FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE LATINX URBAN HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES IN OBTAINING A COLLEGE DEGREE: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY OF LATINX VOICES

by
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FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE LATINX URBAN HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES IN OBTAINING A COLLEGE DEGREE: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY OF LATINA VOICES

Abstract

Enrollment rates for Latinx students are projected to increase, yet there is still a disproportionate number of Latinx students completing higher education. This research conducted in-depth interviews with 10 Latinas to understand Latinx students’ experiences who graduated from a lower socioeconomic urban high school in California’s San Joaquin Central Valley, decided to attend a higher educational institution, and obtained their college degree. Three frameworks were utilized in the research: funds of knowledge, community cultural wealth, and Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory for a suitable foundation for this study as they encompass the assets that Latinx communities utilize in their decisions and aspirations to higher education. In sum, all three frameworks were triangulated to create a New Concept framework for the study called Latinx Student Higher Education Influence Model (LSHEI). The Latinx Student’s knowledge about college attainability depends on various influencing factors throughout their educational journey. Family and religion are the most influential aspects of the Latinx student utilized throughout their process in attaining a college degree. Taking advantage of social capital throughout the Latinx student public school experience builds upon the value of relationships which are a valuable resource in understanding resistance and navigational wealth for the Latinx student to attain their college degree. Recognizing the foundational bases that contribute to Latinx
students’ successes will assist those Latinx students who are finding challenges in succeeding in higher education.
California State University, Fresno
Kremen School of Education and Human Development
Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRELUDE</td>
<td>xiv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher’s Roots</td>
<td>xiv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Capitalization</td>
<td>xiv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistant Capitalization</td>
<td>xv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familial Capitalization</td>
<td>xvii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Capitalization</td>
<td>xvii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic Capitalization</td>
<td>xviii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navigational Capitalization</td>
<td>xix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspirational Capitalization</td>
<td>xix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latinx Student Population</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful Latinx Students</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Statement</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Problem</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms Describing Latin Americans</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outline of Theoretical Frameworks Used in Study</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Summary</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Frameworks Supporting Latinx Educational Success(s)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funds of Knowledge</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Community Cultural Wealth ................................................................. 18
Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Theory .................................................... 26
Examining How to Support Latinx Students’ Higher Education Attainment . 33
Advanced Preparatory Courses ............................................................ 33
The Link Between Motivation and College Retention Rates .................. 35
Understanding Motivation Factors: Intrinsic and Extrinsic .................... 36
School Climate and Culture ................................................................. 39
Culturally Responsive Approaches in Schools ...................................... 40
Historical Context of Culturally Responsive Teaching .......................... 42
Chapter Summary .............................................................................. 44
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY ................................................................. 46
Description of Qualitative Approach .................................................... 47
Data Collection ................................................................................... 47
Instruments ......................................................................................... 48
Data Analysis ...................................................................................... 49
Positionality Statement ....................................................................... 50
Limitations of the Study ...................................................................... 51
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND OUTCOMES ............................................. 53
Purpose of the Study ........................................................................... 55
The Participants .................................................................................. 55
Summary of Results ............................................................................ 60
Analysis of Data .................................................................................. 60
Limitations ........................................................................................... 61
Findings ............................................................................................... 62
Microsystem ......................................................................................... 62
Spirituality ............................................................................................ 63
Familial Capital ................................................................. 64
Mesosystem ........................................................................ 65
Relationships ..................................................................... 65
Exosystem .......................................................................... 67
Social Capital ...................................................................... 68
*AP Courses* ..................................................................... 68
Macro system ...................................................................... 70
Linguistic Capital .............................................................. 70
Culture Responsibilities ..................................................... 72
Aspirational Capital .......................................................... 74
Chronosystem ..................................................................... 75
Navigational Capital .......................................................... 76
Resistant Capital ............................................................... 78
Motivation .......................................................................... 81
Research Questions ........................................................... 83
Participants’ Responses Answering Research Questions ........ 83
Chapter Summary .............................................................. 90

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS ..... 92
Summary of Findings .......................................................... 93
Discussion of Study’s Findings ............................................ 102
Latinx Student .................................................................... 102
Micro system ...................................................................... 103
Mesosystem ........................................................................ 105
Exosystem .......................................................................... 107
Macro system ...................................................................... 109
Chronosystem .................................................................... 111
Summary and Research Questions................................................................. 114
Recommendation for Practice........................................................................... 115
  Family Support Services: Microsystem ......................................................... 117
  Strengthening Relationships: Mesosystem...................................................... 118
  Social Capital on the School Campus: Exosystem......................................... 118
  Foster Culturally Relevant Environment: Macrosystem................................. 119
  College-Going Culture Alumni Mentoring Program: Chronosystem............. 120
Implications for Future Research....................................................................... 120
Conclusion ........................................................................................................... 121
REFERENCES ....................................................................................................... 123
APPENDIX: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL.................................................................. 139
LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1</td>
<td>School District X College Enrollment Summary Report by Ethnicity Enrolled in Higher Education After High School</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2</td>
<td>Participant Profile for 10 Participants</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3</td>
<td>Extrinsic Factors</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4</td>
<td>Intrinsic Factors</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5</td>
<td>Adult Agents</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1</td>
<td>Discoveries in the San Joaquin Valley Grapevines</td>
<td>xvi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2</td>
<td>Fresno, California Educational Attainment by Race</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3</td>
<td>Fresno, California Educational Attainment for Latinx</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4</td>
<td>Latinx Student Higher Education Influences Model</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5</td>
<td>Microsystem Ring</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6</td>
<td>Mesosystem Ring</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7</td>
<td>Exosystem Ring</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 8</td>
<td>Macrosystem Ring</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 9</td>
<td>Chronosystem Ring</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 10</td>
<td>Latinx Student Center Ring</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 11</td>
<td>Microsystem Ring</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 12</td>
<td>Mesosystem Ring</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 13</td>
<td>Exosystem Ring</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 14</td>
<td>Macrosystem Ring</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 15</td>
<td>Chronosystem Ring</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PRELUDE

Researcher’s Roots
Through Community Cultural Wealth and Funds of Knowledge Lens

Cultural Capitalization

It was 1963 when my father arrived in Texas as a 14-year-old boy from Durango, Mexico. His father enrolled him in a public school. My father shared he could remember the teacher asking him questions in English but did not understand and simply repeated her statements. The laughter from the other students became too unbearable that he eventually decided to drop out. He then spent days helping his father pick fruit from trees. Little did he know this would be his future job for the next 60 years of his life and how he would support his own family.

My father was raised in Durango while my mother was raised in Coahuila, Mexico. They arrived in California with not much money and made a life through their work ethic by working in the fields of the San Joaquin Valley of California. My parents worked in the crop fields picking whichever fruit was in season to rear their five children. They both had no formal education or the ability to speak English fluently. However, my father had managed to climb his way up to a foreman position and oversee workers at a crop plantation.

I can remember the excitement I felt as a young girl when my father would take me along to help deliver paychecks to the workers. I felt important holding the box of paychecks on my lap. When we would arrive at one of the worker’s homes, my dad would call out the name for me to pull the check. I would search for the first letter of the name as I slowly pronounced it in my head to hand my
dad the check. He would smile as he took the check from my hand and say, “Muy bien, estas leyendo.” This was the beginning of funds of literacy.

**Resistant Capitalization**

With the limited childcare accessibility, my parents had no choice but to take the children with them to work in the crop fields during school’s off-season in the summer. As a child, my summers did not consist of swimming lessons or leadership camps but instead working the entire season in the vineyards. We would harvest fields of grapes throughout the Central San Joaquin Valley of California. Our mornings began at 4:30 a.m. to arrive by 6 a.m. This would allow us to get an early start to the day to beat the scorching three-digit temperatures. On our way to work, my dad would pick up several other workers to bring along. They would sit in the back of our pickup truck. I can remember my father yelling as he picked up each worker, “El agua, no te olvides!” We had to make sure to pack our jug of water. There were no water fountains or restrooms provided by the farm owners out in the crop fields for the field workers, which primarily comprised of immigrants from Mexico. There were no trees or tarps to provide shade to sit under, except for the grapevines full of insects. The days would reach over 100 degrees.

My father’s job was to supervise the workers, logging in the number of vineyards completed and by whom. My mother and my sister would pick grapes from a row in the vineyards. My older brother, who was only 12 years old, and myself eight at the time, would take another row in the vineyard. Our job was to cut the bunches of grapes, spread them out on paper, and let the sun do its job by cooking the grapes into raisins. My brother would cut and pull the grapes off the vine, place them in a bucket, then lift the bucket to toss the grapes on the poster-sized paper. My job was to lay the poster-sized papers on the ground for my
brother to toss the grapes on. I would need to place one bundle of grapes on each corner of the paper to avoid the wind taking it away. Sometimes the wind would beat me, and as the paper would start flying away, I would catch it, and get a few paper cuts. So much so that I would run through the grapevines, hiding in them, sucking my fingers to stop the bleeding (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*Discoveries in the San Joaquin Valley Grapevines*

![Discoveries in the San Joaquin Valley Grapevines](image)


I would often get distracted under the vines by the leaves that served as airplanes for the caterpillars I would catch. Dad would yell, looking for me, “Lidia, donde estas! Ven aqui, tu hermano necesita ayuda?” I would say goodbye to the insects I discovered under the vines and run back to my brother. As a child, working in the fields was my “normalcy” every summer throughout my grade
school years. This was my funds of work ethic, geography, science, agriculture, and entertainment.

**Familial Capitalization**

My father would often share that nothing was free in this country, and hard work paid off. He also emphasized, which at the time I did not understand, “Somos Mexicanos y para eso necesitamos trabajar más duro.” I assumed that since I was born Latina, I was expected to work harder. In school, my work ethic from working in the crop fields carried me through my studies; a sense of perseverance and expectation to get things done. For the first 14 years of my life, I grew up living in public housing, also known as the projects, located in the small town of Reedley, California. Some of my best childhood memories are growing up in that neighborhood. The children would spend hours playing outside: hopscotch, dodge ball, marbles, tag, kickball, and countless other physical games. The mothers in the neighborhood knew all the children and would watch out for each of them as they came across their path. I can remember going to friends’ homes and parents always offering a bite to eat to the other children who stopped by to visit. Every year, my mother would celebrate my birthday with a home-baked cake and invited all the children in the neighborhood to celebrate along with us. There was a sense of nurturing and family-oriented environment within the community. I learned about family values, team building, fairness, and the value of effective communication through the countless activities shared among the community.

**Social Capitalization**

I also witnessed the community, and my parents help many other families outside the neighborhood, regardless of our limited resources. As a child, I remember my father assisting many families in transitioning to the United States
from Mexico. My father would allow a family to sleep in our small living room space. He would help them find shelter and offer them work opportunities in the crop fields. They would usually stay no more than a week or two. He did this often, supporting large families, small families, or a young couple. My father would not take any of the few funds the families would offer but would accept a gift of a bolsa of dulces for the children or a sobrecama. I learned about resourcefulness by helping my mother prepare meals with the limited food we had for the families. My father was a religious man who took his family to la mesa every Domingo. In addition to religion, he instilled values to care for Nuestra Familia and help others as well. However, health services were too expensive; it was rare to see a doctor or a dentist. Luckily, when the pain became unbearable in my mouth from a cavity, it was a comadre who told my mom about a free clinic a town away in Orange Cove. This clinic became our doctor and dentist visits. Lastly, it was also a vecina who shared with my mom about a free preschool a block away for me to receive an early start in attending school. It was friends who shared the benefits of purchasing a home. By the time I was 14 years old, my dad managed to purchase our first home. These were my funds of religion, economics, health, and cooking.

**Linguistic Capitalization**

My mother did not receive an American education. Her knowledge of the education system was limited through the lenses of her children. I found myself interpreting for her at the doctor’s office, grocery store, and school conferences. It was through these experiences that my cognitive linguistic skills were strengthened. Because of my constant switching of languages with family and friends, I found myself thinking in Spanish and English to solve academic problems in school. This was the funds of languages.
Navigational Capitalization

After telling my mother we did not have any books in the house, she excitedly found one at a yard sale. I did not have the heart to tell her it was a Webster’s Pocket English Dictionary. Anytime I heard a word I did not understand from a teacher at school or on a television show, I would look it up in my small dictionary. By the time I entered high school, I had lost my Spanish accent.

It was Mrs. Flores, my high school counselor, who summoned me from my class to speak about college. Although I did not know her well, my impression was that she was a nice lady who cared about students. From my freshman year to my last year in high school, she sent a birthday card to my classroom every year. She tried to make connections with her students, and for that reason, I listened to her advice. Finally, she convinced me to apply to our local community college in Reedley. She summoned me out of class a few more times to help with the necessary community college paperwork. This was the funds social capital and navigational capital.

Aspirational Capitalization

When I completed community college, I saw the joy in my parents’ eyes and knew I had to keep going for them. I felt my story, raised by immigrant parents, working in the grapevines, and living in the projects, all served as my assets to succeed in higher education. It was challenging maneuvering my way in college, being the only child in the family to attend a four-year university. It was the culmination of my funds of knowledge and the richness of wealth among the various community capitals in achieving my goals, the strength of my family unity, and resistant capital that all contributed to leading me to achieve a higher education.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This study emerged from my childhood upbringing, questioning my influences on deciding and attaining my higher education degrees. In addition, my interest in this research on Latinx students’ influences on attaining a college degree stems from my experience as a teacher teaching at the same lower socioeconomic high school for the past 23 years. I have witnessed many students take different career paths after graduation. Some decide to attend college right after high school, and many do not. Many of these students share similar upbringing stories as mine: lower socioeconomic status and from a marginalized ethnic group. However, all students have been shaped by their own childhood experiences, motivational levels, family, community, and educational influences. Moreover, since the high school’s inception in 1999 (where this study’s participants were from), there has not been any such research collected from the school site on interviewing past students about how and why they decided to pursue and attain a college degree. Where did the influences stem? This research collected their stories and shed light on Latinx students’ experiences who graduated from a lower socioeconomic high school in California’s Central Valley, decided to attend a higher educational institution, and obtained their college degrees. The participants’ stories can provide useful information for those who formulate policy, teach, and deliver services to provide recommendations for how high schools in lower socioeconomic communities can develop services that promote higher education attainment and achievement for students from a lower marginalized group, such as Latinx students.
Latinx Student Population

The Latinx population continues to grow in the United States. They are the nation’s largest ethnic group, with a total population increase from 16% in 2010 to 18% by 2019 (Noe-Bustamante et al., 2020a). The number of Latinx students enrolled in schools, colleges, and universities in the United States has doubled from 1996 of 8.8 million students to 2016 of 17.9 million students, with a total makeup of 22.7% of all people enrolled in school (Bauman, 2017). Furthermore, students from racial and ethnic minority groups in the United States who attend lower socioeconomic high schools experience persistent barriers to educational opportunities (Gandara, 2010). In 2019, 69% of students from higher-income high schools were 25% more likely to enroll in college versus only 55% from lower-income high schools” (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021, p. 1).

Moreover, Latinx (Hispanic and Latino/a) is the nation’s largest minority group in California, Texas, and New Mexico, and more than 16% of the youth population is Latinx (Gandara, 2010). Due to 80% of Latinx students being socioeconomically disadvantaged compared to 31% of White students in California, Latinx students are more likely to attend segregated schools that are disproportionately low income (Brighouse et al., 2018; Buenrostro, 2016).

By 2060, the Latinx population is estimated to grow to 111 million, making up 26.5% of the total population in the United States (United States Census Bureau, 2018). California has a total population of 39,283,000, with 15,327,688 comprising the Hispanic population (Hernandez-Nieto et al., 2017). However, there is still a disproportionate number of Latinx students completing their education. Moreover, it has been a pattern for decades that the Latinx population in the United States has the largest gap in college attainment among adults with college degrees (Camacho, 2011). California shows Latinx students graduating
high school, with 86% possessing a graduation diploma or equivalent, but there are only 18% of adults who attain a college degree compared to 52% of Whites (Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018). Many Latinos are first-generation students to attend college and may find it challenging to attend college, making them more susceptible to dropping out (Morales, 2018). Latinx students are less likely to complete college due to family or work obligations, lack of familiarity with college life, or understanding financial aid (Morales, 2018). Moreover, only 36% of full-time enrolled Latinx students’ complete college within 6 years compared to 49% of White students (Camacho, 2011).

The Central Valley of California has one of the fifth largest cities named Fresno, one of the largest urban populations in the United States, which is comprised of a population of 542,107, and the average household income is $69,880, with median house values at $242,000 (Healthy Fresno County Community Dashboard [HFCCD], 2021). Fresno’s population is rapidly growing and demographically changing. In 1940, Fresno had a demographic population of 94% White. By 2021, Fresno now has 50.4% of its demographics comprising of Hispanics with a median income of $46,300 and 29.97% of its population living in poverty (HFCCD, 2021). Figure 2 shows Fresno’s educational attainment differences among ethnic groups, with 11% of Hispanics earning bachelor’s degrees and 65% graduating high school, 83.55% Blacks graduating high school and 17% achieving a bachelor’s degree, 75.74% Asians graduating high school and 29.61% attaining a bachelor’s degree compared to 99% White graduating high school and 33% attaining a bachelor’s degree (World Population Rate, 2021).
The Hispanic total population in Fresno, California is 256,260, with 136,381 attending the public school system and showing 88,820 (65.12%) completing high school and 15,462 (17.41%) attaining a bachelor’s degree (World Population Rate, 2021). Although, Latinx is the largest minority group in the county of Fresno, this population shows to have the lowest higher education attainment (see Figure 3).
The California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) results showed a 28 percentage-point gap between Hispanic students and their White peers and a 47 percentage-point gap between Latinx and Asian peers (Buenrostro, 2016). Gandara (2010) claimed that from the start of Latinx students’ education experiences beginning with kindergarten, on average, they perform far below most of their counterparts throughout their educational trajectory. Latinx children also have less access to preschool, are more than twice as likely to be poorer than White children, and one-third of Latino families lack health insurance contributing to chronic health problems, which may cause students to be absent (Berliner, 2009). Moreover, there is a significant achievement gap between Latinx and their White peers in math and English language arts. Furthermore, according to the National Assessment of Educational
Progress (National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP]; 2021), only 16% of Latino fourth graders are proficient in reading. According to Garcia and Chun (2016), Latinos that are not proficient in reading tend to drop out of school at a larger rate than non-Latino students. Moreover, the dropout rate among Latinos is higher than non-Latino students (Garcia & Chun, 2016).

**Successful Latinx Students**

Focusing on the Latinx students who graduate from an urban high school serving the lower socioeconomic status population and decide to pursue college to attain a college degree will help to understand better how to support other students from a similar background and population attending urban high schools that do not pursue a higher institution after graduation. High schools that have effective programs to monitor Latinx students’ progress in college-going programs tend to be more academically successful in supporting students’ higher education pursuits (Gandara & Bial, 2001). When students experience a sense of belonging and attachment to their high school, they are less likely to drop out (Gandara, 2010). Teachers are a significant asset in providing the necessary skills to promote inclusivity for all students (Day, 1999). Unfortunately, schools throughout the United States that serve low-income students lack the advanced courses and qualified teachers to give students access to educational skills needed for college preparation or be graduate to career-ready (Berliner, 2009).

**Problem Statement**

There is a much lower college attainment rate among Latinx students who graduate from an urban high school than their counterparts. One of the largest school districts in the Central Valley of California, an urban school district, was the study’s prime focus, which primarily composes lower socioeconomic schools
and shows Latinx students attending college at much lower rates than their counterparts. This urban school district serves 70,860 students, more than 88% are socioeconomically disadvantaged, and 18.3% are emergent English learners (California Department of Education, 2022). In school district X (pseudonym), over 7,500 students are receiving special education. The ethnic makeup of this district is 68% Hispanic, 11.4% Asian, 9.7% White, 8.7% Black, and less than 1% Pacific Islander and Native American. After reviewing the summary report of this school district, it was noted that the college enrollment after graduation (see Table 1) for Latinx students is the lowest percentage to attend college after high school.

Table 1

School District X College Enrollment Summary Report by Ethnicity Enrolled in Higher Education After High School

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</thead>
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<td>African-American Black</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
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<td>Asian</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>83.6%</td>
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<td>2002</td>
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<td>259</td>
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<td>3993</td>
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<td>53.9%</td>
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School district X’s summary report shows the high school graduating class of 2017 with a college enrollment of 86% among Asian students, 88% among Native Americans, 88% among Pacific Islanders, 83% among Whites, 77% among
Blacks, and 78% among Hispanic students. With the graduating class from high school in 2019 who decided to attend college, the percentages slightly altered with Asian student college enrollment at 78%, Native American at 85%, Pacific Islander at 81%, White at 72%, Black at 78%. Hispanic students had the lowest college enrollment percentage at 70%. There are population differences among all groups in this school district, with 327 Black students who graduated in 2020, 496 Asian students, 20 Native American students, 21 Pacific Islander students, 358 White students, and 2,687 Hispanic students who graduated high school in the year 2020.

One of the high schools within this school district that has a slightly higher percentage of high school graduation than the district average was examined to collect and analyze the narratives of Latina college alumni students who all graduated from this school. The high school has 2,948 students, 89.8% socioeconomically disadvantaged, 15.7% emergent English learners, and 0.6% foster youth (California Department of Education, 2022). There is a population of 69% Hispanics at this high school, 19% Asians, 3.2% White, and 5.8% African American (California Department of Education, 2022). The high school is ranked 685th within California and is in the 52nd percentile of all public high schools in California for graduation rate (PrepScholar, 2022). It has a total minority enrollment of 97% and is recognized as an Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) national demonstration school. This high school also offers 17 subject AP courses, over 60 clubs, a Doctor’s Academy, a Criminology and Public Service Academy, and the AVID academy.

According to Schhneider et al. (2006), Latinx students drop out of school at much higher rates than students in any other marginalized racial group in the United States. Understanding the influencing factors that foster achievement for
Latinx students to pursue and attain a college degree will help narrow the understanding of how to support and increase college enrollment and contribute to Latinx students’ success.

**Purpose of the Study**

This study’s purpose was to collect the foundational bases that contributed to Latinx students’ college degree attainment to assist other students who are finding challenges in succeeding in higher education. Yosso’s (2005) community cultural wealth framework provided a foundation for this study as it encompassed the assets that Latinx communities utilize in their decisions and aspirations to higher education. In addition, funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 2001; Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1994) was highlighted as it focused on family values as a strong component of Latinx students’ education achievement. This study collected and analyzed the narratives of 10 college alumni Latinx students who all graduated from the same urban high school located in one of the largest school districts in California. These same students enrolled in higher education and obtained their college degrees. In-depth interviews with these Latinx alumni college students clarified their educational experiences of higher education success attainment, including family and environment interactions that facilitated their choice to pursue and attain a college degree. Lastly, Bronfenbrenner’s (1976, 1989) ecological theory contributed to understanding how important Latinx students’ environment is to their education successes. By collecting the narratives of what high school, family, and environmental experiences influence Latina students in higher degree attainment, I intend to provide this information to school leaders, urban communities, and relevant stakeholders to support practices and policies that can contribute to raising the percentage of Latinx students who pursue and attain a college degree.
Research Questions

The study addressed the following research questions regarding the factors of Latinx students to pursue and attain a college degree:

**Research Question 1:** What extrinsic factors related to their environment, community, and family influence Latina students who graduated from an urban high school to pursue and attain a bachelor’s degree?

**Research Question 2:** What intrinsic factors related to school, community, or family support influenced Latina students who graduated from an urban high school to pursue and attain a college degree?

**Research Question 3:** How did adult agents (teachers, parents, etc.) influence the decision of Latinas to pursue higher education?

Significance of the Problem

This study examined the influencing factors of Latina students when they decide to attend college and attain their college degrees. According to Wiggan and Watson (2016), this would be a valuable resource for educators to identify successful strategies for increasing college enrollment among students of color. It is essential to investigate the influences of Latinx students who graduate from lower socioeconomic urban high schools and decide to pursue and attain a college degree (Day, 1999).

Definition of Terms Describing Latin Americans

Terms used to describe 18% of the U.S. population of Latin American descent are Spanish-speaking, Hispanics, Latino, Chicano, and Latinx (Simon, 2020). In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Nixon administration debated what to call the people of Latin American descent. By 1977, the term Hispanic was adopted by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) as a category that
included Spanish-origin people (Mercedes, 2013). The word Hispanic was linked to Hispano. Although it carried resistance since it referred to those from Spain and other Spanish-speaking countries but excluded Brazil, it still gained popularity by the 1990s (Simon, 2020). Social media outlets like Telemundo and Univision wanted to lump their audiences across the country as one market (Simon, 2020). Although Latino, short for Latino Americano, emerged between the years 1808–1821 as Latin American countries became independent, it faded while other terms came about (Simon, 2020). Latino was criticized for its lack of recognizing people from Spain. Chicano is a term that became popular among Mexicans born in America as a symbol of pride during the Chicano Movement of the 1960s (Planas, 2012). The movement brought students to protest from various public schools. “Students walked out in protest at public schools from Crystal City, Texas, to East Los Angeles” (Planas, 2012, p. 1).

Today, in 2021, Latinx is a term used to describe people of or related to Latin American origin or descent (Noe-Bustamante et al., 2020b). Latinx is becoming a “global movement to introduce gender-neutral nouns and pronouns into many languages whose grammar has traditionally used male or female construction” (Noe-Bustamante et al., 2020, p. 4). Gonzalez-Barrera (2020) surveyed 3,030 U.S. Hispanic adults in a national survey of Latinos. Only 23% of the U.S. adults who self-identified as Hispanic or Latino have heard of Latinx, and only 3% used it to describe themselves. Another 76% had not heard of the term Latinx, while 20% had heard of it (Gonzalez-Barrera, 2020). Since the terms Latino and Hispanic continue to be used interchangeably in the literature review to describe people of Spanish descent in the United States, both terms may be utilized when explaining research work. However, the researcher will primarily use the term Latinx throughout the research in discussions and reviews.
Outline of Theoretical Frameworks Used in Study

Funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 2001; Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1994) and community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) served as the frameworks to help guide this research work to understand Latinx students’ influences and those who decide to pursue and attain a college degree. In addition, Bronfenbrenner’s (1976, 1989) ecological theory will help understand Yosso’s (2005) work, and the community cultural wealth framework will provide a suitable foundation for this study as it encompasses the assets that Latinx communities utilize in their decisions and aspirations to higher education. In addition, funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 2001; Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1994) will also be highlighted as it focuses on family values as a strong component of Latinx students’ educational achievement. These frameworks were chosen since they are asset-based approaches, meaning they counteract the notion that the culture and language of Latinx students are deficiencies to overcome, but instead, they are strengths. Lastly, Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory will contribute to understanding how important the environment of Latinx students is to their education successes.

Chapter Summary

Although there is growing research on why Latinx students do not attend college, there is a lack of research highlighting those who attend college and attain their degrees. Therefore, recognizing the influencing factors of how Latinx students decide and earn a college degree will have value in assisting to bridge the equity barrier gaps that exist among Latinx students and their White counterparts.

Chapter 2 will emphasize the study frameworks and present the supporting literature: funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 2001; Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1994), community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005), and Bronfenbrenner’s (1976) ecological systems theory. These were selected to facilitate engagement
discussions for educators who teach Latinx students to understand the resources and knowledge these students bring to school. In addition, Latinx college retention and college completion rates will be discussed. Moreover, culturally responsive practices, motivational factors, and school curriculum, particularly advanced placement (AP) courses, will also be highlighted within the literature review to provide a sense of intrinsic and extrinsic factors.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

According to Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968), the Pygmalion effect is how teachers’ expectations influence student performance; positive expectations about students affect performance positively while negative expectations for students influence performance negatively. Boser et al. (2014) found that secondary teachers have lower expectations for Latinx students, believing they are 42% less likely to earn a college diploma than their White peers. Kumar et al. (2015) set out a hypothesis question: “Do White teachers leave their stereotypes and prejudices at the classroom door?” (p. 536). Kumar et al.’s (2015) study consisted of 241 White teachers, of which 71% were females and from 12 middle schools located in a culturally diverse school district in the Midwest of the United States. The teachers took an implicit association test that tested their speed cognitive tasks based on pictures that pertained to stereotypical view questions. The results reported a significant preference for White students over non-White students in the implicit association test. Overall, the findings of this study stated, “teachers’ behavior in the classroom results from a blend of conscious and unconscious processes” (Kumar et al., 2015, p. 541). Gay (2002) suggested

An awareness step requires teachers to examine their own beliefs, values, and behaviors that hinder or facilitate the process of student learning; once self-awareness becomes apparent, teachers are better able to recognize different cultural elements in students’ behaviors and use those insights to moderate teaching strategies. (p. 113)

With this research in mind, the literature review will include three frameworks to help teachers recognize Latinx students’ strengths to avoid a deficit mindset when teaching lower socioeconomic Latinx students. Past research contributions of the models will be showcased using historical context exploration and how they can support Latinx students’ higher institution endeavors and
attainment. The frameworks presented in the literature review that intersect with Latinx students’ education success will include community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005), funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 2001; Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1994), and Bronfenbrenner’s (1976) ecological theory.

Culturally relevant teaching (CRT) will also be discussed to showcase how the educator’s knowledge in utilizing the various capitals in community wealth, funds of knowledge, and contributing to a safe environment contribute to supporting Latinx education success. Lastly, supporting Latinx students through presenting research on motivational levels, including intrinsic and extrinsic levels, will be discussed, along with the curriculum, including the history of advanced placement (AP) courses with Latinx students.

Theoretical Frameworks Supporting Latinx Educational Success(s)

Funds of Knowledge

There can be many reasons students decide to pursue higher education, but skills learned from family influence are one of the most valuable assets (Brusoski et al., 1992). To understand family dynamics and their value to Latinx students’ decisions to pursue higher education, the funds of knowledge (FOK) framework guides research in understanding the influencing factors of Latinx college alumni students’ decisions to pursue and attain a college degree. Funds of knowledge is a model used to incorporate families into the K–12 curriculum. The FOK has two primary purposes: how teachers represent “historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household and individual functioning and well-being” (González et al., 2005, p. 133). This model recognizes resources and skills present in the homes that have been utilized to integrate
students’ and families’ experiences in the classroom (Kiyama, 2011). Funds of knowledge draw from Vygotsky and neo-sociocultural perspectives in designing a methodology that views the everyday practices of language and action as constructing knowledge (González et al., 2005). This approach “facilitates a systematic and powerful way to represent communities in terms of the resources they possess and how to harness them for classroom teaching” (González et al., 2005, p. 5).

Funds of knowledge came from decades of research work concerned with “social justice issues such as the validity and impacts of deficit thinking” (Hogg, 2010, p. 666). In the 1960s, the American government was concerned about the academic gaps among minority students, mainly Hispanic (Hogg, 2010). The roots of the term funds of knowledge came to life by Wolf (1966), who explained the term as resources and knowledge to manage the household, like funds for rent, ceremonial funds, social funds, and replacement funds to survive in the household economy (Hogg, 2010). Vélez-Ibáñez and Greenberg (1994) initially created the concept of FOK. They found the term was relevant in describing the varied resources possessed by Latinx learners, and this model served as an effective research tool for these learners to bring to the classroom (Baker & Rhodes, 2008; Oughton, 2010). They used the concept to describe the assets and cultural ways of interacting evident in the United States–Mexican households. Vélez-Ibáñez and Greenberg (1994) explained FOK as “bodies of knowledge of strategic importance” to Mexican households (p. 270). In the study of Mexican households in Tucson, Arizona, it was found that “Mexican populations operate within a cluster of kin relationships connected to other local households” (Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1994, p. 276). Those Mexican families’ relationships are valued by investing their labor and pooling resources for calendric activities such as
birthdays, quinceaneras, weddings, and baptisms. These are all examples of social funds, which are a component within the funds of knowledge.

Moll et al. (2001) formed a collaborative project to study households and classroom practices within working-class Mexican communities. It was Moll et al.’s (2001) “extension of the idea from anthropology to education, that the concept gains much of its power to disrupt discourses of deficit and to transform teacher’s beliefs and attitudes” (Oughton, 2010, p. 64). The study entailed exploring how household members use their funds of knowledge in dealing with change and often complex social and economic circumstances (Moll et al., 2001). The study focused on how Mexican families build a social exchange of resources, including labor, contributing to the household’s economic survival. Teachers conducted regular home visits to build relationships using qualitative methods to study household knowledge. As a result, the teacher became the student, learning from their student’s family and building stronger relationships. Teachers experienced firsthand their students’ funds of knowledge through witnessing how some helped with household finances, labor skills, and how well-versed they were in their homelands. The funds of knowledge identified by the study suggested, “realistic views of households as containing ample cultural and cognitive resources with great potential utility for classroom instruction” (Oughton, 2010, p. 64). These embodied skills can be transferred within the classroom to contribute to students’ academic success.

Funds of knowledge challenge a teacher’s perceptions about students of color, countering the pervasiveness of cultural deficit theorizing that may contribute to the underachievement of ethnic minority students due to assuming deficiencies regarding their culture, families, and themselves (Verdin et al., 2016). By understanding and validating students’ funds of knowledge, teachers can
provide the skills in the classroom to enrich academic content while tapping into students’ motivation. Utilizing the funds of knowledge framework within the classroom for educators can provide motivation and support to help Latinx students excel in their educational endeavors.

**Community Cultural Wealth**

Teachers who carry a deficit mindset of thinking about their students of colors’ academic performance, such as high risk or high maintenance and underprepared or culturally deprived, contribute to students of colors’ inability to perform at their optimum level (Kanagala et al., 2016). Schools with a positive school climate, where teachers hold positive attitudes and high expectations about students and value culturally responsive practices, build a school where students of a marginalized group, like Latinx, want to learn and perform academically better than their White peers (Harmon, 2012). Like the funds of knowledge framework, another framework where educators can build and be better equipped to employ culturally informed promotive and protective resources when working with Latinx students is Yosso’s (2005) community cultural wealth framework, which focuses on Latinx cultures to be considered assets rather than deficits. Communities of color foster six types of capital and collectively form community cultural wealth, accompanied by a cultural race theory lens (Yosso, 2005). Cultural race theory’s historical intent was to understand how white supremacy and people of color had been established (Yosso, 2005). Specifically, critical race theory focuses on the inequities and unjust distribution of resources and power within society. A community cultural wealth model is an asset-based approach that examines six forms of cultural capital that students of color experience and historically are undervalued in White, middle-class educational institutions (Liou et al., 2009). Yosso’s (2005) framework of six forms of community cultural wealth was applied
to this study to understand how students maneuvered through their challenges and succeeded in college. I also included examples from my prologue to help understand how I applied the six forms of community cultural wealth within my life, leading to higher education. In Hobbs (2020), Robert Martinez, a Latinx researcher, studied how academic counselors can effectively serve Latinx students using funds of knowledge and community cultural wealth discussed throughout the capitals. Kanagala et al. (2016) learned about students’ assets in a qualitative research study by examining 47 Latino/a students at a Hispanic-serving institution who participated in focus groups. Students shared their triumphs and challenges through the cultural collision as they transitioned from their familiar worlds to the newly chartered waters of the college world. Through these studies and my prologue, the six frames of cultural wealth capitals are utilized as empowerment for Latinx students to persevere and succeed in educational institutions. Exploring Yosso’s (2005) six frames in more detail will help build an understanding of how Latinx students develop a sense of resiliency for academic success.

One of the six frames is resistant wealth, which is about those “knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequity” (Yosso, 2005, p. 80). Although Latinx students from poor-quality high schools tend to struggle in college, many still persevere to graduate (Duncheon, 2018). In Martinez and Deil-Amen’s study (2015), the Latinx students’ experiences transitioning from various socioeconomic status high schools to their first year in a postsecondary four-year public university were analyzed. Martinez and Deil-Amen’s (2015) found Latinx students learn to internalize perceptions about their self-efficacy throughout their high school experiences. Academic tracks, school resources, relationships, and guidance counselors play a factor in students’ confidence to believe they can succeed in college (Martinez & Deil-Amen, 2015).
These perceptions gain traction that helps shape their responses to academic challenges faced as Latinx students during their first year of college, and anytime they doubted their academic abilities, they drew on their past perseverance experiences to build the confidence levels to pursue and succeed in college (Martinez & Deil-Amen, 2015).

Furthermore, resistant capital is the ability to motivate and resist oppressive factors that may hold a person of color back (Yosso, 2005). Hobbs (2020) stated that Latinx students develop skills to challenge academic obstacles due to lifelong racial microaggressions. According to Janak (2021), racial microaggressions can be broken down into three types: microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations. Janak (2021) explained that microassaults are old-fashioned racism, such as telling racist jokes or mocking someone’s language, microinsults are racist comments about a person of color’s race or heritage, and microinvalidations are actions or comments that demean the lived racial realities of people of color. Microaggressions are a subtler form of racism that insults marginalized groups, which carry the potential to affect Latinx students’ psychological adjustment to include depression, anxiety, or drug use (Lui, 2020). Moreover, in the prologue, the researcher shared the harsh conditions with the absence of drinking water and access to toilets for the field workers even after a California law was initiated in 1965 requiring field toilets. However, this microinvalidation did not detract workers from earning an income; field workers continued to persevere by working, bringing their own jug of water and toiletries. The workers used the grape fields as their restroom.

Martinez and Deil-Amen (2015) stated that the quality of teacher interaction relationships matters to a student’s self-efficacy, which is a key element of Latinx students’ college completion rate. Self-efficacy is a key factor in
success. According to Bandura and Adams (1977), self-efficacy is defined as beliefs that determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave. An individual can gain self-efficacy by overcoming obstacles and by strengthening persistence. How one feels about themselves can affect their choices of activities, behavioral setting, the amount of effort put forth, and how long they will persevere in the face of obstacles and aversive experiences (Bandura & Adams, 1977).

Latinx students search for resistant capital to persevere through college. Hobbs (2020) stated that one way to help Latinx students in this capital is through identifying and lowering barriers that inhibit Latinx students’ academic achievements.

Another frame is familial capital, which is the ability of students to recognize human resources in their environment (Kanagala et al., 2016). Yosso (2005) refers to familial wealth as cultural knowledge nurtured among familia (kin) that carries a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition. Hobbs (2020) stated that Latinx students find strength in the guidance they receive from their families. In the prologue, as a family unit, achieving a home was done together. The neighborhood the researcher was raised in was community-oriented, where children interacted through collaborative teamwork and celebrations and were inclusive of everyone in the neighborhood. In Liou et al.’s (2009) study, low-income and limited-supported college-going identities of Latinx students participated in in-depth interviews to understand the extent to which families encourage their academic success. Responses included mothers helping with homework or seeking resources to facilitate learning and mothers serving as mentors to their children, which included making their mothers proud through success. Overall, Liou et al.’s (2009) study concluded that networks of trusted adults who can mentor students and guide them with academic expectations help
cultivate a college-going school climate. Kolluri’s (2019) study examined Latinx students’ experiences from high school to college. Latinx participants found the familial capital necessary to maneuver through college. For example, a participant “assembled pieces of dominant cultural knowledge from assorted resources in their lives by capitalizing on the knowledge of extended family, peers, and teachers to enhance their repertoires of college-going capital” (Kolluri, 2019, p. 10). Participants relied on past teachers, college-going family members, and friends to help familiarize themselves with the challenges of college. Dedicating time to Latinx students’ families can help educators become familiar with the student’s home responsibilities and build a sense of trust and connection (Hobbs, 2020).

According to Yosso (2005), cultural capital is values, knowledge shared among groups, and cultural practices. Pursuing higher education among Latinx families is valued, but navigating college is challenging as many are the first in their families to attend college (Morales, 2018; Vega, 2016). In California, Latinx households, of which “1.6 million families” are struggling financially, with less than $40,000 annual income a year (Denney et al., 2019, p. 1). A college education can ensure Latinx students’ financial stability, but the pressure of being the first in their family to complete their education and without much knowledge about higher education creates challenges for many to obtain their degree (Morales, 2018; Vega, 2016). A key factor for Latinx students to maneuver through college successfully is by utilizing the social wealth frame, which is the ability for students to recognize and gain support from social contacts such as peers for answers to facilitate social mobility (Kanagala et al., 2016). Motivation can play a factor in social networking, giving the answers Latinx families need to provide for their families and students who are attempting or pursuing higher education. For
example, Mrs. Flores, the counselor discussed in the prologue, gave academic advice and assisted in the application process of pursuing college. Another example in the prologue was how the father’s philanthropy in assisting families who migrated from Mexico. He provided shelter and assisted them in job placement to guide them in financial stability for getting started in America. In addition, the mother learned of the health services and schooling opportunities through a neighbor and a comadre who informed her about the free family services. Furthermore, Isik et al. (2018) investigated factors that influenced the academic motivation of ethnic minority students in high school and found that individual, family-related, school-related, and social factors influence the intellectual basis of ethnic minority students positively and negatively. Social wealth capital refers to the social dynamics of the family and the community and how social networks help in accomplishing goals (Yosso, 2005).

Often Latinx students may interpret for their parents in different places utilizing the linguistic wealth frame, which is the ability to develop communication skills through various experiences. Yosso (2005) stated, “Linguistic capital reflects the idea that students of color arrive at school with multiple language and communication skills” (p. 78). These various intellectual and social communication skills are what bilingual students bring to the classroom. Yosso (2005) stated bilingual children bring to the classroom the responsibilities of translating for their parents and gaining social skills to use in the classroom. For example, in the prologue, linguistic wealth was demonstrated when it was shared how the mother needed translation at various places, like the doctor’s office and school conferences. Latinx students are often asked on a whim to translate, quickly transitioning from child to interpreter, building their versatile skills for school’s unexpected homework tasks. Pimentel and Sevin (2009) stated
that about 90% of children from minority, second-language families serve as language brokers, which may start as early as eight years old. According to Merriam-Webster (2021), a broker is one who helps others reach agreements or help buy property. According to Kam (2011), language brokering is the “communication process where individuals with no formal training (often children of immigrant families) linguistically mediate for two or more parties, which are usually adult family members” (p. 455). Language brokering helps Latinx students with cognitive development (Mann, 2021). Problem-solving skills, higher-level decision-making strategies, and higher scores on standardized tests are correlated with language brokers (Piller, 2015). Research from Pimentel and Sevin (2009) showed language brokers outperform nonbrokering second-language learners in standardized tests and grade point averages. Language brokering has benefits for school success. According to Bialystok and Craik (2010), there are cognitive benefits of multilingualism (the use of more than one language, either by one or more speakers), including cognitive flexibility and a higher level of executing cognitive functions. One way to support Latinx students’ linguistic wealth in schools is by providing guidance forms for families and students in their native language to strengthen their linguistic effort (Hobbs, 2020).

The navigational wealth frame is the ability for students to utilize skills to maneuver through challenging circumstances that may not support social institutions and may not be created with “communities of color in mind” (Yosso, 2005, p. 80). Latinx students may be inclined to experience negative stereotypes, prejudices, and microaggressions (preconscious slight insults) while transitioning from high school to college and while on college campuses (Yosso et al., 2009). Guidance counselors are in positions where they can help Latinx students by providing academic advice and positive strategies for Latinx students to cope with
challenging circumstances (Tello & Lonn, 2017). In Duncheon’s (2018) study, participants reported challenges in making friends, and one participant cited his classmates stating he could not fathom being a first-generation student going to college. In the prologue, it was Mrs. Flores who helped navigate the paperwork needed to enter college for the student. English was the researcher’s second language, and a simple dictionary made learning English easier. To encourage schools to build navigational wealth, Latinx students would benefit from early career and college exploration to build an early college-going mindset (Hobbs, 2020).

Finally, the aspirational wealth frame is the ability of students to maintain hope and dreams for the future, especially under challenging circumstances (Yosso, 2005). In the prologue, aspirational wealth was evident in the researcher’s ability to defeat adversity as a child from immigrant parents, working in the fields of the Central Valley San Joaquin grapevines to accomplishing college degrees, including a doctorate. Duncheon’s (2018) case study explored the first-year college transition experiences of Latinx students who graduated from an urban high school. The study findings showed that students relied on aspirational, navigational, social, and familiar wealth to help them through their first year of college (Duncheon, 2018). Students in the study reported learning through trial and error for study techniques and navigating tutoring services. All the students reported staying optimistic about their learning opportunities since they felt a great deal of pressure to succeed, not only for themselves but also for their families (Duncheon, 2018). To strengthen Latinx students’ goals, bringing in past students or individuals like themselves who have enrolled in or completed college will build aspirational wealth (Hobbs, 2020).
In Kanagala et al.’s (2016) study, Latino/a students dismantled the notion that their culture is deficit-based; instead, it is a strength within their academic success. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) described critical race methodology as a methodology that hones students’ of color stories and racialized experiences. Learning more about Latinx students’ “stories, family histories, biographies, cuentos, and narratives” will give a clearer understanding of how and why they decided to pursue and attain a college degree (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26). Both funds of knowledge and community cultural wealth approaches can change the deficit thinking perceptions among educators by propelling discussions about asset-based pedagogies and opening doors for more Latinx students to pursue a college degree.

**Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Theory**

Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model is the last framework of discussion that has been modified to tie together the work of funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 2001) and community cultural wealth (Yosso et al., 2009). The model showcases the value of the environment on a growing individual. Furthermore, the model can support teachers in increasing Latinx students’ academic achievement and education attainment by developing practical school environments to students’ needs, culture, characteristics, and family background (Leonard, 2011). The original model was designed and developed by the developmental psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner (1976). The model views the importance of environmental factors, basing its work on how human development occurs in the interaction between genetic attributes and the environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1976). This framework has a series of environmental structures at different levels within the model in which human beings develop, and it is the interaction throughout their lives within these structures that contribute to human development.
Bronfenbrenner (1976). Bronfenbrenner (1989) recognized there were various aspects of a person’s life as they are developing from childhood to adulthood, considering wider influencing factors and the context of development. He divided the person’s environment into five different systems. Microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem. The microsystem represents the direct contact with the child such as parents, siblings and teachers. The mesosystem represents the interactions between the child’s adults in his life. The exosystem includes the neighborhood or surrounding of the child that may indirectly influence the microsystem. The macrosystem represents how the child’s wealth and ethnicity may affect their development. Lastly, the chronosystem represents all the environment changes that happen in the child’s life and affect his development.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1976), the five systems of a person’s life are interrelated with social environmental influences on human development. The theory supports how the environment a child grows up in tends to affect all aspects of one’s life. The social influences contribute to one’s cognitive skills, emotional intelligence, and overall influences of decision-making (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). I have modified Bronfenbrenner’s (1976) framework to include the intersections of community cultural wealth and funds of knowledge as it all applies to the Latinx student interrelations and influences, depending on their relationship with one another in deciding to pursue and attain a college degree. Bronfenbrenner’s (1976) five systems include microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem.

Figure 4 shows a modified model, *Latinx Student Higher Education Influences* Model that applies to Latinx students and is adapted from
Bronfenbrenner’s (1976) original framework and includes components of funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 2001) and community cultural wealth (Yosso et al., 2009).

**Figure 4**

*Latinx Student Higher Education Influences Model*


*Microsystem* entails the close relationships that are detrimental to the developing child and are directly in contact with the child in their immediate environment, like their family, which includes parents and siblings, peers, and religious affiliations (Guy-Evens, 2020). These relationships among close family members and mentors can contribute to a Latinx student’s academic success. Perna and Titus’s (2005) research entailed the value of parent involvement as positively correlated with college enrollment. Supporting parental involvement in
culturally appropriate ways can address the continued underrepresentation of Latinx students in higher education (Perna & Titus, 2005).

Moreover, a sense of religious or spiritual affiliation also influences Latinx students. Barriga’s (2020) phenomenological study of first-generation Latinx college students showed several common themes in their process of navigating through their first year of college. Common themes consisted of how their religious upbringing brought a sense of belonging when with peers with similar beliefs (Barriga, 2020). Attending similar spiritual gatherings like mass or retreats also provided social support (Barriga, 2020). Participants also shared that prayer helped them cope with college stressors. Latinx students find comfort in spirituality, family, and mentors, and the close relationships with family and people who are like family are valuable in their growth development (Barriga, 2020; Chavez, 2020; Perna & Titus, 2005).

The strength and connectiveness of these relationships tie to Bronfenbrenner’s mesosystem, which is the structure entailing the types of relationships the child has with the individuals in their microsystem structure. When positive relationships exist, the child benefits positively, and if there are negative relationships, the child may be negatively impacted (Guy-Evans, 2020). Strong relationships within the Latinx families provide an abundance of high-quality relationships with immediate and extended family (Landale et al., 2015). Without those relationships within this capital, it can create challenges for Latinx students to navigate achieving and obtaining a college degree. Santos and Reigadas (2002) found Latinx students benefitted from a faculty mentorship relationship with increased self-efficacy. A mentor relationship felt more supportive for the 32 Latinx participants if the mentor was of similar ethnicity and a student-mentor correlated with college adjustment (Santos & Reigadas, 2002).
Latinx students also develop a strong sense of relationship through the many forms of knowledge and skills learned through their families, as the funds of knowledge model indicate (Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1994). Life experiences of Latinx students give them the knowledge necessary to use in school (González et al., 2005). Chavez (2020), a multimedia journalist, shared her experience in the BeLatina publication as a Latinx, first-generation student who valued and accredited her academic success to culturally responsive mentorships. Culturally responsive mentorships possess a keen awareness, knowledge, and attitude, which display cultural competence (Chavez, 2020). The relationship with her mentor stemmed from the multitude of hours devoted to helping with writing and college applications, which were detrimental to her success.

Relationships help Latinx students adjust to college, but factors in the student’s environment can also be influential, like the *exosystem*, another component of Bronfenbrenner’s framework. This structure does not have the child in the system, but all factors within this structure can affect the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1976). For example, the place of employment of their parents can affect the child if the parents bring home their mental stressors. Events that can occur around the child may not be directly in that event but can still have impacting effects. One of the most influential settings outside the family home that contributes to child development is the school environment, curriculum accessibility, and culture and climate (Sibley & Brabeck, 2017). For Latinx students, initial disadvantages that may influence their decisions could stem from parents’ immigrant and social-economic status due to a lack of knowledge of the United States’ education system (Schhneider et al., 2006). According to Sibley and Brabeck (2017), children of immigrant parents are less likely to graduate high school when compared to their peers who have parents that are American native-
born. Moreover, Latinx students born to immigrant parents are more likely to live in urban areas where additional challenges are experienced, such as quality of teachers in schools, poverty, crowded housing, and higher violence, which are all influential in a child’s life (Reardon-Anderson et al., 2002). All these factors can influence a child’s decisions.

The macrosystem structure consists of an overarching pattern of micro, meso, and exo characteristics of culture or “other broader social context, with particular reference to the developmentally-instigative belief systems, resources, hazards, lifestyles, opportunity structures, life course options, and patterns of social interchange that are embedded in each of these systems” (Bronfenbrenner, 1989, p. 215). Bronfenbrenner (1976) reiterates that the characteristics of the macrosystem are carried from one generation to the next, like the schools and the socialization process. This structure represents the child’s socioeconomic status, ethnicity, geographic location, values, traditions, linguistic capital, and aspirations within their family and culture that do not refer to the specific environments but ones already established. A study by Chun and Dickson (2011) reviewed a variety of macrosystem characteristics of the Hispanic student’s academic performance. Parental involvement, culturally responsive teaching, a sense of school belonging, and self-efficacy led to positive academic outcomes for Hispanic students in a secondary school setting (Chun & Dickson, 2011). The study results showed Hispanic students’ academic performance, self-efficacy, and sense of belonging increased with positive parental involvement and successful implementation of culturally responsive teaching (Chun & Dickson, 2011).

Finally, Latinx students who decide to pursue or attain a college degree can change the trajectory of their lives, as the chronosystem entails. The chronosystem structure consists of the changes and motivation that occur in Latinx students over
their lifetime. These changes can influence development from a school change to a major life event (Guy-Evans, 2020). These changes can be external (e.g., unexpected issues with family members) or internal (e.g., a variety of maturity levels due to emotional reactions to changes within the student). The Latino student population in public schools has changed vastly, more so in parts of the country than in others. California, New York, and Texas Latinx school-age populations have more than tripled since the 1980s, from 8.1% to 25% (Gandara, 2017). Many changes occur with the Latinx student, from immigrants who are Spanish speaking to those who do not, and many are not from the same country (e.g., Mexican origin is less than 10% Puerto Rican, 3.7% Cuban, 3.2% Dominican Republic, 3.2% Central American nations, and 9% South American: Gandara, 2017). There are also those Latinx students from different classes and traditions. However, there is still a correlation between the Latinx student having a higher probability of attaining a lower educational level and living in higher poverty rates among the group (Gandara, 2017). Although the Latinx student has changed over time utilizing navigational capital, colleges still have a way to go to accommodate their needs and help with academic success.

Bronfenbrenner’s model is worth focusing on for Latinx students since there are a variety of layers within the school structure, which can determine paths to higher education and obtaining a college degree. Adolescents are still navigating their way in high school and figuring out their next moves when reaching college. It was presented that Latinx students utilize the capitals to navigate through obstacles using the community cultural wealth model. In sum, the school setting, teachers, and community relationships are key factors in Bronfenbrenner’s child development and key factors in community cultural wealth and funds of knowledge. Understanding and reviewing how to support Latinx
students’ higher education attainment could serve as an effective starting point in creating a plan of action.

**Examining How to Support Latinx Students’ Higher Education Attainment**

**Advanced Preparatory Courses**

Bronfenbrenner’s (1976) theory indicates that the growing child’s environment is an essential piece in growth development. An important predictor of a student’s growth process, especially for lower socioeconomic students, is providing a positive school climate and cultural environment that is safe and provides academic opportunities for the child to thrive (Leonard, 2011). The academic rigor of courses in the high school curriculum is strongly correlated with college performance (Vega, 2016). By providing school support and access to these rigorous courses, students can better prepare for college enrollment. The opportunities for Latinx students to take advanced courses within their school to prepare for higher education have increased but still can improve in equity access.

Advanced courses in predominantly suburban high schools began in 1955 by the College Board, a national nonprofit educational organization, for students to take college-level courses and earn credit (Quintero, 2019). Miksch (2008) said, “AP courses are the most commonly offered college preparatory courses in the United States and viewed by many as a way to ensure that students are prepared for college” (p. 113). Santoli (2002) conducted a study with 1,115 freshmen students throughout nine colleges, including Yale, Duke, and Michigan, who submitted at least one AP grade. These students were observed for four years. Santoli (2002) showed they had higher academic performance grades than their non-AP counterparts. Taking AP courses has many benefits, but there are also
concerns with equity issues with only one-half of American high schools, including AP courses and schools with a higher marginalized group of student populations not providing AP courses (Santoli, 2002).

On July 27, 1999, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), representing Hispanic and Black students in Inglewood, California, filed a civil rights class-action lawsuit in superior court for denying these students equal and adequate access to AP courses (Cmaadmin, 1999). A disproportionate amount of AP courses being offered at high schools showed differences in demographic populations. Such as Inglewood High School, which had a population of 97% of Latino and African American students, offered only three AP courses but Beverly Hills High School, which had a population of 8% of Latino and African American students, offered 45 AP courses (Cmaadmin, 1999). The lawsuit resulted in appropriations of $30 million by the California legislature to introduce a program to put AP courses online and provide a financial base for establishing or enlarging AP courses in disadvantaged school districts (Santoli, 2002). By 2008, the Hispanic student participation in taking AP exams had more than tripled since 1999, from 62,900 to 338,700 students, with an average of 1.93/5 in exam completion scores (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Today, 80% of the U.S. high schools offer AP classes, with an average of eight out of 38 courses and AP exams across 24 subject areas (Belasco, 2021). Advanced placement course exam outcomes continue to be the best predictor of college readiness among students; however, even with the number of students taking AP exams increasing, there continues to be a gap between White and Latinx students enrolled in these courses (Borg et al., 2011). The College Board has made great strides in improving the number of Latinx students enrolling in AP courses, but schools with predominantly Black and Latinx students tend to have lower enrollment numbers,
and racially diverse schools limit access to AP courses (Rom, 2020). With the benefits of college readiness and college success, AP courses are an essential component to influence Latinx students’ college enrollment and degree attainment.

However, there is an equity access issue with Latinx students taking AP courses. Borg et al. (2011) conducted a collective multiple-case study design, studying why high-achieving Hispanic students do not enroll in AP courses. Data were collected through focus group interviews with 28 high-achieving Hispanic students in a southeast Texas suburban public high school in their senior year. Some reasons given for not taking AP courses were lack of relationship-building among school staff to encourage students to take challenging courses, need to work outside of school to help their family financially, misperceptions of what AP courses entailed, lack of academic advisement, and lack of goal setting (Borg et al., 2011). Also, motivation can be a factor in taking advanced courses.

**The Link Between Motivation and College Retention Rates**

Although Latinx students are the largest minority group in the United States, they continue to perform academically lower than other minority groups (Vega, 2016). Moreover, Latinx students enroll in college at higher rates but tend to have lower college retention rates than their peers (Morales, 2018). College completion rates have improved for Latinx students. An increase in earning at least an associate degree for 25- to 29-year-olds increased from 15% in 2000 to 31% by 2019 (Postsecondary National Policy Institute [PNPI], 2021). In addition, earning a bachelor’s degree increased for Latinx students, from 10% attainment in 2010 to 21% by 2019 (PNPI, 2021). Although Latinx students have made academic gains in educational attainment, they are still trailing behind in college enrollment compared to Asian students (62%), White students (41%), and Black
students (37%; Admissionsly, 2022). In 2014, achieving a bachelor’s degree was significantly lower for Latinx students, with only 15% for 25- to 29-year-olds compared to 22% for Black students, 41% for White students, and 63% for Asian students (Krogstad, 2016).

There are various reasons for the lack of retention. The lack of social capital needed to succeed in college is one (Morales, 2018). Moreover, motivational factors may contribute to the academic differences among marginalized students and their White counterparts, influencing their long-term decisions to pursue a college degree. Hallinan’s (2008) research showed that students who enjoy school have higher academic achievement, motivation to persevere, and lower absenteeism, truancy, and disciplinary problems than those who dislike school. Furthermore, investigating motivation factors may be relevant in giving further insight into student populations’ academic achievement.

**Understanding Motivation Factors: Intrinsic and Extrinsic**

Motivation can be a key factor in how students prioritize their responsibilities. There are different types of motivation, which can contribute to a person’s commitment to excel or not (Myers, 2011). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation among ethnic minority and majority students varies. B. F. Skinner, a behaviorist psychologist and founder of operant conditioning, based his research on reinforcements to move a person’s behavior (Myers, 2011). Skinner stated that to understand behavior is to look at the causes of an action and its consequences (Myers, 2011). External motivation would be considered an operant condition behavior. Richard Ryan and Edward L. Deci (2000), founders of the self-determination theory (SDT), stated that humans have three innate psychological needs: one that relates to acceptance, which is the need to feel related; the need to
feel competent; and the need to feel autonomous. Ryan and Deci (2000) emphasized that intrinsic motivation is a factor that can help students become much more self-reliant, which is a contributing factor in strengthening their perseverance levels. The self-determination theory is a perspective that can encompass many of the attributes a student needs to be successful in various ways and contribute to a student’s self-efficacy, which can help with their academic success and life’s daily challenges. The self-determination theory is an approach to human motivation that argues that people from all cultures, including Latinx students, share basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness that are essential for facilitating optimal growth, social development, and personal well-being (Chirkov et al., 2003).

Ryan and Deci (2000) argued that people from all cultures, including Latinx students, benefit from the need for autonomy, which is a highly encouraging element in a school system. Intrinsic motivation factors with academic achievement have shown positive effects on college student populations, including the Latinx student population (Trevino & DeFreitas, 2014). Teachers who know the different levels to motivate their students are more likely to succeed in presenting their content to students, thus producing higher levels of student outcomes success. Isik et al. (2018) found that the student majority (White) group carries higher intrinsic motivation levels than the minority (Latino) student groups. A study conducted by Vasquez-Salgado et al. (2015) found that Latinx students who prioritize school experienced personal inner conflicts affecting their school performance. Próspero and Vohra-Gupta’s (2012) study entailed motivation and academic differences among college students, with 78% who were first-generation and 40% being Hispanic. In addition, the high school sample size consisted of 57% Hispanic. The study’s findings for the Hispanic student population suggest
Hispanic students with a positive home environment and supportive family relationships had higher intrinsic motivation levels that positively influence their academic achievement (Próspero & Vohra-Gupta, 2012).

For Latinx students, relationships are a crucial component in their development since they are least likely to participate in school extracurricular activities (Gandara, 2017). When students are given opportunities to exercise autonomy versus being controlled, they are more likely to be more engaged in the classroom and exercise their own choices (Black & Deci, 2000). Through autonomy, students can be successful. For example, when students are allowed to select their courses, studies show higher perceived competence, and a goal-oriented student is more willing to attend higher education (Black & Deci, 2000). When educators exercise teaching strategies to benefit all students of color, it can influence their decisions to pursue higher education (Myers, 2011).

Goal setting can be both intrinsic and extrinsic motivating factors for Latinx students. Goals are linked to motivation and performance in achievement situations (Myers, 2011). Goals can be classified as performance goals and learning goals. Performance goals are ones where students can measure how close they were to a certain task (Black & Deci, 2000). Learning goals are ones where students can understand their goal progress and how to improve along the way (Black & Deci, 2000). There is a higher concentration on performance goals in public schools where data can be recorded and interpreted. Although this can help the educator, it may hinder the student’s performance if they are far from the mark without any sense of understanding how to master it (Dweck & Grant, 2003). Also, pure performance goals are not a permanent solution to student life-skills success. However, learning goals should contribute to a student’s intrinsic motivation and be a life skill for students to apply in everyday challenges and
decisions (Dweck & Grant, 2003). Since learning goals are striving toward growth in competencies, it emphasizes the importance and benefits of learning some new knowledge or skill, engaging students in deeper, more self-regulated learning strategies, and, most importantly, having a higher sense of intrinsic motivation (Dweck & Grant, 2003).

By giving Latinx students opportunities to practice differentiating performance and learning goals, they can learn the difference and become active participants in their learning and life. With the importance of valuing a school system where educators can influence students’ motivation, it can reiterate the value of a goal-oriented student who is likely to persevere if the goal is leaning more toward a learning goal of reaching college versus solely a performance goal.

**School Climate and Culture**

One way to tap into motivation levels is to use students’ prior experiences and funds of knowledge to make learning more meaningful and motivating by utilizing culturally responsive practices. When students have a strong sense of attachment to a trusting adult, they have a higher sense of self-esteem, confidence level to achieve their goals, and perseverance in completing tasks, including academic assignments that creates a successful, resilient human being (Ng et al., 2004). School-age children’s attachments to parents have been found to generalize to other figures, such as teachers, influencing how people regulate their subsequent interpersonal behaviors and emotions (Guardia et al., 2000).

Moreover, other research has shown the effects of teachers’ perceptions of children’s competence predict subsequent performance more strongly among children who struggle academically than among high-achieving students (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Students who struggle academically tend to see themselves as less competent than their higher-achieving counterparts when teachers display negative
perceptions. Autonomy is also a contributing factor to students’ school motivation and academic engagement, particularly in secondary school classrooms (Hafen et al., 2011). Schools with a positive school climate, where teachers hold positive attitudes and high expectations of students and positive extended family relations, build a school where students want to learn and perform academically well (Hallinan, 2008). When students do not feel accepted, it is difficult for them to learn. When educators and school leaders utilize strategies to build a bridge to assist their students in gaining the sense to persevere in their academic studies in school by tapping into their motivation levels to gain a sense of autonomy, competency, and attachment, all contributing factors to student development, students are likely to perform at their optimum levels and raise their school likability.

**Culturally Responsive Approaches in Schools**

Successfully implementing culturally responsive teaching an positively affect the school climate and culture. Culturally responsive teaching can be explained as ethnically diverse students’ cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and academic performance styles to make learning simulations more relevant to and effective for their learning (Gay, 2002). Gay (2002) explained five relevant elements of culturally responsive practices (CRP), which includes the following:

- It acknowledges the legitimacy of the cultural heritage of different ethnic groups, both as legacies that affect students’ dispositions, attitudes, and approaches to learning and as worthy content to be taught in the formal curriculum.
- It builds bridges of meaningfulness between the home and school experience.
- It builds bridges of meaningfulness between academic abstractions and lived sociocultural realities.
• It uses a wide variety of instructional strategies that are connected to different learning styles.

• It incorporates multicultural information, resources, and materials in all the subjects and skills routinely taught in schools. (Griner & Stewart, 2012, p. 589)

These elements were created for teachers, regardless of race or ethnicity, and as Gay (2002) stated, “Teachers should become culturally responsive to meet their students’ needs, which have shown tremendous academic gains among minority students” (p. 110). For this matter, it is essential to analyze Latinx students who decided and attained a college degree to understand students’ funds of knowledge and enhance classroom practices for teachers and students (Moll et al., 2001). Culturally responsive practices (CRP) have benefited students from marginalized groups since their early inception.

According to Summey et al. (2021), CRP positively influences educational outcomes for Latinx students in urban schools. Garcia and Chun (2016) investigated whether “teacher expectations and culturally responsive teaching have positive effects on Latino students’ academic self-efficacy and academic performance” (p. 176). Three middle public schools near the United States–Mexico border were encouraged to participate in the study. The Latino population in the city comprised 57%. Participants were paid $5 to participate, and overall, 23% (110) of the students solicited participated, which comprised 55% female and 45% male, and 84% (92) were of Latino descent (others included nine Asian, six Black, and five Native American) ages 10–15. The teachers who participated in the study were “67% White and 28% Hispanic,” and 66% of the students received free or reduced lunch (Garcia & Chun, 2016, p. 175). Student participants were given a Likert scale that ranged from 1 (never) to 5 (always), asking them to “evaluate their teachers’ perception among several factors: teacher expectations of
them, culturally responsive practices, and the creation of a culturally respectful environment” (Garcia & Chun, 2016, p. 177). Other student personal factors were also assessed using a Likert scale, asking about generational status, academic self-efficacy, and academic grades. The maximum likelihood estimation method was used to analyze the results. The study results indicated that the “direct effect of culturally responsive teaching on academic performance was not supported. Rather the indirect effect of diverse teaching practice on academic performance was mediated through academic self-efficacy” (Garcia & Chun, 2016, p. 181). Garcia and Chun’s (2016) study implied that Latinx students benefit from diverse teaching methods by showing improvement in learning engagement, internalizing beliefs, and their ability to perform and succeed higher in school.

**Historical Context of Culturally Responsive Teaching**

When discussing CRP, it has evolved from a variety of past terms or phrases such as multicultural education, critical bicultural pedagogy, equity pedagogy, and culturally relevant pedagogy, which all share similar meanings (López, 2016). Early African American schools were using culturally responsive teaching with a multicultural curriculum and other instructional practices that were culturally congruent for Black students (Cowen, 2019). In 1865, Lydia Child developed books in which Black leaders’ biographies were discussed and celebrated Black pride in students. These books were used within the curriculum of Black schools. Today, evidence of documents indicates attendance was high, and students’ performance was successful (Harmon, 2012). By 1954, the desegregation of schools began initiating the migration of Black students to predominately White schools, with a written White perspective curriculum. Eventually, due to threats from the Ku Klux Klan, African American schools
dissolved along with Black teachers (Woodward, 1964). African American schools were using CRT strategies, and documents prove there was success.

Prior to 1950, it was common to segregate cultural and racial groups in the United States. Jim Crow laws mandated the segregation of races in public schools (Hansan, 2011). In 1947 the “Mendez v. Westminster decision invalidated school attendance patterns that were drawn to exclude Mexican American children from their local schools” (Lindsey et al., 2019, p. 10). In 1954, Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka ended segregation in public facilities (Lindsey et al., 2019). Critically responsive practices emerged from multicultural education during a time of activism for social justice in the 1960s during the Civil Rights Movement (Wiggan & Watson, 2016). Minority students attending colleges participated in civil rights activities in the streets and on college campuses (Gay, 2002). Protests were prevalent at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1969, where courses in ethnic studies were advocated for by student activism (Cowen, 2019). San Francisco University became the first college in the United States to establish the College of Ethnic Studies in 1969 after the Black Student Union led a student coalition for over four months of protests during the fall semester of 1968 (Burke & Rosales, 2020).

In 1968, California State University, Los Angeles, created the first Chicano Studies program in the country (Burke & Rosales, 2020). Minority students were stereotyped as not doing well in school academically due to dysfunctional families and cultural deprivation. During the civil rights movement, this philosophy was replaced with theories about the “negative impact of devaluing minority group’s cultures and the conflicting expectations between school and the home” (Harmon, 2012, p. 10). The Lau v. Nichols (1974, as cited in Harmon, 2012) decision required students to be taught in their primary language and the Bilingual
Education Act. Federal funds became available to research and design bilingual programs and ethnic studies curricula. Many entitlement programs were created for children of a marginalized group and lower socioeconomic status in which permanent labels became associated with certain ethnicities (Lindsey et al., 2019). By the 1970s, discussions of multiculturalism (focus on students’ ethnic differences) were evident with the growing number of students from diverse ethnicities in public school classrooms (Lindsey et al., 2019). The 1980s brought diversity training to corporate America, and the 1990s brought diverse frameworks to support professional change (Lindsey et al., 2019). Finally, cultural proficiency emerged in the 21st century. Culturally responsive practices can be traced back to African American ancestral roots, and these ideals provided the foundation for its academic effectiveness today in public education.

**Chapter Summary**

Latinx students are the largest minority group in the United States, with predictions by the year 2060 to be 29% of the population (Vega, 2016). Educational attainment has improved dramatically for Latinx students, with high school dropout rates lowered from 32% in 2000 to 21% by 2019 and college enrollment up from 22% in 1993 to 35% by 2014 (Krogstad, 2016; PNPI, 2020). A support system is necessary and should be included in the public secondary school system to provide the necessary tools for Latinx students to improve the achievement gap. Muniz (2019) stated that teachers’ behavior toward their students influences their learning and treatment and how they learn in the classroom. Success within the public-school entity will be dependent upon recognition of cultural accessibility that can promote inclusion among different cultural groups (Muniz, 2019).
The literature showed that an important predictor of a student’s growth process, especially for lower socioeconomic students, is providing a positive school climate, with opportunities to grow from advanced courses, building motivation opportunities, and a cultural environment that is safe for the child to thrive (Leonard, 2011). The gap and achievements in higher education attainment for Latinx students were explored through cultural capital, funds of family, and Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory. The framework models have emerged to understand better the needs of Latinx students in the public school system and college (Bronfenbrenner, 1976; Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1994; Yosso, 2005). Latinx students need to adapt and rely on themselves to maneuver through college, and they must be resilient and persist in the face of adversity to graduate (Gandara, 2017). There are differences within the Latinx ethnicity, and the resistant capital is in full swing once they realize the system is not designed to accommodate their needs. It will be purposeful to examine the stories behind the Latinx students who decided and successfully navigated through and succeeded in college using their funds of knowledge and community cultural wealth assets to provide the necessary support needed in the public school system. The literature also gave a close examination of understanding how Latinx students navigate Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system. Chapter 3 will describe the methodology approach utilized in the study, instruments used, and data analysis implemented to collect the narratives of 10 Latina participants.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Latinx students graduating from a lower socioeconomic urban high school in the Central Valley of California are not transitioning into a four-year college at the same rate as higher socioeconomic status students. Latinx students drop out of school at higher rates than students in any other marginalized racial group in the United States (Garcia & Chun, 2016). Understanding the influencing factors that foster achievement for Latinx students to pursue and attain a college degree will help narrow the understanding of how to support and increase college enrollment and contribute to Latinx students’ success.

Ten Latinas participated in the study, and all graduated from the same urban high school. The high school all participants graduated from has a slightly higher percentage of high school graduation than its district average. The high school has the highest student population from other high schools within its district with an average of 2800 students. The population entails of 89.8% socioeconomically disadvantaged, 15.7% emergent English learners, and 0.6% foster youth (California Department of Education, 2022). The demographic population entails 69% Hispanics, 19% Asians, 3.2% White, and 5.8% African American (California Department of Education, 2022). The high school is ranked 685th within California and is in the 52nd percentile of all public high schools in California for graduation rate (PrepScholar, 2022). It has a total minority enrollment of 97%. The high school is recognized as an Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) national demonstration school. It is also the only high school in the district to have an extra homeroom period where an average of 30 students stays with the same teacher for four years. The high school is recognized as an AVID National Demonstration School. AVID stands for
Advancement Via Individual Determination and is a college bound program with over 400 of its students enrolled in the AVID academies. Academies include, a Doctor’s Academy, a Criminology and Public Service Academy. Other programs and pathways at this school include Agriscience & Technology, Health & Human Services, Multimedia & Marketing and over 60 clubs for students to join. Lastly, this school has an open policy for allowing their students regardless of GPA to take AP courses and have 17 different advance courses to choose from.

**Description of Qualitative Approach**

The study entailed a qualitative approach, focusing on a narrative inquiry with a semistructured interview process to understand Latina students’ influencing factors and experiences in deciding and attaining a college degree. The narrative inquiry resulted in in-depth interviews and recordings to study patterns and themes from collected data (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Since narrative inquiry begins with the experiences expressed in lived and told stories of individuals, it was valuable to collect the different perspectives from each participant (Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 67).

**Data Collection**

I conducted semistructured, in-depth interviews with 10 Latina students who graduated from the same urban high school. The narrative inquiry design entailed selecting participants who identified with a specific experience or issue explored; all 10 Latinas shared the experiences of after graduating from high school, decided to pursue higher education, and attained at their bachelor’s degree. A brief description of the study was provided to participants in an Instagram message through social media for the recruitment process. The researcher followed up with participants to ensure their understanding of the study and
willingness to participate. Once participants agreed to participate, their personal emails were collected to send the informed consent and notify them of their rights. Once voluntary participation was verified with a signature on the consent form, the researcher set up one-hour interviews by scheduling a date to meet via Zoom with the participant. This method was sufficient for this study design (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The selection process criteria was to select 10 Latina students who graduated from the same urban high school, decided to attend college right after high school, and attained at least a bachelor’s degree.

The participant pool was no more than 10 participants who met the criteria. The criteria for participation in this study were that they graduated from the same urban high school within the class of 2010 to the class of 2018, then enrolled in college, and since graduated from a four-year college. One interview per participant was the primary source of data collection. Each participant was allocated with an hour-long, in-depth interview. The interview entailed 17 questions via Zoom. For the first 15 minutes, relationship building built a sense of rapport and ease with the participant. Then the following 45 minutes focused on learning the participants’ narratives about their decision to pursue higher education and attain their degrees.

**Instruments**

In-depth interviews with each student participant were the primary source of data collection. Participants who volunteered to participate in the data collection process responded to 17 questions within the five subtopic areas, which included the following:

- Tell me about yourself.
- Tell me about your family.
- Tell me about your high school experience.
Tell me about attaining your college degree.

Tell me about any additional overall experience.

Participants’ real names were not shared in the dissertation. Interviews were conducted using Zoom conferencing. Participants were sent a Zoom invite link or meeting ID to meet. Those participants who agreed to have their interview recorded during the Zoom interview were used solely to transcribe the interview into text files. Recording data and describing the narratives during the interview process assured participants their information shared was accurate, and no biases were involved with the researcher or others. Once the research study is completed, the interview recordings will be deleted. Participants who could not meet via Zoom were sent a copy of the 17 questions, answered on their own time, and returned to the researcher within three weeks via email.

Data Analysis

A chronological narrative analysis approach was utilized to analyze this study’s collected data. The data collection and recorded transcripts were used to analyze themes. Interviews were structured and unstructured to understand the influences that contributed to them deciding to attend and attain a college degree. Creswell and Poth (2016) explained how to analyze chronological narrative analysis: read through the collected information, make margin notes, formulate category codes, describe patterns, and form stories and themes to help categorize across the objective of a set of experiences. This process was conducted for all acquired texts collected from participant interviews or submissions of completed responses. Key components across collected narratives to aid in interpreting and contextualizing information gathered were identified and unveiled (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Delve, a qualitative software program, organized, coded, and developed common themes that emerged from the responses. Delve is a software
program downloaded on my personal computer. The narrative components were pieced together to re-story and unfold the chronology of events within each participant’s story overall. Responses were organized in patterns and meaningful segments of the narrative into categories to triangulate the responses: microsystem (familial capital and spirituality), mesosystem (relationships), exosystem (social capital), macrosystem (aspirational capital and linguistic capital) chronosystem (navigational capital and resistant capital) to pursue and attain a college degree.

I checked for accuracy from the viewpoint of a researcher. Triangulation was used to build evidence using different data sources (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The study findings were based on participants responses to the 17 questions (see Appendix) during in-depth interviews. Interviews were recorded, and Delve quotes were included in the study extracted directly from participants’ recordings (responses). The Zoom communication system allowed the researcher to record the session and then transcribe the interviews into text files. Recording data and describing the narratives during the interview process assured participants that their information shared was accurate, and no biases were involved with the researcher or others (Milner, 2016). Cross-analysis of all interviews were conducted, and responses to questions were cross-examined for calibration of analysis and validation of thematic categories about the research questions addressed in the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

**Positionality Statement**

Human behavior tends to summarize and understand worldviews by associating personal experiences and philosophical perspectives (Myers, 2011). Therefore, it is important to identify my positionality as the researcher. My interest in the factors influencing Latinx students to pursue and attain a college degree stems from my experiences teaching at an urban high school. In my teaching
career, I have been in awe of past student graduates who have persevered to graduate from college successfully regardless of their upbringing’s circumstances. Although I have witnessed many students’ success stories, I have also seen many students not take the higher education path after high school. I have often wondered why students from the same high school and backgrounds take different life pathways.

I am a Latinx teacher who has taught at the same urban high school for the past 24 years. The student population at this high school mirrors my ethnic and demographic background growing up. I am a child of Mexican immigrant parents. I was born in the United States, and my first language acquired was Spanish. As a first-generation Latina student, I matriculated through the public school system and, subsequently, public higher education institutions. I was the only child of five children in my family to pursue a four-year university. Regardless of breaking institutional barriers and acquiring the English language, access to educational resources was minimal in my experience. I had to navigate within the school system seeking resources and individuals to provide academic guidance and eventually earn a college degree. Gaining the opportunity to attend college changed the trajectory of my life outlook.

However, achieving it was not easy. Although I have witnessed many students achieve their college degrees after high school, a large proportion still does not. As an advocate to amplify Latinx student voices in reaching success, I hope this research will clarify the influencing factors of Latinx students’ decisions to pursue and attain a college degree.

Limitations of the Study

There were a few limitations within the collection of the data. Due to the nature of this study, the following limits should be acknowledged: student
participants were selected from one specific urban high school, thus limiting participants from other urban high schools. Limitations could also be observed using the interview questions and misinterpretations by the participants when answering or retelling their stories to the researcher. Interviews were conducted on Zoom, missing the in-person connection, which may limit the responses’ transparency. If the questions become too specific, it could limit the type of information collected by the researcher. If not careful, research questions could be conflicted through a person’s subconscious conditioned thoughts (Peshkin, 1988). I realize that data can be misleading if not mindful of the backgrounds or personal perspectives (Milner, 2016). The study also only researched Latinx females.

There was one other limitation in the collection of the data. Although 10 Latina participants agreed to participate in the study, not all students participated in the Zoom interview process. Four participants chose to respond to the 17 questions on their own. They had a duration of two weeks to review the questions and respond. They sent back the completed questionnaire with detailed responses. However, although their responses were equal to those who participated in the Zoom interview, there was a lack of dialogue among the participants to clarify any responses. The emotions also while responding to the questions were not seen either since they independently completed the questions on their own.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND OUTCOMES

This chapter contains the research findings relevant to Latinx students who graduated from the same urban high school, attended a four-year university, and earned their college degrees. This chapter is organized into five sections. The first section provides a brief synopsis of the study’s purpose, then the second section introduces the research participants’ identities and gives detailed information about their parent’s background and education. The third section reviews how the data was gathered and analyzed. The fourth section presents the findings categorized into themes pertaining to the researcher’s adapted framework, the Latinx student higher education influences model. The adapted model shows the Latinx student in the center of different layers of rings representing asset-based resources, which are utilized to influence higher education and achieve a college degree. The Latinx student higher education influences model was adapted from three theoretical frameworks. The main base of each ring includes Bronfenbrenner’s (1976) ecological theory (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem). This framework served as the base of the model incorporating each ring into the other two theoretical frameworks. Community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) framework was incorporated within the base rings, including familial capital in the microsystem, social capital in the exosystem, aspirational capital and linguistic capital in the macrosystem, and navigational capital and resistant capital in the chronosystem. Lastly, funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 2001) was incorporated within the bases. These included various additional asset-based funds of knowledge that Latinx students utilized throughout their upbringing and continued to utilize throughout their academic careers in influencing them to pursue higher education and attain their college degrees.
These funds of knowledge included spirituality located in the microsystem, relationships and responsibilities located within the mesosystem, and motivation located in the chronosystem (see Figure 4).

The last section of Chapter 4 will answer the research question that guided this study. Those questions are as follows:

**Research Question 1:** What type of extrinsic factors related to their environment, community, and family influence did Latina students who graduated from an urban high school to pursue and attain a bachelor’s degree have?

**Research Question 2:** What type of intrinsic factors related to school or community support influenced these Latina students who graduated from an urban high school to pursue and attain a college degree?

**Research Question 3:** How did adult agents (teachers, parents, etc.) influence the decision to pursue higher education?

These questions were designed to investigate factors Latina students identified as influencing their decision to pursue college after high school graduation and earn their college degree. The research focused on the intrinsic and external factors that motivated Latinx students to complete their college education.

Through semistructured interviews via Zoom and self-reports, the participants answered a series of 17 questions. The 17 questions (see Appendix) pertained to the adapted Latinx student higher education influences model that I created, which included the six community cultural wealth capitals: familial, aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, navigational, funds of knowledge, and Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory to help understand the influences of college degree attainment after graduating from an urban high school.
Purpose of the Study

This chapter will present the responses from the 10 Latina participants. The study’s purpose was to identify the influencing factors and influences that contributed to the Latina participants attaining their college degree to help understand how each of them used their cultural wealth assets, funds of knowledge, and Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory to navigate, persevere, and achieve their college degree. By collecting the narratives of what high school, family, and environmental experiences influence had on Latina students in higher degree attainment, I intend to provide this information to school leaders, urban communities, and relevant stakeholders to support practices and policies that can contribute to raising the percentage of Latinx students who pursue and attain a college degree.

The Participants

Participants for this study had to meet three basic criteria categories to participate. Ten Latina participants met the following criteria to participate in the study: (a) those who self-identified as a Latina/Mexican, (b) those who graduated from the same urban high school, and (c) those who at least attained a minimum of a bachelor’s degree. All participants were recruited from a social media application called Instagram. I sent an instant message via Instagram to each participant, asking if they met the criteria categories and if they were interested in participating in the study. Once the participants confirmed the criteria bases and agreed to participate, I collected their personal email accounts. I then followed up with an email detailing the study by sending them a copy of the Interview Protocol and Consent Form. Interview dates and times were scheduled through Zoom for a one-hour block interview. However, interviews were an average of 30 minutes. Pseudonyms were given to each participant to maintain confidentiality and protect
the participants’ identity. There was a total of 16 Latina participants solicited to participate, but the final sample consisted of 10 Latina participants (see Table 2). The 10 participating Latinx students’ backgrounds were described in more detail using quotes from their own descriptions of their childhood neighborhoods.

**Table 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Parent (1)</th>
<th>Ethnicity Self-Identification</th>
<th>Parent(s) Country(ies) of Origin</th>
<th>Parent(s) highest level of education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Flor</td>
<td>Parent (1)</td>
<td>Hispanic, Mexican</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Community College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent (2)</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Community College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candela</td>
<td>Parent (1)</td>
<td>Mexican American</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Third grade (MX)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent (2)</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Eighth grade (MX)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Parent (1)</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Elementary (MX)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent (2)</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>College degree (MX)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valentina</td>
<td>Parent (1)</td>
<td>Latina</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Some High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent (2)</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Some College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malena</td>
<td>Parent (1)</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Middle School (MX)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent (2)</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Elementary (MX)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Third grade (MX)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>High School GED</td>
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<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Sixth grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent (2)</td>
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<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Middle School (MX)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent (2)</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Secondary (MX)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Middle School (MX)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent (2)</td>
<td>Latina</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Secondary (MX)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Flora:** Identifies as Mexican and Hispanic. Her parents were both born in the United States. Flora’s parents’ highest education achieved was a college
associate’s degree in the United States. Flora described her childhood neighborhood as a decent area. Flora stated:

It was normally pretty quiet, and the people living around us maintained their property well. However, over the years, it has since gone down. It is a low socioeconomic area. I wouldn’t say that my neighborhood was dangerous, it was pretty friendly for the most part, and my parents never had any problems with my sister and going outside to play.

It took Flora 4.5 years to attain her bachelor of arts degree in psychology. She then completed her master’s degree in the spring of 2021 in psychology.

Candela: Identifies as Mexican American. Both her parents are natives of Mexico. Candela’s parents’ highest level of education is third grade and eighth grade in Mexico. Candela described her childhood neighborhood as very eclectic. She stated this meant there was a mixed of socioeconomic status among the neighborhoods. She also stated, “There wasn’t a lot of gang violence, but there was a lot of policing and criminalization of my neighbors as our neighborhood police department was right down the street.” It took 4 years for Candela to complete her bachelor’s degree, double majoring in anthropology and Chicano/a Studies with a minor in English. She started her master’s program in the fall of 2021.

Victoria: Identifies as Mexican, and both her parents are from Mexico. One parent has an elementary education, and the other has some college in Mexico. Victoria described her childhood neighborhood and said:

I grew up in a low socio-economic area . . . Just a few apartments down are government-owned apartments that are commonly used to house individuals in section 8 or [who] need financial assistance. We have lived there for 18 years, and to us, it has been a great affordable place.
Victoria completed her bachelor of arts in psychology and minored in criminology. She then completed her master’s degree in forensic and legal psychology in the spring of 2021.

Valentina: Identifies as Latina. Her father was born and raised in Texas, and her mother was born and raised in California. Her father’s highest level of education was some high school and her mother’s was some community college. Valentina described her childhood neighborhood as “diverse, where everyone was friendly with each other and looked out for one another.” It took Valentina 5 years to complete her college degree in psychology during the spring semester of 2019.

Malena: Identifies as Mexican. Both her parents were born and raised in Mexico. One parent has an elementary education, and the other has a middle school education in Mexico. Malena described her childhood neighborhood. She stated:

I lived in front of an elementary school, so there [were] always a lot of children roaming around between the hours of 7:30 am through 5:00 pm. But just like every area, there is always the bad side of the neighborhood, which is located a few blocks from my house. That neighborhood is considered dangerous because of the gang-related violence that has occurred in the past. Often, we hear police sirens and helicopters in our area, but we never find out what happens.

It took Malena 5 years to achieve her bachelor’s degree in sociology during the fall of 2020 semester.

Paloma: Identifies as Mexican. Both Paloma’s parents were born and raised in Mexico. Her mother’s highest level of education was third grade, while her father’s high school level of education was a secondary school in Mexico. She described the neighborhood she grew up in as a “lower to middle class area. It was very common to hear gunshots once every few months.” She lived near a gas station where she stated armed robberies, fights, and shootings were common.
Paloma completed her bachelor’s degree in 4.5 years. Her degree is in criminology and attained in the spring of 2021.

**Alessandra:** Identifies as Latina, Mexican, and Hispanic. Her parents are from Mexico, and both completed a sixth-grade education in Mexico. Alessandra was born in Michoacan, Mexico. She migrated to the United States at the age of four. She described her childhood neighborhood in America. Alessandra commented:

> It was not uncommon to see gang fights, drug deals, and drive-bys. Though there were a lot of bad influences in the neighborhood, there were also many hardworking farmworkers who just wanted to provide their families with a better life.

Alessandra attended the university part-time while she worked, attaining her bachelor’s degree in business administration. She completed her bachelor’s degree in 7 years during the spring 2020 semester.

**Mariangel:** Identifies as Mexican. Both her parents are from Mexico, and one parent has a middle school education, while the other has a secondary schooling education in Mexico. Mariangel described her childhood neighborhood in Chihuahua, Mexico, as peaceful, “every store and school were close enough for my mother and I to walk to. Our neighbors were friendly, and I felt safe even though it wasn’t the nicest neighborhood.” Mariangel migrated to the United States at the age of 7. It took 7 years for Mariangel to complete her bachelor’s degree in criminology with an option in victimology during the spring 2018 semester.

**Milagros:** Identifies as Mexican. Both her parents are from Mexico. One parent possesses a middle school education from Mexico, and the other parent completed some vocational training in Mexico. Milagros described her childhood neighborhood as quiet “but not too safe. I experienced a few robberies and saw
people getting robbed as well as people stealing from my parent’s house like tools, palm trees.” Milagros attained her college degree in 6.5 years and majored in Spanish. She completed her degree in the fall of 2020.

Joséfa: Identifies as Mexican. Both parents are from Mexico and have at least a secondary education from Mexico. Joséfa described her childhood neighborhood an affordable housing community. She remarked:

The neighborhood it was in was considered unsafe. I was not allowed out after sunset, and my family monitored who I interacted with. However, the immediate community I was in felt safe to me, and I was fortunate enough to not experience any violence. We moved out of this community and area when I was around 10 to a different neighborhood with residential homes. Most families kept to themselves, and there was not a lot of activity outdoors.

Joséfa earned her bachelor of science in human development and psychological services. It took Joséfa 3 years after high school to earn her college degree in the spring of 2015.

Summary of Results

Analysis of Data

An inductive study method was used to analyze the data of how the Latina participants utilized the funds of knowledge, cultural wealth, and Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system assets to navigate and persevere to college degree attainment. Each participant responded to the same 17 questions for an average of 32 minutes via Zoom interviews (an hour was allocated). The data from the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. After each interview, the responses were printed; I then read through them immediately following the interview, highlighting similar responses from the prior participants. Then to help organize all responses, each participant’s information was uploaded to a computer software tool (Delve) to help analyze the qualitative data. Once all participants’
responses were uploaded to the software tool (Delve), I read through each one using the program to begin coding and analyzing themes. I read each participant’s information again, this time coding and analyzing themes pertaining to the adapted research model (Latinx student higher education influences model) that included funds of knowledge, community cultural wealth, and Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system. I combed the data for the third time, using constant comparative analysis to generate themes from the responses by comparing the first themes found and how it corresponded with the researcher’s adapted model. I found a sense of organization and patterns drawing from the data after rereading each participant’s information at least once on paper, highlighting similarities to other participant responses, then uploading each participant’s transcription to the software tool (Delve), and then rereading them again for a total of three times to finally confirm the final themes that corresponded to the researcher’s adapted Latinx student higher education influences model (community cultural wealth, funds of knowledge, and Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems).

**Limitations**

There was one major limitation in the collection of the data. Although 10 Latina participants agreed to participate in the study, not all students participated in the Zoom interview process. Four participants chose to respond to the 17 questions on their own. They had a duration of two weeks to review the questions and respond. They sent back the completed questionnaire with enriching, detailed responses. However, although their responses were equal to those who participated in the Zoom interview, there was a lack of dialogue among the participants to clarify any responses. The emotions also while responding to the questions were not seen either since they independently completed the questions on their own.
Findings

Findings throughout this chapter are presented with quotes stated from the participants and categorized in themes by the researcher’s Latinx student higher education influences model (see Figure 4) adapted from community cultural wealth, funds of knowledge, and Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems. The main umbrella themes are titled with Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system components, which include the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. Under those umbrellas are the capitals within the community cultural wealth, which include familial capital, social capital, linguistic capital, aspirational capital, navigational capital, and resistance capital. The funds of knowledge include funds of spirituality, relationships, chores, and motivation.

Microsystem

Microsystem ring (see Figure 5) entails the close relationships within the Latinx student environment, including familial capital and funds of spirituality. These two components are often used the closest in relationship to the Latinx student. Latinx students rely on them to complete their college degrees.

Figure 5

Microsystem Ring
Spirituality

Eight out of the 10 participants relied on spirituality to persevere toward their college degree. Spirituality included praying to a God or an alternate saint for strength, guidance, or hope during challenging circumstances or doubt. Flora said, “I pray all the time to get me through everything. I think just praying and having that faith that God was/is always with me helped me as well in college.” Candela stated:

My mother always taught me to pray to La Virgen De Guadalupe so she would guide and protect me. As I navigated college, I asked la Virgen to get me through tough times and to give me the strength to keep going. My dad gave me a picture of la Virgen when he dropped me off at college my first year at the dorm. I have always kept that picture to protect me and to motivate me.

Valentina stated:

I am a pretty religious person, so I felt like my faith gave me the confidence and motivation to continue my education. Whenever I felt stressed, I prayed and would listen to Christian music to ease my nerves and relax my mind. Whenever I felt like I couldn’t do it anymore and when I had no one to turn to, I also prayed that God would keep me on the right path and he would give me the strength to keep moving forward.

Malena said:

My parents always taught me that prayers will [would] get me through my days. We attended church every Sunday, and that was when my mom said that our prayers counted more. When I knew times were tough, I prayed for motivation and for an open mind to get me through my school days.

Alessandra stated:

I grow up in a traditional catholic household. My mother reminded us that every achievement and success was because God was answering a prayer. When talking about future achievements, she always says “primero Dios” to remind us that God willing, things will work out in our favor. Prayer and attending mass on Sunday were a big part of my college experience.
Mariangel said, “I was raised Catholic and always had faith that God had a plan for me. I would also pray to have a positive mentality throughout college whenever my personal life got complicated.” Milagros said, “I would always pray in times of stress. Especially during finals and midterms. My faith in God would always make me feel like I was able to accomplish everything.” Josefa stated, “I received a lot of moral and emotional support from the Catholic Center on campus.”

**Familial Capital**

Ten out of 10 Latinx participants stated their family was an essential element in attaining their college degree. All participants relied or depended on their families for emotional, financial, or guidance. Flora said:

> I was very fortunate that my parents were very supportive and hands-on with helping both my sister and I when it came to applying to college, paying for college, and getting everything we needed for it. My parents made a savings account specifically for me when I was young so they could pay for my college tuition. I am very grateful to them.

Candela stated, “My parents gave me money when they could. Most of it was emotional support.” Victoria stated, “It was difficult at first, but they were able to give me a little bit of money at the beginning until the Dream Act funds went through my first year of college.” Valentina said, “My parents always encouraged me to attend college and supported me financially and emotionally.” Malena said:

> My parents have always told me that if I wanted to become something of myself, I had to get good grades and go to college to obtain a career. I listened to my mom and took advantage of the opportunity I had. So, when my parents found out that I was graduating and attending a university, they were extremely proud. Although my parents did not like the fact that I was leaving home, they encouraged me to go and try it out. This was something new for them, so I was just happy my family was there to support me.
Paloma said, “My parents were always very supportive of me furthering my education.” Alessandra stated:

My parents supported me one hundred percent with getting a college degree. I live with my parents throughout my entire college experience. They provided me with shelter and food without expecting much in return. My dad also bought me my first car so I could go to work and school. We didn’t grow up having much, but the fact that my parents would somehow always make it happen to support us is a type of gratitude I can’t put into words.

Mariangel said:

My mother brought me to the United States so that I would have more opportunities to succeed in my education. I was in fourth grade when I arrived, and although it was scary, my mother motivated me to do well in school. Once it was time to apply for college, my financial aid didn’t go through, so my mother sold some of her gold jewelry to help me afford my first semester in college.

Milagros said, “I was unable to receive financial aid; the biggest support from my family was paying for my tuition as well as helping me with any other school-related expenses like books, meals, parking, etc.” Josefa stated:

My parents’ emotional support was huge. I went out of state for college. Traditionally in Mexican households, women do not move out of their parent’s homes until they are married. I was worried about their reactions, but they were both encouraging of my academic pursuits.

Mesosystem

Relationships

The second base of the model is the mesosystem ring (see Figure 6), which entails valuable relationships within the Latinx students’ lives that strengthen their beliefs to accomplish higher degree attainment. These included relationships that have been established since childhood (family or others) and others created at schools, such as teachers, counselors, or peers. Nine out of 10 Latinx participants
stated they each had an individual that impacted their belief that a college degree was attainable.

**Figure 6**

*Mesosystem Ring*

Flora said, “The teachers that I had and my counselor were like an added bonus to give me that extra push to pursue higher education.” Candela stated:

My AVID teacher showed me how I could get to higher education. Gave me the resources, support, and motivation I needed to pursue big-name schools, big scholarships, and to honestly stay in college after I wanted to drop out; it’s like he followed me throughout all these years. Like a for life mentor.

Victoria stated, “I had two teachers.” Valentina said:

Every teacher I had in high school encouraged their students to attend college. However, I had the same teacher for the Doctor’s Academy program all fours of high school, so she became like our school mom/mentor. She made us feel that college was possible for any of us regardless of where we came from.

Malena said:
I had two teachers that encouraged me to pursue higher education. They both taught AP classes. I appreciate them because they saw that I would fall behind on my work and sometimes did not try, but [they] still convinced me that I was able to put more effort into my work. They gave me advice about applying to colleges and convinced me that I needed to challenge myself in order to be better. One thing I liked about them is that they were passionate about their classes and their students. I thought to myself, if this person believes in me, then I should consider planning a better future for myself. Both teachers talked to their students about their college experiences which, in my opinion, can influence them even more. The stories convinced me that college can be a fun experience, and I pictured myself going to college and experiencing that myself.

Paloma said:

I’ve always expressed to my childhood friend that her family and she had a huge impact on the choices I made. I consider her family, and I consider her parent’s family, and I did not want to disappoint them, so I attended college. They always instilled the importance of college to my friend and I, and it stuck with me forever. My high school counselor also always made sure I was on track with my classes and grades and repeatedly reminded me that she would help in whatever I needed even after high school.

Dulce said, “A few teachers reinforced my decision to pursue higher education as I already wanted to go to college.” Mariangel said:

I had several teachers, such as my English, Spanish, and psychology teachers, that often took their time between assignments to connect with students when it came to education. My school counselor took the time to help me apply for the honors program at Fresno City College, and several of my teachers wrote recommendation letters to help me achieve that goal.

Josepha stated, “I was fortunate to have people in elementary school guide me toward a path that would lead to college. I learned more from my peers who were also looking to attend private universities.”

**Exosystem**

All factors within this structure, the exosystem ring (see Figure 7) can affect the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1976). One of the most influential settings outside the family home that contributes to child development is the school
environment, curriculum accessibility, and culture and climate (Sibley & Brabeck, 2017). For Latinx students taking advantage of opportunities to help them succeed can contribute to their success. All 10 Latinx participants took advantage of taking AP courses in high school. However, not all agreed that AP courses in high school helped prepare them for college. Six of the 10 participants felt the AP courses prepared them for college, while two participants felt the AP courses did not help them, and two other participants felt it partially helped them for college.

**Figure 7**

_Exosystem Ring_

Social Capital

**AP Courses**

Flora took AP economics and AP literature and stated, “I was also in English honors classes.” She commented that she did not feel that the AP courses prepared her for college. Candela took nine AP courses in high school. Candela said:

I don’t think anything could have prepared me for college. I came to college thinking the work was just different. The workload of AP classes
didn’t compare to the workload in college classes. The level of critical analysis needed when writing papers in college was just something I didn’t pick up in high school. I don’t think it’s because the teachers do a bad job, I think I just wasn’t aware. I somehow managed to pass AP tests.

Victoria took three AP courses and commented, “They sort of prepared me for college with the amount of work and responsibility given.” Valentina took six AP classes throughout high school and reported, “The AP courses I took definitely prepared me for college and what was going to be expected of me. The workload was very heavy and required a lot of studying. It helped me with time management.” Malena took four AP courses and said:

AP courses give you a clue of how college courses may be, but it all depends on the professor you get. Each professor taught differently and had different expectations for the class. The workload was similar to my difficult classes, however, there was much more reading in college compared to my AP courses. They also helped with taking notes and analyzing articles or books and understanding what was read. I knew how to study and take tests and pass my classes, but in college, things began to click and made much more sense to me. AP statistics and AP psychology were the main courses that helped me get through my tough classes in college.

Paloma took AP psychology and AP literature. She said, “I feel that those of us who attended AP courses were held at a higher standard, and more was expected of us, and college was exactly that.” Alessandra took four AP classes. Alessandra commented, “I believe AP classes helped me feel more prepared for college. I remember taking English courses in high school that were writing intensive. That allowed me to not be intimidated by the essays assigned in college.” Mariangel took five AP courses. She said:

I do believe the AP courses I took prepared me [for] college. The English AP classes were more complex and helped students learn to analyze and interpret the content in assignments. I remember reading challenging subject matter and then discussing the material with my peers, which is something I often had to do in college.
Milagros took AP Spanish literature and said, “I think it prepared me for college.” Josefa took nine AP classes overall. Josefa said, “To an extent, these courses helped me in college. I knew that the depth and pace were greater than that of non-AP classes. However, the teaching styles, assignments, and grading were not like those I saw at my university.”

**Macrosystem**

This structure, the macrosystem ring (see Figure 8) represents the influences within Latinx students’ culture, school and community that contribute to shaping their attitudes and ideologies about college attainment. It includes Latinx linguistic capital, aspirational capital, culture, community and school climate and culture.

**Figure 8**

*Macrosystem Ring*

Nine out of 10 participants found themselves translating English to Spanish and vice versa for their parents as they grew up. Yosso (2005) stated, “Linguistic capital reflects the idea that students of color arrive at school with multiple
languages and communication skills” (p. 78). These various intellectual and social skills of communication are what bilingual students bring to the classroom.

**Linguistic Capital**

Spanish was Candela’s first language acquired. Candela commented:

In my own home, I was responsible for translating documents for my parents. Outside of the home, my parents brought me to doctor’s appointments so I could translate from English to Spanish. I also ran my dad’s limo rental business for a while as he did not speak English and needed me for his English consumer base.

Spanish was Victoria’s first language acquired. She found herself interpreting for her parents “all the time.” Although English was Valentina’s first language acquired, she still found herself translating documents for her parents. Spanish was Malena’s first language spoken and is still her primary language used in the home. She would translate for her parents often and still does to this day. Malena claimed, “Up to this day, my siblings and I still have to translate, especially when they have new clients to work with or they have doctor appointments.” Paloma found herself translating often. She said:

I grew up living with my mother only, so the only language spoken at home was Spanish. Ever since elementary school, I always had to translate for my mother everywhere we went. Being that I was so young and I didn’t have a very extended vocabulary, translating was a bit challenging. It was common for me to translate at the doctor, and any store, or anywhere we went. I also often had to translate paperwork and mail, make phone calls for her, fill out forms for whatever was needed.

Spanish was Alessandra’s primary language spoken in the home. She found herself translating not only for her parents but also for extended family like uncles and aunts. Spanish was Mariangel’s primary language. She found herself often translating for her mother. Mariangel commented:
I did translate for my mother throughout my years in school and also at home with phone calls. I also did a lot of translating that was more difficult to overcome since it had to do with my mother’s doctor appointments. Spanish was Milagros’s primary language spoken. She also translated for her parents. Milagros said, “I would always have to translate for my parents in different places at all times.” Spanish was the primary language for Josefa. She said:

Everyone spoke Spanish at home. My parents often asked me to translate to cashiers when we were out. At school, I sometimes had to translate. I also helped with translating documents from either English to Spanish or Spanish to English. At times I would have to translate at doctor’s offices, but we also often encountered people who were bilingual.

Culture Responsibilities

All 10 Latina participants had chores or responsibilities growing up in their households. These provided a sense of work ethic, responsibilities, and the bond built within their family network to strengthen the relationship among family members contributing to their household community and building upon their ideologies of a collective community to accomplish goals. Flora shared:

Some of the chores I had growing up were [cleaning] the hall bathroom, which meant cleaning the toilet, cleaning the counters, the mirror, sweeping, mopping, and throwing out the restroom garbage. I also had to vacuum weekly and do the dishes every now and again. My parents also made sure that we had a clean room, and if it was dirty, we had to clean it before watching TV or going out.

Candela stated:

Growing up in a Mexican household, the daughter always has a lot of responsibilities. In my own home, I was responsible for translating documents for my parents, helping my parents fill out forms, pay[ing] bills, writ[ing] checks, cleaning the house, and taking care of myself.

Victoria stated, “Childhood responsibilities inside of the home included watching my three younger siblings when my mom needed help and cleaning. Outside of the
home, it was just making sure I had good grades in school.” Valentina said, “During my childhood, I had the responsibility of washing dishes, cleaning the living room, and always keeping my room clean. Outside of my home, my main responsibility was school.” Malena said:

Growing up, my parents expected me to go to school, then help around the house as soon as I got home. If my mom was cooking, I would have to help her make dinner. Then after everyone in the house ate dinner, I would have to stay and help clean up. This consisted of picking up everyone’s plate, washing the dishes, then putting them away. This was an everyday thing, and the difficult part was that I still had homework to do. As it got late, I knew I was going to sleep late in order to finish my assignments and keep my grades up. Every Saturday, we had the same routine, my mom would wake up my sister and I early to help her clean. Our rooms had to be sparkly clean, and we had to sweep, mop, dust, and clean the restrooms.

Paloma said:

Responsibilities inside of the home for me consisted of cleaning the kitchen, doing my laundry, keeping my room clean, staying on top of schoolwork, and any other errands my mom needed help with. If I visited anyone’s home, I had to make sure I always offered to help in whatever was needed, whether it’d be to clean up if I was fed or if I saw someone carrying something, offer to help.

Alessandra shared:

Clean the house after school to make sure it was all tidied up before my parents arrived from their fieldwork. If it was during the vacation months, my eldest sister and I would babysit the younger siblings and cook for them. Outside the home, my biggest responsibility, as expressed by my mother, was to simply excel in school. She would tell us that while she and my father worked the fields, all she expected of us was to do good in school. Occasionally, I would also help my mom sell bags of cherries in the evening around the neighborhood.

Mariangel said, “Keep my room clean and made sure that my homework was completed on time.” Milagros shared:
My responsibilities as a child were not hard, but [they] did include house chores. On the weekends or during school breaks, I was expected to wash dishes, clean my room, help my mom to maintain the backyard and front yard as well as helping her cook.

Josefa shared, “I helped out with some chores like washing dishes and taking out the trash. My parents made sure I was doing well in school and encouraged my involvement in school-related activities.”

**Aspirational Capital**

All 10 Latinx students had aspirations growing up either about career goals, college, or financial stability. Flora started thinking about college early growing up. Flora shared:

> As I got older, I knew that I had to go to college. It was ingrained in my sister and I at a young age that we were going to go to college so that we can grow up and get a good job.

Candela began to think about career paths early in her life. Candela said:

> As a child, I aspired to become a veterinarian because my uncle in Mexico was a veterinarian. As I got older, I realized this wasn’t a career path that interested me, and I thought I wanted to be a doctor. I realized that wasn’t for me either and began to think about being a history teacher because I loved history.

Victoria was not clear on what college entailed but had a goal to reach and said, “I did not know what college was until I got to high school, so my aspirations were to have a job and have money.” Valentina’s goal was “one day becoming a pediatrician.” Malena had many goals in life. She commented:

> As a child, I always dreamed of moving out and having my own place. I have always wanted my own space where I could do whatever I want, decorate, and do things my own way. Living in the city always caught my attention. I pictured myself working at a fancy office in a downtown area, walking the busy streets with my coworkers just like in the movies. I wanted to earn enough money so that I can help support my parents and not worry about having enough money. I also wanted a big family so that my children would grow up with their siblings just like I did. However, as I got
older, the countryside seemed more comfortable. Similar dreams but living in a more open area and have more privacy.

Paloma had big dreams growing up. She shared:

As a child, I always dreamt of purchasing my mother a home and being financially responsible for her. I aspired to attend college and be the first in my family to obtain a college degree. I saw myself having a stable career and continuing to focus on bettering myself for [the] future me.

Alessandra had two careers in mind growing up. She said, “As a child, I dreamed of being a teacher. I think I was shoved into that after tutoring four of my siblings. In middle school, I started a successful candy store and became intrigued with knowing more about business.” Mariangel said:

Aspirations as a child revolved around doing really well in school. My parents tried their best to be involved in my school activities and provided all the support I needed so that I could focus on being the best student I could be.

Milagros’ goals entailed finishing college and taking care of her father. She said:

As a child, I had different aspirations. The most important one was to go to college and get my bachelor’s degree in Spanish Literature. I also aspired to become a successful Literature professor. Retiring my dad was and still is my biggest aspiration.

Josefa’s goals were to attend college. She said, “I wanted to be successful, which I associated with having a college degree, well-paying job, and family.”

**Chronosystem**

The chronosystem ring (see Figure 9) structure consists of how the Latinx student utilizes the navigational, motivational, and resistant capital to pursue or attain a college degree. The Latinx student can change the trajectory of their lives with levels of motivation that occur over their lifetimes. These changes can influence development from a school change to a major life event (Guy-Evans,
2020). These changes can be external (e.g., unexpected issues with family members) or internal (e.g., a variety of maturity levels due to emotional reactions to changes within the student). All 10 participants accredited their high school campus culture for helping them navigate toward college. All 10 Latinas were first-generation in attending a 4-year university. They all had challenges navigating their way through college but resisted quitting from pursuing their college degrees. Lastly, all 10 Latina participants had motivation from family members and within themselves to complete their college degree.

**Figure 9**

*Chronosystem Ring*

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**Navigational Capital**

Flora’s response to navigating toward college was through her high school culture. Flora commented:
My high school, I feel, had a very high energy and positive outlook on college and making sure students were college-ready. In fact, every office on campus is named after a university; for example, my office was called Harvard. The classes that I took generally had a lot of smart students, and so the classroom culture was always to do good in this course, and it will look good on your transcripts.

Candela’s response to navigating toward college was how her high school provided a college culture. She said:

I definitely think there was a big college-going culture at my high school. Especially if you were part of the culture of AVID or other academic programs. I had a whole team of people who could support me in completing financial aid paperwork, applying to colleges, scholarships, transcripts, and looking over my personal statements.

Victoria’s academic program exposed her to college. She shared, “I think because I was able to join the AVID program my sophomore year, that helped me be more exposed to college and how to apply.” Valentina stated:

The culture of my high school was always very positive. We had a very diverse population and were always culturally educated. There was plenty of support and resources from staff for college, and they always made the campus a safe place to be.

Malena stated:

My high school campus was very helpful when it came to applying to colleges. They had meetings about financial aid for students and parents. They even made us apply to our community college so that we had a backup just in case our plans did not work out. My teachers pushed me to go to college and even shared their college experiences so that we could get an idea of how fun our experiences can be.

Paloma said, “I feel that due to being enrolled in honors courses and gate classes, attending college was always a topic of discussion in my high school. It was always highly encouraged and expected of us.” Alessandra stated, “I feel that my high school pushed us to attend college. I was in many gate, honors, and AP classes where the whole concept was to prepare you for college.” Mariangel said:
My high school highlighted the importance of going to college in several ways. I recall most teachers lecturing about the importance of continued education and helping us prepare for the workload through critical thinking assignments and papers. Advisors met with students one on one to ensure students had a plan. I also recall classes taking time to help students apply for different colleges and financial aid.

Milagros shared, “I would describe the college-going culture of my high school campus as a very helpful one. They had counselors guiding students throughout their college applications.” Josefa shared:

The college-going campus got the students thinking about college; most of my classmates were set on going to school at a nearby local community or state college. Higher achieving classmates were more likely to attend one of the UCs.

Resistant Capital

Flora shared:

I was very undecided on what I wanted to major in as the first in my family to attend a four-year university. I think I was feeling the pressure that I made it to college, but now, what was I going to do there? And how was I going to get a job if I didn’t know what I wanted to do? All my life, I was told to go to school to get a good job, so that pressure of achieving that good job was weighing on me. I was very independent in college and had the mindset to just do what I needed to do to graduate. I would sometimes attend tutoring in the library if I needed help with some of my classes or connect with a friend.

Candela stated:

I think my biggest challenge was feeling like an imposter. I felt like I didn’t belong in college because I wasn’t smart enough like everyone else there. I compared myself to others, and I really struggled during the first quarter to do well. I was also dealing with anxiety due to the imposter syndrome, lack of a sense of belonging, and homesickness. There was a huge culture shock coming from a diverse place like my high school and then suddenly only seeing White students and Asian students in all your classes. Not only that, there were huge wealth disparities that were incredibly noticeable. Also, the stress that comes from the pressure to succeed from your family, friends, and community. Being a first-generation college student didn’t help either
because, really, I had no idea what I needed to do, how I could talk to professors, what to get involved in? I felt there was a very racist nature to the way institutions are run and operated. Pursuing a college degree was one of the hardest things I had to do in my entire life. It came at the cost of my mental health and at the exposure of one microaggression and discriminatory experience after another. It did, however, allow me to understand how inequitable society is and what I could do to change it. I really hope that as more Latinas attend college or move away from their families, that there are support systems for them on college campuses. My biggest support system was the Academic Advancement Program, which was an organization at the college aimed at supporting and helping students of color or students from underrepresented backgrounds to succeed. They provided student tutoring through the same philosophy of AVID and its student facilitation and student ideas. In addition, I joined cultural organizations that affirmed my identity and helped to retain me within the institution because there were many times that I just wanted to leave and never come back.

Victoria stated:

Financial difficulties, stress, and isolation were barriers in college as first-generation in my family to attend college. Having to work full time while going to college and having an internship was stressful. Also, the pressure of not failing. But I met my best friend in college, and that was a big support.

Valentina said:

I experienced a lot of barriers as a first-generation college student. I didn’t have anyone in my family to help me when I was struggling or to go to for any academic advice. I had to find resources and figure things out on my own. In every class, I met at least one friend that I could communicate and study with. Often, we would create group texts with other classmates to meet with each other and provide support to one another.

Malena shared:

It was difficult to go to school and have a job because there was not enough time for homework or life in general. At times I would lose motivation and did not want to continue. Being that I am first-generation to attend college, it also affected me mentally and emotionally. I participated in small study sessions with friends and classmates. I did not have a lot of time to stay after classes or go before because I always had to go to work before or
after. But my study sessions with my classmates are what got me through college. They taught me their ways of learning which helped me.

Paloma said:

The biggest challenge I faced was having to work and attend school on the same day. I recall getting out of class at 2:15 and starting work at 2:30. Also, being that I was first-generation to attend college, I did not have much guidance when it came down to knowing how to enroll in courses or how many courses were too much or too little. Having to complete financial aid on my own [for] the first 2 years was also a bit stressful.

Alessandra shared:

Being in the position of having a work permit but not technically a legal status was the biggest barrier I faced when starting college. My high school graduating class was the first to have incoming DACA college students. I applied and got accepted into a four-year university, but due to my immigration status, the college administration did not know what to do with people like me. I ended up taking a semester off and enrolling in community college where they had a tuition waiver for low-income students. Another challenge was having to navigate college with little guidance. I spent 2 years in community college not really knowing if I was even taking the correct courses. In community college, a DACA help center was eventually opened. This helped me navigate through financial aid applications and get more tips on how to get through college.

Mariangel said:

Initially, I struggled with barriers related to financial aid. During my transition from high school to college, I had some issues with the renewal of my green card, so it affected my application process. Fortunately, I had financial support from my mother and grandparents. I also faced some challenges being first-generation in the family to go to college. As the oldest sister, I felt a sense of responsibility in setting a good example for my younger sisters. It was difficult because, at times, I felt lost and wished I had an older sibling that had attended college. But with time and support from teachers, I learned my way through. The honors program I was in at the community college was extremely helpful. It created a clear plan for me to help me transfer to a four-year university.

Milagros shared:
When I started college, I experienced a few challenges since I was the first in my family to attend a four-year university. The biggest one was paying for my tuition. Another challenge that I faced was the lack of technology literacy I had in college. I started meeting with new people that would allow me to study with them. I also attended office hours with my professors and asked many questions to understand.

Josefa shared:

I chose to attend a college out of state. I felt alone in navigating my finances. Soon after I arrived on campus, I realized that Google would be my best friend. I had to learn about opportunities on campus through friends. I had been independent prior to entering college, which I think helped me know that I could figure things out. The university I attended was a predominantly white institution, so I also faced culture shock. I also did not realize how much not speaking Spanish daily would affect me. Being a brown Latina, I have experienced discrimination in education and in the workplace. As discouraging and challenging as my college experience was at times, feeling that quitting wasn’t an option for me helped me to overcome a lot of obstacles. I know that it is possible, but I also know that pursuing college can also impact one’s mental health. I also recently spoke with a former supervisor. We discussed experiencing imposter syndrome in places where we don’t look like everyone else.

Motivation

Flora shared, “My family was my biggest motivation. I would always tell myself, you can’t stop now, you made it this far, so now you have to finish.”

Candela shared:

What motivated me was the idea of having a better life for myself than the one I knew growing up as well as the difference I could make in my community as a community college counselor. I also wanted to make my parents proud and to make all of their sacrifices worth it. I just wanted to prove to myself that I could do it and that I could do it well. I threw my entire self into academics, and by the end of it, my identity was that of being a student.

Victoria said, “My siblings and my family were my motivation.” Valentina shared, “Making my family proud and becoming a first-generation graduate was my biggest motivation to complete my college degree.” Malena said:
My parents motivated me, but I strongly believe that I was an even bigger motivation for myself. From the times I wanted to give up, I wanted to prove to myself that I was able to finish. Also, knowing that as soon as I got my degree, I would be able to gain better experiences and a better job helped me out the most.

Paloma shared:

I was very determined to be the first in my family to obtain a college degree. Growing up, attending college was my biggest goal, and I loved the feeling of knowing I would be the first to say I did it on my own. I also knew I did not want to settle for a job I hated, so finishing college would allow me to obtain a career I enjoyed.

Alessandra said:

Seeing my parents work hard is what always pushed me to finish my degree. It is also what always stopped me from complaining. While I was in an air-conditioned classroom, they were under the hot sun breaking their backs so my dreams could come true. The best day of my life was being able to hand them my degree and tell them, “We made it, si se pudo.” Showing them that their sacrifices had not gone in vain was my fuel. Though I know they were deserving of the same opportunities I had, I will forever be grateful that they sacrificed so much so I could have a chance at the American Dream.

Mariangel shared:

What motivated me the most was the support I got from my family and school staff who cared about me. The assistance I had made me such a grateful individual that I made it a goal to accomplish my goals to help those around me. I always wanted to set a good example and influence people in my life through personal connection.

Milagros said:

My number one motivation to complete my college degree was to be the first one in my family to finish college. Also, I wanted to prove to myself that I was capable of completing my degree and getting an opportunity to have the job or career that I wanted.

Josefa shared:

I did not see dropping out as an option. It was an expectation to complete it. After my first year, I considered transferring closer to home from studying
out of state, but I felt I would miss out on multiple opportunities. However, wanting to grow as a person and student mixed in with wanting to move back to my hometown served as fuel for me taking on additional courses and graduating in 3 years.

**Research Questions**

The research questions were designed to investigate factors Latinx students identified as influencing their decision to pursue college after high school graduation and earn their college degree. The research focused on the intrinsic and external factors that motivated Latinx students to complete their college education. The following questions were answered using the participants’ information:

**Research Question 1:** What type of extrinsic factors related to their environment, community, and family influence did Latina students who graduated from an urban high school to pursue and attain a bachelor’s degree have?

**Research Question 2:** What type of intrinsic factors related to school or community support influenced these Latina students who graduated from an urban high school to pursue and attain a college degree?

**Research Question 3:** How did adult agents (teachers, parents, etc.) influence the decision to pursue higher education?

**Participants’ Responses Answering Research Questions**

**Research Question 1:** What type of extrinsic factors related to their environment, community, and family influence did Latina students who graduated from an urban high school to pursue and attain a bachelor’s degree have?

All participants attained environment extrinsic factors (see Table 3) in high school contributing to the strength in the exosystem within the social services at school. Three of the participants credited their AVID program as an extrinsic community factor. The California Department of Education (2022) explained AVID as:
Advancement Via Individual Determination is an in-school academic support program for grades seven through twelve. The purpose of the program is to prepare students for college eligibility and success. AVID places academically average students in advanced classes; levels the playing field for minority, rural, low-income, and other students without a college-going tradition in their families. (California Department of Education, 2022, para. 1)

The AVID program assisted students with college applications, guidance, and financial aid completion paperwork necessary to pursue college. Advanced placement courses were also stated as a preparatory to college. Lastly, all participants stated their family assisted them with financial support in some capacity.

The second research question pertained to the level of intrinsic factors utilized by the participants. **Research Question 2:** What intrinsic factors related to school, community, or family support influenced these Latinx students who graduated from an urban high school to pursue and attain a college degree? All participants had a strong desire to pursue and achieve a college degree (see Table 4). Completing a college degree meant serving as a role model for other students similar to themselves and making their families proud as the first to graduate.

The third research question entailed the role models or influencing adult agents who may have contributed to their college attendance and achievement. **Research Question 3:** How did adult agents (teachers, parents, etc.) influence the decision to pursue higher education? All participants had an adult agent who motivated them to attend and complete their college education (see Table 5).
### Table 3

**Extrinsic Factors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latina Participants</th>
<th>Environment Extrinsic Factors</th>
<th>Community Extrinsic Factors</th>
<th>Family Extrinsic Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flora</td>
<td>Extracurricular/Sports: played softball all 4 years in high school. Participated in school clubs.</td>
<td>High School (HS) Culture – “every office on Campus is named after a university. The classes that I took classroom culture was always to “do good in this course and it will look good on your transcripts”.</td>
<td>Financial Support – parents created a saving account during childhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candela</td>
<td>Sports &amp; Student Government; “I was involved in HS because I was told it was necessary to get into a good college, to be well rounded student.” Class President &amp; Water Polo</td>
<td>College – Tutoring services CBS/AVID “Help completing financial aid, applying to colleges, scholarships, fee waivers and sending transcripts.”</td>
<td>Financial Support – “A lot of it was monetary, they gave me money when they could.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>Extracurricular Activities- “I played a sport, theater, and tried to keep my grades up.”</td>
<td>AP Courses – “Sort of, with the amount of work and responsibility given.” AVID -“I was able to join the PHS/Avid program my sophomore year that helped me be more exposed to college and how to apply.”</td>
<td>Financial Support - “It was difficult at first, but they were able to give me a little bit of money at the beginning until the dream act funds went through my first year of college.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valentina</td>
<td>Summer internship participation Community Service School Clubs</td>
<td>HS Culture – positive, diverse population, culturally educated, plenty of support and resources from staff and the campus was a safe place to be. AP Courses – “It helped me with time management.” AVID/DA – “Being in this program, I had numerous opportunities and experiences including college prep workshops, visiting CSU and UC campuses, and internships in hospitals.”</td>
<td>Financial Support – “supported financially with what they could for college and helped emotionally.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malena</td>
<td>Extracurricular Activities: leadership roles, organized school rallies, was her senior class secretary.</td>
<td>HS Culture - “was helpful when it came to applying to colleges and gave information on financial aid.” AP Courses – “my courses gave me a glimpse to college courses with workload similar.”</td>
<td>Financial Support “I was just happy they were there to support me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paloma</td>
<td>Extracurricular Activities; folklorico dance, leadership and member of key club.</td>
<td>HS Culture –college conversations in honor courses. AP Courses – provided the academic skills needed in college.</td>
<td>Financial Support “Parents were always willing to help and supportive.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3 (Cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Extracurricular Activities</th>
<th>HS Culture</th>
<th>Financial Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alessandra</td>
<td>was involved with video production academy. She was the broadcast anchor in her school bulletin news channel.</td>
<td>“My high school pushed us to go to college.”</td>
<td>“I lived with my parents supporting me 100% with getting a college degree. They provided me with shelter, food without expecting anything in return.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AP Courses</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I believe AP classes helped me feel more prepared for college. I remember taking English courses in high school that were writing intensive.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>College</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“In community college, a DACA helped me navigate through financial aid applications and get more tips on how to get through college.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariangel</td>
<td>“I was part of the after school Folkloric dance group and participated in several school performances to promote diversity. I was an after-school mentor at an elementary. My involvement gave me a sense of purpose and I was able to see how my impact made a difference.”</td>
<td>HS Culture</td>
<td>Financial Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“My high school highlighted the importance of going to college in several ways.”</td>
<td>“Once it was time to apply for college, my financial aid didn’t go through so my mother sold some of her gold jewelry to help me afford my first semester in college.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AP Course</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“The English AP classes were more complex and helped to analyze and interpret the content in assignments. I remember reading challenging subject matter and then discussing the material with my peers, which is something I often had to do in college.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milagros</td>
<td>“I was a Folklorico dancer during all 4 years. I was also a member of the MECHA club and Fashion Club during my senior year.”</td>
<td>HS Culture</td>
<td>Financial Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I would describe the college going culture of my high school campus as a very helpful one.”</td>
<td>“I was unable to receive Financial aid, the biggest support from my family was paying for my tuition as well as helping me with any other school related expenses; books, meals, parking, etc.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josefa</td>
<td>“I became involved in clubs focused on service.”</td>
<td>AP Courses</td>
<td>Support in relocating out of state for college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“To an extent these courses helped. I knew that the depth and pace was greater than that of non-AP classes.”</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>College</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I became involved in the Catholic center on campus which opened up several opportunities. I received a scholarship through the church, developed friendships, and gained leadership opportunities. I was a work study student which allowed me to meet other individuals who I could connect with.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latina Participants</td>
<td>School Intrinsic Factors</td>
<td>Community Intrinsic Factors</td>
<td>Family Intrinsic Factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flora</td>
<td>Felt compelled to do well in school to attend college.</td>
<td>“Completing a college degree was the only way towards a great career.”</td>
<td>Felt the need to finish for parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I pray all the time to get me through everything. I think just praying and having that faith that God was/is always with me helped me as well in college.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candela</td>
<td>In school, “it seemed like going to college is how I can move up in life and be more financially stable than I had been in my childhood.”</td>
<td>“I also wanted to finish college so I could support other students in college as well that came from communities like mine.”</td>
<td>“I was really motivated to finish college to make my parents proud and so I could help them out too.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“My mother always taught me to pray to La Virgen De Guadalupe so she would guide and protect me.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>“In school, I was motivated to go to college and get a good job.”</td>
<td>“By getting a job in the community I can provide for my family.”</td>
<td>“I wanted to create a pathway for my siblings to see college as attainable.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I wanted to make my family proud.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valentina</td>
<td>“Understanding in school, that I was first-generation and that was my motivation to attend college and finish.”</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Whenever I felt like I couldn’t do it anymore and when I had no one to turn to, I also prayed that God would keep me on the right path, and he would give me the strength to keep moving forward.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“My parents motivated me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malena</td>
<td>“I strongly believe that I was an even bigger motivation for myself.”</td>
<td>“Also knowing that as soon as I got my degree, I would be able to gain better experiences and a better job helped me out the most to finish.”</td>
<td>“My parents always taught me that prayers will get me through my days.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I was focused on living a happy life and knew college would get me the job that would make me happy.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paloma</td>
<td>“I learned in high school that if I didn’t go to college, I’d be stuck working a job I hated or just disliked. This motivated me to go to college.”</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Seeing my parents work hard is what pushed me to finish, stopped me from complaining and making my parents proud got me through college.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I grow up in a traditional catholic household. My mother reminded us that every achievement and success was because God was answering a prayer.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alessandra</td>
<td>“While I was in an air-conditioned classroom, they (parents) were under the hot sun breaking their backs so my dreams could come true.” This is what motivated Alessandra to do well in school.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latina Participants</td>
<td>School Intrinsic Factors</td>
<td>Community Intrinsic Factors</td>
<td>Family Intrinsic Factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
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<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariangel</td>
<td>“self-growth and improvement throughout school motivated me to finish my degree.”</td>
<td>“By attending college, it would help me improve my skills that would not only help me academically but also help develop confidence to pursue a more fulfilling job in the community.”</td>
<td>“I was raised Catholic and always had faith that God had a plan for me. I would also pray to have a positive mentality throughout college whenever my personal life got complicated.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milagros</td>
<td>“I wanted to prove to myself that I was capable of completing my degree and getting an opportunity to have the job or career that I wanted.”</td>
<td>“My number one motivation to complete my college degree was to be the first one in my family to finish college.”</td>
<td>“I would always pray in times of stress. Specially during finals and midterms. My faith in God would always make me feel like I was able to accomplish everything.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josefa</td>
<td>“Wanting to grow as a person and student mixed in with wanting to move back to my hometown served as fuel for me to finish college. I took on additional courses and graduated in 3 years.”</td>
<td>“I did not see dropping out as an option. It was an expectation to complete it.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 5

**Adult Agents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latina Participants</th>
<th>Adult Agent</th>
<th>The Influence to Pursue Higher Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flora</td>
<td>Sixth-grade Teacher Parents</td>
<td>“I had an awesome teacher who always spoke highly of me. She always kept in touch and made sure we were on the right track. “My parents had conversations with my sister and I about college growing up all the time as well.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candela</td>
<td>CBS/AVID Teacher</td>
<td>“This teacher showed me how I could get to college. Gave me the resources, support, and motivation I needed to pursue big name schools, big scholarships and to honestly stay in college after I wanted to drop out, it’s like he followed me throughout all these years. Like a life mentor.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>AVID Teacher</td>
<td>“Gave college advice, helped with letters of recommendations and college paperwork.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AP Psychology Teacher</td>
<td>“Provided emotional support.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Siblings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valentina</td>
<td>AVID/DA Teacher</td>
<td>“She became like a school mom/mentor. She made us feel that college was possible for any of us regardless of where we came from.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malena</td>
<td>AP Psychology Teacher</td>
<td>“I appreciated them. They gave me advice about applying to colleges and convinced me that I needed to challenge myself to be better. One thing I liked about them is that they were passionate about their classes and their students. Both teachers talked to their students about their college experiences which in my opinion can influence them even more. The stories convinced me that college can be a fun experience and I pictured myself going to college and experiencing that myself.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AP Statistics Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paloma</td>
<td>Best Friend</td>
<td>The best friend and her family made an impact in her decision to finish college. “They always instilled the importance of college to me and it stuck with me forever.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Best Friend’s Family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HS Counselor</td>
<td>“My high school counselor always made sure I was on track with my classes and grades and repeatedly reminded me that she would help in whatever I needed even after high school.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alessandra</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Their work ethic inspired her to finish college.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5 (Cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latina Participants</th>
<th>Adult Agent</th>
<th>The Influence to Pursue Higher Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mariangel</td>
<td>English Teacher</td>
<td>“They often took their time between assignment to connect with students when it came to education. Teachers were honest and inspired students to pursue higher education by believing in their hard work. They wrote recommendation letters.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spanish Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychology Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High School Counselor</td>
<td>“She took the time to help me apply for the Honors program at Fresno City College.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milagros</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>“Supported and encouraged to finish college.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>“They reinforced my decision to pursue higher education.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josefa</td>
<td>Peer Influence</td>
<td>“I learned more from my peers who were also looking to attend private universities.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter Summary

This chapter described the participants in the study and the findings based on the research questions. Each participant’s parent’s education and a brief biography were shared to give the reader a sense of reference for each participant. Each participant was given a pseudonym to protect their identity. Each participant’s voice was demonstrated through their direct quotes to capture the overall findings of the study organized through the adapted model Latinx student higher education influences framework, which encompassed three theoretical frameworks of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system, community cultural wealth, and funds of knowledge. The participants shared how they decided and achieved their college degrees. The Latina participants shared many commonalities in their responses. One was the strong ties with their families that provided emotional or financial support to complete their college degree, which represented the microsystem. Eight out of 10 participants stated that spirituality was an important element in their college perseverance. Another commonality was within their
responses representing the mesosystem in which all participants recalled their memories about their upbringing in a Mexican household entailing chores given and expected within their home. One area in the exosystem that was not agreed upon was the area of social capital, which looked different for each participant. For example, not all participants agreed that taking AP courses benefited them in college. The macrosystem was overwhelmingly utilized as another commonality among the participants, sharing their childhood memories and helping their parents with communication and translation (language brokering). Lastly, the chronosystem showed all participants navigated their decision to attend or complete their higher education with the help of an adult agent. All participants also stated strong intrinsic and extrinsic factors in their motivation to pursue and complete their college degrees.

Chapter 5 will provide more details about the findings, including a discussion in a summary form specific to each Latinx higher education influences model. The chapter concludes with sections related to the study’s implications for further research and future policy and practice recommendations.
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

By 2060, the Latinx population is estimated to grow to 111 million, making up 26.5% of the total population in the United States (United States Census Bureau, 2018). California has a total population of 39,283,000, with 15,327,688 comprising the Hispanic population (Hernandez-Nieto et al., 2017). The Hispanic total population in Fresno, California, is 256,260 with 136,381 attending the public school system showing 88,820 completing high school and 15,462 attained a bachelor’s degree (World Population Rate, 2021). Although Latinx is the largest minority group in the county of Fresno, this population shows to have the lowest higher education attainment. There is still a disproportionate number of Latinx students completing their education. Moreover, it has been a pattern for decades that the Latinx population in the United States has the largest college attainment gap among adults with college degrees (Camacho, 2011).

This research study sought to understand the influencing factors in which Latinx students who pursued higher education and attained their college degree utilized their funds of knowledge, community cultural wealth, and Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system. All three frameworks were triangulated to create a New Concept framework called the Latinx higher education influences model. The research study used a qualitative design entailing in-depth interviews with 10 Latinx participants. Direct quotes were used to showcase the results in Chapter 4 to display the participants’ voices as they shared their experiences about their journey to achieving a college degree.

Chapter 5 is comprised of five sections. The first section includes a summary of the findings. The second section explains the Latinx student higher
education influences model and how the New Concept framework help explain how the participants utilized the model to pursue and achieve their first four-year college degree. The third section gives a detailed discussion applying the study’s findings connecting to Chapter 2’s literature and the three research questions that set the foundation for the research study as they applied to each layer of the Latinx student higher education influences model. The fourth section discusses recommendations for urban high schools with high populations of marginalized groups, including Latinx students. The last section includes implications for research and further studies, with a summary concluding the study.

**Summary of Findings**

Findings for the study were based on participants’ data from the in-depth interviews. The study successfully discovered how participants utilize the Latinx higher education influences model adapted from Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system with components of funds of knowledge and community cultural wealth. The study revealed that all Latinx participants utilize a variety of asset-based approaches aligning with the Latinx higher education influences model to guide them through their higher education achievement. There were also commonalities among the participants’ responses. All participants stated that familial capital was essential in attaining their college degrees. They all valued family contributions growing up by participating in chores within their household. Spirituality was a vital component for 80% of the participants, which indicated it was essential in persevering in their studies in college. All participants also mentioned relationships with family members and other adult agents to help navigate through the education system.

Furthermore, all participants utilized social capital by taking advantage of opportunities within their high school, including AP courses and extracurricular
activities, and building upon the resources available on the school campus to help with college applications, financial aid, college tours, and counseling services. In addition, 90% of the participants grew up translating for their parents, allowing the students to become fluent in two languages, cognitively switching their thoughts from English to Spanish and Spanish to English as they began school. All 10 participants had aspirations before starting college that pertained to higher education attainment. Moreover, all Latinx participants shared that they experienced challenges as they navigated to complete their college degrees. Lastly, all participants stated that motivation was a key trait they possessed in succeeding in higher education and eventually earning their college degree.

The participants’ responses to motivational factors aligned with points mentioned in the literature. High schools with effective programs to monitor Latinx students’ progress in college-going programs tend to be more academically successful in supporting students’ higher education pursuits (Gandara & Bial, 2001). Three of the participants were in a specific AVID course in high school. However, all participants graduated from an AVID demonstration model high school where note-taking strategies and college culture were the norms within the school culture. All participants stated they were involved in an extracurricular activity and felt connected with their school through these activities. All students mentioned high school culture as well. Saying their high school had a strong college culture. There was also a strong sense of attachment to a trusting adult like a teacher, counselor, or peer on their high school campus that motivated them to pursue higher education. Ng et al. (2004) indicated that a more heightened sense of self-esteem, confidence level to achieve goals, and perseverance in completing tasks, including academic assignments that creates a thriving, resilient human being, is more evident in students who build an attachment to a trusting adult.
New Concept Framework

Many of the participants’ responses correlated with the Latinx student higher education influences model designed and created by the researcher and adapted by “The Ecology of Human Development: History and Perspectives,” by U. Bronfenbrenner (1976).

The Latinx student higher education influences model (see Figure 4) was created to show a New Concept framework encompassing an asset base approach with an ecological systems theory in place. The model was created and utilized to understand the intersections of the Latinx student’s influencing factors while achieving a higher education degree. The Latinx Student Higher Education Influence Model begins with the strongest asset of the Latinx Student that will influence them throughout their journey in earning their college degree, the family culture influences encompassing religion, home responsibilities in which strengthens their ideologies and builds upon their school social capital in addition to influences of relationships and social capital widening their influencing factors as they navigate towards a higher education degree. The Latinx student utilizes various internal and external factors as they develop to understand how to achieve a higher education degree. The closer the ring to the center of the Latinx student (see Figure 10) is the one of utmost influential and the one they will utilize throughout their journey to a college degree. The center begins with the Latinx student as the core, surrounded by external and internal factors within their environment utilized to attain a college degree.
The success of the Latinx student in successfully reaching higher education depends on the interactions between the structures at different levels within the *Latinx Student Higher Education Influences Model*. Bronfenbrenner (1989) recognized various aspects of a person’s life as they develop from childhood to adulthood, considering wider influencing factors and the context of development. The Latinx student higher education influences model is a similar concept design as Bronfenbrenner’s original model but with additions of asset base frameworks, the community cultural wealth framework and funds of knowledge. The Latinx student utilizes various internal and external factors as they develop to understand through influences within their environment how to achieve a higher education degree. The closer ring(s) to the center of the Latinx Student (Figure 13) are the ones of utmost influential to the student and the ones they will utilize throughout their journey towards a college degree. As the research presented, the Latina participants all successfully navigated toward a higher education by building upon their influences within the *Latinx Student Higher Education Influences Model*. It was evident through the narrative inquiry showcasing how all rings were successfully utilized building upon motivation, inspiration and reassurance as they navigated towards a higher education experiencing resistant capital.
The *microsystem* ring (see Figure 11) is the closest to the Latinx student, which includes family and spirituality within the *microsystem*. This entails students relying on their families for internal or external factors. Spirituality is a strong component in Latinx families. Latinx students utilize this asset throughout their higher education journey as a sense of perseverance. All Latina participants built upon their family strength and encouragement for completing their higher education degree. The narrative inquiry showed sustaining family values carries merit for the Latinx Student, building upon hope and the ability to bring along family practices such as religion gives a sense of calmness within the resistant capital. There were 80% of Latina participants who had an upbringing with strong spirituality beliefs and values. These beliefs stay close to the Latinx Student and taken along to college with them build upon their persistence, confidence and intrinsic motivation to complete a college degree. This ring is the closest to the Latinx Student and the most influential in achieving a college degree.

**Figure 11**

*Microsystem Ring*
The next ring is the *mesosystem ring* (see Figure 12), which entails the influences of relationships within their family or ones they formed during their public elementary and secondary schooling experience. These relationships serve as role models or assisted with resources for college attainment and are essential in influencing Latinx students with higher education attainment.

**Figure 12**

*Mesosystem Ring*

![Mesosystem Ring Diagram](image)

It is through these relationships where Latinx students are given the navigational tools needed to pursue and achieve a higher education degree. These relationships serve as role models and key influencing factors for Latinx student’s success. Teachers are a valuable guiding resource. As shown in the research collected all participants depended on an adult agent with various guiding purposes. An “extra push” stated by one of the participants. It was the AP Psychology teacher, Spanish teacher and AVID teachers that made huge impacts in the motivational levels for the Latina participants to reach and attain their degree. The ring of mesosystem is one of the closer rings to Latinx Student since it
is one revolving ring needed for college degree completion. As the Latina participants experienced resistant capital during their college experience it was these relationships, like prior teachers they reached out to for support and guidance.

The exosystem ring (see Figure 13) strongly entails the social capital resources. The Latinx student can become informative to facilitate social mobility and seek the necessary guidance to pursue or attain a college degree. Advanced placement courses can give the skills needed for Latinx students to experience the pace and academic workload of a college-level course equipping them with higher education skills. School services and counselors provide students with the knowledge and help with college exposure opportunities and assistance in completing college admittance paperwork. The Latina participants all took advantage of taking AP courses in high school. The school environment was found positively correlated with the Latina participants understanding of the value of a college degree. It was described as a college going environment. This provided a sense of hope college was attainable.

Figure 13

Exosystem Ring
The *macrosystem ring* (see Figure 14) helps explain how Latinx students’ assets, such as their culture responsibilities, aspirations, and linguistic ability to speak two languages, give them a sense of empowerment to shape their attitudes and ideologies about attaining a college degree. This ring builds upon the work ethic of a Latinx Student which is taken with them as they maneuver through a higher education degree. All Latina participants in the study had responsibilities in their household which also included serving as language brokers and understanding finances by playing active roles in the family economics. Mexican families’ relationships are valued by investing their labor and pooling resources, these are all examples of social funds, which are a component within the funds of knowledge. This ring contributed to the Latina participants ideologies based on those funds they acquired during their upbringing, school experiences and aspirations.

**Figure 14**

*Macrosystem Ring*
Lastly, the chronosystem ring (see Figure 15) is ongoing and life changing. In this ring, the Latinx student is preparing or currently attaining their higher education degree, the variety of capitals are being utilized to reach their college degree. Many Latinx students may be the first to attend college and need to use navigational and may need to persevere through resistant capitals to attain their college degrees. Additionally, when Latinx student changes their home life to attend college, they may experience resistance with imposter syndrome (feelings of not belonging in college) or financial barriers. They may also experience culture shock coming from urban high school. Candela, described those experiences best in this excerpt:

There was a huge culture shock coming from a diverse place like my high school and then suddenly only seeing Whites and Asians in all your classes. Not only that, but there were also huge wealth disparities that were incredibly noticeable. Also, the stress that comes from the pressure to succeed from your family, friends, and community.

Still, Candela got through college and is presently pursuing a master’s degree. It was through the ability to utilize the resources within the Latinx Student Higher Education Influences Model, including the navigational, when their level of motivation rises to guide them to their first higher education degree. Once the Latinx Student achieves a college degree by understanding the Latinx Student Higher Education model, the levels of motivation in the chronosystem can also guide Latinx students to continue higher education passed a bachelor’s degree. It is the culmination of utilizing all rings within the Latinx student higher education influences model, which includes internal and external factors that help Latinx students achieve a college degree.
Figure 15

*Chronosystem Ring*

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**Discussion of Study’s Findings**

I will discuss the study’s findings and each ring of the Latinx student higher education influences model and identify the significant results within each ring. Each ring emphasizes the impact of the findings that could enhance the intricate and extricate values of the Latina participants.

**Latinx Student**

Ten Latina participants all graduated from central California’s same urban high school. In addition to all being of Latin descent, they shared other commonalities. Eight participants were daughters of Mexican immigrant parents, while two had parents born in America. Two participants also migrated with their families to America as young children. The two participants had their parents born in America, had parents who achieved a high school diploma, and the other had parents who graduated from a community college. The other eight participants had parents who ranged in completing education from third grade to vocational
training in Mexico. A bachelor’s degree attainment among all the participants ranged from achieving in 3 years to as long as 7 years. They were all raised in the same neighborhood near their home high school. Words and phrases the participants used to describe their neighborhood ranged from the following:

- Unsafe
- Bad influences in the neighborhood
- Low socioeconomic area
- Dangerous
- Diverse

Eclectic, a mix of socioeconomic status

Other terms included:

- Decent area
- Friendly and looked after each other
- Many children roaming around
- Hardworking farmworkers

All Latina participants decided to attend college after graduating from high school. There were similarities in their influences on choosing and achieving their college degree. The following paragraphs will discuss how participants’ responses aligned with the Latinx student higher education influences model.

**Microsystem**

The microsystem ring was strongly utilized by all participants. This ring entails the ability for students to recognize the human resources in their environment, which includes familial capital and spirituality. Hobbs (2020) stated that Latinx students find strength in the guidance they receive from their families. All 10 participants utilized their families for college support. Nine of the 10 said they relied on their families for financial aid, and all participants indicated their
family was their emotional support. All participants are first-generation and value their parents’ support. Their parents’ financial, emotional, or physical support kept them going to complete their higher education. As stated by participants:

- “It was difficult at first, but they could give me a little bit of money at the beginning.”
- “My parents gave me money when they could. But most of it was emotional support.”
- “My parents supported me one hundred percent with getting a college degree. I live with my parents throughout my entire college experience. They provided me with shelter and food without expecting much in return.”

Yosso (2005) refers to familial capital as cultural knowledge that carries a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition. A sense of community and memory taken to college by eight of the nine participants was their religious values. Religious or spiritual affiliation was overwhelmingly influential among the majority of the participants. Barriga’s (2020) phenomenological study of first-generation Latinx college students showed that participants shared that prayer helped them cope with college stressors. Latinx students find comfort in spirituality (Barriga, 2020; Chavez, 2020; Perna & Titus, 2005). Eight of the 10 participants in this study correlated with Barriga’s (2020) study, stating they, too, strongly relied on spirituality during challenging and uncertain times in college. Spirituality included praying to a God or an alternate saint for strength, guidance, or hope during challenging circumstances or self-doubt. One participant had a solid attachment to a saint taught to her by her mother. It was of utmost importance within their family values. Her father gave her a picture of the saint when leaving for the first time to college. She stated, “I
asked la Virgen to get me through tough times and give me the strength to keep going.”

Other comments from participants pertaining to praying included the following:

- “I pray all the time to get me through everything. I think just praying and having that faith that God was/is always with me helped me in college.”
- “My parents always taught me that prayers will get me through my days.”
- “I was raised Catholic and always had faith that God had a plan for me. I would also pray to have a positive mentality throughout college whenever my personal life got complicated.”
- “I would always pray in times of stress. Especially during finals and midterms.”

Spirituality was learned in the Latina participants’ homes, and they continued to rely on it during college to help them achieve their degrees. Spirituality was an overwhelmingly strong asset base component to help the participants hope and persistence in completing their college degrees.

**Mesosystem**

This layer entails the structure of relationships to help guide or raise the sense of hope for Latinx students to pursue a college degree. Relationships was a strong variable of importance for the Latina participants in reaching college. Nine of the 10 participants had a close relationship with an adult agent who contributed to their college degree attainment. The relationships ranged from being established in childhood like family to other relationships established at schools, such as teachers, counselors, or peers. The literature mentioned the study of Martinez and
Deil-Amen (2015), who found that the quality of teacher interaction relationships matters to a student’s self-efficacy, which is a crucial element of Latinx students’ college completion rate. This was seen in the current study with the Latina participants. For example, Malena shared how two teachers significantly impacted her decision to pursue college and commented:

One thing I liked about them is that they were passionate about their classes and their students. If this person believes in me, I thought to myself, I should consider planning a better future for myself. Both teachers talked to their students about their college experiences, which, in my opinion, can influence them even more. The stories convinced me that college can be a fun experience, and I pictured myself going to college and experiencing that myself.

Malena’s comment aligns with Harmon (2012), who stated that schools with a positive school climate, where teachers hold positive attitudes and high expectations about students, build a school where students of a marginalized group, like Latinx, want to learn to perform academically well. Martinez and Deil-Amen (2015) stated that academic tracks, school resources, relationships, and guidance counselors play a factor in students’ confidence to believe they can succeed in college. As Flora shared, “The teachers I had and my counselor were like an added bonus to give me that extra push to pursue higher education.”

Participants relied on past teachers, college-going family members, and friends to help familiarize themselves with the challenges of college. Candela relied on her teacher for support during high school and her college journey. She shared:

My AVID teacher showed me how I could get to higher education. He gave me the resources, support, and motivation I needed to pursue big-name schools, big scholarships, and to honestly stay in college after I wanted to drop out; it’s like he followed me throughout all these years. Like a life mentor.
Maintaining relationships with mentors helped Latinx students pursue college and attain degree completion with confidence.

**Exosystem**

This layer entails the Latinx student’s environment outside the family home that contributes to college attainment, including school environment, curriculum accessibility, and culture and climate. This layer, the exosystem contribute to Latinx students’ social capital for college readiness and college exposure opportunities. All 10 participants’ schools and climate were felt to be mainly positive ones where opportunities were not allowed to pass them by but rather to include themselves in involvement. They shared that they were part of additional extracurricular activities in high school, from sports, student government, and clubs to internships. For example, Mariangel was involved in various activities on her high school campus. She said:

I was part of the after-school Folkloric dance group and participated in several school performances to promote diversity. I was an after-school mentor at an elementary school. My involvement gave me a sense of purpose, and I was able to see how my impact made a difference.

The culture and climate of the high school campus these students attended were received positively by nine participants. A few of the comments included:

- “Positive, diverse population, culturally educated, plenty of support and resources from staff, and the campus was safe.”
- “My high school pushed us to go to college.”
- “My high school highlighted the importance of going to college in several ways.”
- “I would describe the college-going culture of my high school campus as a very helpful one.”
All participants overwhelmingly described the high school they attended as a positive experience that promoted college.

All 10 participants took advanced prep courses in high school. The academic rigor of courses in the high school curriculum is strongly correlated with college performance (Vega, 2016). By providing school support and access to these rigorous courses, students can better prepare for college enrollment (Vega, 2016). Six of the 10 participants felt the AP courses taken in high school prepared them for college. Malena shared, “AP courses give you a clue of how college courses may be.” Paloma agreed that her AP courses helped prepare her for college. She stated, “I feel that those who attended AP courses were held at a higher standard, and more was expected of us, and college was exactly that.” Taking AP courses gives Latinx students opportunities to experience a precollege experience to prepare them for higher education.

At the high school where all participants graduated, there is an open-door policy for any student to choose to take AP courses regardless of grade point average (GPA) status. There is no minimum requirement to add an AP course to their class schedule. All participants selected their AP courses of their own free will. When students are given opportunities to exercise autonomy versus being controlled, they are more likely to be more engaged in the classroom and exercise their own choices (Black & Deci, 2000). All participants felt comfortable and safe being involved in extracurricular activities, including sports, student government, clubs, and other opportunities offered at their high school that they chose to be part. Advance prep courses can also be intimidating, but when students are allowed to select their courses, studies show higher perceived competence, and goal-oriented students are more willing to attend higher education (Black & Deci, 2000). All 10 participants took AP courses in high school.
Macrosystem

This ring helps explain how Latinx students shape their ideologies and attitudes about school. All 10 participants stated they had responsibilities growing up within their households. These included a variety of chores that provided a sense of contribution to their family. Mexican families’ relationships are valued by investing their labor and pooling resources, these are all examples of social funds, which are a component within the funds of knowledge (Moll et al. 2001). Chores among the group varied from contributing to cleaning the home, cooking, washing clothes, caring for younger siblings, and helping sell fruits to make extra money for the family. Alessandra shared her experience when she commented:

I cleaned the house after school to make sure it was all tidied up before my parents arrived from their fieldwork. If it was during the vacation months, my eldest sister and I would babysit the younger siblings and cook for them. Occasionally, I would also help my mom sell bags of cherries in the evening around the neighborhood.

As Malena shared, these responsibilities provided a sense of foundation and expectation as part of their daily routine, plus attending to school studies. Malena said:

Growing up, my parents expected me to go to school and then help around the house as soon as I got home. If my mom was cooking, I would have to help her make dinner. Then after everyone in the house ate dinner, I would have to stay and help clean up. This consisted of picking up everyone’s plate, washing the dishes, then putting them away. This was an everyday thing, and the difficult part was that I still had homework to do. As it got late, I knew I was going to sleep late to finish my assignments and keep my grades up. Every Saturday, we had the same routine, my mom would wake up my sister, and we were up early to help her clean. Our rooms had to be sparkly clean, and we had to sweep, mop, dust, and clean the restrooms.

In addition to household chores contributing to Latinx ideologies, language brokering does as well. It was an expectation for nine of the 10 participants to translate for their parents growing up. Language brokering helps Latinx students...
with cognitive development (Mann, 2021). Yosso (2005) stated that bilingual children bring the responsibilities of translating for their parents and gaining social skills to use in the classroom. The skills acquired from the Latinx student upbringing translating for their parents were ones they took to college to achieve their degree. Malena shared that she still translates for her parents as an adult. “Up to this day, my siblings and I still have to translate, especially when they have new clients to work with or doctor appointments.”

Paloma shared that she started translating for her parents at an early age, needing to build up her vocabulary to translate for various places and various things. Paloma said:

I grew up living with my mother only, so Spanish was the only language spoken at home. Ever since elementary school, I always had to translate for my mother everywhere we went. Being that I was so young, and I didn’t have a very extended vocabulary, translating was a bit challenging. It was common for me to translate at the doctor and any store or anywhere we went. I also often had to translate paperwork and mail, make phone calls for her, fill out forms for whatever was needed.

Language brokering was the norm for most participants growing up, contributing to their social and cognitive development.

Another factor that all 10 participants possessed was aspirations. They each had goals growing up that entailed a college degree. Flora talked about how college was a mandatory requirement ingrained in her mind. Some aspired to become doctors, like Candela and Valentina, while others aspired to become a teacher like Milagros and Alessandra. Milagros also dreamed of taking care of her father. She shared:

As a child, I had different aspirations. The most important one was to go to college and get my bachelor’s degree in Spanish literature. I also aspired to become a successful Literature professor. Retiring my dad was and still is my biggest aspiration.
Próspero and Vohra-Gupta’s (2012) study findings indicated that the Hispanic student population suggested Hispanic students with a positive home environment and supportive family relationships had higher intrinsic motivation levels that positively influenced their academic achievement. All 10 participants contributed to household chores, and language brokering was another overwhelming variable among nine participants, and all Latinas possessed aspirations that contributed to a college mindset. All responses aligned to the macrosystem components of what Latinx students tap into to complete a college degree.

**Chronosystem**

Lastly, the chronosystem is ongoing and life-changing to continue as the Latinx student is preparing or currently attaining their higher education degree. This ring entails resistant capital, navigational capital, and motivation levels. The resistant capital is the ability to motivate and resist oppressive factors that may hold a person of color back (Yosso, 2005). The navigational capital is the ability of the student to utilize skills to maneuver through challenging circumstances that may not support social institutions or may not be created with communities of color in mind (Yosso, 2005, p. 80). All participants were able to change the trajectory of their lives with levels of motivation and persistence to seek the answers they needed to succeed. All 10 participants accredited their high school campus culture for helping them navigate toward college. Eight participants stated a teacher helped them toward understanding college. One said it was a counselor, and another participant stated it was her school peers who influenced her to attend college. High school adult agents helped students understand college, get into college, assist with the paperwork for college, or take them on a field trip for college exposure. Through the various adult agents, Latinx students were able to
navigate toward college. Victoria was very appreciative of her AVID and AP psychology teachers. Victoria commented, “They gave college advice, helped with letters of recommendations and college paperwork.” Flora had a life mentor teacher who contributed to her self-efficacy to attend college. Flora said, “I had an awesome teacher who always spoke highly of me. She always kept in touch and ensured I was on the right track.”

Hobbs (2020) stated that one way to help Latinx students in this capital was through identifying and lowering barriers that inhibit Latinx students’ academic achievements. When students experience a sense of belonging and attachment to their high school, they are less likely to drop out (Gandara, 2010). Teachers are a significant asset in providing the necessary skills to promote inclusivity for all students (Day, 1999). All participants had an anchor that helped them navigate attending college, which lowered the barrier that may have inhibited them from attending higher education.

All 10 participants stated they had barriers in pursuing their college degrees. Many Latinos are first-generation students to attend college and may find it challenging to attend a higher education institution, making them more susceptible to dropping out (Morales, 2018). In addition, Latinx students are less likely to complete college due to a lack of familiarity with college life or understanding of financial aid (Morales, 2018). Nine of the 10 participants stated their families supported them with finances. Parents also provided the emotional support needed.

Motivation can be a key factor in how students prioritize their responsibilities. Different types of motivation can contribute to a person’s commitment to excel or not (Myers, 2011). Gandara (2017) stated although Latinx students may find themselves needing to adapt and rely on themselves to
maneuver through college, they must be resilient and persist in the face of adversity to graduate. There are differences within the Latinx ethnicity, and the resistant capital is in full swing once they realize the system may not be designed to accommodate their needs. Being the first generation in Latinx students’ families to attend college, they may find a variety of challenges. Candela shared her challenging experiences attaining her college degree while attending a large university. She shared:

I felt like I didn’t belong at a place like—College because I wasn’t smart enough like everyone else there was. I compared myself to others, and I struggled during the first quarter to do well. I was also dealing with anxiety and depression due to the imposter syndrome, lack of a sense of belonging, and homesickness. There was a huge culture shock coming from a diverse place like my high school and then suddenly only seeing Whites and Asians in all your classes. Not only that, but there were also huge wealth disparities that were incredibly noticeable. Also, the stress that comes from the pressure to succeed from your family, friends, and community. Being a first-generation college student didn’t help either because, really, I had no idea what I needed to do, how I could talk to professors, what to get involved. I didn’t even know what research was, all I knew was that I probably wouldn’t succeed at it. There’s also a very racist nature to the way institutions are run and operated. I noticed this the most during the pandemic.

Candela’s experience aligned with Yosso’s (2005) work in explaining the navigational wealth frame is the ability for students to utilize skills to maneuver through challenging circumstances that may not support social institutions and may not be created with “communities of color in mind” (p. 80). Moreover, Latinx students may be inclined to experience negative stereotypes, prejudices, and microaggressions while transitioning from high school to college and while on college campuses (Yosso et al., 2009). All Latina participants succeeded in college because they took advantage of various services to help them navigate toward their degrees. Those commonalities among them included tutoring services, programs
aimed at helping students of color, or students from underrepresented backgrounds support in succeeding towards their college degrees. Hobbs (2020) stated that Latinx students develop skills to challenge academic obstacles due to lifelong racial microaggressions. All Latina participants stated that their intrinsic motivation also helped them succeed in college. Their aspirations of helping their families, living a better life, and having the career they dreamed of achieving were goals they all shared.

**Summary and Research Questions**

This chapter described the participants in the study and findings based on the research questions. The Latinx student higher education influences model was explained in detail to orient the reader to each layer of the ring of reference applied to Latinx students striving to achieve a college degree. Each layer of the Latinx student higher education influences model was explained by using the results of the Latina participants as they shared their experiences navigating to a college degree. The study revealed that all Latinx participants utilize various asset-based approaches aligning with the Latinx student higher education influences model to guide them through their higher education achievement. In addition, the research showed commonalities among the participants’ responses relating to the three research questions:

**Research Question 1:** What extrinsic factors related to their environment, community, and family influence Latina students who graduated from an urban high school to pursue and attain a bachelor’s degree?

The extrinsic factors included social capital support from high school programs such as AVID and participating in extracurricular activities, like student government, clubs, and internships. In addition, nine of the 10 participants
overwhelmingly stated that financial assistance from parents, grants, and scholarships helped finance college.

**Research Question 2:** What intrinsic factors related to school, community, or family support influenced these Latin students who graduated from an urban high school to pursue and attain a college degree?

Intrinsic factors included self-motivation, aspirations, family values, and being the first generation to attend college were all commonalities among the participants in influencing factors to attain a college degree. Their aspirations led them to create a college mindset in pursuing a higher education degree. Families were supportive emotionally and encouraged, and the nonmonetary support offered was valuable in their persistence to finish their college degrees.

**Research Question 3:** How did adult agents (teachers, parents, etc.) influence the decision to pursue higher education? Entailing intrinsic, extrinsic, and adult agents utilized to achieve a college degree.

The adult agents that helped the participants influence their decision to attend college included AP teachers, AVID teachers, counselors, parents, and peers. Teachers played a tremendous role in the student by giving them the sense of hope, reassurance and a life time mentor to take the initiative to pursue a college degree.

Overall, the participants utilized a wide range of the Latinx student higher education influences model.

**Recommendation for Practice**

The results of this study support the cultivation and validation of students. Latinx student higher education influences model was adapted with the design of Bronfenbrenner’s (1976) ecological systems theory and encompassed the community’s cultural wealth and funds of knowledge to show how 10 Latina
students navigated to pursue a higher education institution college degree. The participants used the Latinx student higher education influences model to persevere, navigate, and achieve their college degree. Many of the influences shared by the 10 Latinas were consistent with the literature in Chapter 2, stating the importance of family, positive relationships, school culture and climate, and the benefits of mentorship, taking AP courses, and the value of spirituality in welcoming a nurturing school environment to help college success. All 10 participants spoke highly of their high school experiences providing a nurturing environment with caring adults who helped them navigate toward a college degree. They felt safe participating in various extracurricular activities and bonded with trusting adults. They were able to take AP courses that gave them glimpses into the college experience. Programs that catered to lower socioeconomically marginalized groups to prepare for college, like AVID, were beneficial for participants. All participants graduated from the same urban high school, an AVID National Demonstration school. A college-going school’s strategies benefit all its student population regardless of whether students are in a specific tailored AVID course. All teachers at the high school are trained in AVID strategies and utilize them in cross-curricular curriculums. Overall, this study offers evidence for implementing validating experiences at other urban high schools with a large Latinx population to improve student success in pursuing a college degree.

The study searched to identify the internal, external, and adult agents that influenced the Latina participants in achieving their college degrees. Gaining insight into the Latina participants’ responses helped me understand the influences successful Latinas utilized to accomplish their degrees. More insight can be gathered by replicating this study with a more significant participant number. This urban high school contributes to students’ success by providing the influences the
10 student participants indicated. As Reardon-Anderson et al. (2002) stated, Latinx students born to immigrant parents are more likely to live in urban areas where additional challenges are experienced, such as quality of teachers in schools, poverty, crowded housing, and higher violence, which are all influential in a child’s life. It is essential for a significant predictor of a student’s growth process, especially for lower socioeconomic students, to provide a safe, positive school climate and cultural environment and provide academic opportunities for the child to thrive (Leonard, 2011).

This study sought to identify the factors that influence Latinx urban high school graduates in obtaining a college degree through a narrative inquiry of Latina voices. Gaining a perspective of how Latinas persevere in achieving their college degree was essential to understanding how to support other Latinx students pursuing a higher education institution. The adapted Latinx student higher education influences model gave insight into the approaches used by students to reach their college degrees. Recommendations are categorized to include the main layers represented in the Latinx student higher education influences model. The overwhelming number of participants stated elements of it throughout the study. The five recommendations are geared for other urban high schools with predominately a Latin base population or students from a marginalized minority group in how to serve them best to pursue a college degree.

**Family Support Services: Microsystem**

The findings revealed the strong bond between the Latina participants and their families. Mainly the parents of the participants played a dominant role in the students pursuing and earning their college degrees.

Recommendations for high schools are to promote high-quality communication with families. Promote family nights where they are part of the
student's understanding of college exploration. Invite families for college interest-relevant activities and experiences that bring families to the high school campus. Invite parents to attend field trips with their students on college tours. Create workshops for financial aid and promote guest speakers in their native language of Spanish. Since familial capital was the predominantly crucial factor in the Latinas’ responses, families need to be nurtured to embrace the culture.

**Strengthening Relationships: Mesosystem**

All Latina participants stated that relationships with an adult agent influenced them to pursue college or built their self-efficacy to envision themselves on a college campus. Teachers play an essential role in many students’ lives. By providing teachers a better understanding of Latinx students’ needs, they can better serve them.

A recommendation is to create teacher mentor programs where students can build relationships with at least one adult to make the difference they need to be successful and attend college. In addition, teachers involved in student programs can build relationships with students outside of academic curricula. Encourage teachers to coach, sponsor a club, provide tutoring services, and promote a community service project where students can build relationships with peers and teachers.

**Social Capital on the School Campus: Exosystem**

The study showed that all students were involved in various activities on their school campus. Providing access to opportunities that build up social capital like AP courses, extracurricular activities, internships, and academic programs like AVID and student leadership clubs builds up the Latinx student’s self-efficacy and confidence to attend college.
A recommendation is for schools to create an open-access program for advanced placement of Latinx students. This allows students to challenge themselves by taking honor or AP courses where they can gain college rigor course experiences. Students should not be denied the ability to take a course of interest. Recruit mentor tutors to assist students in challenging themselves in courses. Providing a vast number of activities where student development is fostered, challenged, and has positive impacts will benefit the college culture on the school campus.

**Foster Culturally Relevant Environment: Macrosystem**

All participants had aspirations pertaining to college attainment, valued spirituality, and engaged in language brokering for parents or caretakers. These experiences influenced their attitudes and ideologies about persistence, hope, and dreams.

A recommendation is that school staff needs to ingrain cultural relevance within their school curriculum to tap into Latinx students’ aspirations. Fostering and validating home language creates a sense of belonging and connection for the student. High school campuses should be mindful of their staff’s hiring practices reflecting the student population they are serving. Hiring practices reflecting the student population should not be limited to teachers only. Still, it is essential to hire people in leadership positions (Superintendents, Deputy Superintendents, Principals, Vice Principals, etc.) reflective of the student population served in the school. Students should be able to identify themselves in print, reflected in the curriculum, scholarship, and the staff leadership on the school campus.
College-Going Culture Alumni Mentoring Program: Chronosystem

All Latina participants stated they had challenges as they pursued their college degrees. Many turned to their families and past relationships to navigate toward their degrees. Suppose high schools provide a safe space where past students can reconnect and have access to a trusting adult when faced with college obstacles. In that case, it can provide the safety net they may need to not only complete their bachelor’s degree but perhaps a master’s or even a doctoral degree.

A recommendation for schools is to design a college-going culture alumni mentoring program. It would be an excellent resource for past students to develop connections, stay informed with their community, help other students, build a network of other graduates, and maintain lifelong bonds. This area will provide the necessary reassurance for students if they attend college in an unfamiliar space; they can still reach out to the college-going alumni mentoring program for support. Alumni students can return to take roles of mentors and inspirational speakers from which all students of a marginalized group can learn.

Implications for Future Research

As the percentage of Latinos grows in California, it is essential to support and better understand how to foster a college-going culture for its youth. Implications for future research include the importance of more Latinx student voices to share their journeys toward a college degree for others to follow and validate their experiences. The powerful voices of the 10 Latinas provided a sense of understanding of their barriers and how they reached their success regardless of adversity. There needs to be more research that is designed to reflect and validate the voices of Latinx students. This study primarily focused on the factors that influenced Latina urban high school graduates in obtaining a college degree. However, further research is needed, specifically on how Latinx students
successfully navigated through college and what factors influenced them to continue pursuing a higher education degree beyond a bachelor’s degree. Being that this study primarily focused on Latina participants, other research can look closely at Latino factors that influenced them to pursue and graduate with a college degree. Lastly, the public education system must be on board with promoting equitable and supportive practices for all students from marginalized groups and help identify where additional equity gaps exist.

Conclusion

This study entailed a qualitative approach, focusing on a narrative inquiry with a semistructured interview process to understand a purposeful sample of 10 Latina students’ intrinsic and extrinsic influencing factors in deciding and attaining a college degree. All participants graduated from the same urban high school and had similarities in achieving their college degree with influential factors aligned with the Latinx student higher education influences model. The factors included familial capital, spirituality, strong relationships, social capital, linguistic capital, resistance capital, and navigational capital. I triangulated three frameworks: Bronfenbrenner’s (1976) ecological systems theory, integrated community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005,) and funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 2001). The Latinx student higher education influences model was based on the variables within all systems (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem) and how community cultural wealth and funds of knowledge intersected with each of those systems.

The 10 Latina participants provided a wider lens for understanding factors that influence Latinx urban high school graduates in obtaining a college degree. Their narratives gave insight and reflection on the higher education influences to pursue a college degree. Through the power of their voices in sharing their
experiences, five recommendations were made for public urban high schools primarily serving students from marginalized groups. The following recommendations all stemmed from this research study’s findings:

- **Family Support Services.** Recommendations are for high schools to promote high-quality communication with families.

- **Strengthen Relationships:** A recommendation is to create a teacher mentor program where students can build relationships with at least one adult who can make the difference she would need to be successful and attend college.

- **Social Capital on the School Campus.** A recommendation is for schools to create an open-access program for advanced placement of Latinx students.

- **Foster a Culturally Relevant Environment.** A recommendation is that the school staff needs to ingrain cultural relevance within their school curriculum to tap into Latinx students’ aspirations.

- **College-Going Alumni Mentoring Program.** A recommendation is for schools to design a college-going culture alumni mentoring program.

In summary, the study successfully identified how Latinx students provided the foundation in designing a model that addresses Bronfenbrenner’s (1976) ecological systems theory, community cultural wealth, and funds of knowledge in developing the Latinx student higher education influences model that could assist students in navigating college degree attainment. It is recommended that the Latinx student higher education influences model be incorporated in high schools that support a college-going culture for marginalized students.
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APPENDIX: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

I am interested in learning how to support Latinx students who graduate from urban high schools and obtain a college degree. Participants in the study include Latinx students who graduated from an urban high school, decided to attend college, and attained their bachelor’s degree. I would like to ask questions about motivating factors, intrinsically or extrinsically, that influenced the decision to attend and attain a bachelor’s degree.

Tell me about yourself.
1. How would you describe the neighborhood you grew up in?
2. What type of childhood responsibilities did you have inside or outside of the home growing up?
3. What type of aspirations did you have as a child?

Tell me about your family.
4. Where are your parents/guardians from?
5. What is the highest level of education your parents/guardians achieved?
6. What type of support did your parents/guardian provide you to attend college?
7. What was your primary home language spoken? If other than English.
   7b. Did you have to translate for your parents at businesses, schools, or other places?

Tell me about your High School experience.
8. How would you describe the college-going culture of your high school campus?
9. How would you describe your high school involvement and experiences?
10. Did you take AP courses in high school? If yes, how many?
11. Did you feel that the AP courses prepared you for college?
12. Did you have a mentor/adult in high school that influenced your decision to pursue higher education?
13. Do you recall when you began thinking about going to college?

Tell me about attaining your college degree.
14. What type of challenges/barriers did you experience in college?
15. What type of support networks did you participate in college to help you succeed?
16. What motivated you to complete your college degree?

Tell me about any additional overall experience.
17. Are there any additional comments or information you would like to add about your overall experience pursuing college or attaining your degree?
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