identifies the Latino student as a demographic that must be studied in these various settings because of their low persistence rates and believes that their backgrounds and personal experiences will influence the rates of persistence (Reason, 2009).

Statement of the Problem

The Latino population is changing quickly in the United States which is affecting educational communities and higher education institutions. The increase in Latinos entering post-secondary institutions and the estimated increase of Latino workers by 55% between 2010 and 2030 support the need for an increase in understanding how Latinos who persist to graduation

would be beneficial to the higher education sector (Martinez, 2009). Kim and Nunez (2013) state that the Latino population is expected to double in the United States by the year 2050.

A better understanding about college persistence patterns of Latino students is important to the state of Tennessee. Between 2000 and 2012, there was a rapid increase in the Latino population (163%) making Tennessee one of the top five in the nation for Latino growth (Krogstad & Lopez, 2014). With the South being a primary region of the United States to which Latinos are migrating, the need for further exploration on Latino persistence for the State of Tennessee is not surprising (Nagle, Gustafson, & Burd, 2012). Educators need to be aware of the factors that promote Latino postsecondary persistence so institutions can better serve their Latino students (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2013).

Two-year, private, career colleges were among the institutions affected by the Latino growth. Frederick (2016) says that private, for-profit career colleges have experienced growth in Latino enrollment that surpassed both public and non-profit institutions. The number of degrees conferred also increased. According to the National Center of Education Statistics (2014) associate's degree attainment grew 170% for private, for-profit institutions who conferred 76,700 degrees in academic year 2000-2001 to 207,000 in academic year 2011-2012. The Hispanic population was higher in the two-year, private, career colleges (25%) than at public institutions (20%) and private, non-profit (13%).

Despite many persistence strategies identified through research such as obtaining social and cultural capital or establishing a supportive campus climate, institutions continue to struggle with identifying the cultural markers necessary to improve Latino college persistence through graduation. Latinos should not be blamed for their under-education or inability to persist through graduation because of their culture (Serrano, 2009). For Latino students to persist, they must be

resilient to the cultural challenges they will face in a college. Additionally, colleges must consider their roles in ensuring student engagement to promote student persistence (Martinez, 2009).

The prevailing issue is that the State of Tennessee will follow national trends in Latino population growth. A projected growth from 2015-2045 is expected to occur with the Latino population increasing 7.2 percentage points to 12.7% of the state's population. With Latinos having the lowest college going rate of all ethnic groups in Tennessee and showing an increase in college enrollment from 34.3% in 2013 to 41.4% in 2014, institutions of higher learning must identify persistence factors to improve citizenry, the labor workforce, and lifelong learning (Tennessee Higher Education Commission, 2016). The low percentage of Latino college completers in the state and the increase in Latinos moving to Tennessee present a challenge for research to provide a foundation for a more comprehensive understanding of which factors promote Latino persistence.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore college persistence factors for Latino students at a two-year, private, career college in West Tennessee. For the purposes of this study, college persistence was defined as a student achieving completion of a two-year degree in a private, career college. Persistence through college is the goal students usually establish during the admission's process. In fact, "Persistence is an individual phenomenon – students persist to goal attainment with graduation being the goal" (Reason, 2009, p. 660). Tennessee has a Latino college completion rate of 16% compared to the national Latino completion rate of 29% (Excelencia in Education, 2011). With the Latino population having the lowest completion rates among their minority counterparts, studying the factors of those who persist through graduation

will contribute to the body of knowledge needed to assist other Latinos, as well as, teachers of Latinos.

There is a need to study this phenomenon because:

Given the increasingly diverse population in the United States, and the national interest in fostering a skilled workforce and an educated and engaged citizenry, all educators must work to support these students; minority student success is no longer a minority issue. (Benitez & DeAro, 2004, p. 35)

To understand the underlying phenomenon of persistence, this case study must be conducted hearing from real people who faced struggles through college but made it through.

Also, we can learn from a study on Latino students the elements that are affiliated with the various environments in their lives that become challenges they must overcome or become strengths they use to persevere. Latinos and other minority students feel cultural shock while trying to achieve in the world of academia. This is in part due to the normal processes and behaviors of the academic world deriving mostly from Anglo customs and traditions. More than other students, minority students feel lonely and isolated. They set unreachable goals and are fearful when their performance is evaluated. These negative feelings cause them to separate themselves from the dominant culture and style while struggling with internal control over events they may face (Baltimore, 1995).

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were: (1) How do college experiences affect Latino persistence to graduation? and (2) How do cultural factors promote or hinder Latino college persistence?

Significance of the Study

Research shows that Latino completion rates in the state of Tennessee fall behind when compared to Whites. Latinos report at a 16% college completion rate per 100 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) students and Whites at 18% (Excelencia in Education, 2011). A full time equivalent is calculated by using the number of students enrolled in the equivalent of what the college has established as a full course load (Nusbaum, 2016). This study is meant to provide additional knowledge to colleges about persistence. There has been a vast amount of research on persistence, sometimes referred to as retention, completion, or graduation. Academic capital, or academic preparation, is critical in determining progress toward and through postsecondary education (Adelman, 2006).

Unfortunately, there is a gap in the research on Latino persistence in two-year, private, career colleges. This study will contribute to the growing need for knowledge regarding Latinos who persist through graduation at a two-year, private, career college. The voices of 12 Latinos will add to the research on Latino college persistence by using their prior college and during college experiences to inform other institutions of higher learning about their persistence efforts.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study consists of internal organizational context, peer environment, and individual experiences (Reason, 2009). This framework was drawn from other research as further described. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991, 2005) developed models of student development using Tinto's (1975, 1988, 1993) works on student departure. Pascarella and Terenzini's (2005) study discussed the scope of intellectual and personal development of first-generation students compared to all other students. They found that college students who had parents who were college educated received educational benefits such as higher GPA's that

positively affect their persistence. The study found that these intergenerational students were affected in their development psychosocially and cognitively. Overall, there was a difference in college persistence for those students who were first generation college students and their non-first-generational peers (Padgett, Johnson, & Pascarella, 2012). Astin (1991) developed an Input-Environment-Outcome (I-E-O) model which is based on characteristics and experiences students bring to college and gain at college. This model is a framework for the creation of assessment and for addressing the complex and high level issues in assessment and evaluation. The term input in the model describes student characteristics at time of college entry. Environment describes the institutional interventions like educational programs and student experiences. Outcome relates to student achievement, development, or growth (Astin, 1991). Berger and Milam (2000) developed a model that focused on organizational effects on student outcomes. The model was developed from a study that assesses institutional level traits' impact on degree completion. The traits include student peer characteristics like high school GPA, financial concern, degree aspiration, and institutional characteristics like institutional size, selectivity, racial diversity and whether private or public, four-year or two-year (Berger & Milam, 2000). Terenzini and Reason (2005) combined facets of these models to develop a more comprehensive approach on student persistence called *A Comprehensive Model of Influences on Student Learning and Persistence* (Reason, 2009).

Terenzini and Reason's (2005) Comprehensive Model of Influences on Student Learning and Persistence employs four sets of constructs. They include (1) student precollege characteristics and experiences – an assortment of experiences and dispositions obtained prior to college; (2) organizational context – the behavior, culture, and climate of an organization; (3) peer environment – the dominant and normative values, beliefs, attitudes, and expectations of the

campus' student body; and (4) individual student experiences – students' personal experiences in their academic and nonacademic lives (Reason, 2009).

Assumptions

College persistence among Latinos has historically been low compared to other racial/ethnic groups. One of the assumptions in this study is that Latino college persistence rates will continue to rank below other racial/ethnic groups. Another assumption is the belief that the low college persistence rates are partially based on the experiences of Latinos in the social and intellectual aspects of their lives. Lastly, the researcher assumes that the Latinos in this study will state college persistence factors are dependent upon the college campus climate.

Limitations

This study is limited by its focus on Latino graduates with no other purpose but to compare their responses to other racial/ethnic groups. There is an importance in comparing the Latino responses to other racial/ethnic groups to better serve the Latino students. Latino students will attend colleges with other racial/ethnic groups and colleges will need to be prepared to help them learn together.

The study is also limited by the language barrier between the researcher and the participants. Though the graduates speak English, 10 of the 12 participants are more comfortable in their first language, Spanish. Gonzales, Vasquez, and Mikkelson (1991) (as cited in Cervantes-Kelly, 2010) described translation and interpretation as a multilayered process where language is interpreted and transferred while at the same time understanding the underlying meaning which is then refined to a more accurate meaning. The researcher delimited this barrier by the use of peer debriefing. A professional who is familiar with the research process will

review select excerpts of the transcriptions and inform the researcher of any misinterpretations due to the language barrier.

The researcher interviewed graduates of a college in which she is affiliated and the possibility of bias could occur. The researcher restated to the graduates that all information is confidential and the purpose of this study was to learn about their experiences prior and during college which does not include interjections of the researcher.

Delimitations

The study was conducted with graduates from a two-year, private, career college located in West Tennessee. The sample consisted of 12 graduates selected by a purposeful sampling process and who agreed to participate in the study. Face-to-face, in-person interviews were performed so the researcher could control the line of questioning. The interviews were semi-structured and included audiotaping and transcribing. The researcher used physical artifacts as part of the analysis. The time of the study was from June 2017 through August 2017.

Definitions of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions were established by the researcher.

Career College – a postsecondary institution with a mission to provide education that leads to a career.

Career Guidance – a program or resource that assists in direction toward gaining a career opportunity.

Completion – a student who completes education at a point that provides the student a certificate or degree.

Job Shadowing – the act of observing and communicating with professionals in a field of interest by a student or prospective student.

Latino – a person of Latin American descent.

Persistence – the desire of a student to stay in a college or university from beginning to degree completion.

For-Profit college – a college that operates without federal or state dollars given to the institution…..sometimes referred to as a "private" college.

Racial/ethnic Groups – physical or cultural characteristics of a group of people that according to society sets them apart from those who do not share the same traits.

Retention – students remaining in school for a designated period of time.

Study Overview

This qualitative study focuses on the college experiences of 12 Latino graduates as it relates to student persistence. The research purpose was to add to the current research on persistence by using the pre-college and during college experiences of Latinos who graduated from a two-year, private, career college to expand the knowledge of the topic of college persistence. Reason (2009) conducted a study on the Terenzini and Reason (2005) Comprehensive Model of Influences on Student Learning and Persistence and established a means to explore four areas of persistence which are student pre-college characteristics and experiences, organizational context, peer environment, and individual student experiences during college. The current study uses Terenzini and Reason's (2005) model as a guide. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature related to persistence of all students, then persistence of minority students and lastly, persistence of Latinos. Chapter 3 describes the qualitative methodology and the methods used, as well as, the subjectivity statement. Chapter 4 describes

the participants and discusses the findings. Chapter 5 provides conclusions and implications of

the research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Latino college student persistence is the primary topic under review for this study. There is a vast amount of research regarding student college persistence as a broad concept; however, few studies offer a concrete, comprehensive model to aid in Latino college student persistence. The nature of this topic focuses on factors affecting Latino persistence such as environmental factors before and during college (Rivera, 2014), campus climate (Reason, 2009), various forms of capital attained by the student from their home experiences and their college experiences (Kim & Nunez, 2013), cultural factors and identity factors inside and outside the college (Aguinaga & Gloria, 2015), and academic/career preparation prior to college (Carson & Reed, 2015).

The topic of Latino college student persistence covers a gamut of influences related to maintaining a student in college through graduation. Camacho (2014) identified some of these influences as (1) "socioeconomic status"; (2) "expectations of being a college student"; (3) "acclimation to college life"; (4) "student engagement with other Latino college students"; and (5) "the financial burden of college". Additionally, institutional diversity initiatives can fall short in meeting the needs of Latino students which will influence their persistence (Banks-Gunzenhauser, 2009). The literature shows multiple influences that affect Latino students and their college persistence.

Patton (2002) says the "review of relevant literature can bring focus to a study (p. 226) and "confirm questions or ideas" (p. 239). The focus of this study is on Latino college persistence at a two-year, private, career college which centers on the following areas: (1) college student enrollment; (2) institutional type; (3) college student persistence; (4) college

persistence in minorities; (5) Latino college persistence; and (6) A Comprehensive Model of Influences on Student Learning and Persistence. This chapter will address each of them in detail.

Persistence

Student college persistence has been of interest to researchers and institutions for many years. Habley et al. (2012) said that it is possible that no other topic in the last fifty years has had more focus than student characteristics that impact the likelihood of persisting toward degree attainment. Although the literature is replete with persistence studies, there continues to be interest in further study. Persisting through college is different for each person who engages in higher education learning environments. To help students understand themselves and help institutions understand the student, one must make an effort to understand the core concept of persistence. Habley et al. (2012) stated that the last forty years of research have produced little change in retention rates and degree attainment, but they believe there were new developments to support the success of students on an individual basis (p. 39). This section underpins the developments on persistence and is organized into three areas: (1) the historical background of persistence; (2) terminology related to persistence; and (3) theories related to persistence.

Historical background of persistence. Student persistence became a concern for higher education after the institution of the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862. Universities failed to matriculate all students who wanted to move through higher education so other institutional forms were created (Cohen & Kisker, 2010). The purpose of the act was to institute more institutions on a grander scale. The plan was to have at least one college in every state with the primary focus of study as agriculture and engineering (Seidman, 2005). Collins (2015) said, "The role of the land-grant institution is deeply connected to the ways in which postsecondary institutions can contribute to society" (Collins, 2015, p.42). The Morrill Act supported other

branches of study including classical studies, military tactics, and research. The establishment of this act and the expansion of cities brought about industrialization and a need for more students to persist and be professionally educated (Golden & Katz, 1999).

The locus of education moved away from educating men as pastors and missionaries as colleges like Harvard, William and Mary, and Yale did in their initial curriculum. The communities pressured the school systems to graduate more students in law and public life which caused more colleges to arise. These students were from elite families and were expected to be male. Because ministers were still in high demand, farmer's sons began entering this profession and more colleges were founded (Seidman, 2005). Colleges and universities faced the societal pressure of graduating students as trained professionals and the training of multiple groups as a major outcome of their performance (Cohen & Kisker, 2010).

As the colleges began to rise across the nation, they began to imitate systems from prominent universities like Harvard. Competition to be different amongst the colleges began to surface in order to attract more students, but certain practices remained similar such as course attendance and the time to complete a degree, a component of persistence (Cohen & Kisker, 2010). Higher education institutions developed a stronger desire for increased persistence to graduation.

As previously mentioned, "colleges expanded their curriculum to prepare men from elite families for vocations in law and public life" (Seidman, 2005, p. 9). Though colonies needed students to persist, other forces interfered with the progress of the institutions to survive such as the expansion of the American Frontier. This and other events slowed the progress of any attempts for students to persist and more importantly affected the development of colleges.

For example, during the time of the American Frontier, people began to move to new, unsettled lands. Once again, the survival of working the land, of securing transportation and of establishing bank credit was more important to the settler than higher education. The universities had to consider changing their practices and find a way to reach deeper into the country and enroll a wider variety of people (Turner, 2014).

The 1900s marked the era in which student persistence to graduation came to life for institutions of higher education. The 20th century saw a rise in student enrollment and student life began to emerge as a priority. Enrollment increased in the 20th century because of population growth and more people attending college. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported that between 1919-1920 and 1929-1930, enrollment rose 84% compared to an increase of 68% in the prior decade (NCES, 1993). Programs were being developed to balance the social and academic aspects of a college student. The study of human development evolved and student personnel professionals worked on ways to assist with vocational guidance. This later changed because the belief was that the "person" as a student should be considered. Then, student affairs developed an emphasis on assisting with student life on campus (Evans et al., 2010). Implementation of extracurricular activities materialized to create loyalty to the college resulting in efforts toward persistence. Sports became a large part of college life (Seidman, 2005).

The increase in student enrollment allowed institutions to become more selective and from this they developed admissions processes to assist in choosing what they defined as the highest level student (Seidman, 2005). The selection process translated into identifying students who would persist and help the colleges develop a reputation of greatness. Because so many students were interested in college, more colleges were borne, some for those students who would have easy access due to financial backing and other colleges for those who would

normally not have access to postsecondary education (Seidman, 2005). With so many colleges erecting, the idea of persistence began to form.

The persistence of students in college was believed to be a direct correlation to higher paying jobs (Seidman, 2005). Because the undergraduate population was increasing and the types of colleges were becoming differentiated, persistence strategies began to surface as a necessary endeavor. Student populations were becoming more diverse, including across race and gender. Women were beginning to have a presence in the undergraduate population. Specific groups of people were beginning to attend college such as the Jewish, Catholic, and African American populations (Cohen & Kisker, 2010). Various institution types were developing with distinct characteristics that would identify them differently from others and attract more students. These two developments triggered a desire by institutions to have students who would likely complete their education earning a postsecondary degree (Seidman, 2005). The communities were slowly moving toward the idea that a college degree was a valuable asset which promoted competition for obtaining higher paying professional positions. The Department of the Treasury and the Department of Education (2012) found that "there was substantial evidence that education raises earnings" (p.3). Former belief that a high school diploma was sufficient was gradually disappearing (Seidman, 2005). As a result, the emergence of research studies on persistence became prevalent. Seidman (2005) defines persistence as a "desire and action of a student to stay within the system of higher education from beginning year through degree completion" (p. 7). A college education was becoming increasingly important and research was focusing on understanding what makes students persist (Seidman, 2005).

Persistence affected by student character and environmental traits became part of studies about attrition. Some called this idea of attrition "student mortality" and student mortality

directly impacted retention, otherwise known as persistence. The first studies on "student

mortality" materialized in the 1930s. One of the studies was performed by John McNeely, which

was published in 1938. Sixty institutions across the nation were invited to participate in various

studies offered by the Office of Education (McNeely, 1937). McNeely performed one of these

studies by researching data from 25 institutions and investigating attrition. McNeely's study was

based on a group of entering freshmen in school year 1931-1932 working toward a degree. The

students were followed over a four-year period with notations made about those who left in the

four-year period. McNeely looked at degree completion; points during the educational process in

which attrition was most prevalent; impact of institution population; impact of any identifiable

factors; and reasons for withdrawal (Seidman, 2005). Additionally, the Office of Education

provided McNeely 75 items related to the causes for students to leave school. The list included

"sex of student, age at time of entrance, [distance of college from home], place of lodging, credit

hours registered for, academic [grades], membership in social fraternity or sorority,

extracurricular activities, and part-time work" (McNeely, 1937, p.2). This study showed

McNeely's work was comprehensive and could be penned as the foundation on which more

complete studies were based years later.

Before more persistence studies were conducted, the country experienced The Great

Depression and World War II. These two catastrophic events sent resources previously

earmarked for education to other activities necessary to sustain the nation. After World War II,

higher education became a major focus and student access and degree attainment once again

arose to the top of many action agendas. The nation began implementing movements to support

hundreds of thousands of students to go to college such as the National Youth Administration of

1935 that funded postsecondary education, and the GI Bill that funded education for soldiers

returning to home. Additionally, the National Defense Education Act of 1958 and the Higher

Education Act of 1965 encouraged persistence as a means to sustain the United States.

The National Youth Administration of 1935 assisted students with staying in college by

"funding part-time jobs for students" (Cohen & Kisker, 2010, p. 176). The administration had

two goals: (1) to prevent young people from dropping out of high school or college due to a

financial hardship and (2) to provide some training that could have long-term value. Later, these

goals assisted in a number of those in program getting trained as machinists for the defense

industry because of war (Roosevelt Institute, 2011). The focus on persistence was evident in this

executive order.

When masses of servicemen were withdrawn from the military, the GI Bill was born. The

purpose of the bill was to provide Veteran's benefits while attending school including school

tuition. The veteran who had two years of active duty could have government monies allocated

to them that would cover a four-year college program (Cohen & Kisker, 2010). The financial

hardships encountered while attending college that military personnel might face were alleviated

by this bill. Enrollment numbers exceeded capacity at many institutions. Soldiers were entering

college in great masses (Seidman, 2005).

The National Defense Education Act of 1958 and the Higher Education Act of 1965

supported college attendance as a staple of the United States. Additionally, they helped outline

how the federal government would financially back higher education (Seidman, 2005). The

Higher Education Act gave grants to institutions for various college services while the national

Defense Education Act sanctioned loans and fellowships for students going to college (Cohen &

Kisker, 2010). The importance of students persisting in college became evident at a national

level.

Though enrollments were increasing, it was not until the 1970s that persistence became a leading topic for educators, researchers and institutions. Researchers who studied students who persisted primarily examined the factors that caused academic failure; however, other areas challenging persistence were now emerging such as gender, race, class and academic preparation. The civil rights movement opened opportunities for African Americans and other racial and ethnic groups providing a more diverse student body with new and varying factors affecting college persistence. Institutions began to realize that promoting access and diversity on campus presented new challenges regarding persistence. Many of the colleges were not prepared to implement supportive environments for students of color and others simply refused. Other challenges included the academic preparation of students of color who were now entering a college environment and had not been given the necessary academic resources to prepare them. Colleges were continuously changing which caused more distress to the students and educators as they tried unsuccessfully to collaborate on the best methods for meeting the needs of a diverse study body (Seidman, 2005).

The literature notes several persistence researchers attempting to determine patterns of departure. One of the early investigators of persistence was William Spady. He presented a study, "Dropouts from Higher Education: An Interdisciplinary Review and Synthesis" (Spady, 1971), focusing on a review of the interaction between student attributes and the college environment. Spady (1971) explains that students enter college with a set of characteristics brought with them from their home environment. He continues noting that these characteristics greatly impact the student's decisions to persist. "It is assumed that this entire range of experiences and attributes may influence his overall ability to accommodate the influences and pressures he encounters in his new environment" (Spady, 1971, p. 38). Spady's (1971) study

provided an important basis on which to have other research performed, but the study was not complete with theories on developing models for student persistence. This lack of persistence models for practice and observation provided the impetus for new works to emerge by those such as Vincent Tinto.

Vincent Tinto (1973, 1975) built upon Spady's work with the development of interactionalist theory. Tinto and Cullen (1973) developed their theory using "two theories of human behavior; Durkheim's sociological theory of suicide and the theory of cost-benefits analysis as originally derived in economics" (p. 36). The culmination of the two theories above formed the new interactionalist theory which states that persistence is impacted by students entering with "individual characteristics, family backgrounds and prior educational experiences" which influences their commitment to educational goals (Tinto & Cullen, 1973, p. 42). Goal commitment was presented as a critical factor in students persisting in college. While the review provided some foundational knowledge on improving student persistence, the knowledge regarding how specific factors affected students individually was deficient.

Persistence studies continued with work by Ernest Pascarella and Patrick Terenzini who built upon Tinto's models by taking his central concepts and developing persistence models to be used on a campus (Seidman, 2005). The study was longitudinal and took place at a large, private university. The sampling consisted of incoming freshmen and data was collected using survey instruments prior, during and after the 1975-1976 academic year. Their study results found that student-faculty informal relationships that are positively related are not the exclusive reason students persist. The study did support that the student-faculty relationships do add to the variations of factors that cause students to persist (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1978). This study contributes to Tinto's research that relationships are important to student persistence and those

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relationships are developed at different levels and rates of speed based on the differences of each student.

Years of persistence research has brought us to a multitude of educational practices and theories. Those studying this phenomenon began with core constructs regarding the social, psychological and intellectual aspects of a student and designed models to positively impact student persistence. Over time, those original core constructs have been expanded to include student relationships and home or college environments that students face.

Theories related to persistence. Bean and Eaton's Psychological Model of College Student Retention (2000) combine four theories into a theory of student departure. The model considers characteristics of students as they enter college such as past behavior, beliefs, and normative beliefs. These beliefs drive how the student perceives the college environment. The perception, in turn, impacts the student's interaction with the institution finally affecting their motivation to persist. The student is influenced by various psychological processes such as positive self-efficacy, declining stress, increasing efficacy, and internal locus of control. These processes are continuously adjusted as they are influenced by institutional and external environments (Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon, 2004).

Alexander Astin (1984) developed a model that focused on the belief that physical and psychological stamina play an important role in persistence decisions. The model was based on a theory of student involvement and involvement "refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy a student devotes to the academic experience" (p. 297). This meant that the professor and the student played a part in linking teaching methods based on the outcomes they both desired (Habley et al., 2012). The premise was that the more students were involved in their academic ventures, the more likely they were to persist. The model was easy to understand

and user friendly. This model focused on one primary concept and lacked the coordination of the multiple forces that affect student persistence. The term involvement in this theory references the behaviors a student exhibits while in college that impacts their outcomes, including persistence. Astin's theory stands on five principles. The first includes the belief that involvement can be generalized or specific. Secondly, involvement exists continuously and becomes distinct for each student at a specific time. Next, involvement can be quantitative or qualitative. The amount of student involvement directly impacts the amount of learning and personal development attained (Astin, 1984). In order to impact student persistence, educational policy or practice must be effective toward improving student involvement (Braxton & Hirschy, 2004).

Berger (2000) uses Bourdieu's (1973, 1977) idea of cultural capital to college student departure. Cultural capital is when there is a symbolic resource a student uses to advance their social status such as "interpersonal skills, manners, linguistics, and educational credentials" (p. 97). The model discusses how social reproduction exists for the student and the institution. Student persistence is affected if the social reproductive process does not match between the student's cultural capital and the institution's cultural capital. The theory posits that students with higher levels of cultural capital persist at a higher rate at institutions with a higher rate of organizational cultural capital. Persistence also happens when students with low levels of cultural capital attend institutional organizational with low cultural capital.

The theories discussed are aligned with the research purpose of this study. This study explored the persistence factors of Latinos from a two-year, private, career college in West Tennessee. During this exploration, the experiences of Latinos in the study will be interviewed using a comprehensive model developed by Terenzini and Reason (2005) and studied by Reason (2009) that reviews influences on Latino college persistence.

Terminology related to persistence. There are many terms related to student persistence. Understanding these terms based on their use in the literature will help guide the application of theories and knowledge. The related terms are either describing events regarding students staying in school or leaving school. Each term will be discussed based on the theories or on the theorists who use them.

Student persistence is described as a student who stays enrolled at the institution after matriculation (Habley et al., 2012). Astin (1975) believes that a student must be at a full-time status and in the process of pursuing a degree to fulfill the definition of persistence. Persistence can also be one who enrolls over and over without interruption (Lenning, 1978). There are other qualifiers such as Guthrie's (2002) idea regarding persistence as a student who graduates in two or four years. The multiple definitions of persistence are differentiated by various stopping points, but the idea of staying in school to a certain point exists in all the definitions which are the core meaning.

Stopout is a term used in relation to persistence but meaning the temporary discontinuation of attending college. Astin (1975) defined stopout as a student who "interrupts education for a relatively brief period of time and returns to complete a degree." Lenning (1978) defined the term similarly to Astin's definition with the added modifier of having no specific length of time of the stopout period. Stopout is not meant to be a dropout or a terminal point in education but a period of time in which a student needs time to adjust prior to returning to college to persist to degree.

Student departure is another term related to student persistence but is the exact opposite of persistence and is sometimes called dropout. Summerskill (1962) said dropout related to a

student who stopped attending prior to earning a degree. Student departure or dropout can also indicate that a student has discontinued their movement toward a certificate or degree. Astin (1975) described dropout as a student who is no longer enrolled in school and has no plans to pursue a degree.

Retention is a term very closely related to persistence and is often used to describe a rate or percentage of the students in a specified enrollment period (Habley et al., 2012). The terms persistence and retention are often used interchangeably to describe a student who stays in school (Seidman, 2005). In this study, the student has been retained through graduation.

Persistence at two-year, private, career colleges. There have been few studies on persistence at two-year, career colleges which is an untapped source of information for researchers of student persistence. For example, non-traditional students tend to prefer the career colleges and those who persist to graduation do so because of overcoming obstacles like balancing family and school, time-management issues and holding down a necessary job while still attending (Woods, 2016). Woods (2016) conducted a study on the persistence of two-year, for-profit, career colleges and found that students persisted at higher rates than the community colleges and four year institutions. The study found the students persisted because the college was more centrally located, was seen as a business, provided more career-oriented majors, and promised to graduate students sooner due to their accelerated educational programs. The study also supported other research that social integration (relationships with faculty and advisors) positively impacted student persistence at the for-profit career colleges, as well as, at community colleges.

College Student Enrollment

Facts surrounding college student enrollment are measured by many agencies with various descriptors regarding race/ethnicity and institutional type. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) presented numbers on enrollment from its last update, May 2015. NCES (2015) reported that 17.5 million undergraduate students attended in fall 2013 at populations of 9.9 million Whites, 2.9 million Hispanics, 2.5 million Blacks, and 1.0 million Asians. Between 1990 and 2013, Hispanic enrollment rose the highest from 0.7 million to 2.9 million, Black enrollment doubled and White enrollment increased 7%. Most groups of undergraduate enrollments were lower in 2013 than in 2010 except for Hispanics, who increased by 13%.

Institutional type was also studied and findings covered public, private, non-profit and private, for-profit. The statistics for race and institutional type were taken from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). The institutional type enrollment figures showed private, for-profit institutions at 56% compared to public institutions at 37% and private, nonprofit at 35% between 1990 and 2013. For the purpose of clarity, the private, for-profit institution was 0.2 million enrollments in 1990 compared to public at 9.7 and private, nonprofit at 2.0 million. Between 2000-2010, the private, for-profit growth quadrupled. To compare, the public institutions grew 30% and the private, nonprofit grew 20%. Later, IPEDS reported that enrollment in the private sector showed marked growth. A more recent pattern of enrollment at private for-profit institutions changed in 2013 (1.4 million students) which was 21% lower than in 2010; enrollment at public institutions (13.3 million students) was 3% lower, while enrollment at private nonprofit institutions (2.8 million students) was 4% higher (NCES, 2015).

There is a limitation in the IPEDS data. These data only track incoming freshman who are full-time students. The part-time students or transfer students were not tracked. The aforementioned numbers are reporting on full-time, incoming freshmen and do not present a comprehensive picture of enrollment at these institution types.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2015) submitted a press release that spoke about universities having low Latino graduation rates. They report that 51% of Latinos graduate with a bachelor's degree in six years compared to 59% of White students. They found that the lower rates hold true regardless of student or institution.

When considering all students, first-time students at a private, non-profit, four-year institution had an overall retention rate of 81%. Private, for-profit, four year institutions had a retention rate of 53%. The two-year, private, for-profit institutions showed retention rates of 68% with two-year public and two-year private, non-profit at 59% (NCES, 2015). Later, NCES (2017) published another report and the retention rates of for-profits continued to exceed the publics. The overall retention rate for all two-year institutions was 61%. The two-year, private, for-profit retention rate was (66%) while the two-year private, non-profit and the public were each at 61%.

Postsecondary Institutional Types

Today, there are three conventional types of higher education institutions known as public, private (non-profit), and private (for-profit). The public institutions range from two-year community colleges to graduate research institutions. The private, non-profit are typically Ivy League colleges in addition to religious institutions and liberal arts colleges. The private, for-profit, do not have a tax-preferred status (Department of the Treasury, 2012).

To further describe the types of higher education institutions, the literature review will begin with universities. Universities are identified as public or private, each with specific reasons for existence. Some of them are research institutions that brought in millions of federal and private dollars for research. The research universities are usually selective in their admissions processes and offer multiple specialized courses. Other universities are doctoral-granting universities that compete with the research universities. There are also land-grant universities that focus on the local ecological problems and offer programs traditionally in animal science, horticulture and other disciplines that relate to farming (Cohen & Kisker, 2010).

Another type of higher education institution is the community college. Community colleges are typically aimed at low-ability students, unemployed, and other underprivileged students. They usually connect with the high schools and provide an avenue for students to begin college with future plans of going on to a university. These are two-year public colleges. Many two-year, non-profits mirror some of the community college program offerings (Cohen & Kisker, 2010).

Paralleling the previously mentioned institutional types is the private, for-profit college system. For-profit schools usually focus on specific job skills and the programs usually have a predetermined set of courses. Most of the programs are less than two years in length granting degrees and certificates of completion (Cohen & Kisker, 2010).

Historically, for-profit education dates back to the mid-seventeenth century in America with development of private and evening schools. The curriculum was usually theology, ancient language, or philosophy based and was mainly governed by the churches of England. Women were not allowed education, so male students completed their studies and assumed careers as

clergymen. Harvard, William and Mary, and Yale are some of these early colleges (Cohen & Kisker, 2010).

The colonies grew and a strong demand for instruction in careers of farming, engineering, or navigation became important. These disciplines were introduced because the colony colleges did not offer them (Ruch, 2001). Since the colony colleges did not offer these areas, the for-profit institutions filled the gap. These colleges survived the Civil War, World War II, and Vietnam War by offering veterans training to compete in the workforce (Honick, 1995).

For-profit colleges and universities today derived from the proprietary business institutions that emerged in the nineteenth century. By 1890, there were 250 of these private institutions with a total enrollment of 81,000. An 1873 U.S. Bureau of Education reported the accelerated growth of these schools and the vast number of students seeking this kind of skill based training supports that they meet a want which is provided by no other schools in an equal amount (Kinser, 2006).

Minority Student Persistence

Serrano (2009) conducted a study regarding factors that affect the degree aspirations of African Americans and Latino community college students. The study found that while institutions are beginning to accept more students from diverse backgrounds the necessary support systems are not in place. Diversity on campus brings a plethora of challenges and institutions must learn the factors attached to each student that impacts their persistence. Many times minority student persistence is affected by the background, psychological, and behavioral experiences they bring to the campus. The background of these students prevents them from devoting time to involvement activities which is important to persistence as shown by Astin's (1977) theory of involvement.

Kim and Nunez (2013) conducted a study on how ethnicity affects college enrollment. These same effects impact student minority persistence and should be surveyed continuously. The study showed that financial capital and human capital play a significant role in student enrollment and persistence among minorities. A student will weigh the costs of attending the institution from enrollment to graduation. The researchers identified social and cultural capital as major factors in student persistence. The findings concluded that ethnicity plays an important role in enrollment and persistence. The study found that Latinos are negatively associated with college enrollment and persistence which they learned was due to cultural capital. With regard to academic preparation, the study noted that White and Asian academic preparation was far ahead of both African American and Latino students and was the single most important predictor of enrollment and success. The study found that financial and cultural capital greatly impacted student enrollment and persistence. The study concluded that while parents of those who were not able to attend college had high expectations for their children, they could not afford the education and the student's environment did not prepare them for college.

Jackson and Suizzo (2015) conducted a study on minority student persistence using ecocultural theories as a basis. The particular focus was the identity theory. The model translated as students with individual behaviors that are the interpretation of their cultural understanding of the world and are connected to the different identities the student may have in their world. The work focused on family and society constructs together to provide a foundation of combining how the student is identified in the family and society. The study pointed out that minority persistence can be affected by the powerful cultural norms in student lives. With institutions consisting of diverse populations, identities of the students developed in their own cultures must be a topic for institutions to study (Jackson & Suizzo, 2015).

Minority student persistence remains important in higher education. Habley et al. (2012) report that the two largest minority groups, Latinos and African Americans, have made no marked progress in educational attainment rates as of a 2010 report by the American Council on Education. Though there were increases in college enrollment, the persistence to degree attainment was not significant. The causes for the lack of persistence remained the same over time with specific reasons being financial resources, student preparation for college level work, study skills, and low socioeconomic status.

Latino Persistence

Various environmental factors affect Latino persistence. They have beliefs they learn at home that are indigenous to their family members which may match or may completely disagree with the beliefs they learn in educational environments. Both of these environments may differ yet from the environments with friends or coworkers. All these factors affect the actions and persistence power of Latinos for college completion. This section will discuss many of the factors that become part of a Latino's belief system and how these beliefs affect their persistence in college.

Cultural capital and persistence. Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1990) is a theorist who has studied several forms of capital. One of them is cultural capital. Cultural capital is affected by social reproduction. Culture plays a vital role in developing chances given in life because parents who have developed cultural capital pass it along to their children who then have more advantages with academic success. Each class of people has their own cultural background, knowledge, dispositions, and likes that are passed down through the family. Cultural capital is necessary for Latino, low-income and first-generation students, for whom access to college is clearly compromised. The dominant groups in our world who form the knowledge and skills that

are valued the most form the basis of what is taught in schools. A Latino student who learns the culture of the dominant group builds the student's capital and is then considered educated or talented. If one does not possess cultural capital, then they may be considered ignorant or uneducated (Kim & Nunez, 2013). Kvasny (2006) states the harmony between what is taught in the schools and the cultural capital that students possess greatly supports the academic performance and education credentials like diplomas and degrees. This translates as the belief that students from more affluent families have higher chances of excelling in school and attaining those credentials that open occupational opportunities because they have more cultural capital that is considered privileged in educational settings.

Bourdieu (1977, 1984, 1986) defined cultural capital as being familiar with the cultural codes that are dominant for everyone in society. He believed strongly that building cultural capital should be viewed as important to one's success as much as building economic capital and social networks. Cultural capital is owned by families and individuals and is given to children by their parents through investments and socialization. In addition to being able to stand by itself, cultural capital is a common asset that can be changed into economic and social capital (Anderson & Jaeger, 2015).

Winkle-Wagner and McCoy (2016) believe Bourdieu's social reproduction theory is appropriate for the study of individuals who need to alter their social class or experience upward mobility. Bourdieu believes students can use their familial assets or assets they gain from college as a means for persisting in college. "Bourdieu's full theory of social reproduction includes the concepts of field, cultural capital, social capital, and habitus and is particularly useful for the study of social inequalities" (Winkle-Wagner, 2010, p. 183). Field refers to the setting that provides a basis for certain forms of knowledge, skills, abilities or social networks. Cultural

capital is knowledge, skills, or abilities that act as an asset in particular social settings such as persisting in college. Habitus is a set of dispositions and beliefs that influence the way one looks at one's self in certain situations and is obtained through life with a family. Lastly, having social capital helps one to achieve a higher status in certain settings whether they are formal or informal. A student who understands the meaning of field, cultural capital, social capital, and habitus can use these resources to be successful in college. The concepts are particularly important to underrepresented populations such as Latinos. For example, a Latino student who is bilingual could use their cultural capital to help with a project based on bilingual education (Winkle-Wagner & McCoy, 2016).

Intrinsic motivation and self-determination. Self-determination theory focuses on research that discusses characteristics which nurture or starve positive potential in people (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The conditions are actions like performance in academic venues (Faye & Sharpe, 2008) and also self-determination theory is the "investigation of people's innate psychological needs that are a basis for their self-motivation and personality integration as well as for the conditions that foster these positive processes" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 68).

Parental advising was a positive part of school motivation, self-efficacy, and intrinsic motivation for an ethnically diverse group. Latino students usually have higher intrinsic motivation towards school and high academic self-efficacy when there was an increase in parent-school communication about their issues. Research has also proven that parents can have a positive impact on college age students when they are supported (Trevino & DeFreitas, 2014).

Parents can also play a part in impacting intrinsic motivation. They can encourage this motivation when their children are young which can impact the children then as far as through the college years. Research finds that Latinos who have high levels of familism (a cultural value

of loyalty to one's family) would also have high levels of intrinsic motivation (Trevino & DeFreitas, 2014).

Latino persistence at two-year, private, career colleges. Latinos and other minorities sometimes choose the two-year, private, career colleges over other institutions of higher learning. A number of higher education experts recognize these institutions for their effectiveness at offering practical training for a part of the population that might not otherwise consider postsecondary education. The focused efforts on professional training are what draw many minority students. The ability to present a "real world" applicability of the skills they will learn resonates very well with minority students (Farrell, 2003).

The two-year, private, career colleges work to accommodate the students in ways different than other institutions. Some have translated much of their advertising into Spanish to reach the ever-growing Latino population. Additionally, these colleges schedule offices to be open for assistance to the students in evenings and on weekends. This convenience works well for the Latino student, especially the first-generation student (Farrell, 2003).

Latinos are typically family based and two-year, private, career colleges are usually situated in or near the neighborhood so students can attend and continue living at home. Many students needed to stay home to help the family while attending college (Farrell, 2003). Latino students choose to attend college because of how close the college is to their family or if the family is knowledgeable of the college (Contreras, 2016). Farrell (2003) stated Latinos reported that family always comes first even though education is important so being close to family makes it easier to stay in school.

When considering persistence to graduation and the attainment of an associate's degree, two-year, private, career colleges rated second (19%) only to four year universities (21%) for

Latino associate degree attainment. The public, two year colleges were rated at 14 percent in associate's degree attainment of Latinos (Borden, 2015).

A Comprehensive Model of Influences on Student Learning and Persistence

Although researchers have developed models that include multiple variables affecting college persistence such as pre-college experiences, campus climate and individual experiences, Reason (2009) believed Terenzini and Reason's (2005) comprehensive model would be more effective. He stated that researchers must consider the multidimensional forces that affect persistence because student decisions and behaviors are not one-dimensional. The following information describes why Reason (2009) developed his comprehensive model.

Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) concluded that studying just one variable or a set of variables during the college years may not be as vital to college persistence as the interconnected changes that take place during the college process. They explained that many times, research only focuses on a set of factors affecting persistence which presents only partial conclusions.

Terenzini and Reason (2005) developed a conceptual framework that expanded and connected persistence models developed by other researchers that provided consideration of some combination of influences such as faculty behaviors, attitudes, cultures, peer climate, and organizational traits. The model was new and introduced the aspect of exploring internal organizational features like policies, budgets and staffing. The purpose of this model was to look at a broader array of factors that affect college student outcomes (Reason, 2009).

The model integrated a wide variety of influences on college student persistence: presenting comprehensive, integrated, and coordinated structures and policies; have appropriate recruitment, admissions, and student transitions; ensure first year as high priority with faculty; serve first year students based on needs (gender, race/ethnicity); engage students in and out of

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the classroom; ensure students encounter diverse ideas, worldviews and people and conduct assessments along with maintaining association with professional organizations. The aforementioned influences would impact students directly or indirectly regarding their persistence (Terenzini & Reason, 2005). The model recognized that students arrive to college with multiple personal, academic, and social background characteristics and experiences that can ready them to varying levels to take part in formal and informal learning.

The vast majority of literature on student persistence through graduation has been compartmentalized to a single contributing factor as decided by the researcher; however, multiple elements affect the persistence of students, simultaneously. Additionally, those multiple persistence elements of precollege experiences and college experiences have sub-categories when considering Latino students who persist. Higher education leaders need to move away from focusing on one area of intervention as a means of improving student persistence and realize they have to think in a more holistic way, considering the whole student. Gloria and Castellanos (2007) state a focus on faculty mentors and their impact on Latino students' niche in college stresses the examination of the whole student.

For example, Habley et al. (2012) present a great amount of discussion on how institutional culture affects student persistence. The authors report that a great amount of consideration has been given to how student persistence is affected by institutional culture. They state that entering student demographics impact student graduation and persistence rates, but institutions also have the power to positively impact student persistence rates. The authors provided a summary of the literature on how to develop a campus culture/ethos to support student persistence and engagement inside the institution.

The authors continue to say that if an institution would look at student persistence as an opportunity instead of a dilemma they could then use the organizational development theory of Appreciative Inquiry and lead the way in their approach to developing a campus culture focused on student persistence (Habley et al., 2012). The student pre-college characteristics and experiences such as sociodemographic traits, academic preparation and performance, and student dispositions were not considered.

To recognize another single element of persistence found prevalent in research is to highlight the area of cultural capital which has been studied over and over. The research describes how cultural capital is acquired by students and how it affects their educational progress. Zambrana and Zoppi (2002) evaluated the educational trends among Latino students in high schools and offered for consideration the idea that the cultural wealth Latino families possess could be a way to alter any poor academic success and their access to human capital. The researchers supported their suggestion with this brief description of the cultural capital obtained by Latino students. When defining resilience characteristics of students, one will find the cultural assets of Latino families as a way to describe resilience. The assets include faith in a religious being, bringing to focus their collectivity as Latinos, placing value on children, and engaging in many affective behaviors from childhood on. They teach children values such as being responsible to others, being responsible to the Latino group, showing respect to elders and figures of authority, and showing responsibility as a sibling. Additionally, they teach that civility is to be respected and expressed in the form of kindness and helpful.

Again, this one area identified as cultural capital and its uses toward improving student persistence is the major purpose of Zambrana and Zoppi's (2002) study; however, the role of institutional climate and the student experiences that affect persistence were non-existent.

Another study takes particular focus on ethnic identity and persistence and the effects of ethnicity on persistence decisions. Researchers find that one's identity, specifically around race/ethnicity, will have an effect on the decisions students make to matriculate. One study finds that the ethnic identity, or the cultural orientation and identification one holds toward a certain ethnic group influences that person's perceptions, cognitions, affects, and behaviors (Cuellar & Gonzales, 2000). To further the connection, the individual's action just described "may also significantly impact persistence attitudes and decisions" (Aguinaga & Gloria, 2015, p. 16).

The study focused only on the effects of ethnicity toward persistence. The institutional climate, individual student experiences and peer environment were not discussed which supports that the literature typically focuses on one area affecting student persistence in college. Other researchers studied independent elements and presented them as the contributing factor to student persistence. Specifics from those additional studies are described further.

Another study that focused on interrelationships was conducted and findings held that persistence could be positively impacted by developing these relationships. Among those who studied interrelationships were Faye and Sharpe (2008) who examined "the interrelationships among psychological needs, intrinsic motivation and psychosocial development" (p. 191). Within the college student sample, those individuals whose identity formation was stronger experienced an increase in autonomy and competence. An individual's reinforcement history affects competence, which affects intrinsic motivation, such that when students are encouraged in their mastery goals and they meet their goals, feelings of competence and increased intrinsic motivation are exhibited and persistence is positively impacted (Faye & Sharpe, 2008).

Familism was studied by Jackson and Suizzo (2015) who worked with Latino women persisting through programs geared toward Latino science identity. The study found that

familism played a role in the women meeting their goals of persistence. The researchers found that these women stated they had parents who wanted them to pursue careers that mandated long-term schooling and opposed traditional gender stereotypes. Although a small amount of women shared stories of gender discrimination, the majority felt supported of their aspirations, especially by immediate family. The women stated the support was important to them. Although there was strong support from the family to pursue their chosen occupation, they also continued to feel obligated to their families. This represented their cultural value of familism (Jackson & Suizzo, 2015).

The literature presents a plethora of studies on single or dual elements affecting persistence of college students and lacks a more comprehensive look at impacting student persistence on a broader level. The more aspects of a college student's life and experiences that can be addressed the greater the chances of persistence. Tinto (1993) posits that "the 'secret' of successful [persistence], if there is one, lies in understanding [three] principles and how they can be applied to the complex problem of the [persistence] of different students in different institutional settings" (p. 146). The three principles are labeled as "institutional commitment to students", "educational commitment", and "social and intellectual community" (Tinto, 1993, pp. 146-147). Although Tinto (1993) presents three principles on which to connect persistence efforts, Reason (2009) purports that an even broader look at elements affecting student persistence is necessary. He finds that various aspects of student precollege characteristics and experiences, the organizational context, the peer environment, and multiple facets of the individual student experience will provide a more comprehensive model on which to build persistence amongst college students. There is a gap in the literature on the more comprehensive

approach which includes specific aspects identified by Reason (2009) important to address for student college persistence.

In 2003, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) published a research report on a comprehensive approach including institutional environment, student characteristics, academic preparation, and family impact; however, the study lacked the elements of Reason's (2009) model regarding the peer environment and individual student experiences. Additionally, the Canadian Center of Science and Education published a study on various persistence models studied over time, but again each lacked one or more elements of Reason's (2009) model.

Terenzini and Reason's (2005) model integrated a wide variety of influences on college student persistence: student precollege characteristics and experiences, the organizational context, the student peer environment, and the individual student experience. The model recognized that students arrive to college with multiple personal, academic, and social background characteristics and experiences that can ready them to varying levels to take part in formal and informal learning. The precollege experiences aided students' college experiences through their interactions with institutional and peer environments (Reason, 2009).

This study purports to present information regarding Latino persistence using Terenzini and Reason's (2005) Comprehensive Model of Influences on Student Learning and Persistence. A desire to address all elements of Terenzini and Reason's (2009) model is held in order to provide institutions with a foundation for comprehensive program planning and to provide other researchers a springboard of information for future research.

Chapter Summary

The preceding chapter has provided a literature review of areas related to the present study including: student college enrollment, institutional types, student college persistence,

persistence in minorities, Latino college persistence, Latino persistence at two-year, private, career colleges and Terenzini and Reason's (2005) Comprehensive Model of Influences on Student Learning and Persistence. The following methodology chapter will describe how this research study, with its qualitative design and methods, explored the multiple forces regarding Latino student college persistence at a two-year, private, career college.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Research Design

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore college persistence factors of Latino graduates from a two-year, postsecondary career college in West Tennessee. Creswell (2014) describes qualitative research as a way for exploring and understanding the meaning that people or groups set to a social or human issue. Yin goes on to explain that case study research is "a linear but iterative process, investigates a contemporary phenomenon in its 'real world' context" (Yin, 2014, pp. 1-2). The research questions were meant to obtain insight on persistence through the use of Terenzini and Reason's (2005) Comprehensive Model of Influences on Student Learning and Persistence. The two research questions that guided this study were:

(1) How do college experiences affect Latino persistence to graduation?

(2) How do cultural factors promote or hinder Latino college persistence?

The research questions led the inquiry and helped determine how the data was collected and as Merriam and Simpson (2000) state the research questions presented a picture of the researcher's evaluation that determined the most important factors to study.

Epistemology

McLaughlin (2012) defines epistemology as "how we philosophically ground what we can know about the world, the types of knowledge claims that we can make about the world and how we can then assure the credibility of such claims" (p. 25). Piantanida and Garman (2009) postulate that epistemology are the assumptions about the origin of knowledge, the origin of truth, and how those origins provide genuine claims of knowledge and truth. Glesne (2011) further explains that epistemology can be when the researcher has worldviews created by the

mind and how the mind understands, categorizes and interprets what it sees. She further says, "what you believe knowledge to be, in turn, shapes and serves to justify the methodology you choose to answer your questions" (p. 5). Crotty (1998) presents the work of Maynard who conjectures that epistemology is focused on a philosophical foundation to assist in determining the types of knowledge possible and then how the researcher can guarantee that they are acceptable and genuine. Crotty finds three main epistemological stances: objectivism, constructionism, and subjectivism. To compare the three, he says that "Objectivist epistemology holds that meaning, and therefore meaningful reality, exists as such apart from the operation of any consciousness" (p. 8). Further, he finds in constructionism that "there is no objective truth waiting for us to discover. Truth, or meaning, comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world" (p. 8). Lastly, he reports that "in subjectivism, meaning does not come out of an interplay between subject and object but is imposed on the object by the subject" (p. 9).

I am a constructionist supporting Aguinaldo (2004) that if we deny there is an empirical world undiscovered by the social and the political, how can we consider evaluating our research claims? Crotty (1998) posits that our first look at the world has meaning because we have viewed it through our own cultural lenses. Our individual culture allows us to see the world with meaning and in the same way causes us to ignore other meanings that could be possible (Crotty, 1998). The constructionist paradigm centers on research based on the perception of the participants and perception is based on the cultural worlds in which one has lived. Merriam (2002) finds that "meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world" and that there are "multiple constructions and interpretations of reality that are in flux and that

change over time" (p. 3). This study explored how Latino college graduates are affected by their culture and interactions with their world as they persisted to graduation.

Theoretical Perspective

Crotty (1998) states that the theoretical perspective is the foundation for the steps involved in the process, and that logic and criteria are grounded on the foundation. When a researcher studies a particular methodology, they found an integrated set of assumptions inside. Grant and Osanloo (2015) state a theoretical perspective presents a unified world view that supports one's thinking on the problem and on the analysis of data. Crotty (1998) posits that interpretivism as theoretical perspective tries to comprehend and describe what is real in the human and social context. Glesne (2011) cites the work of Geertz who postulates that interpretivists differ from those who have different world views by understanding theory based on interpretation or by attempting to legitimize a social interaction. I agree with her assertion that "interpretivists consider every human situation as novel, emergent, and filled with multiple, often conflicting, meanings and interpretations" (Glesne, 2011, p. 35). Chowdury (2014) cites Whitley who posits that researchers search for the context and intention of people's actions such as their behavior and interactions with others in the society and culture. Interpretivism gives a study the ability to present ideas that have been socially constructed based on the individual's perceptions.

Further, interpretivism is a type of social science research borne from philosophers such as Immanuel Kant, Eilhelm Dilthey, Max Weber, and Edmund Husserl. These philosophers believed the world cannot remain without the knower and the mind (Glesne, 2011). The knower and the mind work together and create understanding. As a component of interpretivism, understanding is an action that employs human ideas, actions, and interactions in certain contexts or in terms of the comprehensive culture (Glesne, 2011). As an interpretivist, the researcher

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engages these ideas, actions and interactions to learn cultural patterns of specific groups of

people. Glesne (2011) affirms that finding the perspectives of many members of the same social

group regarding a particular phenomenon can begin to determine say something about the

cultural patterns of thought and action for that group.

Crotty (1998) states that "interpretivism is often linked to the thought of Max Weber who

suggests that in the human sciences we are concerned with 'verstehen' (understanding) (p. 67).

He contrasts this with the "explicative approach [erklaren] which is focused on causality" and

helps to make the "distinction between qualitative research methods and quantitative research

methods" (p. 67). Crotty (1998) further notes that Wilhelm Dilthey differentiates verstehen and

erklaren and suggests that natural reality and social reality are different realities and to study

them requires different methods. Two other philosophers Wilhelm Windelband and Heinrich

Rickert renounce the idea that there is some real distinction between natural reality and social

reality, agree that there is a logical difference, one posited by the mind, between the two (Crotty,

1998).

Crotty (1998) finds that Weber agrees with Windelband and Rickert who reject Dilthey's

idea regarding a real distinction between natural and social reality and proposes there is only a

logical distinction. He further finds that Weber declares the need to base social inquiry on

meaning and values of people's behavior and on the subjective meaning of that behavior in its

complex state. Crotty (1998) says, in his current times, interpretivism has separated from the

traditional acts of people. Weber's verstehen approach has not been steadfast in the empirical

authentication when addressing understanding and interpretation. In many cases, it supports what

Weber refused to accept, which is the human and social sciences require different methods from

those of the natural sciences. Yet, Max Weber remains the popular name found in research when identifying who is known for the interpretivism theoretical approach (Crotty, 1998).

To further discuss theory and epistemology, one finds they are related in their characterizations; therefore, a theoretical framework rests upon the epistemological foundation. For example, constructionism is building something using the continuous interaction between self and society or culture that occurs in a physical world, and knowledge is founded on meanings that are created in social context. In relation, interpretivism aspires to identify interpretations of the social world that were culturally originated and historically based (deMarrais & Lapan, 2014). Glesne (2011) says "epistemology refers to the study of the nature of knowledge" and in order to study that knowledge we have theory for "how one might see the world" (p. 5).

Epistemology and theoretical perspectives guide research questions, methodology, and methods. Particularly, interpretivism has the nature to guide a researcher to develop questions that cause understanding. Since interpretivism is born from the constructivist view, it means that questions are broad and general so that those who participate can put the meaning of a situation into context and it is better to have more open-ended the questioning so the researcher can listen carefully to what people say or do in their social settings (Creswell, 2014).

I see the world through the lens of a constructionist which is why I selected the interpretivist approach to inquiry regarding the cultural factors and college experiences that might affect the participants' college persistence. The epistemology and theoretical perspectives align with my research as they are both based on understanding within a social and cultural context. In addition, deMarrais and Lapan (2014) posit that in constructionism researchers become sensitive to the fact that their studies are partnerships between themselves and their

participants. The participants may or may not cooperate, reveal or conceal information. In addition, the participants have the ability to allow or refuse to grant the researcher any access at all (deMarrais & Lapan, 2014). This study focused on the creating and delivering of meaning between the researcher and the participants (Crotty (1998).

To develop my interpretivist approach, I used the case study methodology which allowed me to create questions that would promote conversation with the participants about their cultural and college experiences. Glesne (2011) posits the study of a case allows for an in-depth and sometimes longitudinal look with data gathered from in-depth interviewing and document collection and analysis. Yin (2014) states a case study assumes the role of an interpretivist mindset presenting the case from [the] participant's many perspectives and meaning.

The study used methods typically found in case studies such as interviews, artifacts, and rick, thick descriptions and these methods supported the tenets of interpretivism. For example, Yin (2014) finds that interviews provide insight and explanations from personal views, perceptions, attitudes and meanings. Glesne (2011) posits that the use of artifacts includes material objects that assist the researcher in the interpretation of the culture of people you are studying. These methods helped develop the rich description necessary to interpret and understand the participants in their social and cultural worlds.

Research design is vital to the process and I have found Creswell (2014) and Yin (2014) to be useful resources for guiding the development of research questions, methodology, methods, and desired uses of research products. Using Creswell's (2014) guidance for writing qualitative research questions, "[an] intent to explore the general, complex set of factors surrounding the central phenomenon and present[ing] the broad, varied perspectives or meanings that participants

hold (p. 140)." I wrote my research questions on the broad concept surrounding culture and college experiences as related to student persistence.

Reason's theoretical framework on which this study is based lends itself to case study as its methodology. Reason (2009) finds that Tinto reviewed research that pointed him to determine that the higher education community now realizes that different backgrounds students experience cause them to experience the forces in our higher education institution environments differently which includes our efforts to positively impact student persistence. In order to support Reason's (2009) framework, A Comprehensive Model of Student Learning and Persistence, the use of interviews, and Yin's (2014) proposal of the importance of "artifacts" was important (p. 106). The study used data regarding real human activities, behavior and personal perspectives of the participants (Yin, 2014).

Institutional Setting

Everyone's College, a pseudonym, is the college from which the Latino participants will come. The college was established in 1989 with a major focus on allied healthcare occupations. The college currently offers certificate programs such as Medical Assistant, Dental Assisting, Pharmacy Technician, and Medical Office Professional and associate degree programs such as Radiologic Technology, Respiratory Therapy, Dental Hygiene, Physical Therapist Assistant, and Registered Nurse. While the list is not comprehensive of all the programs offered, the college provides education to students in twenty programs.

The college is situated in a 36 floor business complex which occupies more than 65,000 square feet. The building is located on what is considered by city officials as a major street connecting several areas of the city and many businesses. Twenty-four hour security is provided

by building management and by the college. Well known businesses surround the building which provides adequate support for student needs while in school.

The facility consists of classrooms and labs for each of the programs and two of the programs operate a live clinic where the general public can receive services for dental care and for massage therapy. Support for the students includes service areas such as the library, tutoring center, testing center, resume writing center and study nooks. The walls are adorned with past, present and future student events; pictures of advisory members; motivational framed pictures; and informative flyers or brochures. The floors are carpeted or tiled based on the need of the space such as for protection from hazardous materials or for noise reduction.

There are five major departments that manage the operations of the college, the building and serve the students. The admissions department includes the reception area where students experience their first meeting at the school. Once students are assigned an admissions representative, they are given a tour and later a full description of all the programs offered. Students who are interested in moving forward schedule and entrance test in the testing center and are escorted to testing by their admissions representative who is there for them upon completion to guide them through next steps. The admissions department develops the relationship with the student and introduces new relationships with the other departments. The admissions representative schedules appointments with the Financial Aid department and the Business Office so the student can be informed of costs and make any necessary arrangements. The Academic and Student Affairs departments work closely together for the student from the beginning of enrollment until after graduation. Student Affairs manages graduation for the college and is supported by the Academic department. The entire student process is guided by the college and its faculty and staff.

Institutional Population

The college maintains approximately 900 students of varying socioeconomic and ethnic

backgrounds. The population is predominantly White with African American as the next largest

population. The dominant race at the college fluctuates between White and African American

based on enrollment dates. Latino, Asian American, American Indian and other races each

represent less than 10% of the population per race.

Regarding gender, the population consists of majority female (86%) as of spring, 2017.

The male population is the next lowest (14%) with one identified transgender as of spring, 2017.

The population is considered majority adult learner as the greatest number of students are at least

25 years of age. The population consistently represents as an adult learner career college.

Participants

deMarrais and Lapan (2014) stated purposive sampling required that people were

deliberately selected with the purpose of addressing the specific research questions because they

could provide rich sources of data. Further, Draper and Swift (2011) added participants could be

selected based on their personal characteristics, their experience of a specific event, their

behavior, or their attitudes and beliefs. My purpose in selecting participants was to find graduates

who could clearly describe their college experiences and their culture as a Latino. The following

criteria were used to select the participants.

- The participant must self-identify as Hispanic, White Hispanic or Latino. The Latino

  group was chosen to look at one specific people group within the population.

- The participants must have graduated from a two-year, career college in West Tennessee.

  Everyone's College, a pseudonym, is the specific two-year career college from which the

participants will be selected. The purpose for using graduates is to show the participant persisted through graduation.

- There was a combination of male (2) and female participants (10) who could provide a broader perspective for the research. Gender will not be used in this study as a contribution to the research.

In selecting participants, the researcher emailed fifty graduates from the master graduate list at the two-year, private, career college (Appendix C). The graduate list was generated by the Director of Student Affairs who oversees the maintenance of all electronic records for graduates of the institution and will be able to ensure the appropriate demographic is being considered. The email outlines the research study and the criteria to participate in the study. The researcher used her University of Memphis email account which ensured security of the information.

The National Research Act (1974) created the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research. The Commission was charged with identifying basic ethical principles and thus created The Belmont Report (National Research Act, 1974). As Yin (2014) cites from the National Research Council (2003), the researcher gained informed consent from all participants by alerting them to the nature of the case study and formally solicited their volunteerism to participate through an Informed Consent form (Appendix B).

The researcher protected those who participated from harm, which included avoiding the use of any deception in the study (Yin, 2014). This was accomplished by following two rules from The Belmont Report (1979) which are (a) do not harm and (b) maximize possible benefits and minimize possible harms.

The researcher protected the privacy and confidentiality of those who participated so they would not unwillingly be put in any undesirable position (Yin, 2014). To avoid any potential risks, the participants were told that if they wished to back out of the research study, they were free to do so at any time. To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms were used for the participants and the college. Participation in this study was on a voluntary basis. Confidentiality was upheld within the limits allowed by the law. All written documents and electronic information related to this research will remain secure, and only accessible to the researcher. The data that has any identifier to the participants were destroyed after completion of the research process.

Data Collection

One of the key elements of methodology is the selection of instruments to be used to collect data (Joyner, Rouse, & Glatthorne, 2013). To lessen the risk of systematic biases or limitations, two methods of data collection will be used (Maxwell, 2005). The study utilized semi-structured questions for interviews and physical artifact analysis from the items provided by the participants. The analysis of information from these two data sources will assist the researcher in identifying patterns or themes, as related to the research questions. In order to analyze the data, the researcher sought to comprehend the meaning the participants voiced about their cultural and college experiences (Merriam, 2002). Using qualitative inquiry allowed a complete understanding of both the subject and the participants as they used their voices to share cultural and college experiences. The data collection methods used in this study, semi-structured, one-on-one interviews and artifact analysis was remarkably useful in the descriptive process of the study.

Interviews. One of the data collection methods was a semi-structured interview in which the researcher conducted one-on-one, face-to-face interviews with each participant using a set of

questions adapted from Randall Fletcher's (2015) interview questions in his case analysis

research (Appendix E). The researcher met the participants for 1-2 hours at a scheduled date,

time and place established by the participant and agreed upon by the researcher. Prior to the

interview, the researcher informed the participants that the sessions would be recorded and was a

requirement for participation. All 12 participants agreed to the recorded sessions. The recordings

were transcribed by the researcher and later coded in an effort to locate emerging themes.

Merriam (2002) stated that semi-structured interview questions are a mix between varying levels

of structured questions with no exact wording or order determined in advance. This type of

questioning allowed the researcher to use probing for in-depth descriptions of the

phenomenology under study.

Physical artifact analysis. The last type of data collection was the retrieval of physical

artifacts the participants may have kept that related to their cultural values and college

experiences. Analyzing artifacts that the participants shared and that the researcher obtained

from the college provided deeper insight and understanding of the participants' personal

perspectives and adding to the themes that emerged from the interviews. Creswell (2014) states

that documents "enable a researcher to obtain the language and words of participants [and]

represent data to which participants have given attention" (p. 191). Analysis of physical artifacts

allowed the researcher to identify experiences of the participants in the essence of the moment

which provided a deeper understanding beyond what was gained when the participant shared

during interviews about their past.

At the end of the first semi-structured interview, the participants were asked to talk about

any physical artifacts from their educational endeavors or family events that were of importance

to them. For some participants, a second meeting was held where the participants brought the

artifacts and was asked to describe their importance. Other participants had artifacts available at the interview so no additional meeting was needed. The researcher numbered each artifact and took pictures. Each picture was then described by the participant as the researcher recorded the description. The recorded descriptions were transcribed and later coded to identify any new emerging themes. Yin (2014) states that studying physical artifacts will provide the researcher with a broader perspective.

Reliability

Creswell (2014) states researchers should state the process they will take in their studies to validate the accuracy and credibility of their findings. Gibbs (2007) notes qualitative validity is when the researcher tests for the accuracy of the findings by utilizing certain processes and qualitative reliability means the approach used by the researcher is consistent amongst researcher's projects. Roberts (2010) defines validity as the instrument the researcher uses measures to the degree to which it purported and reliability is the degree the researcher's instrument consistently measures from time to time.

Creswell (2014) emphasizes that terms are numerous in qualitative literature that speak about validity, some of which are trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility. Golafshani (2003) purported that the researcher must look closely at the level of trustworthiness to ensure appropriate reliability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that since validity cannot exist without reliability, a demonstration of the validity is sufficient to establish reliability. Comparatively, Patton (2002) said the ability and skill of any qualitative researcher is where reliability is a consequence of the validity in a study.

Further, Creswell (2014) discusses eight procedures that promote validity. They include activities such as "prolonged engagement and persistent observation; triangulation or

crystallization; peer review and debriefing; negative case analysis; clarification of researcher bias; member checking; rich, thick description; and an external audit" (pp. 201-202). This study confirmed validity and reliability through (a) member checking; (b) peer-debriefing; and (c) rich, thick description.

Member checking. One of the strategies used to ensure the validity of the data was member checking. Once the interview had been transcribed and coded, various sections of the data and interpretations were reviewed with the study participants via telephone including themes, and accuracy in the researcher's understanding was ensured. The researcher made few revisions since the participants stated after reading the transcripts they were confident they were accurate. Creswell and Miller (2000) state researchers should ask participants if the themes or categories connect to what they intended to say, are created with enough evidence, and if the full record is realistic and accurate. As a constructionist, I agree with the idea that the researcher should consider incorporating stakeholder feedback into the interpretations as additional information to strengthen the research (Madill & Sullivan, 2017).

Peer debriefing. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that peer debriefing an examination outside the participant pool that tests the inquiry process. To add to the value and believability of the finds, this study used peer debriefing as a means of acquiring credibility. The researcher coded the data obtained from the participants during interviews and identified all emerging themes. A second analyst who is familiar with the qualitative research as well as coding and labeling was secured and reviewed the labels, also known as themes. The purpose of an independent analyst is not to identify the exact same code names and thematic structure as the researcher. The purpose of an independent analyst is to see if they agree with the data labels and the logical paths taken to arrive at those labels (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004).

The analyst who assisted with the research has a Latino heritage and has worked with college age students in the geographical area of study as a bi-lingual education advisor. The analyst was familiar with the research process and has been involved in other research as a reviewer of data. After a review of excerpts from the data, the analyst identified themes consistent with the labels developed by the researcher. The researcher and the analyst discussed their individual labels and agreed there were no conflicts.

Rich, thick description. Rich, thick descriptions were used to present the findings. The researcher hopes the descriptions will carry the readers of this study to the setting and provide a discussion in a way that they find shared experiences. A researcher who provides a detailed description or offers many perspectives about a theme, the outcome becomes more practical and richer (Creswell, 2014). To enhance the transferability of the study, the researcher provided rich, thick descriptions of the elements in the study and provided exact quotes from the participants that supported the findings. Houghton, Casey, Shaw, and Murphy (2013) state detailed and appropriate descriptions will assist readers in making informed decisions about the applicability of the findings to specific contexts. They continue with the fact that imperative details should include a record of the context and include examples of raw data so other interpretations can be considered (Houghton et al., 2013).

Merriam (2002) states trustworthiness is greatly dependent upon the ethical conduct of research. The researcher must provide safeguards for the participant and for the research. Additionally, the research must be ethically performed because ethical issues can surface at all points of research which dictates the researcher to be sensitive and respond in a way that promotes trustworthiness (Roberts, 2010).

Data Analysis

Creswell (2014) reported that data analysis helps the researcher understand more clearly the text and image data obtained by dissecting each piece (analysis) and then putting it all together again (synthesis). LeCompte (2000) says that analysis, which provides interpretation, requires researchers to first determine how to organize their data and use it to construct a picture of the original phenomenon under study and second, to tell readers what that picture means. The following process was used to analyze the data. Based on Creswell (2014), the analysis of data began while the collection was still occurring. The data were organized for analysis which included transcribing interviews and cataloguing the visual material. While gathering the material, iterative reading occurred and I took time to consider what the participants might have meant with each statement and began classifying them into possible topics.

Next, I began coding the data. Creswell (2014) says coding "involves taking text data or pictures gathered during data collection, segmenting sentences (or paragraphs) or images into categories, and labeling those categories with a term" (p. 198). MicroSoft Excel was used to organize the data. Columns were used to label the codes as the researcher looked for emerging themes. Once themes emerged, the researcher sorted the coded data and assigned umbrella headings for each group and color coded them to ensure all coded data belonged to the appropriate theme. This process was adapted from a system established by Guba and Lincoln (1981).

The adaptation derived from the following method which was titled the index card method. Here, the researcher took bits of information extracted from the interviews and artifacts and placed it onto index cards. The first card will establish the first pile. The second card will be assessed to determine if it is like the information in the first pile or if it will establish a second

pile. As the piles are built, they are given a name that will best represent the information in the pile. The names given must be related to the study. As the analysis continues and new information is obtained, the piles will be assessed and reassessed to ensure that new piles do not need to be established. The process will continue until no new data are found. Then the researcher will be charged with determining how the information relates to the study and what the information means (Merriam, 2000).

The themes that emerged during this study were combined and began to connect. They told the story of the case study participants. Creswell (2014) states the researcher can employ narrative passage to share the findings of the analysis which could be descriptive data about each participant in a table.

The adapted method allowed the researcher to assess the emerging concepts. Roberts (2010) states there is no correct way to code textual data but the method chosen must help those who read the research understand how the data was abridged or reconstructed. The process of indexing notes can also be called categorizing. This is the preferred method by qualitative researchers as it aids in creating a thematic organization framework, unlike quantitative analysis which is categorizing for the purpose of counting (Glesne, 2011).

The triangulation of themes occurred after the first iteration of theme development. Creswell (2014) reports the researcher can

> triangulate different data sources of information by examining evidence from the sources and using it to build a coherent justification for themes. If themes are established based on converging several sources of data or perspectives from participants, then this process can be claimed as adding to the validity of the study. (p. 201)

The researcher again reviewed the artifacts and transcriptions using the established themes to ensure that the ideas and statements of the participants had the same outcome after the second iteration.

Inconsistency during data analysis is a strong possibility. To remove the researcher from bias of data or errors in theme development, a cross check of codes was performed. Creswell (2014) describes cross check as when "two or more coders agree on codes used for the same passages in text" (p. 203).

Subjectivity Statement

Subjectivity or the personal connection of the researcher with the study is important. The researcher thought about how their role in the study and their personal backgrounds, culture and experiences affected the interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2014). This section will describe each of these areas from the researcher's perspective.

There are few things harder to see than the outside bounds of our own perspective or to identify assumptions we think are universal truth (Takacs, 2002). My positionality affects my view of the world and I recognize that I must consider these positions. I am a white, middle-class female with a graduate degree. This position in society is affected by my race, gender, and social class. The findings of this study can only be considered valid by the reader by understanding my positionality while the study took place.

I believe there is no objective truth. To find meaning, it must be constructed through our interactions with the world. I recognize that I have not had life and college experiences in the same way as my participants which will affect my frame of reference. This may cause my perceptions of realities and actions to not be the same as theirs. I worked to ensure the voices of my participants are heard and not mine.

My work in higher education has afforded me experiences with various cultures and given me a greater understanding of how the Latino participants may have meanings constructed from their social world that may be different from mine. With over 20 years in higher education and more than 30 years in education combined, I recognize that the participants have experienced cultural backgrounds, school and college experiences and societal experiences different from my own. I find it important to work toward no bias because of my own background experiences.

I recognize that the participants may not have the same perspective as I so I was determined to hear their voices without interjecting my own. I systematically studied the phenomenon following prescribed steps by past researchers so I did not integrate my own. My prior experiences include 19 years of higher education experience in management positions and an additional 10 years of elementary and secondary teaching experience. While working with elementary and secondary students, I taught multiculturalism courses and served students of varying races/ethnicities. These positions allowed me to gain insight into the lives of students who attended the public institutions and private, career college where I worked which informed this research. Students are affected by their environmental factors regardless of institutional type or social context. I focused on objectivity and allowed the graduates to answer the questions of the study which added to the collection of literature on student college persistence.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an in-depth description of case study research. Further, it identified the theoretical framework that guided the study along with the researcher's epistemological stance and theoretical perspective. The data collection methods of interviews, physical artifact analysis and rich, thick descriptions were explained as well as a complete analysis process in the

development of themes. The researcher's subjectivities and methods of reliability and validity were proclaimed for the reader. The chapter provided a complete description of the research design process citing numerous theorists and researchers.

Chapter 4

Findings

The purpose of the qualitative case study was to explore Latino graduates persisted to graduation at a two-year, private, career college. Employing data from in-depth interviews and physical artifacts from 12 participants, the study presented how Latino men and women wielded their way to toward graduation. Interviewing these men and women and analyzing their stories and artifacts were valuable, leading to themes that described the actions that took place by the student or the institution which created an avenue for the students to graduate with a degree at a two-year, private, career college known as Everyone's College for the purpose of this study. This chapter introduces the participants, presents the findings from the participants' stories and includes a discussion of the themes supporting each of the findings along with a presentation of conversations regarding the physical artifacts collected where applicable.

Breakdown of Participants

This section introduces the 12 Latino male and female graduates who participated in the study. Beginning this section is a summary overview of the participant sample followed by individual summaries that include background information on each participant. The section closes with a narrative of the participants.

The participants. Pseudonyms were used in the study to protect the identities of the participants and the institution. The participants were Jose, Rose, Javier, Angelica, Viktoria, Jaylena, Trinity, Rosetta, Maria, Daniela, Rosa, and Marietta. The ages of the participants ranged from ages 20-32. None of the participants dropped out and restarted. This means these graduates effectively persisted to graduation on time with no interruptions in their education track. Their Latino descent covered several countries with 67% of the participants being born in Mexico.

Other countries represented were Columbia, Spain, Cuba, and Guatemala. Their areas of study were focused in a two-year healthcare specialty, specifically medical, dental, surgical, and pharmacy. All the students were considered full-time students attending classes five days per week. Of the 12 participants, 58% of them worked part-time or full-time jobs while attending school. The participants reported they had family members (67%) who had also attended college with 33% of the family members being immediate family such as father, mother, or sibling. This section continues with individual summaries of each participant.

Jose. Jose is a 23-year-old male with strong verbal and leadership skills. He graduated with a Medical Assisting degree and was very involved on campus with his instructors, classmates, and students outside his discipline. He considers himself an activist. He was affiliated with *United We Dream* and did political work to reinforce immigration reform and spoke to Congress. He was featured on the front page of a local Latino magazine. Jose was born in Mexico and raised in a two-parent home and came to America when he was 11 years old. Neither of his parents went to college. He could not speak the English language and struggled in his pre-college education. He is currently working on a Master's degree in clinical mental health education and wants to be a psychiatric nurse practitioner.

Rose. Rose is a high-spirited 29-year-old female. She graduated with a Dental Assisting degree and was very vocal in her classroom. She married at the age of 19 and had a daughter who she believes is her primary reason for going to college. Rose was born in Mexico and raised in a two-parent home and came to America when she was 3 years old. She speaks English very well and had no trouble communicating to her English-speaking friends during her pre-college years. Both her parents attended college and have degrees. Her father has a business degree and her mother has a computer degree. She has an older sister who is a psychologist, another sister

who is a few months older than her who is in college for childhood education and a younger sister in the Army. Rose is applying to Dental Hygiene school and wants to eventually become a dentist.

Javier. Javier is a reserved, but focused 32-year-old male. He graduated with a Surgical Technology degree. He was very quiet and focused in the classroom. Javier was born in Columbia and moved to America at the age of 5 as he was adopted by a Caucasian mother. Javier was raised in a single parent home by his mother and speaks English very well. After he graduated from high school, he enlisted in the Navy and served 8 years. His mother does not have a degree and has not been to college. He has no siblings and currently lives alone. Javier plans to continue his education in a different field as he is considering Occupational Therapy.

Angelica. Angelica is a mild-mannered 21–year-old female. She graduated with a Dental Assisting degree and describes herself as very shy in the classroom. She did support Latino efforts in her city with the local Latino non-profit organization. Her endeavors took her to Washington, D.C. to promote Latino initiatives. Angelica was born in Mexico and raised in a two-parent home and still struggles some with English while displaying a strong Latino accent. Neither parent has a college education nor any of her four siblings. She did not tell any of her family members she was attending college until after she started classes because she felt she may not be able to graduate and would have been embarrassed to face them. She does hope to continue her education and aspires to become a Dentist.

Viktoria. Viktoria is a pleasant 24-year-old female. She graduated with a Dental Hygiene degree and was a positive influence in all her classes. She was born in Spain and raised in a two-parent home with both parents being in the military. They both have degrees through the military and were currently out of the country. She has one sister 6 years older and one sister 12 years

younger. She was married, but is no longer married and is currently living alone. She plans to pursue her bachelor's degree in Dental Hygiene.

Jaylena. Jaylena is a business driven 23-year-old female. She graduated with a Pharmacy Technician degree. She was born in America and raised in a single home by her father. She has had no difficulties with the English language. Her father nor any of her siblings have a college education. She has one older brother and one older sister and a younger half-sister. She has never been married and has no children of her own. She is currently working in a marketing department for a local business and has plans to return to college to become a Pharmacist.

Trinity. Trinity is a compassionate, but educationally focused 30-year-old female. She graduated with a Medical Assisting degree. She was born in Guatemala and raised in a home with both parents. Neither of her parents have a degree. She came to America at a late age and had not completed high school in her country and received her GED after arriving in America. She arrived at the age of 19 and knew no English. She has a very strong Spanish accent but has learned to successfully speak English. She admits there are some words she still cannot hear in the English language. She does not plan to go further in school, but will maintain her career as a Medical Assistant.

Rosetta. Rosetta is a laid-back, low confidence 23-year-old female. She graduated with a Medical Assisting degree. She was born in Mexico and was raised by her mother. She came to America when she was 3, but still has a strong Spanish speaking accent. She has an older brother and an older sister and a younger sister. Her mother has not been to college. Rosetta is pregnant and lives with her mother. She stated that she was discouraged by her mother and family to attend college, but her boyfriend encouraged her to show them she could be successful and she

did. She is working on becoming a U.S. citizen and will return to college for a Registered Nurse degree.

Maria. Maria is a soft-spoken 22-year-old female. She graduated with a Dental Assisting degree. Maria was born in Mexico and raised by her mother and father. She came to America when she was four and still as a strong Spanish speaking accent. She has one sister who is younger. She is currently not a resident of the United States, but is currently progressing toward citizenship so she can have other opportunities at colleges or universities. She is the only person in her family who has graduated from college. Her sister is now attending college, but Maria started first and led the way for her sister. She wants to continue her education to become a Dental Hygienist.

Daniela. Daniela is reserved and gave careful answers. She is 20-years-old and is from Mexico. She was born in Mexico and was raised by her mother here. Her father continues to live in Mexico to support the family. Daniela worked from 3am until class time most of her time in college and took care of her mother and sister who lived here. Neither parent had a college education, and she was the first to attend. She does plan to continue her education but stated she did not know which field she would study next.

Rosa. Rosa is a soft-spoken 20-year-old female. She graduated with a Medical Assisting degree. She was born in Mexico and raised by her mother and father. She was brought here at the age of three and continues to have a strong Spanish speaking accent. She has one sister and five brothers and reports she lives in a small house with eight people. Her parents supported her attending college and she wanted to attend the local community college, but had difficulties with financial aid and decided to attend elsewhere. No other immediate family members have gone to

college and prefer to work. She plans to continue her education and become a Registered Nurse after achieving citizenship.

Marietta. Marietta is a very confident, well-spoken 23-year-old female. She graduated with a Dental Hygiene degree. She was born in Mexico and raised by both parents. She has three sisters and one brother and two children of her own. None of her other siblings have been to college. She was brought to America at the age of 13 and still has difficulty with some of the English words. She fears public speaking in class because she begins mixing her English and Spanish. She is angry that the general public does not hold her hard work at a career college as rigorous as other colleges. She informs them that she takes the same board as the hygienist with the bachelor's degree. She plans to continue her education with a bachelor's degree and then work towards becoming a Physician's Assistant. Table 1 provides a summary of the participants.

Table 1

Participant Information

Participant	Age	Major	Enrollment Status	Employment Status	After Graduation Goals	Parent College Education
Jose	22	Medical Assisting	Full-time	Not employed	Psychiatric Nurse	Father-none Mother-none
Rose	29	Dental Assisting	Full-time	Full-time	Dental Hygienist	Father-yes Mother-yes
Javier	32	Surgical Technology	Full-time	Full-time	Occupational Therapy	Mother-no
Angelica	21	Dental Assisting	Full-time	Not employed	Dentist	Father-none Mother-none
Viktoria	24	Dental Hygiene	Full-time	Not employed	Dental Hygiene	Father-none Mother-none
Jaylena	23	Pharmacy Technician	Full-time	Part-time	Pharmacist	Father-none
Trinity	30	Medical Assisting	Full-time	Part-time	Continue in Medical Assisting	Father-none Mother-none
Rosetta	23	Medical Assisting	Full-time	Part-time	Registered Nurse	Mother-none

Table 1

Participant	Age	Major	Enrollment Status	Employment Status	After Graduation Goals	Parent College Education
Maria	22	Dental Assisting	Full-time	Not employed	Dental Hygienist	Father-none Mother-none
Daniela	20	Medical Assisting	Full-time	Full-time	Continue-Undeclared	Father-none Mother-none
Rosa	23	Medical Assisting	Full-time	Full-time	Registered Nurse	Father-none Mother-none
Marietta	23	Dental Hygiene	Full-time	Not employed	Physician Assistant	Father-none Mother-none

Narrative Summary of the Participants

The narrative summaries present the participants and their age, various educational backgrounds, family characteristics, and some of their pre-college experiences. Although they have differentiating characteristics that helped shape who they are, they all have a similarity in ethnicity and in graduating from a two-year, private career college. During the interviews, all of the participants shared that education was important to them, but for different reasons, which is what motivated them to persist. Four of the participants found support beyond their parents to attend college. The parents felt college was not attainable for various reasons or found no benefit in the participant attending. The participant found encouragement through others such as cousins, teachers, or boyfriends. Many of them were either the first or the only family member to attend college. They recognized a benefit from education on their own and pursued their dream. Only one of 12 participants expressed a desire to remain in her current position and no longer pursue education. All of the participants stated that their educational process provided a foundation to increase their personal and professional confidence.

Introduction of Themes

The themes that emerged in this study related closely to the Comprehensive Model of Influences on Student Learning and Persistence model developed by Terenzini and Reason (2005). The model was developed to address a more comprehensive approach toward persistence since other models were more restricted in their focus. Four constructs exist in the model that affect student outcomes which are: precollege characteristics and experiences, the organizational context, the student peer environment, and the individual student experience (Terenzini & Reason, 2005). Each theme and its subsequent discussion will provide a deeper understanding of the forces at work with Latino college student persistence. Those forces reside in multiple environments for each of the students and the students had reactions to those environments that were both different and similar.

During the development of themes, I continued to explore how the Latino graduates I interviewed persisted to graduation which provided more depth to the understanding about Latino college student persistence. To better depict the participants' beliefs about their reasons for persistence, it was necessary to utilize direct quotations from the interviews and critically analyze their descriptions of the physical artifacts. These practices helped me to interpret the data which in turn strengthened the research.

The first segment of the findings supports the first research question, "How do college experiences affect Latino persistence to graduation?" and three of Terenzini and Reason's (2005) constructs, "organizational context", "peer environment" and "individual student experiences". While analyzing the interviews of the 12 participants, four themes emerged related to the research question about college experiences.

- Theme 1: Campus Influences

- Theme 2: Out of Class Experiences

- Theme 3: Curricular Experiences

- Theme 4: Teachers' Influences

The first four themes were titled as such because they best described the data gathered and responded to the first research question. The first theme, "Campus influences", depicts how the organizational context (type of institution) and the peer environment affected the persistence of these Latinos. The remaining themes showed how individual student experiences were important to understanding how these 12 Latino participants persisted in a two-year, private career college. Table 2 presents a layout of the themes related to the first research question.

Table 2

First Research Question – Themes

Theme	Sub-categories	Data Collection Method
Campus Influences	Institutional Type Admission's Criteria Classroom Engagement	Semi-structured interviews
Out of Class Experiences	None	Semi-structured interviews; artifacts
Curricular Experiences	None	Semi-structured interviews; artifacts
Teacher Influences	None	Semi-structured interviews; artifacts

The second segment of the findings supports the second research question, "How do cultural factors promote or hinder Latino college persistence?" and one of Terenzini and Reason's (2005) constructs, "student pre-college characteristics and experiences". While analyzing the interviews of the 12 participants, two themes emerged related to the research question about college experiences.

- Theme 5: Influential People

- Theme 6: Pre-college preparation

The two themes were labeled as such because they corresponded to the data gathered and responded to the second research question. The first theme, "Influential People", represents how individuals in the families of these Latino graduates affected their college persistence. Closely related is the second theme, "pre-college preparation" which discusses various situations the participants experienced which shaped their actions of persistence in college. Table 3 presents a layout of the themes related to the second research question.

Table 3

Second Research Question – Themes

Theme	Sub-categories	Data Collection Method
Influential People	None	Semi-structured interviews, artifacts
Pre-college Preparation	None	Semi-structured interviews, artifacts

Theme 1: Campus Influences

The first theme relates to how other people's perceptions of the participants' college affected their desires and motivations to persist. The participants recognized the various perceptions regarding their attendance at a two-year career college and dismissed those perceptions without letting them hinder their decisions to persist. Three of the participants chose the two-year, private, career college due to its admissions criteria. All of the participants believed that their level of classroom engagement promoted their success toward persistence. The following information supports these beliefs and is categorized in the same way as described above.

Institution type. Whether an institution is public or private and the additional factor of being a career college presented perceptions that the participants had to face during the college

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enrollment. The data revealed that the participants developed their own beliefs about the two-year, private, career college they attended and moved beyond the perceptions of others. Viktoria said she faces the constant question of why she didn't get a bachelor's degree in her field. She stated that she is getting one now, but needed to start here. Marietta, like Viktoria, faces conflict in the community. She has developed a sense of pride regarding her attendance of a career college and reports she tells the nay-sayers, "People see it like a lower standard but they don't understand that we had to take the same board exams as the bachelor students and I tell them that…..then they stop talking." These two participants found that their circles of influence were degrading their education which bothered them even though they found ways to overcome the comments. The influencers were not strong enough to cause them to not persist.

Viktoria told the following:

> Now that I'm a dental hygienist, I go for job interviews. It gets frustrating because some of the dental offices tell me that I should have graduated from [XXX university] with a bachelor's degree instead of a two-year college. I smile and tell them that I am confident I have the appropriate knowledge for the job because I took the same board exam as the bachelor's degree graduates. One office did give me a chance and once I began working, the dentist came back to say that he apologized because my skills were stronger than his hygienist from the [XXX university]. I was happy to hear that, but still wanted to get my bachelor's degree as a personal goal. I love college and Everyone's College was a great place for me to start, for the most part, my career.

Marietta's story was:

> Yeah, well, I hear some people talk about Everyone's College and how it was a waste of money and I should have gotten a bachelor's degree, but I just let them know that I took

the same board as the bachelor's degree graduate and actually, the State Board

organization chose Everyone's College as the primary location for the exam. What I

thought was funny was that the graduates of [XXX University] had to come to my

college to take their board exam because our facilities were better and we had more

working equipment. I am proud of my degree from Everyone's College and am working

in my field making the same money as the bachelor's degree people and got my career

going sooner.

On the other hand, Jaylena was not concerned about the perceptions of others regarding

her career college education. She stated, "It was one of the best schools helping you to learn,

they're really awesome." She went on to say that, "No one really cared if I went to a community

college or a university versus a career college."

Jaylena: Yeah, I hear stuff but I just ignore ignorant people. How can they talk about my

college when they don't know it was hard too, but they really helped us. I got a lot of one

on one attention and stuff. My family didn't care….like they were OK with wherever I

went. I did the research on schools and found that this one was the best for me at the

time. I might go to a different school later like a university or something or I might come

back here for another degree. It's a good school, yeah, it's a great school.

Like Jaylena, Daniela and Rose both found a benefit in attending a career college.

Daniela said, "[It] means a lot….it was a short journey and I learned a lot." Rose said, "It

facilitated my schedule and it was more like an adult environment. I didn't want to go to class

with a bunch of high school graduates." Although these two refuted other's beliefs about a career

college, the findings show they were satisfied with this institutional type. Additionally, one of

them had reservations about attending the community college because she believed her classes

would be all high school graduates and she preferred to learn with adult learners. Daniela explained her feelings this way:

> When I decided to go to school, college, I mean, I looked at different schools in the area. I had heard from other people that Everyone's College was a good college, so I was fine with going there. I also knew some people who had graduated from there. I did hear that it was hard because it moved so fast, but people said that there were a lot of people there to help you learn the skills and the classroom things. When I graduated I couldn't believe I was done already. I learned so much in a short time. I would recommend this college to anyone. They really care about you.

Rose said:

> Yes, I thought about the kind of college I was going to. I talked to a lot of people before going because, you know, it was not known well, but I heard that it was a good school and that they would help you get a job. I had been out of school for a long time and I felt bad about going back but I had to go back so I didn't want to go to a community college. I think this school had more grown-ups and I would be able to find people my own age to help me.

Javier and Angelica related what they heard about career colleges to financial deficiencies. Angelica stated, "I was always told it was too expensive, but I didn't care because I was finishing in two years." Javier said, "I was told you can't get a good paying job with just an associate degree" and he told them, "there are some two-year degree programs that pay pretty good." These participants related the two-year, private, career college stigma to finances with one discussing tuition and the other salary after completion. Angelica said:

When I decided to go to college, I found Everyone's College in my research and it looked like it would be a good school. I talked to several people about the school like friends and family. Some of them said it was very expensive. I worried that I could not go and wanted to but I didn't have the money myself to go..I just couldn't pay. One of my friends went there and told me that it was a really great school and I should go. Don't let people hold you back cause of money. My dad knew I really wanted to go there and he worked hard to get me the money to go. He wanted me to get in a career soon and this was fast so if he was OK with the money I was. Really, I was finish early.

Javier explained his conversation with others this way:

Some of my friends would rag me and say that I couldn't have good money with this degree and that I needed to get a higher degree. They really didn't talk about that it was a career college but that the degree would not make me a good salary. That made me worried at first and I almost went to a community college in another state but I was not guaranteed to get in for enrollment. So when I talked to people at Everyone's College I learned that there was a course starting soon. I researched the salaries and found that I would have the ability to make a salary that would be great for me. I was surprised. When my friends found out after I graduated what I made, they were all like that ain't fair, man, I won't make that much when I finish with my bachelor's degree.

All the participants created perceptions that validated their choice to attend a career college. They found value in attending for reasons such as financial, convenience, length of study, and curricular rigor. Jose was the most vocal and truly supported the aspects of the institutional type. His exposition is as follows:

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To me, since I had already gotten exposure to college, like being educated in the education atmosphere and curriculum, I would say [the career college] is breaking down barriers. I would say that they're not help, there are more supporters, more counseling and more ethical research done to help undocumented students and to help Latinos in general. So I would say schools now and then have a little bit of understanding so I realize there are probably institutions, [like career colleges] be able to manage their money and manage their budget so they can help more students…..more than public institutions [do]. Public institutions, I would say...they're still [a] blind [blank] folder in terms of helping students because if they [the students] don't meet the criteria and that means on the residency status, then we charge them out of state tuition. [A career college] has more awareness of what it's like and not just Latino, in any culture, I feel like they have more tools and more skills to help students. It was freedom, it was a liberty of expression, it was a liberty of open your mind, of course, be conscious of what you say.

Jose seemingly believes that public institutions are not equipped to address all the needs of Latino students. He has experienced public institutions prior to the career college and found his needs were more closely met at the career college. Like all the others, he has identified specific aspects of the career college that fit his current situation. One such characteristic was the admissions criteria.

Admissions criteria. The admissions criteria used at the career college the participants attended seemed to meet the needs of three of the participants. They discussed the times classes were offered, citizen status and the language barrier. Trinity wanted to start earlier than other institutions in the area would allow and her academic choice offered program starts on a monthly basis. Trinity said, "Because they said I could start in May and then going in June and

July while kids were out of school [was good] so I didn't have to worry about homework." This start schedule helped Trinity become accustom to being in school and to become more settled once her children started back in the fall. Many students rely on school schedules to accommodate their required family responsibilities. Trinity's full story was:

> I really needed to get back in school and get a career. I heard about this college from other people and went to find out more. I have three children and they are all in school, you know, and I have to be able to take care of them and help them with homework and things so I was looking for a college that would be good for my kids schedule. When I was told that my program was starting in summer I was not really sure because I wanted to spend time with my kids but they wanted me to start school then I started thinking if I start now in summer then I will have time to learn the school and not think about helping kids with homework. It was good time for me.

Rosetta and Maria felt happy to get started on a career prior to becoming a citizen. They shared that they were interested in attending a university, but could not because of their current status. Rosetta remarked, "Cause I wasn't born here, I don't have same privileges as going to university." Maria supported this statement by saying, "Since I graduated from high school I couldn't go to a university because [I was] not resident of US." Both of these girls wanted to find a career in healthcare, so once that was decided, they looked for enrollment options. Based on their knowledge, they were not allowed to attend the local university. Rosetta's full account was:

> You know, I have been here for a long time, since I was 3 but I have no citizen. I want to be in medical but I found from Latino organization that I was not able to go to university in medical because I was no citizen. I was sad about that and want good for myself to

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learn medical and get career not no like job, I can go get like job somewhere but I want, you know, career for me to grow, to learn, to be better. I have to work now but I no like job and want somethin' like medical, you know, career that's why Everyone's College was good school for me right now.

Maria said:

Well in my last high school year I was starting to look at university for school. I went to visit and many people tell me that I am not resident so…..what does so mean…..I was told that I cannot go because I am not resident. This make me a little, you know, sad cause I been here for so long and no one told me but I didn't give up, I wanted a career, you know, so I talk to people and learn that Everyone's College did not think resident for me but that I could go to school if I wanted. I find good program in medical and I was able to go. I loved my college because I could get a career, you know, it was a good school.

While Rosetta and Maria found benefit in the admissions criteria of the career college, Rosa worried about other Latinos who wanted to attend but could not pass the English portion of the entrance exam. She stated that many others she knew would have to learn English to be able to pass the test at the career college to get in. She was sad about that. Rosa said:

I was happy to get to school and not be, you know, citizen but I know many friends who want to go but not know English. I mean they try to take test to get in school but they can't read English and fail test. They do speak English but they don't know much and don't know how to read so they are going for, you know, English classes so can read better then come back to take test for Everyone's College. I am hoping they come and

can pass test cause this is good school for you know people not citizen so they can get career.

The participants have relayed that their choice in attending a career college over another type of institution was a choice which did affect their persistence. The fact they attended a two-year, private career college did not prevent them from moving toward their goal of degree attainment. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) offered the idea that the impact of institutional selection influences student persistence more than the pre-college academic preparation they achieve. To further explore this idea, a suggested explanation for this phenomenon is the influence of peer environments (Terenzini & Reason, 2005). The participants speak of their peer environments while engaging in the classroom

Classroom engagement. The student peer environments promoted participation and eight of the participants shared their desire to take part in classroom activities with their peers. Viktoria stated she felt comfortable speaking up in class which helped her understand the material. She described this action assisted her in being prepared for the workforce. She said:

> I am very comfortable speaking up in class. I study the material at home and when I am in class I know the answers so I speak up when I can. The projects we do with our classmates are fun and help us learn. They are hard though. We have to follow APA style when writing our reports and my high school never told us about that. The teachers discussed collaborative learning and how us working together will help us with words and skills that we might not learn in her lecture. She was right. I learned a lot from my peers. I also learned that not all students were easy to work with. Some tried to do everything and we would have to tell them that this is a group project. This was good for me so when I get a job and work on a team I am able to work with different people.

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Jaylena shared how she felt special because of how her peers described her. Her story was, "Presentations, projects, powerpoints, I did because I was learning [and] I felt empowered that I was becoming more knowledgeable about[the] field so I always raised my hand and I had all the answers. [smiling] They [peers] called me the teacher's pet". Jaylena's full story was rich with her growth of self-confidence:

I didn't mind that they called me teacher's pet, you know, cause I was so happy to be learning so many things. I was always happy in class and felt good about myself. I didn't ever feel like that before. When I was in high school, I was quiet and not very smart. I didn't think I could learn so much. Whenever we had groups at college, I always volunteered to do the most on the project. I loved to create things. I created on poster boards, on computer and I was beginning to learn the words in my field and was able to explain things in a smart way about my career. I studied hard and was always ready for class every day.

Marietta said, "I studied and knew the answers, so why not participate." Marietta continued her story with:

When I decided to go to school, I was serious, you know, like no matter what people thought I was going to learn because it meant a lot to me. I find that my friends were nice and we spent a lot of time together. So that was OK and when I was in class I knew I had studied and I read the book so I knew the answers so I was going to participate. Also I worked on projects and things with my friends. We made skeleton models and learned all the parts of the skeleton and that was a lot I mean not just the bones but all the muscles connected to the bones. I helped

my friends write a song to sing that helped the class name all the bones of the

body. It was really fun you know. I had fun with my friends.

Trinity used her peer environment as a source of resilience and motivation to participate. She said, "I was the only one in class, Latino, so I'm very quiet and feel like other people think I might not be smart, so I wanted to prove others that yes….I'm from another country and I want to be successful….what you guys have from beginning is great…I wanted to show them all I could do it to." Further, Trinity said:

> When I started classes at Everyone's College I didn't see much Latinos you know
>
> like I was scared but the classmates were all different and we, you know, got
>
> along. They were nice to me. I think they thought I was not smart because I didn't
>
> speak good English and cause I'm Latino I not smart but I was smart. I don't like
>
> to speak up in class but I want to be successful in America you know so I find in
>
> my heart strength to speak up and I did good. My classmates were like, that was
>
> good Trinity. I was happy cause I started from you know a hard place when I got
>
> here and I am doing good. I wanted them to see I am doing good and can do good
>
> in another country.

Rosetta echoed Trinity's desires to stand out amongst her peers. Rosetta said, "I was a lamplighter [student club leader] because I always wanted to be something when I was in college. I graduated with a 4.0." Rosetta commented:

> I always loved to be involved and the lamplighter was a good thing for me. I was
>
> able to help other students on campus. Sometimes I helped them with learning and
>
> other times I helped them with finding offices on campus. I had other lamplighter
>
> friends and we all had a good time together. We were like recognized on campus.

Even one time we escorted the head of a hospital in the city to the recognition event we were having and got to sit at the table with him for lunch. I participated a whole lot with my friends and still got a good grade when I graduated. The club was a lot of work but because I was with my friends I had fun and it was great. As a lamplighter I was able to assist my other classmates in class with lessons. That was a good feeling.

Rosa, Maria, Daniela all enjoyed participating in front of their peers. They each described having fun working with their peers on projects with comments like, "Working with people have helped me not be shy," "I really liked doing the labs with my classmates," and "Practicing [skills] and talking [with friends] was fun so I got up and did it more." These three participants have exciting stories. Rosa said:

I have always been a shy girl since I was in elementary school. So when I started Everyone's College I was the same way in class. Then my teacher got me involved in some group projects and I had to participate. It was hard at first. My classmates were really great. We had a good class. When I got to my second semester we had labs and had to learn blood pressures on each other. This was really good to help me not be shy. I had to introduce myself as the professional to a pretend patient. The labs were my favorite.

Maria said:

We had a lot of lab classes. I really enjoyed working with my classmates. We like set up a doctor's office in the lab and ran it like it was like real. We did so many things together. Everyone had problems with some skill so that made it easier for

me cause I was not scared to do things cause we all make mistakes. It was so fun

to do those skills in labs. We learned a lot.

Daniela said:

I am a shy person but with the labs it was fun. We got to do things about our

lessons on each other…..for practice….you know. I like doing things with my

hands and like to create things. I was able to work with my hands a lot and my

friends and I worked together in the stations. There were four of us in each station

and we had different roles to do. Every week we changed partners but that was

OK cause I like my class. My classmates were nice to me and always tried to help

me when I didn't understand.

The participants presented expressions of satisfaction when they engaged in class. Astin

(1993) conducted a study about student outcomes and how they were influenced by students'

peer environments. Kuh et al. (2005) found that normal levels of engagement in education

activities positively impact student outcomes. Each of these studies is supported by the fact that

the participants continually engaged in classroom activities and felt a sense of pride or enjoyment

in the participation. Table 4 below represents those who considered institutional type or

admissions' criteria before attending or while attending the career college. It also shows those

who engaged with their peers which promoted their desire to persist. There will be overlap in the

totals beyond the 12 participants because some of the participants considered two or more

categories.

No artifacts were presented to support this theme. Some students discussed physical

documents that they created during their classroom engagement, but none of those artifacts were

presented. Some of the students had moved and lost them. Other students said they did not keep them due to having a large family and no place to store them.

Table 4

Campus Influences

Participant	Institutional Type	Admissions Criteria	Classroom Engagement
Jose	X		
Rose	X		
Javier	X		
Angelica	X		
Viktoria	X		X
Jaylena	X		X
Trinity		X	X
Rosetta		X	X
Maria	X	X	X
Daniela	X		X
Rosa		X	X
Marietta			X
Total	**8**	**4**	**8**

Theme 2: Out of Class Experiences

The second theme relates to the activities that students enjoy outside of the classroom. Some participants took part in events off campus, while others participated in events on campus. The participants felt comfortable at gatherings and described their need to be together in order to be successful. One participant described in detail the multiple activities in which he participated. Seven participants shared their similar activities while on campus. Although these last five participants found no need to participate in any out of class activities, they supported that being involved in out of class activities is productive. The following information presents the stories of the participants and is recounted in the same way as described above.

Jose becomes excited when describing his out of class experiences. He feels these experiences provide him opportunities to help others which are a vital aspect of his nature. Jose is a very involved student and loves to learn new things. His story begins with,

The activities were productive. I feel like I belonged to a family. The school tried to create a healthy positive environment for students [which involved] activities to encourage students. We did college fairs and job fairs to provide resources for students. We did health fairs where we went to a church and did blood pressures, respiration, pulse, educating patients about health like how to be more healthy. We did several study groups and I was like organizing some of the groups before taking tests so I was pretty involved in study group sessions. If other [majors] asked us to help with blood drives, I would do that.

Jose was proud of his amount of participation and looked for opportunities to help others and be involved outside of the classroom.

Jaylena, Rosetta, Maria, Daniela, Rosa, and Marietta all gave examples of having study group sessions at various places. Sometimes they went to lunch and studied during lunch. Other times they gathered somewhere on campus. Comments such as "I met a lot of friends, we studied together" proved to be a positive impact toward persistence.

Jaylena said:

Sometimes we would sit in the hallways and study together. There were tables, you know, outside our classrooms for us to sit at. We would do things like ask each other questions to practice for the test. Sometimes I would read and ask my friends to help me understand some of the words in the book. We would bring our teeth models out and talk about how they looked and try to identify the parts for a quiz that we have soon. I would

go to lunch with them sometimes and we would not have long because the break times were not very long and we would study while we walked there and while we ate.

Rosetta shared she is still friends with those she met in college. Further, she discussed how she felt during study sessions:

I was always working with my friends on learning the material. We would make flash cards and help each other study and sometimes I would just study them by myself. We had those concrete picnic tables outside our classroom and six of us would always sit there on breaks and study for the test we were going to have when we went back in. I learned so much studying with my friends because they would make me think when we talked about the words that we had to learn.

Maria and Rosa talked about the "amount of work" they put into school by meeting at "breaks" and "after class in the hallways" to study. Maria talked about how she spent time studying like this:

I would be at school at 6 o'clock every morning and sit in the main hallway at the student tables. That would be a quiet time for me to study. Later my friends came in one by one and joined me and we began to study together. Test days were the worst because we had so much to review and all of us would study, study, study. It was hard for me so every break time friends would go to the little store down the hallway for me and get my snack while I studied. I didn't spend time talking and stuff but I did talk to my friends when we went over the notes.

Rosa said:

We walked next door to one of the fast food places and would talk about class along the way. This really helped me because it was hard for me to get use to the medical terms in

English. When I talk about them to my friends I learned them more. At the fast food

place we would get our lunch and then go over our flash cards. There was four of us and

we stayed together all thru school. They were good friends to me because they were so

helping me to get through. They said they would not let me fail. I was happy for that.

Also, we would sit in floor outside our classroom and try to remember what the teacher

just told us and what she was talking about. I studied a lot and tried to do my best. I did

and I graduated.

The participant stories support that areas for study on campus are important to students.

They provide a way for students to gain confidence about their coursework by working with

others. Additionally, the students learn new study habits from their friends and gain self

confidence amongst peers.

Five students chose to not participate in any out of class activities while attending

college. They did make friends and some of them ate lunch with classmates but stated they did

not study together. Even though they did not study together, they expressed that out of class

experiences with classmates could be beneficial. Javier explained it this way:

Mainly, I just studied and it was just circumstantial because you know, everybody, the

students, you get a lot of them that are already married, have families, have other jobs, so

they kinda have their own personal life between that and kinda just has their own things

goin on so I didn't every spend time with them. In certain circumstances, it could be

helpful to study with my classmates, though.

Rose shared some fun experiences with her school friends that were not school related or

school supported. She believed that studying together could be good but she chose not to do

school related activities with her classmates. She said:

Yes, I made some good friends at Everyone's College but we did not do school activities together. We really just both had daughters and made playdates with each other so the kids could play together. We would go to like the park or a place to eat that had a slide and other things for them to play on. Actually we are going camping soon and we are excited about that. The whole family is going with this other family and we have been talking about this and we are finally going to do it now. The girls are so excited. But I do think that it would be a benefit for classmates to study together or do events at school together. I just never did that.

Angelica shared her out of class experiences this way:

We just like ate together sometimes well almost every day. There were places to eat by the school. I did not participate in any school activities because when I was not at school I just went home and studied and took care of my daughter. It is good for students to do that because they get more learning by discussing things with others. Also it is good to talk to others from other programs because we can help each other out with personal situations you know.

Viktoria said:

I made a few great friends at Everyone's College. We never did any of the school activities together, but we did go get coffee a lot. We mostly talked about our personal lives and our children and what we were going to do after graduation. It was nice to just not think about school sometimes and just spend time to clear our minds. Sometimes we would see our teachers at the place we went to eat and we might eat with her, but we did not discuss school. She was nice. She just joined in like a friend. That is what made her so great.

Trinity said:

> I had a lot to do at home with my family so I did not do many things out of class. I wish I
>
> could have but I had to go home and help my Mom. Also, during break times, I would get
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> something to eat and then do my homework by myself because I work better by myself. I
>
> did make some friends and we would do things maybe once a month, but I could not
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> spend much time with friends. I was just trying to get finished and do my work and go
>
> home and take care of my family.

Table 5 presents those participants who participated in as many activities as they could [extreme participation], those who participated when necessary for testing, and those who did not participate at all.

Table 5

Out of Class Experiences

Participant	Extreme Participation	Routine Participation	No Participation
Jose	X		
Rose			X
Javier			X
Angelica			X
Viktoria			X
Jaylena		X	
Trinity			X
Rosetta		X	
Maria		X	
Daniela		X	
Rosa		X	
Marietta		X	
Total	**1**	**6**	**5**

Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) offered a vast amount of research showing positive relationships between out-of-class engagement and persistence. The participants found great importance in studying and preparing for class. Astin (1993) stated that the academic

engagement of students with an institution in the way of study and preparation is strongly related to persistence to graduation. While not all the participants took part in out of class experiences, this college experience theme is supported by the fact that 100% of the participants stated those experiences were important.

Two of the students, Angelica and Marietta, presented pictures of study group sessions as physical artifacts. They each gleamed as they described what was going on during that study session. They shared how much they appreciated the help from their non-Latino friends who assisted them in understanding the curriculum. This speaks to the importance of out of class academic activities that support learning.

Theme 3: Curricular Experiences

The third theme focuses on the curricular experiences, specifically the choice of major each participant selected. The research relating to the curricular experiences of college students purports that the choice of major promotes persistence to graduation along with First Year Seminars (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The participants who attended the two-year, private, career college in the study did not discuss First Year Seminars (study skills and strategies) as a formal program the college offered. However, the entire college consisted of programs in the STEM fields of Science and Technology (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) which is another finding of research that promotes persistence to graduation (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The following describes the beliefs of the participants about their curricular experiences.

Each participant discussed their purpose for choosing their selected major. Viktoria had a degree in social work prior to attending Everyone's College. Due to a frightening event in her

former career, she decided to become a dental hygienist and said once she was committed to the major, she was not stopping. She said:

> I was a social worker and really enjoyed my work then I had a scary like frightening event and I had to leave that job and really left that field. I had to do something safer where I didn't have to work by myself. When I researched the fields I might be interested in I saw that Everyone's College offered dental hygiene. I could have gone to the university for dental hygiene but this program started first and I wasn't sure if I would get accepted in the one at the university. Once I got accepted at Everyone's College I knew that was what I wanted to do. Once I decided that was going to be my field I went all in and I was committed to finishing.

Like Viktoria, Jaylena attended cosmetology school prior to Everyone's College, but never completed. She left that college and enrolled into Everyone's College. Once she made the choice to be a Pharmacy Technician, she stated she was "going to do it" and persisted to graduation with no interruptions. Jaylena's story is:

> You know, I just have my dad and he needed my help. I was tired of working at gas stations and like a pizza place so I needed to get like a career. I didn't know what I wanted to do but I had friends who had gone to Everyone's College so I went to talk to someone about a career. I had been to cosmetology school and I just quit. That was not what I wanted to do. After talking to someone at Everyone's College, I found I was most interested in the pharmacy technician program. It was a good choice for me. Once I got started, I realized I made the right decision for my life and then I was going to make sure I finished.

Trinity had never enrolled in college before but wanted to be a Registered Nurse. Due to personal factors that kept her from her first choice at a university, she chose to become a Medical Assistant at the career college. She talked about the fact that this track moved her closer to her desire for Nursing which caused her to persist to graduation.

> After I graduated from high school, I really wanted to be a Nurse. I could not go to Nursing school because of some personal situation at home. I was really sad that I could not have my dream. I was sitting at home and saw a commercial on TV on Everyone's College and saw that they had medical. I went to talk to them to see if there was something I could do. After talking to the admissions I signed up for Medical Assisting. This was not Nursing but I would be happy because I could do that until I got my situation at home fixed and then I would try for Nursing.

Rosetta and Jose experienced the same 'push back' as Trinity in that they could not begin their career aspirations as a Registered Nurse so they began their careers as Medical Assistants and persisted with no interruptions. Rosetta tells her story like this:

> I had to go to Colorado after graduation and I stayed there for a while and worked. After coming back from Colorado I decided to go to college and wanted to study RN. I have a work permit and that lets me work in America so I thought I could work in any field. I went to Everyone's College to talk to admissions and they told me that I could not go to RN because of my citizen status. I chose medical assisting because it would be a good start for me even to after then go to LPN before RN. But I really want to be RN and I am not giving up on being an RN.

The remaining participants Javier, Rose, Angelica, Maria, Daniela, Rosa, and Marietta, all chose their fields of study as their first degree choice and persisted to graduation. Their choice

of major was important to them as they had researched the area of study and were students who knew they had to get a career. Javier was especially vocal about why he persisted to graduation. He stated:

> Nothing at Everyone's College motivated me to not drop out…..once I committed, I knew I was going to be committed. I was [emphatically] going to be a surgical technician".

Rose said:

> I was always interested in dental and was happy that I passed my test to get into school at Everyone's College. It was the dental assisting program, you know, where we assist the dentist and make molds and crowns and things like that. We can't clean teeth though. That is a higher level. Once I passed my test and got in to school, I was not going to let anything stop me. I needed that for my daughter.

Angelica shared this:

> I was finishing high school and I started thinking about what I wanted to do as a career. I liked pretty teeth and was interested in medical so I thought about that. I asked around to my friends and family and asked what they thought I should do. They said to make sure that I researched the school. They did not know much else. I saw Everyone's College on a commercial and decided to look at it on the internet. I saw that it was a good school so I went to talk to someone and the process was short. I was in starting in school real fast.

Maria said:

> I wanted to start college as soon as I graduated from high school but I could not. It took me three years to raise the money so I started later than I wanted to but I always wanted to be a dental assistant. I like working with people and I like dentistry. I thought that

since I was in high school. It was a good career for me. Since it took me so long to raise the money to start school and Everyone's College had a fast-paced program, I was definitely going to finish on time. I couldn't get myself behind again.

Daniela said:

I knew in high school that I wanted to go to medical assisting. I had a friend who was already doing that and she like inspired me and said that you learn to work in so many different places. So right after high school I went to Everyone's College and found out that I could start the next week after I passed the test to get in. I passed the test and everything went so fast and smooth. I wanted to get in the medical field fast too so I was not going to let anything stop me.

Rosa told her story like this:

Right after high school I wanted to start school. I don't lie to you that I started to try community college first, but it was like a lot of problems to get in. I needed to start quick and get a career quick. I couldn't do that so I found Everyone's College. I was not able to go to RN like I wanted so I learned about medical assisting at Everyone's College. This worked for me. The program was quick. I could see the end so I worked hard and finished the first time. I did not stop.

Marietta said:

I got a divorce and I needed something better for my kids and I needed to make a good salary. I liked dental so I looked at two programs. They were dental assisting and dental hygiene. When I took the test to get into school I made high enough to take the second, harder test for the dental hygiene program. That was the highest level and I wanted that

one. I passed and started that program. It was hard and we worked very hard every day but because of my kids I was not going to give up.

The choices by the participants with the curricular experiences seemed to promote their persistence to graduation. Each was proud of their degree field and many participants plan to pursue the next level in that same discipline. The finding that all the participants persisted in their original choice of degree supports the research that curricular experiences have a strong relationship to persistence. Table 6 represents the participants who have attended other colleges or universities prior to attending Everyone's College.

Table 6

Curricular Experiences

Participant	Prior College	No Prior College
Jose		X
Rose		X
Javier		X
Angelica		X
Viktoria	X	
Jaylena	X	
Trinity		X
Rosetta		X
Maria		X
Daniela		X
Rosa		X
Marietta		X
Total	**2**	**10**

Braxton and Lee (2005) find that when a student initially commits to the academic program at an institution, they have greater levels of persistence to graduation, thus, meeting their goal. All the participants related their choice of major to a personal goal and that major was helping them get there. Additionally, self-determination, like that found in Javier, played a role in many of the participants' decisions to persist. Ryan and Deci (2000) stated that self-

determination was an internal psychological need that promotes motivation to achieve positive

outcomes.

As students presented their artifacts and described them during the interviews, all of them

held in high regard their college diplomas validating graduation from their desired program.

They talked about how they were "happy" to show others in their family, as well as, other

influencers of their education the document. Some of the students kept them in private places to

ensure protection of the document. Others had them hanging on walls in the family rooms. Two

of them had their diplomas under a clear, protective kitchen table cover for display. They

described the dinner meal enjoyed conversations about their great accomplishment on many

occasions.

Theme 4: Teachers' Influences

The fourth theme relates to the perception a student has of their teacher and to the

relationship between that student and their teacher. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) presented

background information supporting the relationship between the outcomes of a student and the

pedagogical practices and characteristics of the instructor. They explain the relationship further

by stating instructor preparation is a means of showing organization which is important to the

student just as clarity, availability and helpfulness with quality and frequency in their feedback.

The participants in this study gave rich descriptions of their experiences with their teachers.

Eight of the participants had positive relationships with one or all of their instructors. Four

participants had positive and negative experiences with their instructors.

The participants varied in their responses regarding teacher influences. The central belief

was that the positive experiences were based on teachers whom they believed to be caring, while

the negative experiences were based on their beliefs that the teacher was degrading, judgmental,

or distant. These beliefs concur with research stating that instructor rapport and helpfulness promote student persistence. The following section reflects their stories about their teachers.

Angelica established a strong relationship with her instructor in a way that she felt comfortable communicating with her outside of the classroom. She explained her relationship this way:

> We would talk in class and then in the hallway we would talk and say like, hey, how ya' doin' and we I would say good….yeah…this other instructor would tell us all the good experiences she would have during work in her field so we were like, oh…..we're gonna do that too…she was telling us about this office that she worked for that they would give her bonus then they give her a trip or something and we're like, we're going to get this too, this is good, I'm gonna continue.

Angelica felt a sense of helpfulness from her instructor, availability to talk, and great feedback about her career choice. She was proud of her relationship with her instructors and believed she still had those relationships after graduation. She said:

> There were four and I can still remember every single one of them. I still talk to one of them. We met at one of the restaurants the other day and we just started talking. She was by herself and I was by myself so we just sat at the same table and we had a long conversation.

The relationship with the instructors continued to be a resounding theme leading to persistence. Not only was the helpfulness the instructors exhibited a factor, but their professional knowledge and how they were able to transfer that knowledge contributed to the participants' motivation to persist. Daniela said:

[My teacher] was just always in a good mood and she was a good teacher, too. She taught

me for two semesters. I really loved her, you know, she was always thinking of new ways

to help students learn. She would teach the book's way and if we didn't get it, she would

think of another way to explain things. She was really good teacher. I had another teacher

in two other classes. She was always happy and could teach really good too. I really had

teachers who cared for all my classes but not like the first one.

Daniela drew from her teacher's pleasant demeanor as well as her ability to teach as part of her

motivation to stay in school. Rosetta, like Daniela, appreciated her teacher's confidence in

teaching her. Rosetta said,

I get nervous doing things. [I] say to myself what if I don't do it right, but one my

teachers showed me how to draw blood and it was exactly how to do it. I felt happy that I

could learn this and the teacher was proud of me…..I was proud of me.

Rosa and Jaylena support the research that beliefs on caring and knowledge were prevailing

factors in their persistence. Rosa said:

I would stay for help and she [my teacher] would help me after class. I liked that because

even though she was supposed to go home or to lunch, she stayed anyway. I was able to

get like one on one with her and really felt comfortable asking things I didn't know. Also,

she would practice with me on my skills and that made me better for the next class. She

was a great teacher.

Jaylena said:

When I was in class my program director [also her teacher] stayed on me about grades

and keeping them up to par. She would always check on me after class and the other

students. She was just that way. She was a personal who really liked her job and loved

100

her students. It showed. The night teacher was the most encouraging as far as my personal life goes, when I had no car, she encouraged me. I really wanted to quit but she just kept encouraging me. She found me a ride to school and it was with one of my classmates. That was so nice because they didn't make me pay for class.

Javier was most impacted by the caring attitude although the teacher's knowledge played a role. He stated:

Definitely, [teacher name] was a wonderful teacher, she wants everybody to succeed and I wish every teacher could be like her, she's got a big heart…she wants to help everybody and I know she goes thru a lot….she definitely…she inspired a lot of people, she motivated a lot of people. I'm grateful for having her as an instructor. Another teacher [who is] not here anymore..she's also a great instructor. She's very knowledgeable in her field. I think she encouraged a lot of us cause' she wants us to succeed.

Jose felt challenged by his instructor in a positive way and appreciated being encouraged by hard work. He liked the instructor rapport which gave him instant access to knowledge upon request. Jose said:

Yeah, they were really, very helpful. They were willing to stay after class and work with you. If you had questions, it didn't matter how long you stayed they were there to help you. That was the way it was with all the teachers in my major. They really worked together and were all trying really heard to make everyone successful. They shared constant information. When I submitted questions through email or a phone call or a text message, they did answer and they did their best to find you the right answer.

Maria developed a different positive relationship with her instructor. She faced

some outside obstacles which caused her to be late to class, but her teacher was compassionate. Maria said:

> [For a] week I had to be late for class almost every day, they said OK, they were understanding and didn't hold anything against me for that. I know some teachers who would count off points or not let you make up tests or anything. I didn't want to fail and I was willing to do the work but I needed to have this time off for my family. This teacher got permission from the Dean of the school and I was able to be off and make up my work. This meant a lot to me.

Maria's persistence was affected by a teacher who understood she had personal obstacles and helped her to be successful beyond the attendance expectations.

Viktoria, Marietta, Trinity and Rose all experienced both positive and negative relationships with instructors. The positive relationships echoed the instructors with caring, helpful attitudes and a strong knowledge base while the negative relationships presented degradation and separation from the student. Viktoria's experiences portrayed these findings as she described one teacher as "very helpful", "made sure you understood", and "stayed after" for continued explanation while another teacher said she was a "big person." Viktoria said:

> In my classes I had several teachers and all but one of them were nice and knew their subject. One teacher especially was very helpful to all the students because she made sure you understood and you didn't feel stupid for asking questions in her class. Many times during breaks, she would stay around just in case we had questions. We always did. Oh….but there was one teacher who pulled me aside one day, in the classroom if you can believe it, and told me that I was a big person so I needed to buy different scrubs. I was so embarrassed. She had no feelings for me. I did lose weight since then, 50 lbs., but I did

not get along with that teacher. I was happy to be out of her class. I'm happy I didn't have her for many classes.

Marietta found comfort in one of her instructors applauding her for the "hard work the whole time [in school]," but was discouraged by another instructor who, in Marietta's presence, dominated an instructor who had given her good marks on a practical [hands on] exam and caused her marks to be lower. Marietta's story was:

I enjoyed going to class each day and for the most part I was a student who really tried. One day I had a patient come in and I cleaned her teeth. Afterwards my supervising instructor said I had done a really great job. Then another instructor came along and she told her that I had missed some places of plaque in several of the quads. The other instructor said I didn't but she went with that instructor anyway and I got a bad grade. I was really upset at first but then I decided to just learn from it and move on.

Trinity, like the others, found conflicting experiences and gave a strong statement of how instructors can be motivating or demotivating. Her experience was recounted as:

This [one] teacher, you wanted to see her, she was so full of life, she was the one who always wanted to keep you motivated. I wish she could have stayed with us all the way thru. This [other] teacher, she was like being in the house by yourself, didn't explain [anything], I didn't like that. She just told us to read.

The graduates who experienced negative behaviors relied on the positive ones to find staying power. Their relationships with the teachers they loved helped them to persist to graduation, especially when those relationships existed beyond the classroom.

Rose was pleased with some instructors and unhappy with others. She experienced positive and negative experiences, but when she explained them she was not as descriptive as the

other participants. She focused more on her personal, at home, obstacles and that her daughter

was her primary motivator. Although she had developed some good relationships with some of

her instructors, as well as, her classmates, she always came back to her strong need to persist

because of her daughter. Her story is as follows:

> I went to school and had my daughter, and worked Full-time and we had tests every other
>
> day and [I] still graduated…I mean….still with honors…but I know it wasn't just because
>
> I passed, it was because I know that I made the effort…that I studied…so I pretty much
>
> did it. One [teacher] would get mad if you questioned her during class and she would say
>
> this is what the school system says. [Another teacher] was like, I'll find out for you or
>
> you guys are really good…but I guess my main motivation was my daughter.

Below, Table 7 presents a tally of those participants who shared their experiences with

one or more of their teachers. Some had only positive experiences with one or more of the

teachers and some had positive and negative experiences with one or more of their teachers.

Table 7

Teacher influences

Participant	Positive experiences	Positive/Negative Experiences
Jose	X	
Rose		X
Javier	X	
Angelica	X	
Viktoria		X
Jaylena		X
Trinity		X
Rosetta	X	
Maria	X	
Daniela	X	
Rosa	X	
Marietta	X	
Total	**8**	**4**

As the majority of the students have explained, the teacher definitely impacts persistence. An instructor who is prepared for class and knows the material in addition to being able to explain the lessons well make strong connections with students. Teachers who develop rapport with their students through means of being helpful or offering meaningful and frequent feedback establish student relationships that are positive (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). These actions lead to persistence decisions amongst students. Braxton et al. (2004) found that solid teaching methods and persistence were directly related because of growth in student satisfaction.

One student, Angelica, presented a model of her first mold of teeth as a physical artifact. She was very proud of this accomplishment and talked in depth about how the instructor guided her through the process and hers turned out to be one of the top three in class. The model was very neat and had clean edges. She was proud of her skill, but just as proud of her teacher's helpfulness.

Theme 5: Influential People

The fifth theme "influential people" describes those family members in the lives of each participant who somehow influenced the participants' decisions to persist in the two-year, private career college they were attending. All 12 participants had family members such as parents, children, siblings or relatives who influenced their persistence in college either in a positive or negative way. Of the 12 participants, three had family members who did not promote college and the participants found support elsewhere.

Viktoria had parents who were both in the military. She voiced the drive for education that came from not only her immediate family, but from relatives. Her story was:

> I came from a "country town" near the border of Mexico and saw that most people had
> no aspirations to attend college or even better themselves in any way. There were no

colleges in my town and most people were factory workers. The town was pretty much dead. [I lived] where everyone is expected to be nothing. Nobody even thought about going to college. Then my cousin went to Stanford and was the first one in the family to go to college. That was amazing to me. I saw her evolve and it was inspiring to me, a lot, like I really thought, now I can do this. She was a great motivator for me and many of our family members to go to college. Now several of us have graduated with degrees.

 Trinity's story was a little different because she came to America later in life, age 19. After several years here, she developed an intrinsic desire to start college. She was pleased to have the support of her family. [gleaming] She said:

> When I started college it made my kids so happy. [They were] very supporting, they want me to be happy to do what I want to do. They said to me to go to school Mom. We will help out around the house. We can do homework together. It makes me feel good, they say yes, go and do what you need to do. Since I started, they have all been very helpful to me. They try to keep their rooms clean and do their homework when I do mine except they finish before me [laughingly].

Maria's family came to America for the sole purpose of their children attending college. She had strong support from the beginning. She said:

> My Dad and Mom always told me that they wanted to come here and give me and my sister a better life. From before they left they talked many times about our futures. Once we started school it was easy to see that they really wanted a good life for us. They were very supportive all our lives. And, when I started college they were always there for me and helped me when I got tired. They were a big reason why I made it through.

Similarly, Daniela had parents who wanted her to immediately go to college. She said:

I went to high school and did, you know, alright but right after high school, Mom and

Dad wanted me to go to college. We all began looking for the right college for me. I saw

Everyone's College on the internet and we went all together to talk to admissions. After

we left the college, my parents were very happy about the school and what they told us. I

was happy to bring my grades and projects home to them from class and we all talked

about them.

Javier timidly reported that his "Mom" influenced him to go. Javier said:

Well, if anyone influenced my decision to go to school, I would have to

say….well…..yeah it was my Mom. She has already been there for me and she wanted

me to go. She didn't like come with me to the college, but she told me she wished I

would go to college. So yeah, my Mom was my greatest influence.

Rosa had parental support as well but seemed to need continuous reinforcement to

persist. She said:

Yeah, from the beginning I would say my parents. My parents wanted me to go to college

pushed me to keep going. There were times that I had so much going on at home I didn't

want to go to school some days. My parents would keep pushing me to finish. Not every

Hispanic speaking parent wants their kid to go to school. Their beliefs are they should

work hard and the younger will work and then they can grow to make more money. If

they go to school and don't show up school, there is a problem at home.

Marietta had several family members support her persistence through college. Her story

was:

My Dad said life was hard as it is and without a career was even worse. My sister is a

doctor and said it was going to be hard, but don't give up. You should get your degree.

My kids were an important part of me starting and finishing.

Angelica spoke happily about all her dad did to help her get to college and how he

encouraged her while she was there. She said:

Dad wanted the best of me…he wanted me to be something. He like wanted me to

work…like , well mostly [the issue was] the part where I was going thru high school

cause I used to work at a restaurant and a pizza place and then another restaurant. He

didn't wanted me to say on that field so that's where he wanted me to go to college and

be something…get a title where I don't' have to work as much but get some more money.

Dad was there for me during the whole time. He always asked me what was going on and

when I needed something for school he got it for me.

Angelica felt like she owed her dad. She said, "I have to do it cause' he's doing all that work for

me to go high school and I have to do something back for him….so that's when I said I need to

go to Everyone's College".

Three participants experienced no support from family to attend college, with one of

them receiving negative messaging from family members before and during her college

experience. Jaylena was one who had no family support. She shared:

My family didn't really care either way if I went to college or not. They were not really

involved in who I was. I have my Godfather though who encouraged me to go to college.

He was a coach at my high school and a counselor. He has always been there for me. He

makes me want to be a better person and strive to be the best that I can be. If it weren't

for my Godfather I would not have my degree now and would not have made it to graduation.

Rosetta actually received discouragement from her family to attend college. She was pushed to not attend and found support from someone not related to the family. She is still bothered by the fact that her family didn't believe in her. Rosetta said:

No, my family were not supportive, they didn't want me to go. They wanted me to stay home and keep house for them. I felt sad and my boyfriend motivated me….cause my aunts and cousins said 'don't waste your time, you'll never make it', but I didn't let them influence me. My boyfriend always made me show people otherwise and kept me going.

I am so happy to have him because he has made me be a more independent person.

Rosetta talked about "quitting" from time to time, due to her lack of family support. During Rose's interview, she displayed the appreciation that she felt when her friend encouraged her to go to school. Nearly three years have passed and she is still emotionally affected by that support. Rose said:

A friend helped me fill out my FAFSA and was like you know all the time supporting me. She said to me, like you know…go to school!!! go to school!!!! go to school!!!!. Every time we talked she would ask if I had started school yet. She would not give up on me. It took her one whole year, but I finally started to college and I'm happy I did. Even when I was going I wanted to quit many times, but my friend would not let me. All my reasons she would have something else to tell me that made me change my mind. I am so thankful for her.

Like Marietta, Jose had several who influenced his pursuit to attend college. Although Marietta's influences were all family related, Jose's were a combination of family and advisors. Jose explained it this way:

> My pastor influenced me..my spiritual leader and advisor which is my pastor. He'd encourage me to stay in school. He'd pray for me and he counseled me in so many ways to develop a relationship with God and how that relationship was going to help me in the long run in school. My parents, obviously, they were big supporters and when I was school and when I went in New Mexico, you know they got all kinds of activities to sponsor me and did way too much for me to stay in school. Definitely influential people in the community…like I would say that teachers from like middle school teachers from high school encouraged me as well, and not so much friends.

In Table 8 below, participants are labeled as having family support, no family support or a combination of family and other supporters. Those marked as "no family support" does not mean they were all discouraged by family. Only one was pushed to not attend college. The other two just felt as if family was fine if they went to college or not.

Table 8

Influential people

Participant	Family Support	No Family Support	Support Outside the Family
Jose	X		X
Rose		X	
Javier	X		
Angelica	X		
Viktoria	X		
Jaylena		X	
Trinity	X		
Rosetta		X	
Maria	X		
Daniela	X		

Table 8

Participant	Family Support	No Family Support	Support Outside the Family
Rosa	X		
Marietta	X		
Total	**9**	**3**	**1**

Each participant in this study gave beneficial insight on how others encouraged or inspired their persistence at Everyone's College. Braxton et al. (2004) found some evidence that the support of family and parents' influences the persistence decisions regardless of racial or ethnic background. This study provides more evidence to support the influence of family and parents. Gloria (2003) found that positive influences from family and community support are specifically related to Latino persistence. Reason (2009) discussed these studies as a basis for further exploration regarding family and persistence relationships. Additionally, the stories from these Latinos support the research from Trevino and DeFreitas (2014) who found parents can have a positive effect on students in college by supporting them.

Angelica and Jose both presented numerous pictures of their family members who stood beside them during their persistence. Angelica presented pictures of her immediate family while Jose had pictures of his immediate family, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Jose's pictures depicted their celebration of his success of graduation. This was his first success after attending a university and a bachelor level college. All but one of the other participants stated that they had pictures of family after graduation but did not present them at the meeting. These artifacts support the findings in this theme that family is a strong indicator of Latino persistence.

Theme 6: Pre-college Preparation

This sixth theme shares experiences of these Latino participants and what they learned from the culture of the dominant group. Each of them attended elementary and high schools in

which the dominant culture was White or African American. Bourdieu (1977, 1990) calls these lessons the act of obtaining cultural capital. Five of the participants found that learning English was an important factor in obtaining friends and making non-Latino friends was vital to success. Another five of the participants found that becoming involved in the dominant group's popular activities or classes would be beneficial to their success. The last two participants found comfort in 'making it' or learning the rules from a family member.

Daniela and Marietta had sad memories of having to move away from where they lived in Mexico. As they moved into the culture of an American school system at a young age, they had feelings of isolation. Daniela explains it this way:

I was only three years old when my mother brought me, my little sister and two brothers here. My Dad didn't come because he stayed to make money to take care of us. My Mom does not speak English so we had to learn when we went to school. It was hard for a long time. I wanted to make friends and I couldn't talk to anyone and because I didn't speak English the other kids in elementary school laughed at me. I just stayed by myself most of the time. There was one teacher who always tried to help me so I liked her.

Marietta said:

When I came here I didn't speak no English and there were only eight Hispanic kids. Communicating was horrible because I was already 13 years old and like most come when they are younger and can learn from the beginning. I had a horrible time learning English even with my ESL [English as a Second Language] teacher because she spoke no Spanish. That was crazy that an ESL teacher was trying to teach me English but when I asked questions she couldn't answer them because she didn't speak Spanish. I went from

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a top student in my country in elementary school to a student who was almost like failing

and the teachers thought I was stupid but it was just that I didn't know English.

Maria also shared that she had difficulty due to not speaking any English at all after her

arrival. She arrived at a young age and struggled with learning the language while in school.

She said:

I came here when I was 4 years old with my Mom and Dad and my younger sister. My

sister was a baby then. It was OK at home but when I started school, I had problems, you

know, with speaking English. I went to ESL classes and I loved my teacher. After 3rd

grade, [things] became easier and all thru middle school I went to ESL. When I went to

high school, I was taken out of high school, you know, cause they say I was doin' so

well. You could see the self-confidence exude from her as she said she was taken out of

ESL in high school because she was "doing so well."

She said her ability to learn the language helped her meet new people and be more accepted in

the school. Angelica found that she had to learn English in order to be "treated as everybody

else." She knew she had finally achieved acceptance in the dominant culture as she described her

experience of being "disciplined for talking too much once she learned English." She told it this

way:

When I started elementary school, I didn't have many friends cause I was maybe….there

wasn't many Hispanic people…I mean Hispanic kids there…it was only like 2 or 3 of us.

There was like the three of us and we weren't like in the same class so it was like me [by

myself]. Sometimes this girl would talk to me but it was like she had her own friends so

she would go with them so most of the time I was by myself. When I had ESL class that's

when all the Hispanic kids meet so that was like my fun school part. In high school, yeah,

I did have more friends cause there were more friends that I made from other schools that got together there in middle school, that's where I learned the most. That's where I met more people. Time flied by so fast that I could barely do anything so, yeah, I had friends, new friends. In high school they treated me as everybody else, yeah, I talked and I got punished and then when I was nice I got reward….so…

Jose came to America later in life. He was 11 years old which made it more difficult for him to learn the language. He recognized at this early age that he had to learn a new culture. He worked diligently to keep his own identity while surviving in a new culture. Jose has a very compelling story and he tells it like this:

I was pulled because of my language because I couldn't speak the language I was havin' a hard time getting used to the culture, to the traditions just the whole American system here, especially education. I didn't get any help from people. Trying to adapt to the culture was just something I started developing on my own because I was expected to get my education. I wanted to help my family because of they're in bad health conditions now and in the future it's not going to allow them to work and receive income. Friendships [in school] I would say it was a little bit difficult and challenging because of the language. I started noticing discrimination and segregation at an early age. There were only 3 or 4 Latinos in my school and we had to find shelter and people to help us. I enjoyed high school a lot more because you have to reinforce those values and to understand that OK…you are unique….yes…your culture's different but you have to develop a sense of culture awareness that's not yours so you can adapt to the system here.

These participants persevered while not only learning a new language, but by integrating into a new culture. They needed motivation for success in academia as well as self-discipline which each exhibited at an early age.

The next four participants learned that the dominant group in their schools rewarded those who participated in 'appropriate' courses or sports. They shared that they believed they were more popular because of participating in these activities. Rose liked "art and enjoyed sports" and "played soccer throughout high school." She found school more appealing when she participated in school activities. She said:

> I really enjoyed like art and I really enjoyed like sports. I played soccer throughout high school. I did some cheerleading throughout high school. Outside of school I did other activities especially though in school I really enjoyed….. liked sports. I liked them because I feel like they give you something to look forward to you know, just not all about studying just studing, studying, studying and it gives you something else to look forward to and you feel a part of the school and the people when you participate like in sports or something.

Viktoria said "sports" helped her fit in because her family "moved around a lot". She said:

> I really enjoyed sports because it was like an outlet for me because we moved around a lot so that was like the best thing for me. I was able to make friends faster if I played sports. I didn't dislike anything at my high school or elementary schools here. Everyone was really involved with the curriculum. I loved my classes and learned a lot. I tried to participate in a lot at the schools and learn all I could and meet many different people. I played things like softball, water polo, and did surfing.

Javier said:

Yeah, I enjoyed a few things in high school. I did like soccer, track and field, and actually

I had a really good geography teacher, he actually took us campin', so that was pretty

enjoyable. We went to this wildlife area in Missouri and we spent a few days there and

that was really neat. I remember I had a lotta good friends...people that I played on the

soccer team with.

Rosa not only found a connection with others through games in physical education

classes, she participated with those activities in school that related to the STEM classes. She

said:

I enjoyed Physical Education [PE] in school. I liked playing with the other kids and

especially the kickball. I was good and they always picked me. I also participated in the

science STEM club and robotics. They were fun and we had competitions and things like

that. There were a lot of us that participated in the club and we built things. It was fun.

The last three, Rosetta, Trinity and Jaylena, each used a different resource for integrating

into the dominant group. Rosetta found a way to feel a part of the dominant culture's system by

assisting the teacher. She said:

I didn't participate in sports, but in elementary school I liked helping teachers out

whenever they needed stuff. I tried hard to keep up grades and make my teachers happy. I

wanted to be able to help them because I didn't play any sports like the others. In high

school, the ESL classes I use to take trips and that was fun to be together.

Trinity believed the teacher was not prepared to teach her and she depended on friends to

help her succeed. She said this:

The classes…the teachers were not prepared to teach, some of them were learning with

us and would tell us that, I was expecting someone to know his stuff and be able to learn

from them and constantly this teacher was nice, but didn't know his stuff. I had to depend

on my friends to help me with my work.

 Jaylena depended greatly "sister" [who] was "there to guide" her. She followed the

actions of her sister to help her learn to navigate the new culture.

My memories in elementary school was like I liked that my sister was there to guide me.

It was bad not being liked because I looked different because of the skin color or the hair

or [they say] you think you're pretty. This make me sad and scared because I didn't had

no friends. They just look at me. I was glad my sister was there to help me.

Below, Table 9 represents cultural capital each participant felt was important to their

success in pre-college experiences.

Table 9

Pre-college Preparation

Participant	Learn English	Participate in Sports	Other Resources
Jose	X		
Rose		X	
Javier		X	
Angelica	X		
Viktoria		X	
Jaylena			X
Trinity			X
Rosetta			X
Maria	X		
Daniela	X		
Rosa		X	
Marietta	X		
Total	**5**	**4**	**3**

These 12 Latino participants learned at an early age they had to integrate into the culture of the dominant group in order to gain cultural capital making them recognized as educated or talented (Kim & Nunez, 2013). They showed their success in learning the cultural codes that are dominant for everyone in society which has positively impacted their ability to persist in college (Bourdieu, 1986). These findings seem to disagree with Reason's (2009) conclusion that student pre-college characteristics are not linked to persistence. The findings of this study showed that, in part, pre-college characteristics support college student persistence for this Latino sample.

Angelica presented pictures of her soccer team in her early years and she described playing helped her make friends. She was also a school representative in her Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) club in which she competed with a beautiful, red dress that she made. She made the comment that there were not many Latinos in her school and the fact that she was able to represent her school with her skills made her very happy.

Summary of Findings

The findings presented in this chapter related to the majority of the literature referenced in this study. As we looked at the many forces that affect college student persistence, all the themes were supported by both the literature and the present study's findings; however, the theme, pre-college preparation, was also considered by Reason (2009) as "not linked to persistence". However, many of these Latino participants had to learn to succeed in a dominant culture to be "recognized" or seen as "educated" (Kim & Nunez, 2003). This "cultural capital" (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990) aided the affected participants later in life as they moved into the college environment. Because of their precollege experiences, such as learning how to work with the dominant culture's population, these students used this knowledge to thrive in peer environments as they engaged in the classroom, an important factor to persistence (Kuh et al, 2005). In

addition, those relationships extended past the classroom with out of class experiences of study and preparation with peers (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

A significant factor of persistence in this study was the influences of teachers with characteristics such as availability and helpfulness (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). These characteristics increased the ability to build rapport with students which is important to persistence along with solid teaching methods and student satisfaction (Braxton et al., 2005). Other powerful influential forces in the lives of the participants in this study were family and parents. Latinos are especially impacted by these individuals as found in the research of Gloria (2003). The support of parents was a major focus for Latinos in the research conducted by Trevino and DeFreitas (2014). However, Reason (2009) believed that more exploration in this area was needed.

Lastly, the type of institution and the curricular experience [choice of major] were addressed as more of a convenience by the participants rather than strong indicators of persistence. These areas should not be ignored because of the seriousness of the participants in their decisions made regarding these categories. Research does support that the type of institution has "influences" on persistence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Additionally, the choice of major which is their "commitment to an academic program" provides a sense of determination toward persistence (Braxton & Lee, 2005, p. 109).

Chapter Summary

This chapter revealed the six themes that emerged from the data analysis of interviews and physical artifacts provided by twelve Latino participants. Those themes were developed as rich, thick descriptions were provided by the stories of the participants. From the stories, findings regarding the forces that affect Latino college student persistence came to light. All of the themes

were supported by current research; however, the present study presented more data in areas that need further development such as parental support. The voices of the participants contributed greatly to the body of research regarding Latino college student persistence.

Chapter 5

Summary, Discussion, Implications, and Conclusions

Summary of the Study

The United States continues to show an increase in the Latino population which subsequently causes a student population increase in institutions of higher learning. Preparation by institutions of higher learning is essential to addressing this Latino growth. Institutions have been using narrowly focused programming as an adequate means to addressing the needs of these students. While programming is effective, a single focus program is not always the best method for meeting the needs of the students in a holistic manner. To address the complexity of forces that affect Latino student persistence in college, a comprehensive model of student influences was developed by Terenzini and Reason (2005) and was used in the present study.

A literature review provided examples and exploration of the research conducted on student persistence, as well as, Latino persistence. Since institutions of higher learning are enrolling Latino students with no marked improvement in their persistence to graduation, a closer look at the lives of Latino students was needed. Research confirmed that more studies should be conducted to inform the education community of best practices regarding Latino college student persistence.

Qualitative research methods based on the epistemological stance of constructionism and the theoretical perspective of interpretivism were utilized to analyze the voices of Latino graduates who persisted at a two-year, private, career college. A case study approach using semi-structured interview questions and the collection of physical artifacts was used to analyze the data. These methods provided insight regarding the participants' perceptions, attitudes, meanings and cultural features. The interviews allowed a focused look at the case, while the documents

described by the participants helped to corroborate the transcripts from the interviews (Yin, 2014). The voices of the Latino participants were necessary in this study to provide a deeper understanding of how Latino students persist in college.

A purposeful sampling technique (Creswell, 2007) was utilized in this study to identify the 12 Latino graduates. This approach permitted me to hold semi-structured interviews with each participant. Exploring and understanding the paths they took to persist at a two-year, private career college were the intent. The interviews conducted were transcribed verbatim and coded to develop the emerging themes. There were six themes that emerged with four themes relating to the first research question and two themes relating to the second research question. The descriptions of the physical artifacts validated the stories of the participants and their beliefs about how they persisted at a two-year, private, career college.

The findings derived from data analysis driven by the two research questions of this study:

(1) How do college experiences affect Latino persistence to graduation?

(2) How do cultural factors promote or hinder Latino college persistence?

The 12 Latino participants identified multiple factors describing how they persisted at a two-year, private, career college which generated six themes: (1) Campus Influences, (2) Out of Class Experiences, (3) Curricular Experiences, (4) Teacher Influences, (5) Influential People, and (6) Pre-college Preparation. The participant responses relating to the two research questions are summarized below.

Discussion

Student persistence has been a primary goal of research in education for several decades. Certainly, it has been the focus of much research among several higher education scholars.

Unfortunately, efforts to improve college student persistence seem to be ineffective for Latino students as persistence rates continue to lag. Although an emphasis has been placed on college student persistence with decades of research and countless institutional initiatives, Latino students continue to persist at a lower rate than other minority groups.

A substantial amount of literature does exist to guide faculty members, campus administrators, and public policymakers in attempts to increase student persistence in higher education. However, Terenzini and Reason (2005) believed that they possessed a major flaw as the studies failed to consider the wide variety of influences that shaped student persistence and instead focused on individually separate conditions, interventions, and policy changes.

This qualitative case study provided new data in relation to the model, "A Comprehensive Model of Student Learning and Persistence" by interviewing 12 Latino graduates who graduated from a two-year, private, career college. Two questions relating to the college experiences and cultural factors that affect student persistence were addressed. The voices of the participants provided ideas that can be used by the higher education institutions in the form of new practices and provided foundations for future research.

How do college experiences affect Latino persistence to graduation? The first theme related to this question is Career Influences which has three subcategories; institutional type, admissions criteria, and classroom engagement. These findings begin with the first subcategory.

For some of the participants, attending a two-year, private, career college was the best choice because of the research they did on institutions near home. Reason (2009) finds that what researchers call "source of support" (whether public or private) are typically control variables to satisfy institutional differences and are seen as questionable regarding their effects on student persistence. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) stated there was an exception to that rule meaning

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students who attended higher quality institutions (admission test scores, selectivity of admission, or average high school grade point average) persisted to graduation at a higher rate. This study finds that the participants did persist because of the type of institution as recorded by Javier's testament that he was at a career college for a career and refuted community comments that he would not get a "good paying job".

The quality of the institution also contributed to student persistence, but quality was defined differently than how Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) reported which was based on admission's processes and entrance requirements. Jaylena found quality in the institution in that the institution provided staff and faculty who really helped her learn. She gained intellectual knowledge although she was not a stellar high school student. Viktoria reported that the career college prepared her to challenge the same professional board exams as the university schools would. These findings suggest that institution type effects college student persistence more than prior research purports.

The participants also referenced subcategory two, admissions criteria, as a source of persisting through the two-year, private, career college. As another characteristic of the institutional structural-demographic characteristic, the admissions criteria provided a means for students to choose a major that related to their career aspirations. In a study conducted by Titus (2004), he found institutional selectivity which included a positive peer climate affected student persistence. The findings of this study showed that criteria specific to student needs do have impacts on persistence. The participants were in an institution that had few Latino students. Some of their supportive needs were met at the institution due to a positive peer climate and a supportive faculty.

The third sub-category, classroom engagement, was another factor influencing college student persistence at this two-year, private, career college. As the participants voiced, they all felt some level of satisfaction engaging with their peers during class. These findings add to the research that peer environments are connected to student behaviors which, in turn, support student persistence (Reason, 2009). As shown by Jaylena, students can participate and feel good about it even when other classmates label you as "teacher's pet" or other words. Baird (2000) suggested that teaching students skills to persist in negative campus climates can possibly increase student persistence. The findings in this study support that these skills do increase student persistence.

The second theme, Out of Class Experiences, was found to be supportive of past research. Reason (2009) stated that co-curricular activities in which students engage that are academically purposed have a strong correlation to persistence to graduation. The current study findings showed that many of the students either followed others who established the co-curricular activities, established their own co-curricular activities, or felt strongly that they were good tools for school environments. Jaylena, Rosetta, Maria, Daniela, Rosa, and Marietta showed a tendency to invest in learning by studying together and sometimes studying through lunch. This finding shows an investment of time and energy (Astin, 1993).

The third theme, Curricular Experiences, was described by the participants as committing to the academic program at the institution. This commitment helped them to reach a preset goal of getting a college education and thus increased the persistence to graduation (Braxton & Lee, 2005). The present study found a measure of self-determination in participants like Javier, who emphatically spoke of his commitment to graduate no matter what (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Jose,

Viktoria, and Jaylena were presented challenges and voiced their commitment to persist to graduation.

The fourth theme, Teacher Influences, in this study presented positive and negative descriptions of experiences the students had with instructors. Many of the participants in this study realized how much their interactions with faculty meant to their persistence. Some of the Latinos spent time with faculty who were willing to spend time outside the classroom to support their persistence to graduation. These relationships allowed the students to feel more comfortable with these positions of authority whether inside or outside the classroom and allowed the participants to integrate more freely into the college environment. Angelica evidenced this by feeling comfortable enough to have a casual conversation in the hallways with one of her instructors daily. Rosetta felt comfortable enough to expose her fears of learning and allow her instructor to teach her a difficult, hands-on skill. Rosa and Jaylena enjoyed staying after class and working longer with their instructors. These findings support the research that reports teachers who can become helpful or provide beneficial learning to the students will positively affect persistence to graduation (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

How do cultural factors promote or hinder Latino college persistence? The participants' personal experiences helped them to find cultural factors in their lives that promoted or hindered their persistence to graduation. Each participant shared cultural experiences they had to overcome in order to persist to graduation. They talked about several cultural characteristics that affected their persistence such as Spanish being their first language, the support or non-support of family members, and the role of friends.

The fifth theme, Influential People, discusses the impact of family members on their persistence. They all had parents who influenced their persistence in some way. Braxton et al.

(2004) found that family support positively affects persistence to graduation regardless of racial/ethnic background and these participants were impacted by their family. Gloria (2003) says that Latino students reach beyond their family and use community support to motivate them to persist. This is supported by Jose who not only spoke of his parents who were very supportive of him, but also of his community relationships that great him great confidence in furthering his education.

The sixth theme, Pre-college Preparation, in the current study focused a great deal on cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). The participants found that they had to develop in certain ways to be successful in the dominant group of society. One of the aspects of cultural capital was learning to speak English. Jose and Maria had difficulty in learning English which affected them negatively. They both gave examples of how their language skills are still lacking somewhat and still hinders them from time to time. Another facet of cultural capital was learning the education and co-curricular activities accepted by the dominant group such as sports and STEM classes. Viktoria commented that she would become involved in sports as a way to "fit in". The present study's findings supported the fact that cultural capital was important to student persistence to graduation (Bourdieu, 1986). The study also disagreed with Reason's (2009) conclusion that pre-college characteristics were not strong indicators of college student persistence.

Implications for Practice

During this qualitative case study, I was challenged as a researcher to analyze a collection of data and report findings. The present research allowed me to present to the reader what is important and what is true as based on the stories of a racial/ethnic group of people and their behaviors and attitudes. This study provided a foundation for developing multiple ways that institutions of higher education can promote the persistence to graduation of Latinos.

Firstly, higher education leadership should identify those individuals in their institution who are of Latino descent which could be collected from a data management system. This identification would assist the institution in understanding the magnitude to which they would need to develop policies and procedures that promote the support of family and parents such as flexible hours in course offerings and extended hours in student services. Policies could be developed which allow students to change class sessions at any time with proper documentation during a semester in order to meet family needs. Additionally, the service centers should be available 24/7 instead of the normal 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. time of operation. Students of Latino descent are typically influenced by their family or parents (Braxton et al., 2004). The present study found that Latino college student persistence was positively impacted by actions of various family members in addition to the support of parents.

Secondly, collecting data such as student's previous enrollment in other colleges and whether they persisted or not would be useful. Student Affairs departments have opportunity here to gather additional data about why the student left their previous college with tools like interviews or surveys. Follow up with the student is necessary to connect the ways in which the new college can accommodate the student in the areas they did not find in the previous college. The satisfaction of the student is important to student persistence. If an institution operates in a collegial manner in the areas of student satisfaction, communication, and participation, greater levels of college student persistence will exist (Braxton et al., 2005). The current study describes the satisfaction of the students who enjoyed their teachers, admissions processes, and classroom activities. Braxton et al. (2004) found that whether a student was at a residential or commuter institution, if a student perceives the institution's actions to be aligned with their mission and vision, then persistence is affected. "Institutional integrity" is the alignment of the student and

the institution which promotes the student's feelings of fairness in decision making, student's satisfaction, and student's feelings of sense of purpose (Braxton et al., 2004).

Thirdly, the findings of the present study's research present an opportunity for institutions to develop and implement programs which would assist faculty in learning how to be more helpful to their Latino students. This study provides meaningful feedback from the participants regarding the helpfulness of their instructors. The participants seemed to be the most appreciative of this teacher characteristic. Of course, other teacher characteristics were mentioned by the participants as effective as well such as preparedness, availability and rapport. Institutions can use this data to evaluate instructors and create training in these areas. Leadership must be aware of faculty who promote or hinder persistence to graduation and act on their findings appropriately. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) found great evidence for the relationship between student outcomes and persistence based on teacher practices and instructor characteristics. Braxton et al. (2004) observed the relationship between positive teaching practices and persistence presented both direct and indirect affects due to an increase in student satisfaction with their educational processes.

As a final suggestion, institutions of higher learning have opportunity to engage students at their institutions with out of class activities. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) touched on the positive relationship between out of class engagement and persistence. The more the student engages in college with time and effort put into activities that are meant to be educational the more likely they will persist. While positive interactions with faculty are important, peers can be especially important such as the ones that help them advance in relation to academic matters. This present study found that many of the participants spent time with the peers studying for tests, reinforcing skills, or reviewing lectures. The participants spoke in length about the amount

of time and effort it took while they were in college to persist to graduation. They spent a great deal of time studying and preparing for class which is considered a type of engagement with an institution (Astin, 1993). Institutions should create environments that support peer study with its design based on student feedback. This will lead to an environment promoting engagement which will benefit the students toward achieving persistence.

Future Research

The current study provided a basis for more research in regard to Latino college student persistence. Researchers of higher education find difficulty in identifying implications from studies focused on race, ethnicity, and gender from a within group study (Tinto, 2006). The present study provided rationale that heterogeneity within a homogeneous group as a research topic may still have purpose in practice. Additionally, the various student characteristics and how they influence college student persistence would greatly impact retention (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). More studies must be conducted on the multiple forces within our colleges and universities along with student pre-college characteristics need to be studied for different students behave differently in different environments.

Braxton et al. (2004) find that parental education impacts student persistence at commuter institutions and residential institutions. The support of parents is paramount to student persistence among the Latino racial/ethnic group. Research regarding the amount of support on campus versus at home should be considered. Other thoughts include what is good support and what type of support hinders the student. This is somewhat of a new area to the field of persistence as Tinto's model promoted a break of family ties which is the model on which a vast amount of persistence research is based (Reason, 2009). As found in this study, family played a

positive role in the participants' persistence, even if they had chosen to attend a residential college.

Reason (2009) states that high educational aspirations were a factor in student persistence for those who attended a community college. The current study found that all but one of the participants who attended the two-year, private, career college had high educational aspirations. More research is needed in this area as the literature is slim with respect to career colleges. Additionally, studies on second choice of major should be studied. There were participants in this study who chose a second major in hopes to move on to their original choice at a later date. Did making this second choice give them future aspirations to continue on to their first choice?

Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) reported that teacher characteristics such as feedback and rapport play a vital role in student persistence. This study supported these tenets as the participants found those teachers whom they considered as caring, helpful, and knowledgeable in teaching pedagogy were motivating elements for them as they persisted. How would this relate to online education? These participants were in face-to-face classes throughout their major and the online element removes some of the affective characteristics between a student and the teacher. There would be importance in determining how to monitor continuous feedback to a student including the levels of feedback necessary to develop rapport and support during online courses. Another research opportunity would be to analyze the messaging that takes place in responses to and between students and their peers and students and their teachers as it affects persistence. Although college student persistence has been studied for decades, there are still many areas of research as described above to be investigated.

Concluding Remarks

The intent of this study was to explore how 12 Latino graduates persisted at a two-year, private, career college. The study utilized the model developed by Terenzini and Reason (2005), A Comprehensive Model of Influences on Student Learning and Persistence, to answer the questions around persistence to graduation that were affected by cultural factors or college experiences. The participants shared before college and during college personal experiences that centered on family, cultural beliefs, attitudes, and values.

The overall findings agreed with Reason (2009) that no single factor in a student's life can cause them to persist to graduation by itself. Many future pathways are available for continued research on Latino persistence factors and the multiple forces that may cause increases or decreases in persistence. For example, when using the four constructs of Terenzini and Reason (2005), would the outcomes be similar for all Latino origins? Additionally, would the results found in this study be similar to the same study performed at a four-year college or university or at a community college? If differences in studies are identified, how will educators address the positive or negative influences found at each institutional type?

It is unclear what impact current Latino graduates will have on future studies regarding the multiple forces that affect student persistence. Higher education researchers have already been considering these more complex designs and procedures. Some have shown a progression from a single site study of individuals to a multisite, multivariate study. This allows a closer, more detailed look at the phenomenon in persistence studies (Reason, 2009). Latinos have a voice that needs to be heard and with the increase in the Latino population at colleges and universities, they must feel the freedom to request services which, if tracked, will help educators

understand what their needs are and can, in turn, aid in creating a more supportive organizational behavior behind the walls of the institution.

With many choices of institutions available, these twelve made a final choice to attend a career college. Through the analysis of interviews and the study of physical artifacts, the researcher attempted to identify emerging themes that may best represent the beliefs of the participants regarding their persistence. The study delved deep into their lives as it asked about elementary years of school and included a discussion of the move to America, if applicable to the participant. The participants gave rich descriptions of their accounts of life before college and during college. Some were shy and reserved, while others presented with excitement, but all spoke with what appeared as a feeling of accomplishment in their lives.

As the study materialized, I became acutely aware of the number of researchers who had interest in persistence in such areas as institutional type, teacher influences, student engagement, and sociodemographic characteristics. I found that most studies were based on the theories of Tinto, Astin, or Terenzini and Pascarella. Other researchers were certainly named and theories developed; however, these were cited quite frequently. The participants taught me some wonderful things regarding what they cared about the most in a college. The strongest theme seemed to be teacher engagement in the form of helpfulness and teaching abilities.

The findings supported multiple forces that worked together in the student's persistence. All six themes, Campus Influence, Out of Class Experiences, Curricular Experiences, Teacher Influences, Influential People, and Precollege Preparation, proved to find support of persistence. Although I had no statistical measure of importance or depth of reach, the Precollege Preparation seemed to have an indirect impact, while the others directly impacted persistence. The participants chose the institution due to the quality of the institution and choice of major. The

fact that the peer environment was strong added to their persistence achievement. In addition, the time they spent studying with friends created a bond not only with the friends, but bonded the student to the institution while attending. This bond continued with the interaction with faculty who seemed to be helpful or beneficial in some way. Externally, the students experienced family, parents, and in this case, some friends who encouraged them constantly to graduate. Even though their precollege experiences could have varied in its impact, the fact that most of them did not speak English after coming to America was a precollege cultural capital asset that certainly impacted persistence. The participants experienced good times and hardships before and during college; however, these 12 Latino graduates had important stories to tell about their journey to persistence.

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Appendix A

June 16, 2016

Institutional Review Board
315 Administration Building
Memphis, TN 38152

Dear Sir/Madam:

This letter is to confirm that Concorde Career College – Memphis has agreed to collaborate with Lori Spencer regarding the study, Exploring Persistence Factors in a Two-Year Private, Career College.

For further information, please contact Tommy Stewart at tstewart@concorde.edu.

Sincerely,

███████████

Tommy Stewart
Vice-President of Operations, West Region

5100 Poplar Ave., Suite 132, Memphis, TN 38137-0132
Phone: (901) 761-9494 • Fax: (901) 761-3293 • www.concorde.edu

Appendix B

IRB Approval 4281

<div style="background-color:#A6192E;">BJ</div>

Beverly Jacobik (bjacobik)
 on behalf of
Institutional Review Board

Reply|
Tue 8/2/2016, 8:36 AM
Lori Jean Spencer (ljspncr1);
Jeff Wilson (jlwlson4)

Hello,

The University of Memphis Institutional Review Board, FWA00006815, has reviewed and approved your submission in accordance with all applicable statuses and regulations as well as ethical principles.

PI NAME: Lori Spencer
CO-PI:
PROJECT TITLE: Exploring Persistence Factors of Latino Graduates in a Two-Year Private, Career College
FACULTY ADVISOR NAME (if applicable): Jeffery Wilson
IRB ID: #4281
APPROVAL DATE: 7/29/2016
EXPIRATION DATE: 7/29/2017
LEVEL OF REVIEW: Expedited

Please Note: Modifications do not extend the expiration of the original approval

Approval of this project is given with the following obligations:

1. If this IRB approval has an expiration date, an approved renewal must be in effect to continue the project prior to that date. If approval is not obtained, the human consent form(s) and recruiting material(s) are no longer valid and any research activities involving human subjects must stop.

2. When the project is finished or terminated, a completion form must be completed and sent to the board.

3. No change may be made in the approved protocol without prior board approval, whether the approved protocol was reviewed at the Exempt, Expedited or Full Board level.

4. Exempt approval are considered to have no expiration date and no further review is necessary unless the protocol needs modification.

Approval of this project is given with the following special obligations:

Thank you,

James P. Whelan, Ph.D.

Institutional Review Board Chair

The University of Memphis.

Note: Review outcomes will be communicated to the email address on file. This email should be considered an official communication from the UM IRB.

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT EMAIL

To: Graduate name
From: Researcher name

Subject Line: Participants Being Sought for a Research Study on Persistence

Lori Spencer is looking for participants for a research study on student college persistence. You are receiving this email because you are a Latino who graduated from a two-year, private career college. Your email address was obtained from the college.

This study is about how experiences in the lives of Latino students affected their college persistence through to graduation. If you take part in this study, you would meet with the researcher, Lori Spencer, for an interview in which you would respond to a series of questions. The interview will be audio recorded. There will be two meeting sessions lasting 1-2 hours each over a period of two months for a total of 2-4 hours. The researcher will also request that you provide any documents you have that may be related to the study. To be able to take part in this study, you must be:

1. At least 18 years of age.
2. Self-identified as Latino.
3. Have graduated from the two-year, private career college in the study.

If you are interested in participating or have any questions about the study, please email Lori Spencer at ljspncr1@memphis.edu or call Lori Spencer at 901-761-9494.

APPENDIX D

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

EXPLORING PERSISTENCE FACTORS OF LATINO GRADUATES OF A TWO-

YEAR, PRIVATE CAREER COLLEGE

WHY ARE YOU BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

You are being invited to take part in a research study about student college persistence. You are being invited to take part in this research study because you graduated from a two-year, private career college. If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will be one of twelve people to do so.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?

The person in charge of this study is Lori Spencer of the University of Memphis Department of Higher and Adult Education Department. She is being guided in this research by *Dr. Jeffery Wilson, advisor.*

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

By doing this study, we hope to learn about the different experiences in the lives of Latinos that support their desire to complete college.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

You should not participate in this study if you (1) are not a self-identified Latino, (2) are over the age of 18, or (3) have not graduated from a two-year private, career college in the western part of Tennessee.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT

LAST?

The research procedures will be conducted at a site agreed upon by each participant and the researcher. You will need to come to the agreed upon site 2 times during the study. Each of those visits will take about 60-120 minutes. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is 2-4 hours over the next 2 months.

WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?

At each visit, you will be given a brief overview of the study purpose. After obtaining some personal information, the researcher will begin asking a series of questions related to the study. You will give your honest response to each question. With your permission, the session will be recorded using an audio device. There will a time for you to clarify any previous responses.

The second session will be a time for the interview questions to be reviewed and fully answered.

The last session will allow you to assist in providing interpretations of your responses based on the researcher's questions.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life.

You may find some questions we ask you to be upsetting or stressful. If so, we can tell you about some people who may be able to help you with these feelings.

In addition to the risks listed above, you may experience a previously unknown risk or side effect.

WILL YOU BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

You will not get any personal benefit from taking part in this study.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study.

IF YOU DON'T WANT TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY, ARE THERE OTHER CHOICES?

If you do not want to be in the study, there are no other choices except not to take part in the study.

WHAT WILL IT COST YOU TO PARTICIPATE?

There are no costs associated with taking part in the study.

WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY REWARDS FOR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY?

You will not receive any rewards or payment for taking part in the study.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT YOU GIVE?

We will make every effort to keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law.

Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combine information we have gathered. You will not be personally identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. Participation in this study will be on a voluntary basis. Confidentiality will be upheld within the limits allowed by law. All written documents and electronic information related to this research will remain secure, and only accessible to the researcher. The data that has any identifier to the participants will eventually be destroyed after completion of the research data. Interviews will be audio recorded for data collection purposes. These recordings will be stored on an external drive that will be secured in a locked cabinet and only accessible to the researcher.

We will keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law. However, there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. We may be required to show information which identifies you to people who need to be sure we have done the research correctly; these would be people from such organizations as the University of Memphis.

CAN YOUR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY?

If you decide to take part in the study you still have the right to decide at any time that you no longer want to continue. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study.

The individuals conducting the study may need to withdraw you from the study. This may occur if you are not able to follow the directions they give you, if they find that your being in the study is more risk than benefit to you, or if the agency funding the study decides to stop the study early for a variety of scientific reasons.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR COMPLAINTS?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you can contact the investigator, Lori Spencer at 662-403-9004. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the Institutional

Review Board staff at the University of Memphis at 901-678-2705. We will give you a signed copy of this consent form to take with you.

WHAT IF NEW INFORMATION IS LEARNED DURING THE STUDY THAT MIGHT AFFECT YOUR DECISION TO PARTICIPATE?

If the researcher learns of new information in regards to this study, and it might change your willingness to stay in this study, the information will be provided to you. You may be asked to sign a new informed consent form if the information is provided to you after you have joined the study.

What happens to my privacy if I am interviewed?
During this study, any identifying information will NOT be associated with your responses. The researcher will use a pseudonym in the place of your name.

_____   _____

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study   Date

_____

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

_____   _____

Name of [authorized] person obtaining informed consent   Date

IRB #: 4281
Expiration Date: July 29, 2017

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Adapted
Fletcher, R. (2015). *Voices of persistence: A case study analysis of African American male*
      community college students participating in a first-year learning community. (Doctoral
      dissertation). Retrieved https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/bitstream/handle/2142/78376/
      FLETCHER-DISSERTATION-2015.pdf?sequence=1

Background

1. Tell me about yourself? Tell me about your family? (older or younger siblings)

High School/Pre-College

1. Tell me about your memories of school (elementary/high school)?
      a. What about these experiences did you enjoy?
      b. How can you relate any of these experiences to your present experience in
      college?

2. Tell me about one of your negative experiences in school (elementary/high school)?
      a. What about your experience did you dislike?
      b. How can you relate this experience to your present experience in college?

3. As a Latino, how would you describe the experience you have had in school prior to coming to
   Everyone's College, especially consider high school and elementary school?
      a. How would you describe the classroom activities, how did you feel about them?
      b. What about extra-curricular activities, what are your feelings about them?
      c. Tell me about the teachers you had in grade and high school, what made them
      stand out, good and bad?
      d. How did teachers, counselors, coaches affect your desire, your motivation to
      remain in school?

Everyone's College from a Latino perspective

4. At what point did you consider pursuing college?
      a. Where did this occur?
      b. When?
      c. What led to this decision?
      d. Who was influential in helping you pursue college (family, friends, teachers,
      coaches, etc?)

5. Tell me what it means from your perspective as Latino to pursue a
   degree at a two-year, private career college (generally speaking)?
      a. How do you fit into this picture?

b. Are you acquainted with anyone who fits into this picture? If so, how do you think they feel about their pursuing a degree?

c. Is there a two-year, career college stigma or perception that has been a barrier in pursuit of higher education?

6. Talk about the social aspects of school, what you do with your friends in-between classes, after school.

a. Do you think you will remain friends with these classmates after graduation?

b. Do you ever mix studying with your social life? Examples?

7. How do your friends feel about you attending school?

a. How does this support make you feel?

8. How do your family and friends feel about you attending Everyone's College?

a. What affect does their support have on you?

b. What motivates you?

9. Do you have any Latinos in your life that have experienced pursuing a college education?

a. If so, what advice did they give you?

10. Thinking about Latinos you know with a college degree, in what ways did they shape your perception of higher education?

11. Why is attending Everyone's College important to you?

a. What made you decide to attend Everyone's College?

b. How did you feel about earning a college degree from Everyone's College?

The Peer Environment

12. When you attended classes each day, what aspects of school and social life made you want to attend class?

13. What about your experiences at Everyone's college? Did they play a role in your motivation to attend classes?

14. Did you participate in class? What motivated you to participate? Discouraged you to participate?

a. If so, in what ways?

b. If not, explain what demotivated you?

15. How did feel about your friends in the classroom?

a. How did your classmates/friends motivate you?

b. Are your feelings for your classmate/friends the same as other friends you have at Everyone's College?

16. Do you feel like your confidence level has changed since you graduated from Everyone's College?

Faculty/Mentors

17. Tell me about your instructors. Were they approachable … in class, and after class?
    a. How do you feel about your instructors?
    b. Recall an experience you have with a faculty member in your semester, good/bad?

18. What affect did they have on your motivation to persist in college?
19. Do you think they view your success differently than all other students?

20. What were some of the most difficult obstacles or barriers during your continued enrollment
    at Everyone's College?
    a. Why?
    b. What did you do to overcome those obstacles/barriers?

21. What were some of the most important aspects of your college experience that you needed to
    overcome those obstacles/barriers?

22. How would you like to be remembered by your friends at Everyone's College?
    Why?

23. Would most Latinos at Everyone's College choose to have out of class experiences, a social
    club? Why?

24. From your experiences, what would you tell a young person at your high school right
    now?
    a.   How would you tell them to prepare for college?

25. From your experiences, what would you tell Latino teachers at your high school right now?
    a. How could you influence them to prepare students for college?

26. From your experiences, what would you tell non-Latino teachers at your high school
    right now?
    a.   How could you influence them to prepare students for college?

27. If possible, what would you change about your grade school and high school experience
    to better prepare you for what you know now about college?

28. Where do you see yourself going with your college education?