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THESE HIPS DON'T LIE: EXAMINING THE ENGAGEMENT OF LATINA/O STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICE SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECTS AT A HISPANIC SERVING INSTITUTION

Felix Zuniga

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THESE HIPS DON’T LIE: EXAMINING THE ENGAGEMENT OF LATINA/O STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICE SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECTS AT A HISPANIC SERVING INSTITUTION

A Dissertation
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education
in
Educational Leadership

by
Felix Julian Zuniga
August 2021
THESE HIPS DON’T LIE: EXAMINING THE ENGAGEMENT OF LATINA/O
STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICE
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Approved by:

Nancy Acevedo-Gil. Ph.D., Committee Chair
Edwin Hernandez, Ph.D., Committee Member
Edna Martinez, Ph.D., Committee Member
While college access has been improved for Latina/o students, there is still the challenge of graduating Latina/o students with equitable academic outcomes (Bates et al., 2018). Hispanic-Serving Institutions are the sites that enroll the majority (67%) of Latina/o students in college; two out of three Latina/o students attend these broad-access, open-enrollment, minority-serving institutions known as HSIs (Excelencia, 2021). Universities across the United States are aware of the changing demographics of higher education but are slow to change policies and practices to become “student-ready” (McNair et al., 2016). Critical research on how Latina/o students experience higher education practices for student retention, more specifically, High-Impact Practices (HIPs) at HSIs, may hold the key to changing institutional cultures that directly impact improving outcomes for Latina/os in all different segments of higher education. Service-learning courses have been recognized in the research to have a higher impact on student success for Students of Color; this study will examine the experiences of Latina/o students in service-learning courses at a Hispanic Serving Institution or HSI. I introduce a framework titled the Student Engagement Ecosystem (SEE) Framework which examines the application of classroom practices beyond the binary of the course practice and the student. The SEE framework encourages leaders and practitioners to examine not only the student but their individual microsystem, which includes their family, access to resources, well-being, health, and their life and educational experiences, both positive and negative. Likewise,
practitioners need to examine their role in the application of the classroom practices, I challenge them to examine the norms in the classroom, amongst the student’s peers, and at the university itself. Practitioners should identify institutional support and resources, as well as barriers and systemic inequity where possible. This framework is based on theoretical frameworks that informed my research, such as Critical Race Theory in Education (CRTE) (Solórzano, 1998), Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) (Yosso, 2005), Validation Theory (Rendon, 1994, Rendon Linares & Muñoz, 2011), Transformational Leadership (Bensimon, 2007; Bensimon & Bishop, 2012), Hispanic Servingness (Garcia, 2017, 2018). Taken together this framework invites leaders and educational practitioners to see the whole student and their complex realities as individuals seeking belonging and validation in an educational system that may be foreign to them and their families.
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Lastly, to my mentees, you know who you are. Remember that we all follow in the footsteps of giants and that it is our duty to help others they others have helped us. You can do this if you want to!
DEDICATION

First, all glory goes to God, for without God, none of this would have been possible. To my wife Martha and my son Felix Mateo, thank you for all of your love, support, dedication, and sacrifice to help us accomplish this milestone. Our family will forever be changed because we have come this far together. There are not enough words or ways to thank you for all that you do for me. I promise to make up all of the Saturdays missed and exciting adventures we will now be going on; I can’t wait!

To all of my family and extended family, thank you for understanding all those years that I was not around and showing unending support to make this goal happen. We did it! You, my family, have shown me the value of hard work, perseverance, selfless dedication to a cause that is greater than our own. Please know I will be eternally grateful for your love and support!

Primero que nada, quiero darle gracias a Dios, que sin Dios, nada de esto hubiera sido posible. A mi esposa Martha y a mi hijo Félix Mateo, gracias por todo su amor, apoyo, dedicación y sacrificio para ayudarnos a lograr esta meta. Nuestra familia cambiará para siempre porque hemos llegado tan lejos juntos. No hay suficientes palabras o formas de agradecerte todo lo que hacen por mí. Prometo recuperar todos los sábados perdidos y las aventuras emocionantes que ahora continuaremos; ¡No puedo esperar!

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CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

Higher education institutions nationwide are working to improve graduation rates for all students. Efforts are pronounced among broad-access colleges and universities such as the California State University (CSU) (Moore, Schrager & Bracco, 2017). In 2016, the CSU, a system of 23 campuses enrolling nearly 500,000 students, set several ambitious graduation goals with its Graduation Initiative 2025 (GI 2025). An example of one of the goals was to double the four-year graduation rate for first-time freshmen to 40 percent by 2025 (Moore & Tan, 2018). More importantly, but less known, the initiative also aimed to eliminate graduation equity gaps across student populations in the system. Previously the CSU completed a similar graduation initiative with two primary goals: 1) raise the 6-year graduation rate; and 2) reduce the gap in degree attainment for underrepresented minority students by half. It accomplished the first goal, yet the equity gaps persisted in student outcomes (Moore et al., 2017). In order to meet the 2025 goals, the CSU must improve graduation rates for historically underrepresented groups in California (Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018; Johnson, Cook, & Mejia, 2017), in particular, Latina/o students, the largest ethnic/racial group of students by percentage and quantity in all groups in California (California Department of Education, 2019).

Latina/o students historically have been marginalized in terms of equitable outcomes in education (Bates, Bell, & Siqueiros, 2018; Bensimon & Bishop, 2012;
Students fortunate enough to navigate and graduate from high school eligible for college face new institutional barriers that limit access, persistence, and graduation in higher education; barriers that become further compounded by factors of demographics, economics, and technology (McNair, Albertine, Cooper, McDonald, & Major, 2016). Garcia and Natividad (2018) argued that the history of oppression and subjugation that Latina/os face as a result of colonization and imperialism have prevented them from advancing at postsecondary educational institutions, primarily because colonial ways of being have been ingrained in the systematic practices of higher education institutions.

The inequitable gap that exists in outcomes for Latina/os continues to widen despite efforts to increase access and retention along the educational pipeline (Bates et al., 2018). Solórzano et al. (2005) suggested that to understand the conditions that influence the educational pipeline; we must examine three factors: 1) the disparity in enrollment at 2- and 4-year institutions; 2) low transfer rates of Latinas/os to 4-year campuses; and (3) retention and graduation rates from both the community college and 4-year university (Solórzano et al., 2005).

The problem addressed in this study is that to increase graduation rates and eliminate gaps in educational attainment, systems and universities need to employ equity-minded leadership (Bensimon, 2012) and act deliberately when creating retention programs that are focused and targeted at one of the biggest and fastest-
growing groups of students that have been and are being underserved, Latina and Latino college students (Fry & Lopez, 2011).

Purpose Statement

The implementation of High Impact Practices or HIPs has been a widespread practice to address student retention and success since Kuh first highlighted them in 2008 (Brownell & Swaner, 2009; Kuh & Kinzie, 2018). Kuh (2008) listed the following as high-impact educational practices based on prior research in the field. Kuh’s list highlighted: first-year experiences, common intellectual experiences, learning communities, writing-intensive classes, collaborative projects or assignments, undergraduate research, diversity & global learning, internships, capstone courses and projects, and service-learning/community-based learning (Kuh, 2008). The individual activities known as HIPs have been available in one form or another for decades on most university campuses (Kuh & Kinzie, 2018). Research shows a link between High Impact Practices and student learning (Kilgo, Sheets, & Pascarella, 2014). Students of Color demonstrate improved academic outcomes with their participation in specific High-Impact Practices (Finley & McNair, 2016). Some argued that HIPs were the solution needed for educational success for all students (Brownell & Swaner, 2010); others disputed that more evidence was required (Hatch, 2012; Terenzini, 2011).

Hispanic-Serving Institutions or HSIs enroll the highest number, two-thirds or 67%, of Latina/o undergraduate students in college (Excelencia, 2021). HSIs continue to grow in quantity, but new institutions from different sectors of education are becoming HSIs, which further implores higher education researchers to explore
what it means to be Hispanic-Serving (Garcia, 2015, 2018, 2019; Marin, 2019). Researchers who focus on Latina/o education call for an increase in research on the postsecondary academic outcomes for Latina/o students to understand their educational experiences and opportunities, which are critical to closing the gap on equitable educational outcomes (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007; Covarrubias, 2011; Delgado-Guerrero, Salazar, Nieves, Mejia, & Martinez, 2017; Gloria, Castellanos, Núñez & Crisp, 2012; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2008). Critical research on how Latina/o students experience higher education practices for student retention, specifically High-Impact Practices (HIPs) like service-learning courses at HSIs, may hold the key to changing institutional cultures that have a direct impact on improving outcomes for Latina/os in all different segments of higher education.

This study will explore the shared experiences of Latina/o students participating in a service-learning course at a Hispanic-Serving Institution. According to Kuh (2008), service-learning programs contain a direct experience for the student inside and outside the classroom. An example could include a student learning about video production and conducting actual field interviews in their local community. Kuh (2008) also shares his belief that this type of college course has the potential to solve community issues. Research on persistence, or the continuation of school through graduation, focuses on low persistence rates and low four-year and six-year graduation rates that are faced by many Students of Color, low-income students, first-gen students, and other students that have entered college with less privilege and insufficiently prepared by the education system (Quaye & Harper, 2015). Although there are many skills and sets of
knowledge that students acquire while attending college, the ultimate measure of a college’s quality is the level of student success, primarily measured by high graduation rates and low departure rates (Braxton, Doyle, Hartley, Hirschy, Jones & McClendon, 2013). Much of the research from the dominant group views all students through a traditional college student lens, where White students are the dominant group, which is deficit-based and ignores persistent educational and economic inequalities for Latina/o students (Darder & Torres, 2014; Nora, Barlow, & Crisp, 2006). The work of Kuh (2008), Tinto (1975), Astin (1984), and Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) is ubiquitous and acknowledges that there are challenges when it comes to Students of Color (Finley & McNair, 2013), but does little to focus on how to solve for these challenges, and even worse often places the responsibility on the student rather than the institution (Gonzalez, 2017). The last 20 years have given rise to the research in student engagement for persistence, although less qualitative research has been done to understand student experiences in retention programs, and even less on Students of Color and minimal on Latina/o students' experiences with high-impact practices (Finley, 2012).

Research Questions or Hypotheses

Building on the purpose listed above, the research questions driving this study are:

1. How did Latina/o students see themselves reflected in service-learning courses, if at all?

2. What were the experiences of Latina/o students in service-learning courses at an HSI?
3. How and in what ways did Latina/o students who participated in service-learning courses developed a sense of belonging in college?

Significance of the Study

This research is significant in order to inform future implementation of practices and equity-minded policies at universities. Classes such as service-learning courses are one of many designated high-impact practices. Service-learning courses should contain two features: 1) they provide opportunities for students to work on real-world problems in the classroom, and 2) students have the opportunity to engage outside the classroom at a service site (Kuh, 2008). According to Kuh (2008), the service projects include tackling “real-world problems” (Kuh, 2017, p. 10); examples of projects may be: conducting a community clean-up effort or assisting in a migrant labor camp. Madsen (2004) points out that power and privilege issues will present themselves in this type of course implementation when the student body is not diverse in their social class or ethnic backgrounds. These issues may stem from deficit thinking or negative assumptions about the people or community that focus on the service project. In some cases, the re-enforcement of negative social stereotypes and power dynamics can result from a poorly implemented course, one that has not addressed power inequalities or examined privilege in-class discussion or reflections (Madsen, 2004). Since universities are widely adopting service-learning courses as an accepted high-impact practice (Kuh & Kinzie, 2018), it is vital to understand how and in what ways Latina/o students experience service-learning courses, and what, if any, is their influence on Latina/o college student persistence. The context of the experiences of
Latina/o students in these types of courses at a Hispanic-Serving Institution is important for two reasons; 1) HSIs enroll the largest number of Latina/o students in college (Excelencia, 2019b); and, 2) to understand the role the institution plays in advancing educational outcomes for Latina/o students in college by removing or by re-enforcing systematic practices that perpetuate the gap in equitable educational outcomes for these students (Garcia & Natividad, 2018)

Theoretical Underpinnings

I will employ critical hermeneutic phenomenology since Latina/o students are not members of a privileged group, and their voices are often discounted (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Phenomenology, in general, presumes that the expert knowledge and experiences of the researcher will guide the inquiry to make meaning of the phenomenon just as it led the researcher to choose the topic in the first place (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Gadamer’s (1989) method combined critical and interpretive schools of thought. Thompson (1990) states that critical hermeneutics emphasizes the concept that the researcher may interpret the experiences that the study participants may not be able to see for themselves. Critical hermeneutics assumes that society influences “socially accepted worldviews” (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p.730) based on the values of the privileged and frequently ignores the voices and experiences of those that are not a part of the dominant group. Any interpretation of the experiences of the participants from non-privileged groups must be prepared to challenge dominant ideologies and critically interrogate systematic power structures (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Critical hermeneutics can serve as an emancipatory tool to bring to light social or political actions that reinforce dominant ideologies or deficit
perspectives. Specifically, I am interested to know how Latina/o students experience service-learning courses at an HSI; does the service-learning course reinforce any underlying dominant ideology or deficit thinking? How do the students experience service-learning courses, and how do they feel about their role? How does the fact that the campus is a Hispanic-Serving Institution influence the service-learning courses, if at all? The answers to these questions may provide new perspectives and direct relevance for educational practitioners at an HSI.

Assumptions

As an educational professional and student of Latino origin, I am working with several assumptions. I assume that the student participants have unique educational journeys and career paths, and no two will be the same. I assume that faculty and site administrators will have different levels of experience and preparation regarding service-learning. I assume that it is with the best intentions that universities create programs to encourage students to persist but blanketly apply generic solutions to attempt to retain students. I believe that High-Impact Practices (HIPs) can be a powerful tool to retain students when implemented properly, but their failure lies in the limited availability to Students of Color and their generic implementation without regard to student needs. The key to the persistence of Latina/o students is creating a connection that shows that you care for that student. Most universities with the designated status of Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) fail to serve those students sincerely. Most of these universities were not born HSIs but evolved into them over time based on student enrollment.

I assume that the results of my study can be used to inform leadership and
educational practices and contribute knowledge to the field where educational professionals can intentionally create equitable practices that support Latina/o students not only to persist but excel and graduate college.

Limitations

My study's possible limitations include access to students who have participated in service-learning courses at an HSI. I plan to work with the office that oversees service-learning courses in addition to posting recruitment flyers. I do not believe I will be able to get students from all service-learning courses. Also, I am open to working with the teachers of service-learning courses to gain access to past student participants. I do not plan to interview faculty, nor am I reviewing syllabi for service-learning courses. I also do not know from which service-learning courses students will be drawn. Since I chose to interview students as a method, it is impossible to interview all students that meet the selection criteria. This study focused on a single site; therefore, the experiences of students experiencing the phenomena at different campus locations were not covered in this study. As much as my personal experience and knowledge guided me toward my study, likewise, they may have had an influence on my observations and conclusions without the proper planning and consultation.

Delimitations

Delimitations are the anticipated choices on what is and what is not within the focus of a research study, which guides the interpretation of the findings (Sampson, 2012). High Impact Practices include: first-year experiences, common intellectual
experiences, learning communities, writing-intensive classes, collaborative projects or assignments, undergraduate research, diversity & global learning, internships, capstone courses and projects, and service-learning or community-based learning (Kuh, 2008). This study is intentionally limited to one of the ten high-impact practices for student engagement (Kuh, 2008). Although only one HIP was chosen, service-learning, this HIP has been shown quantitatively to have the highest impact on Students of Color. Yet, few studies have been conducted on the experiences of Latina/o students in that specific HIP (Finley, 2012). Likewise, I chose to focus on the experiences of Latina/o students and not all students participating in service-learning courses at a Hispanic Serving Institution.

Summary

The research shows us that to raise college graduation rates and close educational attainment gaps; universities need to pay special attention to their Latina/o student populations (Bates, Bell, & Siqueiros, 2018; Gloria & Castellanos, 2012; Núñez & Crisp, 2012). Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) are the host to the majority of Latina/o students in college, enrolling 67% of all Latina/os in college (Excelencia, 2021). The policies and practices at HSIs play an essential role in the educational outcomes for Latina/o students as a whole (Garcia, 2019). Latina/o students have been and continue to be one of the fastest-growing demographics and, in some cases, the largest sub-group of students like in California, where Latina/o students are 52% of all children under 17 years of age (Johnson, Mejia & Hill, 2019). Universities have moved to utilize High-Impact practices to increase student retention for several decades (Kuh & Kinzie, 2018). Most research on HIPs
is quantitative due to the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), an
assessment tool used to evaluate student engagement and retention at
participating universities. Much of the research has shown that participation in HIPs
by Students of Color, including Latina/o students, increases their engagement and
retention in college and persistence to graduation, but more research is necessary
on the qualitative experiences of these students (Finley & McNair, 2013).

In the next chapter, Chapter Two, a thorough review of the existing
literature is presented, including a review of the status of the Latina/o student
educational pipeline, a historical look at the evolution of High-Impact Educational
Practices, an overview of Hispanic Serving Institutions, as well the conceptual
framework that guided my research.
CHAPTER TWO:
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss literature related to student engagement and Latina/o students in college. First, I provide an overview of the U.S. Latina/o population. Then I depict the Latina/o education pipeline and discuss the educational outcomes for Latina/os from high school through the 4-year university. Next, I review the student engagement and retention literature on High Impact Practices (HIPs), specifically service-learning programs, and the experiences of Latina/os in those programs. Then, I describe the status of Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), which enroll over two-thirds of Latina/os in higher education. Also, I highlight the opportunities HSIs have to change the trajectory of Latina/o student outcomes. Finally, I share the conceptual framework guiding this study, providing a lens through which this literature can be reviewed.

The Push for Improved Graduation Rates

Higher education institutions nationwide are working to improve graduation rates for all students. Efforts are pronounced among broad-access colleges and universities such as the California State University (CSU) (Moore, Schrager & Bracco, 2017). In 2016, the CSU, a system of 23 campuses enrolling nearly 500,000 students, set several ambitious graduation goals with its Graduation Initiative 2025 (GI 2025). An example of one of the goals is to double the four-year graduation rate for first-time freshmen to 40 percent by 2025 (Moore & Tan, 2018).
More importantly, but less known, the initiative also aims to eliminate graduation equity gaps across student populations in the system. In 2015, the CSU completed a similar graduation initiative with two primary goals, which were initiated in 2009: 1) raise the 6-year graduation rate for first-time freshmen; and 2) reduce the gap in degree attainment for underrepresented minority students by half. It accomplished the first by exceeding the desired goal and raising the rate of first-time freshmen finishing in 6-years to 59%. Yet, the equity gaps persisted in student outcomes for groups by ethnicity (11%), Pell-eligible students (8%), and first-gen students (13%) (Moore et al., 2017). In order to meet the 2025 goals, the State of California and the CSU must improve graduation rates for historically underrepresented groups in California (Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018; Johnson, Cook, & Mejia, 2017), in particular, Latina/o students, the largest ethnic/racial group of students by percentage and quantity in all groups in California (California Department of Education, 2019).

The U.S. Latina/o Population

Despite a recent slowdown in the U.S. population growth rate, the slowest growth since 1937 (Frey, 2018), Latinas/os still accounted for more than half (54%) of the growth in the US population between the years 2000-2017 (Flores, 2017). As of 2019, the latest published data available from the US Census Bureau, the US Latina/o population grew to approximately 60.5 million or 18.5% of the United States population, compared to just 9% of the population in 1990 (US Census, 2021). Passel and Rohal (2015) projected future growth of the Latina/o US population through 2065 and found that Latina/os are projected to make up nearly a
quarter (24%) of the US population. At over 15.5 million Latina/os, California houses nearly a third (25.7%) of the nation’s Latina/o population. In 2014, Latina/os surpassed the White population as the largest racial/ethnic group in California (Stepler & Lopez, 2016). The current Latina/o population of California is at 39% (US Census Bureau, 2019) and is projected to grow to 51% of the state population by 2060 (Johnson, Mejia & Hill, 2019). In California, Latina/o children make up over half (52%) of the children under 17 years of age, according to Johnson, Mejia, and Hill (2019). For the 2018-2019 school year, Latina/o students had the most significant enrollment percentage (54.6%) in California K-12 schools, greater than all other racial/ethnic groups combined (45.4%) (California Department of Education, 2019). Latina/o students are also the only racial/ethnic demographic to increase enrollment over the past several years, while enrollment numbers for Black and White students have declined (CDE, 2019). One of every two students in California, and one in every four in the United States, from kindergarten to college, are Latina/o (Bauman, 2017; CDE, 2019). Accordingly, equitable academic outcomes for Latina/o students will significantly impact the future of the State of California, the United States, and, most importantly, their families (Bates, Bell, & Siqueiros, 2018).

The Latina/o Education Pipeline

Latina/o students historically have been marginalized in terms of equitable outcomes in education (Bates, Bell, & Siqueiros, 2018; Bensimon & Bishop, 2012; Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Rivas, Pérez, Alvarez & Solórzano, 2007; Solórzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009). Students
fortunate enough to navigate and graduate from high school eligible for college face new institutional barriers that limit access, persistence, and graduation in higher education; barriers that become further compounded by factors of demographics, economics, and technology (McNair, Albertine, Cooper, McDonald, & Major, 2016). Garcia and Natividad (2018) argued that the history of oppression and subjugation that Latina/os face as a result of colonization and imperialism have prevented them from advancing at postsecondary educational institutions, primarily because colonial ways of being are ingrained in the systematic practices of higher education institutions.

Scholars in the field have identified and studied the gap inequitable outcomes for Latina/o students along the educational pipeline (Pérez Huber, Vélez & Solórzano, 2014; Solórzano et al., 2005). More explicitly, from elementary to higher education, these institutions have failed to serve Latina/o students equitably (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Pérez Huber et al., 2015; Pérez Huber, Vélez & Solórzano, 2014; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2016; Solórzano et al., 2005). According to Solórzano et al. (2005), to fully understand outcomes for Latina/o students, one should revisit key connection points along their educational journey. In doing this, patterns emerge in the outcome data that expose the cumulative effects of inadequate schooling conditions and poor educational preparation for Latina/o students from their institutions (Solórzano et al., 2005).

Pre-K Through High School

In 2016, more Latina/o students graduated high school than ever before; 86% of 19-year-olds received their high school diploma compared to 74% in 2006
(Bates et al., 2018). According to the US Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics, numbers show that the national high school dropout rate decreased from 10.9% in 2000 to 6.1% in 2016 (NCES, 2018). The decrease was mainly in part because the dropout rate for Latina/os lowered from 30% in 2000 to 8.6% in 2016 (McFarland et al., 2018). Likewise, more Latina/o students graduated from high school college-ready, 39% in 2016, compared to only 25% in 2006 (Bates et al., 2018). Although there has been an improvement for Latina/o high school students, gaps persist. As of 2016, high schools were not graduating Latina/o students at the same rates as their peers; at 8.6%, the national high school dropout or pushout rate was still higher for Latina/os than Black students (6.2%) and White students (5.2%) (McFarland et al., 2018). Regarding equitable educational attainment, in 2018, US high schools successfully graduated only 70% of their Latina/o students, the lowest for all racial demographics (McFarland et al., 2018). In California, approximately 86% of those Latina/o students enrolled in high school graduated in four years. Of those, high schools prepared only four out of ten (39%) with the minimum requirements (A-G ready) to enter the University of California (UC) or California State University (CSU) systems (Bates et al., 2018). According to the California Department of Education, A-G ready consists of 15 specific high school courses that students must pass with a C grade or better to be able to enter a 4-year public college in California. The courses consist of four years of English, three years of Mathematics, two years of lab science; two years of a foreign language; one year of history, one year of art, and one year of a college preparatory elective (CDE, 2019).
Nationally, the latest US Census data show that 37% of Latina/o adults have less than a high school diploma, compared to 5% of White adults aged 25-64 (US Census, 2018). Although numbers have improved for Latina/os, there is still a disparity in educational outcomes. Likewise, there is a difference between successful outcomes for Latino males and Latina students in high school graduation rates, perpetuating their associate's and bachelor's degree attainment (McFarland et al., 2018; Ponjuan, 2017; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2009; Serrata, 2016).

La'ina/os in College

The gap in equitable outcomes for Latina/os continues to widen despite efforts to increase access and retention along the educational pipeline (Bates et al., 2018). Solórzano et al. (2005) suggested that to understand the conditions that influence the educational pipeline; three factors must be examined: 1) the disparity in enrollment at 2- and 4- year institutions; 2) low transfer rates of Latinas/os to 4- year campuses; and (3) retention and graduation rates from both the community college and 4-year university (Solórzano et al., 2005).

La'ina/o enrollment has grown in every sector of higher education but tends to be overrepresented at 2- and 4- year open access, less highly selective institutions (Fry & Cillufo, 2019). The system of education is supposed to be equal in theory. Still, in examining its operations and outcomes, the system serves as a persistent barrier to college attainment for historically underrepresented groups, like Latina/os and African-American students. They graduate either unprepared for college or are tracked into overcrowded and underfunded open-access institutions (Carnavale & Strohl, 2013). When participation rates and outcomes are analyzed,
they must be viewed from an equity perspective; historically, outcomes are compared against the same group from previous years, which largely ignores disparities between groups (Pérez Huber et al., 2014). The magnitude of the Latina/o education crisis becomes more apparent when examining disparities in educational outcomes between racial/ethnic groups (Pérez Huber et al., 2006; Pérez Huber et al., 2014; Solórzano et al., 2005).

In 2016, the US Enrollment of Latina/o undergraduate students more than doubled to over 3.2 million nationally, from 1.4 million in 2000 (de Brey, et al., 2019). Nationally, in 2016, the percentage of all college students that were from a Latina/o origin grew to 19.1% from just 8% two decades before (Bauman, 2017). Latina/os historically have been one of the fastest-growing segments of the college population and have played a significant role in the student enrollment growth over the last four decades (Fry & Lopez, 2011). Given their increased participation in higher education, colleges are still not graduating Latina/os at the same rates as Whites (Bates et al. 2018; Pérez Huber, Huidor, Malagón, Sánchez, & Solórzano, 2006; Pérez Huber et al., 2015). More importantly, even with the college-going rates for Latina/o students increasing to 37% from 22% between 2000 and 2015 (McFarland et al., 2018), the overall number of Latina/os having the opportunity to participate in college as a percentage of their population is still lower than all groups (Bates et al., 2018; Pérez Huber et al., 2015).

California has the highest Latina/o undergraduate college student enrollment of all states, with 40% or nearly 1.3 of the 3 million college students in the state (NCES, 2018). Ninety percent of those Latina/o students are enrolled at a public
college or university (Bates et al., 2018). The latest data from the NCES (2018) show 72% of California Latina/o college students are enrolled in the California Community College (CCC) system; 13% in the California State University (CSU); and 4% in the University of California (UC) (Bates et al., 2018). While these percentage rates remain low and relatively unchanged, the numbers have increased due to population growth. For example, 15,000 more Latina/os enrolled in the CSU and an additional 7,000 in the UC, primarily because of improved access and population growth (Bates et al., 2018).

As discussed previously, Latina/o students tend to be overrepresented at community colleges; some say it is because of the perceived lower cost and broader acceptance rates (Pérez & Ceja, 2015). Others contend that they are tracked regardless of their educational preparation (Carnavale & Strohl, 2013). Regardless of their reason for attending, many get lost on the pathway to fulfilling their educational and career potential (Carnavale & Strohl, 2013). Over 80% of students who begin their journey at the community college intend to transfer and complete a bachelor’s degree (Jenkins & Fink, 2016). In California, fewer than half (47%) of all community college students complete 60 units, obtain a degree or certificate or transfer within six years (Johnson & Jackson, 2019). The first year of college is the most significant predictor of success and transfer at the community college (Braxton et al., 2013). Likewise, it is when most colleges fail to retain Latina/o students (Acevedo-Gil, Santos, & Solórzano, 2014; Braxton et al., 2013; Nora, 2003, 2006), which puts them on a path of non-transfer and increases their chances of non-completion. Others add that larger enrollment numbers coupled
with impacted course availability delay Latina/o student transfer and completion (Chen, 2018).

Nora (2002, 2003, 2006) created a model to examine Latina/o student engagement in community college, which explored pre-college factors and social and academic experiences, which impacted persistence. Lasher (2018) suggested that the existing research on community college retention failed to make explicit comparisons between Latina/os and other groups regarding systemic comparisons and called for more research to be done; his goal was to determine whether ethnicity impacted college retention. Nevertheless, all agree that there is a crisis in retention of Latina/o students in education, specifically at the community college (Braxton et al., 2013; Chen, 2018; Lasher, 2018; Nora, 2002, 2003, 2006; Pérez & Ceja, 2015; Solórzano et al., 2005). The disproportionate representation of enrollment of Latina/os in the 2-year community college and low transfer rates are issues that have and continue to persist (Acevedo-Gil et al., 2014; Bates et al., 2018; Nora & Crisp, 2009; Rivas, Pérez, Alvarez & Solórzano, 2007; Valliani, 2015). Historically, the promise of the community college was to serve as a gateway for students who desired to transfer to the 4-year university. Yet only 2% of Latina/o students were successfully transferred to a UC or CSU campus from a California Community College in 2 years, 13% in 4 years, and 16% in 6 years for a cumulative total of 31% successful transfer in 6 years compared to 45% of White students at the same time (Bates et al., 2018).

According to Solórzano et al. (2005), Factors that contribute to poor transfer rates include a) lack of transfer culture at the campus; b) lack of transfer
agreements between campuses; c) poor academic guidance and counseling at the campus and d) low expectations of community college faculty at the community college. Solórzano et al. (2005) questioned why so many Latina/o students began their post-secondary journey at the community college level, in light of their history of low transfer rates. One answer, suggested through a critical race analysis, was the inequality in the California Master Plan for Education that had strayed from its original purpose to provide equality of education for anyone who wanted one in the State of California (Solórzano et al., 2005). Research is critical at all levels of the pipeline to gain insight into the experiences of Latina/os in their educational journeys.

Most recent statistics show that 18% of the Latina/o population in California had an associate’s degree or higher, compared to 52% of the White population, among working adults between ages 25-64 (US Census Bureau, 2018). Latina/os had the highest rate of being left behind of all racial/ethnic groups reaching this educational attainment milestone, which is compounded when you examine their population size. The gap in degree production between Whites and Latina/os is greater in California than in all other states, and that gap is widening (Bates et al., 2018). Some argue that the inequity in the educational attainment of Latina/os is a national imperative and needs to be addressed to have a workforce for the future (Bates et al., 2018). Others have argued that Latina/os historically are underserved in terms of educational attainment, which directly impacted earnings and severely impacted their communities; therefore, limiting the socioeconomic advancement and political power of Latina/os in the United States (Gandara & Contreras, 2009;
Johnson et al., 2017; Solórzano et al., 2005; Telles & Ortiz, 2008). College graduates are more likely to be employed than high school completers. College graduates earn, on average, $49,900 per year than those with a high school education only ($30,000) and 100% more earnings on average than those that do not finish high school (Kena et al., 2016).

Research has provided examples that demonstrate considerable differences in the college-going experience and college outcomes when separately examining by race/ethnicity and other subgroups such as males and females, students from different Latina/o ethnic sub-groups, nativity, socio-economic status (Arellano, 2011; Covarrubias, 2011; Núñez & Crisp, 2012; Zarate & Gallimore, 2005). Núñez and Crisp’s (2012) quantitative study on 1500 Latina/o students researched the factors that impacted college access, specifically for Mexican American and Puerto Rican students. Using longitudinal data and regression modeling, they found that Mexican-American college students are more likely to begin their post-secondary educational journey at 2-year institutions rather than a 4-year college. This pathway negatively affected their capacity to transfer and complete college degrees long-term (Núñez & Crisp, 2012). Suggesting that the ultimate graduation rates and strategies for the success of Latina/o students in college could look different when examined by different characteristics or intersections.

Barriers to College Persistence and Completion

Institutional Resources and Selectivity

As more Latina/os are attending college, they attend community college at higher rates than all other racial/ethnic groups. Krogstad (2016) found nearly half
(48%) of Latina/o students in college are enrolled in a community college across the United States, compared to the 36% of Black students (36%), the 32% Asian American students, and the 30% of White students enrolled in community colleges (HACU, 2017). This is troubling because of the low transfer rates from the community college for Latina/o students (Nora & Crisp, 2009). Latina/os have gained greater access to higher education yet still remain underrepresented at the more selective institutions (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013; Sáenz, Oseguera, & Hurtado, 2007).

A critical race perspective on the economics of college showed that postsecondary outcomes in education matter because of resources (Carnavale & Strohl, 2013). Racial stratification in education, as shared by Carnavale and Strohl (2013), showed that 82% of the growth in enrollment of White freshman at the nation’s 468 most selective four-year colleges, while the opposite was true for Black and Latina/o students, who tended to enroll in open-access, two- and four- year colleges. This polarization of college enrollment as a share of the population is more evident when analyzing this through an equity and social justice lens. White students were overrepresented in the top schools, 13 percentage points over their population at that time, while five percentage points less at the open-access colleges. This is problematic for Students of Color since the well-funded schools have higher graduation rates and better economic outcomes for all students who attend (Carnavale & Strohl, 2013). Likewise, the number of colleges that moved from less selective tiers into higher tuition tiers has increased over time, while the
number of open-access colleges has decreased with larger enrollments in effect, providing less for more students at the same time (Carnavale & Strohl, 2013).

Financial support issues continue to be a challenge in higher education, be it from the institution or the individual. As Macedo (2018) put it, the divestment in public education or any public support for that matter is a divestment in support for historically underrepresented groups who are now the majority of what constitutes the public. The reallocation of funds that previously supported public education has forced institutions of higher learning to increase tuition and fees as costs increased over the years; therefore, shifting the burden of the cost of education to the individual rather than society, ironically during a time when there is a call for increased graduation rates (Johnson-Ahorlu, Alvarez, & Hurtado, 2013).

Santiago and Cunningham (2005) shared that even though Latina/os were most likely to receive financial aid, they received the lowest financial aid award between ethnic/racial groups. Early empirical research on acculturative stress in Latina/o students identified socio-economic status (SES) as one of many factors that negatively impacted college enrollment and attendance (Nora & Crisp, 2009). Contreras (2005) identified resource gaps regarding pre-college inputs that Latina/o students had access to concerning educational backgrounds and academic achievement. The factors identified were familial income differences, education levels of the parents, the availability of Advanced Placement (AP) courses in high school, and standardized test scores (Contreras, 2005). In a separate mixed methods study on challenges and sources of support among first- and second-generation Latina/os, students shared the lack of institutional and financial
resources as reasons affecting college completion (Kouyoumdjian, Guzmán, Garcia, & Talavera-Bustillos, 2017). Reasons such as lack of secure work, lack of money coupled with university budget cuts, no financial aid, overcrowded classes, reduced faculty, and reduced advising staff, were all listed as challenges that could delay their graduation, regardless of first- or second- generational status (Kouyoumdjian et al., 2017).

**First Generation Status**

According to Ishitani (2006), higher education institutions are least successful in retaining and graduating first-generation college students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds than their non-first-generation peers. When you dig deeper, you find that Black and Latina/o first-generation college students graduate at even lower rates than Asian or White students (Latino, Stegmann, Radunzel, Way, Sanchez, and Casillas, 2017). According to Bates et al. (2018), in California, Latina/o students have the highest rate of being first in their families to attend a 4-yr college of all racial/ethnic groups at CSUs and UCs. In the UC system, 75% of first-time Latina/o freshman were the first members in their families to attend college, and about half (49%) of the Latina/os enrolled in the CSU were first-generation college-going students (Bates et al., 2018). Early research on first-gen students was more deficit-based and focused on the student's perceived shortcomings rather than the system. For example, according to Pascarella (2006), first-gen college students, compared to their peers, tended to be at a disadvantage in regard to a) access to information about navigating the post-secondary education process; b) their socio-economic status; c) level of familial support; d) degree
planning and expectations and e) how prepared they were for college. Research from Reid and Moore (2008) stated that first-gen students lacked knowledge of how college worked and received minimal support and encouragement from their parents. They were also more likely to have limited financial resources and more likely to come from Black and Latina/o families (Darlyn & Scandyn Smith, 2007). Nonetheless, colleges and universities have failed to make information accessible to both first-generation college students and their families (Bensimon & Bishop, 2012). Furthermore, although Black and Latino families might not be able to provide financial resources to support their college education, research has made it clear that families support their children in non-traditional ways (Cerezo, Lyda, Beristianos, Enriquez, & Connor, 2013; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2011).

**Sense of Belonging**

Many factors go into a student’s sense of belonging at the university. Much of the dominant research has been done to describe why Latina/o students fail rather than what institutions are doing to fail them (Bensimon & Bishop, 2012). Early research on Latina/o students by Hurtado, Carter, and Spuler (1996) showed that the belief that they are a part of the social and academic life of the university is essential for the retention of these students. Gándara and Contreras (2009) shared that Latina/os historically faced disadvantages that contributed to their lower sense of belonging when in college. Pre-college factors included the fact that minoritized communities often came from had less access to extra-curricular activities such as enrollment in honors courses, playing a musical instrument, and participating in intramural sports. These factors were still frequently considered when granting
college admission, reinforcing the privilege reproduced by the dominant culture, which further alienates Latina/o students, making them feel as if they do not belong (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). Departure because of feeling judged, out of place, and not belonging, while being pressured to assimilate to college, have long been explanations for the perceived lack of Latina/o student success (Gonzalez et al., 2014). Rendon (1994) challenged the belief that students must assimilate to be successful; her research proved that by honoring and validating the experiences, histories, and traditions of non-traditional students, success could be achieved.

Opportunities and Catalysts for Higher Education Success

Non-deficit studies on Black and Latino males showed that when their relationships had positive facilitators like mentors, familial encouragement, and teachers who cared, they were more likely to succeed (Cerezo et al., 2013; Rodríguez & Oseguera, 2015). When these students had teachers, who conveyed high academic expectations coupled with caring and value of the student's contributions, they were more likely to succeed in college (Harper, 2012a). In the following section, I discuss factors that contribute to Latino student success, including the value of relationships, family support, mentorship, and support from others in the college-going process.

Relationships Matter

Factors such as Familismo, loyalty, and responsibility to the family, play an essential role in the Latina/o community; it has been shown to help with college preparation, support, and aspiration to attend and stay in college (Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2011). Cerezo et al. (2013) found in their qualitative research study that in
some Latina/o families, in addition to parents, others played a significant role in providing resources and information about the college, like older siblings and cousins. Sometimes these older family members served as financial motivators for college attendance because they shared their experiences and their struggles with them (Cerezo et al., 2013). Research has shown that parental and family support is critical to Latino/a student success, from the aspiration to apply and the support to finish (Nora and Crisp, 2009). Later critical quantitative work by Gonzalez, Brammer, and Sawilowsky (2015) showed that learning communities (a High-Impact Practice) for Latina/o students were successful in building bonds between students and faculty, a sense of collectivity, belonging, and the building of a familia carried students through the college process.

In addition to financial stability and family support, students shared reasons for success were sources of institutional support, such as teachers who made classes engaging, access to financial aid, tutoring, priority registration, transfer programs, support for immigrant students and students with disabilities (Kouyoumdjian et al. 2017). Arellano (2011) studied the various factors that affected Latina/o degree attainment, including both pre-college and institutional factors, and examined similarities and differences between different Latina/o subgroups. The quantitative study used Hierarchical Generalized Linear Modeling (HGLM) to study longitudinal data for over 15,700 students at 459 institutions from the Freshman Survey and the National Student Clearinghouse at the Higher Education Research Institute. Pre-college factors such as gender, high school GPA, and study hours per week were identified as predictors of college success. Nineteen different
institutional factors were examined in the study and grouped into four major categories: financial context, human resources, institutional social networks, and structural demographics. Human resources emerged as the only category that had the most predictive influence. According to Arrellano (2011), human resources was the capacity for human interactions, which mattered most for Latina/os when it came to six-year degree attainment.

In a critical review on library information science Darren Ilet (2019) focused his research on first-generation students in general and highlighted how much of the research on first-generation students portrayed Students of Color as disadvantaged, at-risk, or even as outsiders. Parker (2017), a librarian, discussed the value both she and the first-gen students, mostly Latina, gained from forming relationships based on more than a couple of visits to the classroom, which is the traditional method. The students saw the librarian as more than an authority figure. They created unique relationships with her based-on trust, which allowed them to work to their strengths to navigate social, academic, financial, and administrative challenges present for those students at her university (Parker, 2017). A critical differentiator in this relationship was that the librarians were infused into the academic coursework of specialized programs for underrepresented students and not just referenced as support (Parker, 2017). This research shows that trust and relationships matter when engaging historically underrepresented students academically; the next section will explore a framework for Latina/o student success.
Rodriguez and Oseguera (2015) shared a seven-principle model for Latina/o student success based on both theory and empirical research to change an organization’s institutional culture. They highlighted: 1) That relationships matter, be it with student-teacher, mentors, and other adults who act as institutional agents, yet these relationships are often ignored by institutional reform efforts; 2) creating a culture of dialog, promoting the critical task of actual dialog and hearing the student’s voice, in the classroom, at the institution and the community; 3) creating spaces to listen and learn from student voices, when this is done correctly it can have transformative outcomes to the institution and students; 4) recognizing students as public intellectuals, as creators of knowledge, not just consumers; 5) building a culture of recognition, a praxis of recognition is based up relational, contextual, pedagogical towards “transformative recognition” (p.140); 6) learning from students that have been marginalized, changing the paradigm of silencing or leaving them out, instead listen to what they have to say can transform leadership practices, and last; 7) Build a culture of excellence, one that recognizes and celebrates success and excellence, giving students a chance to define, celebrate and learn from models of excellence (Rodriguez & Oseguera, 2015). This framework provides a practical path to reproduce successful outcomes for Latina/o students. It is essential to keep this research highlighting what works for Latina/o students in mind as many new retention programs are implemented in higher education, such as High Impact Practices or HIPs.
Community Cultural Wealth

Yosso (2005) identified tools implemented by Students and Communities of Color to survive and resist racism and various forms of oppression. The tenets of Community Cultural Wealth challenge dominant views on cultural capital as described through a Critical Race Theory (CRT) lens; they are aspirational capital, familial capital, social capital, navigational capital, resistant capital, and linguistic capital (Yosso, 2005). Yosso’s work directly responds to traditional views on cultural and social capital and the value and worth that working-class communities possess or lack and, in turn, pass on to their children. Yosso (2005) describes the various forms of capital present in Communities of Color while working to shift the dominant deficit views of these communities. This perspective is important because it can give leaders and educators tools to develop the strengths that Students of Color bring to the classroom as opposed to cultural deficiencies.

According to Yosso (2005), aspirational capital is the ability to share hope in a reality that may not yet exist despite real and perceived challenges and inequality. In Latinx communities, this may be represented by the idea or dream that parents have for their children to acquire more education than they did and hopefully have a “better life.” Parents may share advice or consejos, to help guide their children based on the lessons they have already learned navigating the world.

Linguistic capital discusses skills primarily based on language or communication styles that communities and families share with each other. This may represent itself through various forms of communication as art, music, poetry, theater, and song, to name a few methods (Yosso, 2005). A very common use of
these skills is the utilization of bilingual children to serve as translators by parents who may not speak the dominant language in many real-world situations, such as navigating home finances or visits to the doctor.

Yosso (2005) describes the sense of community that is developed and shared in familias that nurtures familial and community history, memory, and knowledge. This capital builds on the notion that the individual is not alone in navigating the world and that there is a greater kinship with the community at large or extended family, including aunts, uncles, godparents, and others who offer support, caring, and love. This may appear as the support network a student has at home in their community, be it through the church, sports team, and their extended family.

Social capital can be examined as the networks and community resources that are present for support and navigation through society (Yosso, 2005). Students of Color often find and create spaces and networks in college that leverage knowledge and resources in order to succeed. These communities can often be affinity groups or clubs that have existed to support students on their path to success.

Navigational capital is the skill to navigate institutions and systems that historically were not designed for People of Color (Yosso, 2005). Inner resilience has been identified as a skill set that can help students navigate the educational system in the face of racism. This resilience coupled with communal knowledge on institutional constraints and organizational culture can support students to navigate these systems to student success. As mentioned previously, this knowledge can
come from family or the campus family that a student creates for themselves at the university.

Resistant capital takes form in the knowledge and traditions passed on by those who have witnessed or experienced racism and other forms of subjugation. Learning how to cope and resist structural inequity and racism is a journey that many students in Communities of Color must face. Yosso (2005) points out that many scholars have identified the transformative process that takes place through the development of critical consciousness, which is important as communities are challenged to transform oppressive structures.

Taken together, these forms of capital represented as Community Cultural Wealth are an excellent starting point to discuss strengths that Students of Color can leverage in order to succeed despite structural inequality and inadequate educational conditions.

High Impact Educational Practices and Student Engagement

The implementation of High Impact Practices or HIPs has been a widespread practice to address student retention and success since Kuh first highlighted them in 2008 (Brownell & Swaner, 2009; Kuh & Kinzie, 2018). The individual activities known as HIPs have been available in one form or another for decades on most university campuses (Kuh & Kinzie, 2018). Research shows a link between High-Impact Practices and student learning (Kilgo, Sheets, & Pascarella, 2014). Improved academic outcomes for Students of Color have been demonstrated with their participation in specific High-Impact Practices (Finley & McNair, 2016). Some argued that HIPs were the solution needed for all students'
educational success (Brownell & Swaner, 2010), others disputed that more evidence was needed (Hatch, 2012; Terenzini 2011). Hatch (2012) called for more research on specific programmatic features and practices. Johnson and Stage (2018) argued that while HIPS are in widespread use at different institutional types, they have demonstrated a limited positive correlation with graduation retention rates. Kuh and Kinzie (2018) offered more recent evidence suggesting that the mere offering of HIPs did not suffice, but how they were implemented was crucial (Kuh & Kinzie, 2018). Finley and McNair (2013) highlighted that access to and participation in High-Impact Practices was inadequate for Students of Color compared to White students. This is unfortunate because Students of Color are among the groups that benefit the most from participation in HIPs (Kuh, 2008; Quaye & Harper, 2014).

The earliest study of student retention in higher education is based on research that refers to student retention in college as student mortality or a student’s failure to remain in college (McNeely, 1937). This study began in the 1930s for the US Department of the Interior and the Office of Education and largely stalled later due to the Great Depression and World War II (Seidman, 2012). Before this time, college retention was not a significant issue, as the focus was on attracting students and not on keeping them (Seidman, 2012). Entering the 1960’s studies on college students emerged from Feldman and Newcomb (1969), Alexander Astin’s (1977), and William Spady (1971), which created a new area of study known as retention (Seidman, 2012). Vincent Tinto built on these studies to publish his interactionist model of student retention in 1975. Astin (1977, 1985)
released his theory of student involvement for retention in the late 1970s and continued working into the 1980s. Kamens (1974) and Bean (1975) also contributed to the foundational research on student retention with contributions on attrition rates and departure decisions, respectively. Seidman (2012) pointed out that early studies on college retention focused on single institutions and generic explanations for attrition and retention. They assumed all college students were homogeneous, that they came from traditional households, with two parents who graduated from college and were predominantly White. Later research focused on retention and specific students' retention at different institutional settings (Seidman, 2012). Berger and Milem (2000) suggested that future research should be focused on the interaction between specific types of students and specific types of campuses instead of overarching theories that try to explain retention for all students at all campuses.

In the early 1960s, many early research studies on student departure from college focused mainly on personality attributes such as motivation, maturity, and disposition from a deficit perspective (Bean, 1990). Since the 1960s, five theoretical frameworks have emerged to describe student attrition and retention: Psychological, Interactional, Sociological, Organizational, and Economical (Seidman, 2012). Spady (1971) mainly paved the way for research on student departure based on sociological factors such as student's attributes and the norms of the college environment, and the student's ability to assimilate socially and academically (Seidman, 2012). Kamens (1971, 1974) developed a sociological model that reported that institutions greater in size and complexity, coupled with a
high capacity to place graduates in prestigious careers, had lower attrition rates. Tinto’s (1975) theory of student integration model (SIM) or interactionist theory on eventual college departure is one of the most often cited in the research (Seidman, 2012). It has been maintained as common knowledge and practice among college administrators (Nora, 2012). The SIM theory incorporates both the psychological and organizational models to examine pre-college characteristics, the student’s initial commitment to the institution, and the institutional commitment to academic and social integration towards student retention. There have been many criticisms of the SIM model since its first appearance in 1975 and later reformulation (Bean, 1980; McCubbin, 2003; Metz, 2002) due to the fact that Tinto focused his study primarily on traditional age, mostly white students straight out of high school, the students that are still most likely to be the focus for recruitment by four-year universities (Seidman, 2005). It is important to identify that Tinto noted the research showed little information that connected race and college dropout, but Race was a strong predictor of Student Persistence (Tinto, 1975).

Astin (1977, 1985) contended that involvement was the key to student retention, he concluded that the more engaged a student was with academic endeavors and in college activities, the more likely they were to be retained (Seidman, 2012). Other literature on student engagement often cites student resilience or grit as a factor for student persistence and success (O’Neal, Espino, Goldthrite, Morin, Weston, Hernandez, & Fuhrmann, 2016; Vela, Lu, Lenz, & Hinojosa, 2015) versus the responsibility of the institution, which is highly problematic (Gonzalez, 2017). Tierney (1999) asserted that the practice of higher
education institutions placing the burden of assimilation on the students from diverse backgrounds forces them to cut ties with their home culture, in essence, to commit a form of cultural suicide. This practice is troubling because the institution’s expectations and that of its agents should never require any student to sever any part of their culture to succeed in higher education. It is essential to note that it is well established that student engagement is vital to student success, yet who is responsible for student success is still in question. The next section will review research on validation theory to explore any connections it may have with successful High-Impact Practices.

Rendón's (1994) Validation Theory provided a new way to theorize student success strategies for those who found difficulty engaging with the institution or may have had invalidating experiences in the past. Rendon (1994) defined non-traditional students as those students who may be from low-income, first-generation backgrounds, returning adult students who more often attended community colleges, Minority-serving institutions (MSIs), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) (Linares & Muñoz, 2011). These colleges contrasted the elite, expensive, predominantly White research institutions designed by and primarily serving privileged families with histories of college attendance (Linares & Muñoz, 2011; Rendón, 1994). Middle and upper-class families felt more confident about attending and finishing college (Rendón, 1994). Rendón (1994) maintained that these non-traditional students benefited from relationships with external agents, including faculty, staff, peers, or family members. These agents supported non-traditional students’ development of
strategies to overcome feelings of alienation and self-doubt while assisting in the resistance of the pressure to assimilate into a new dominant institutional culture that was often different from their home cultures (Rendón, 1994). Revisiting the foundations and development of Validation Theory, Linares and Muñoz (2011) named six elements within Validation Theory: 1) places the responsibility on the institutional agents to initiate contact with students in order to navigate the world of college; not in patronizing ways, but by using methods to build confidence and self-worth in order to increase their motivation to succeed; 2) expresses the idea that when students have a sense of self-worth, are acknowledged as knowledge creators and in turn feel validated, they are more likely to feel capable of learning; 3) the third element states that in order for engaged student development to take place, validation must be present consistently; 4) the fourth element is that validation can occur both inside and outside of the classroom; 5) validation is a process that enriches the student experience over their college career 6) shares that validation is most critical when administered early, in particular during the first weeks of class within the first year of college (Linares & Muñoz, 2011; Rendón, 1994). Given this research, it is crucial to examine whether High-Impact Practices or the agents implementing them provide validating experiences for non-traditional students and the institution's role in reproducing effective practices that produce equitable outcomes for these students. As the HIPs research is reviewed, it is important to be mindful of Validation Theory and its elements pertaining to student success strategies.
Kinzie and Kuh (2017) emphasized that the re-envisioned framework for student success incorporated more considerable attention to institutional responsibility for equity-minded practices that increase student success. According to Kinzie, Gonyea, Shoup, and Kuh (2008), student engagement is represented by two critical features: the extent to which students participated in "educationally effective practices" (p.23) and the degree to which the host institution created and organized “productive activities” for student learning, this is important because it is the institution’s responsibility to facilitate the engagement of the student (Kinzie, Gonyea, Shoup, & Kuh, 2008, p. 23). Chickering and Gamson (1987) stressed seven principles of good teaching and learning, based on fifty years of prior research. Educational practices that foster engagement in undergraduate education and could be considered effective and productive include student-faculty contact, reciprocity, cooperation among students, active-learning techniques, prompt feedback, emphasis on focused course work, communicating high expectations, and respecting diverse talents and ways of learning (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Chickering and Gamson’s (1987) foundational concepts would be built upon and incorporated into what Kuh (2008) labeled High Impact Educational Practices or HIPs.

HIPS: What Are They?

In 2005, the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) launched a ten-year initiative titled Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP). LEAP’s goal was to align college learning with the needs of the new global century. Following this, the AAC&U and the National Leadership Council published
a report in 2007 titled Outlining College Learning for the New Global Century. In this report, the AAC&U attached an appendix item that contained a guide with ten effective educational practices, mainly a review of the research literature on student engagement and success (LEAP, 2007). In 2008, the AAC&U published a separate report entitled High Impact Educational Practices (HIPs); the report focused on what HIPs are, who has access to HIPs, and why HIPs matter. Following are a brief description of the ten high-impact practices that Kuh (2008) referenced in the AAC&U report on High-Impact Educational Practices, including first-year experiences, common intellectual experiences, learning communities, writing-intensive classes, collaborative projects or assignments, undergraduate research, diversity & global learning, internships, capstone courses and projects, and service-learning/community-based learning (Kuh, 2008).

First-Year Experiences are programs that encompass the first year in college or specific seminars for incoming freshmen. High-quality programs focus on the following: a) critical thinking, b) critical information literacy, c) collaborative learning, and d) are writing intensive (Kuh, 2008). Common Intellectual Experiences are themed programs and common experiences that require integrative coursework or participation in learning communities. Themes often include technology and society, global interdependence with a focus on a variety of curricular and co-curricular activities that revolve around the themes (Kuh, 2008). Learning Communities focus on the “big questions” (Kuh, 2008, pg.10) that matter beyond the classroom. Integration and learning in one or several courses across the curriculum are critical
to group-oriented programming goals. Learning communities often have shared reading, themes, and curriculum or service-learning components (Kuh, 2008).

Writing-Intensive Courses emphasize the importance of writing at all levels of instruction, often with the culmination of a final writing project. The production of different types of writing catering to different audiences is often included in these courses. The goal is to produce a repeated practice across the curriculum (Kuh, 2008). Collaborative Assignments and Projects involve learning with two key goals: Listening to others and problem-solving in teams have been identified as key features of collaborative assignments or projects (Kuh, 2008). Undergraduate Research embeds research into the curriculum to expose students early to the processes involved in solving relevant questions. Learning to investigate, observe empirically, and present their findings to their research communities is the goal of this High Impact Practice (Kuh, 2008). Diversity and Global Learning aims to expose students to a world that continues to struggle with global issues such as racial or ethnic differences, gender inequalities, human rights, freedom, and power. Practitioners hope to have students examine a worldview from a different perspective from their own or the dominant culture (Kuh, 2008). Internships as experiential learning allow students to gain real-world experience that can be applied to their learning while still in school. This practice potentially allows for mentorship and coaching to occur in the student’s career field before they leave college (Kuh, 2008). Capstone Courses and Projects are the culminating experiences that students complete towards the end of their college journey that integrate and apply what they have learned while in college, a program, or a
course. A detailed research paper or comprehensive portfolio are typical examples of capstone projects (Kuh, 2008). Service-Learning and Community-Based Learning expands on direct experience inside and outside the classroom while potentially solving community issues. Field-based experiential learning allows students to apply and reflect on their studies and learn that what they do impacts their lives and the communities that they live and serve in (Kuh, 2008). Service-learning High-Impact Practices will be the area of focus for this study, and I will cover more research on this HIP in the following section.

HIPS in the Research

Kuh’s (2008) work on High-Impact Educational Practices set the tone for discussion on High Impact Practices (Kuh & Kinzie, 2018). Kuh declared that participation in educationally purposeful activities, like HIPs, was more beneficial for historically underserved students than White students. Unfortunately, underserved students were also less likely to participate in HIPs than their White peers (Kuh, 2008). Kuh’s (2008) quantitative analysis of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data demonstrated that high-impact practices positively affected the engagement experience of historically underserved students who participated in two or more High-Impact Practices. For example, Black students who participated in at least two HIPs had a higher probability of returning for the second year of college. In addition, Latina/o students that participated in two or more HIPS ended their first year with a higher GPA. Accordingly, Kuh’s (2008) research suggested that students should participate in at least two HIPs in their college career: one early on and another culminating experience. According to Kuh
(2008), research on HIPs demonstrated increases in student retention and student engagement for all students. The practices should be considered a cumulative set of practical tools rather than distinct experiences. All while acknowledging that access for Students of Color and other underserved groups continued to be a challenge (Kuh, 2008).

Research from Kuh (2008) revealed that many of the positive effects of HIPs were conditional on their participation. They were an accumulation of many factors and events that students experienced inside and outside of the classroom. After Kuh’s (2008) work on High Impact Practices was published, much discourse began in higher-ed circles on High-Impact Practices and their function within universities, intentionality in practice, pedagogical influence, and the engagement of students (Finley & McNair, 2013; Kuh & Kinzie, 2018; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2011; Quaye & Harper, 2014; Tinto, 2012).

Swaner and Brownell (2008) conducted a comprehensive review of the literature on five specific high-impact practice areas. In particular, they found that not much was understood about historically underserved students’ outcomes (Swaner & Brownell, 2008). Throughout their work, Brownell and Swaner defined underserved students as students from historically underrepresented racial/minority groups, students from low-income families, and first in their families to attend college (Swaner & Brownell, 2008). Brownell and Swaner (2010) also pointed out that universities have the power to take steps to maximize positive outcomes for their students. The research on access to High-Impact practices suggests that first-generation students are least likely to participate of all students (Brownell &
Swaner, 2010). As noted previously, given various barriers, first-generation college students are more likely to live off-campus, participate in fewer opportunities on campus, less likely to be involved in student groups or volunteer activities, and have lower levels of peer engagement than their non-first-gen peers (Padgett, Johnson, & Pascarella, 2012). Latina/os are primarily of first-generation college status (Bates et al., 2018). In addition, the researchers also stressed that limited empirical research had been conducted on educational outcomes associated with participation in several high-impact practices (Brownell & Swaner 2010).

Brownell and Swaner (2010) studied five specific high-impact practices; they reported that students self-reported higher engagement levels in deep learning and perceived learning gains than those that did not participate. Some HIPs proved more effective than others, ranked highest to lowest were service-learning, student/faculty research, learning communities, senior capstone, internship, and study abroad (Brownell & Swaner, 2010). In regards to service-learning programs, Brownell and Swaner (2010) identified components of successful high-impact practices, which included: a) create structured opportunities for reflection; b) ensure that faculty connect course materials with the service experience; c) ensure service hours required are sufficient to make the experience meaningful; d) focus on the quality of the service, ensure that students directly interact with the stakeholder; and e) oversee all service site activities. According to Brownell and Swaner (2010), the aforementioned HIPs showed promise to increase student engagement with underserved students, but the research failed to desegregate data by subgroups; instead, it looked to lump all underserved students together whether it was by race,
socio-economic status or first-generation status in college. Brownell and Swaner (2010) were the first to synthesize the experiences of underserved students and high-impact practices; their work was subsequently followed by researchers that wanted to examine the progress and assess underserved students’ engagement in HIPs.

Finley (2012) discussed the value of high-impact practices and whether or not schools were making progress. Following Finley, Finley and McNair (2013) published a mixed methods national report which examined underserved students’ engagement in high-impact practices, both quantitatively and qualitatively, via an inquiry-based model. Finley and McNair (2013) identified three critical gaps in the existing research: 1) finding more evidence about the relationship between engagement in HIPS and the learning by underserved students; 2) learn more about the effects on learning outcomes of HIPs in relation to Black and Latina/o students, and 3) move beyond surveys about high impact practices to learn about the rich detail in the student’s lived experiences via qualitative inquiry. Finley and McNair (2013) focused their empirical study on assessing underserved students’ engagement in high-impact practices first through the quantitative study, primarily through regression analysis of NSSE survey data from 25,336 students at thirty-eight institutions across state higher education systems in California, Oregon, and Wisconsin. Finley and McNair (2013) explained that when examining first-generation vs. non-first-generation students and transfer vs. non-transfer students, perceived disparities in learning tended to be smaller with the higher number of high-impact practices in which they participated. Finley and McNair (2013) found
that for race and ethnicity, in general, the greater the number of HIPs a student participated in generated a higher perception level of deep learning experiences across all groups. However, for Asian-Americans and Whites, the study identified that participation in a greater number of HIPs was persistent, with an increasingly positive effect on their perception. In contrast, for African American and Hispanic students, the initial boost in perception leveled off after reaching more than four high-impact practices. The research team then followed up with a qualitative inquiry-based study using 15 focus groups consisting of 91 students across nine comprehensive public institutions to dive deeper into the lived educational experiences of underserved students (Finley & McNair, 2013). The focus groups consisted of traditionally underserved groups in higher education: minority, Pell-grant eligible, transfer, or first-generation students. Students were selected randomly and invited to complete a recruitment survey and then randomly selected to participate in the focus groups. Of the 91 students who participated in the focus groups, they were primarily divided into two groups: those that participated in three or more high-impact educational practices and those that participated in two or fewer. Although the researchers had intended to speak to all who had participated in HIPs, they changed the criteria. One of the focus groups' main findings was that what was most important to students was not whether their educational experiences were labeled “high-impact,” but how well those experiences were implemented (Finley & McNair, 2013, p. 26). Students responded to questions regarding their engagement in learning experiences and most frequently responded with four types of activities: group work, application of knowledge, interaction with peers, and real-
life connections. Applying what is learned in the class to more practical real-world experiences was found to be more valuable than the activity of only passively receiving information in the classroom (Finley & McNair, 2013). Students conveyed the importance of support networks such as mentorship and connected peers working together toward a common goal as important aspects that encouraged engaged learning or high-impact learning experiences. Along with these features, students indicated that they did not need elaborately designed programs or high-cost systems. What was needed was reciprocal engagement by peers and faculty in the learning process. As well as educational environments that encourage students to interact with others while challenging their own opinions. Likewise, having the opportunity to apply knowledge to real-world experiences all while reflecting and incorporating their own lived experiences. Students seek relationships with adults who care and provide them with information that helps them stay on course (Finley & McNair, 2013). Barriers to participation in high-impact practices discussed by students included: lack of advising, lack of guidance about high-impact practices and their importance, the inability to commit time with the constraints in their lives, work, and the inability to sacrifice work for the unpaid internship time. Also, students suggested the need for more transparency on how service-learning activities and how other high-impact practices connected to their learning and how to identify high-quality high-impact practices (Finley & McNair, 2013). An important finding in the study was that students themselves cited that the most significant aspects of participating in high-impact practices were the quality of their experiences, the real-world application of those experiences, and caring
relationships with adults (Finley & McNair, 2013). These aspects were cited more often than the programmatic title of a High-Impact Practice or which HIP category it fell under (Finley & McNair, 2013).

The researchers identified the limitations of their study. They cited: the lack of information on socioeconomic status, the grouping of homogeneous racial and ethnic types, the lack of information on participation in multiple high-impact practices of the same type, and the risk of selection bias of students who have relatively high levels of engagement and their choice to participate in the survey (Finley & McNair, 2013). Finley and McNair (2013) showed that traditionally advantaged groups participated in significantly more high-impact practices than historically underserved students except for transfer students. Non-first-generation students participated in more HIPs than first-generation college students, and White students participated in more than all other racial or ethnic categories (Finley & McNair, 2013). They also highlighted the importance of the student's voice to describe underrepresented students' lived experiences in higher education.

Research tells us that the more a student engages with purposeful education activities during college, the more successful they are (Astin, 1993; Bean, 2005; Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). But few research studies focus on the importance of the role the institution plays in the engagement of those students in the activities it deems educationally purposeful. According to Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, and Hayek (2007), there are two critical features to student engagement: (1) the time and effort a student puts into their studies and educational activities, and (2) how the institution deploys its resources,
organizes the curriculum, learning opportunities, support services that induce students to participate in the experiences that lead to the desired outcomes of the university (Kuh et al. 2007).

As mentioned above, studies have shown that further research is needed to show how universities can better support underserved students, in particular, Latina/o student retention and success (Gonzalez, Brammer & Sawilowsky, 2015; Harper & Quaye, 2015; Pascarella, 2006). Gonzalez et al. (2015), in their mixed-methods research study, the researchers performed a critical analysis of quantitative data using an autoethnographic lens. The researchers also included a narrative of research data and performed a regression analysis on GPAs, test scores for predictive testing (Gonzalez et al., 2015). The researchers also showed how a learning-community model, a high-impact practice designed for Latina/o students, could prevent the voluntary departure of students at their university due to institutional factors (Gonzalez et al., 2015). Features of the program included: the creation of a center Latina/o leadership, specified a focus to increase educational attainment for Latino/a students, offered comprehensive one-stop shop, wrap-around, bilingual services which also included support on recruitment, admissions, financial aid, academic and personal advising all while providing access to Latina/o tenured faculty engaged in scholarship (Gonzalez et al., 2015).

According to Conrad and Gasman (2015), in research conducted on a first-year experience program at La Sierra University in Southern California, administrators were concerned with first-year retention rates. They created a customized First-Year Experience (FYE) program, a mandatory high-impact
practice, which included co-teaching and coaching as integral components of the program. After the program was established at university, La Sierra saw a significant rise in the first-year retention, from 60% to 85%, and increased GPAs and higher satisfaction rates. Another positive attribute was that there was also a disproportionate number of Asian and Hispanic students persisting beyond their freshman year. Next service-learning HIPs programs will be examined more closely. Service-Learning Empirical Studies

Service-learning is a form of “experiential learning” that links service in the community with an academic course or program (Kuh, 2008, p.11). As noted earlier, Brownell and Swaner (2010) pointed out that for service-learning HIPs to be successful, they needed to include the following: 1) have elements of structured self-reflection built into the course or program, 2) students needed to see connections between the service component and their course material or subject matter, 3) programs must have a service component long enough to be considered meaningful and worthwhile, 4) provide quality service experiences for the student, true interactions with the client not simple office work, and; 5) ensure that the site leader oversees all activities at the service location. Next, research on students’ experiences participating in a service-learning, High-Impact Practice, will be explored.

Yeh (2010) conducted an exploratory study using general interpretive qualitative research on six low-income first-generation students' service-learning experiences to gain a greater understanding of how their programmatic experiences contributed to their persistence in college. Yeh (2010) found through observations,
interviews, and document analysis that all the respondents affirmed that their service-learning experiences were vital to their college experience. Four themes emerged: 1) skill-building through the program, 2) development of resilience, 3) finding relevant personal meaning in the program, and 4) the development of critical consciousness. In addition, Yeh (2010) developed a framework for measuring growth in service-learning participation. They include: 1) academic, 2) psychosocial, 3) personal and spiritual, and 4) sociocultural/sociopolitical, which, taken together, influence positive persistence in college. Yeh’s research is one of the few studies that examine students' experiences in high-impact practices qualitatively; while her research attempts to add a method for measuring growth in these programs, it still places the responsibility on the student rather than the institution.

In their work on student success in college, Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, and Whitt (2010) stressed that there was no single blueprint for student success. Given this insight, it is crucial to understand that not all universities are the same, nor are all student populations homogeneous. Higher learning institutions must develop the strength areas that already exist within their institution to truly serve the students they enroll from the communities they are intended to serve (Demetriou, & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011; Yosso, 2005). McNair et al. (2016) recommended that educational institutions flip the existing paradigm and become student-ready, taking ownership of student success, rather than focusing on deficit perspectives and blaming students for not being prepared for the university or college-ready. This ideology places the responsibility on the equity-minded institution to examine policies, practices, and organizational culture to prepare for students entering their
respective institutions (Bensimon & Bishop, 2012; McNair et al., 2016). The next section will discuss the characteristics, challenges, and promise of the Hispanic-Serving Institution, some of which have adopted HIPS (O'Donnell et al., 2011) and enroll the majority of Latina/o students (Excelencia, 2019b).

Critical-Service Learning

Mitchell (2008) tells us about the growing body of research that distinguishes between traditional service-learning and Critical-Service Learning (CCL). Traditional service-learning is more aligned with the AACU research that emphasizes service without any attention to systems that reproduce inequality. Critical Service-Learning is the critical approach to service-learning that looks to dismantle structures of injustice by examining power relationships in the service-learning course, developing authentic relationships with the community being served, and delivering pedagogy from a social justice perspective (Mitchell, 2007, 2008). Some argue that traditional service-learning is transformative, creating students that are more tolerant, altruistic, and culturally aware (Astin & Sax, 1998). Some authors refute this by stating that it is misleading to assume that all service-learning produces the previously stated outcomes (Mitchell, 2008). Critics of traditional service-learning refer to it as charity, forced volunteerism, or patronization primarily to Communities of Color (Mitchell, 2008). Others suggest a reframing of service-learning to a pedagogy of social awareness, where the community problem is the center of the service and not service to the individual (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002). Critical Service-Learning proponents state that students should see themselves as agents of social change using the class experience to address injustice in communities or
service as an ideal or service for critical consciousness (Boyle-Baise, 2007; Wade, 2000).

There are many components to consider when analyzing these two groups of service-learning approaches: the foundation for the service-learning pedagogy, the creation of true community-university partnerships, distinguishing between student development and community change as a goal, providing service to individuals versus ideals (Mitchell, 2008). Finding the right balance between student development and community change is critical to the deployment of critical service-learning, as pedagogy should move from transactional to transformational. The framing of the community “needs” implies inherent deficits and moves the analysis away from the structures of inequality that create the community challenges and serves to reinforce them (Brown, 2001). Critical to this conversation on pedagogy is the faculty member’s approach in developing the projects or service practices. According to Collins (2018), an authentic approach needs to occur to develop authentic relationships with the community being served to avoid replicating relationships rooted in domination and subjugation as opposed to different but equal.

Service-Learning at Hispanic Serving Institutions

A study on teaching perceptions and pedagogy of political science faculty in Texas showed that faculty at Texas Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) face challenges different from other Texas universities, namely the flagship schools with lower Latina/o enrollment (Kiasatpour & Lasley, 2008). A survey was conducted that gathered both quantitative and qualitative responses from 123 political science
faculty members. Respondents were divided into three groups; one, those faculty that teach at HSIs, campuses with large Hispanic student populations; two, Texas’ most prominent and visible “national” universities; and three, all other Texas higher education institutions. Over 80% of the faculty participants self-identified themselves racially as white, non-Hispanic. Findings from the study show that many faculty at HSIs perceived greater challenges with the basic skills and academic preparedness of their students as opposed to those at the other schools. Qualitative responses identified that some faculty were aware of structural inequality that created the challenges such as “bad Texas high schools” and “poor preparation.” At the same time, other HSI faculty cited “lack of motivation to pursue higher education,” “negative self-image,” and “general poverty” as reasons (Kiasatpour & Lasley, 2008). An important finding in the study was that faculty at HSIs employed different methods to control for the perceived challenges and adapted pedagogical strategies that were congruent with the interests of the student population. For example, given the subject of political science, HSI faculty focused more on issues important to the students, like immigration and Mexican-American politics, as opposed to their counterparts at the other universities. Likewise, some faculty cited their ability to speak Spanish as an asset to reach the student population.

Additionally, faculty at HSIs employed different teaching strategies according to Kiasatpour and Lasley (2008); the strategies utilized at HSIs included more group work, collaborative teaching, student-centered assignments, and service-learning. Faculty at the HSIs were more likely than other Texas faculty to use service-learning in the classroom. Examples included volunteering in local community
organizations, participating in local political organizations, attending meetings or events based in the community that was locally relevant to the student population. In the study, those faculty that employed service-learning in their classroom provided details that indicated an increased emphasis in the classroom on service-learning, and civic engagement was important to teaching students enrolled at an HSI.

Hispanic-Serving Institutions

Hispanic-Serving Institutions or HSIs enroll the highest number, two-thirds or 67%, of Latina/o undergraduate students in college (Excelencia, 2021). HSIs not only continue to grow in quantity, but new institutions from different sectors of education are becoming HSIs, which further implores higher education researchers to explore what it means to be Hispanic-Serving (Garcia, 2015, 2018, 2019; Marin, 2019). Researchers on the subject of Latina/o education call for an increase in research on the postsecondary academic outcomes for Latina/o students to understand their educational experiences and opportunities, which are critical to closing the gap on equitable educational outcomes (Castellanos & Gloria, 2007; Covarrubias, 2011; Delgado-Guerrero, Salazar, Nieves, Mejia, & Martinez, 2017; Gloria, Castellanos, Núñez & Crisp, 2012; Sáenz & Ponjuan, 2008).

As of 2021, there are 569 Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), representing 18% of all colleges and universities, yet they enroll 67% of Latina/o students enrolled in college (Excelencia, 2021). This percentage change was an enrollment increase of 17% from half of all Latino students enrolled in 2006 (Excelencia, 2018b). According to federal guidelines, an HSI is an institution that satisfies three
requirements: (1) is accredited and non-profit college or university; (2) enrolls at least 25% Hispanic students; and (3) at least fifty percent of the Latina/o students are low-income, (US Department of Education, 2019). In recent years, the number of 4-year institutions (319) that are HSIs, both 4-yr public (150) and 4-yr private (169), surpassed the total number of 2-year colleges (250) for a change in the structural type of HSIs. However, public community colleges (235) are still the most significant sub-set at 41% of all HSIs (Excelencia, 2021). Over two-thirds (67%) of all HSIs (385) are public institutions; over half of all HSIs are located in the American southwest (California, Texas, and New Mexico), with California having the most at 175 HSIs and 46 emerging HSIs. The profile of what Hispanic-Serving Institutions look like will continue to change in the future as the 362 emerging Hispanic-Serving Institutions (eHSIs), those that are below the 25% Latina/o enrollment, reach required enrollment levels (HACU, 2021). HSIs will differ based on Carnegie classification, institutional type (four-year and two-year), control (public and private), size (small to large), percentage of Latino enrollment, and geography (Garcia, 2016). California HSIs (175) and eHSIs (46) totaling 221 institutions enrolled nearly half of all Latina/o students in college at 43.3%, leading all other states in total HSI institutions and Latina/o student enrollment (Excelencia, 2021). Specifically, the 23 campuses of the California State University (CSU) system, 21 of which are HSIs and the remaining two eHSIs, as of 2021, enrolled over 217,232 Latina/o students, with a systemwide enrollment of an average of 44.7% Latina/o students across the system (California State University, 2021).
Scholars have indicated that Latina/o students who enrolled at HSIs tend to have more positive experiences and outcomes (Cunningham, Park, & Engle, 2014; Ponjuan, 2017). It is critical to study students’ experiences at HSIs to understand practices and outcomes for Latina/o students at these institutions (Garcia, 2016; Kouyoumdjian et al., 2017). In a report on HSIs, researchers cited concerns on whether universities were meeting their Latina/o students’ needs; for HSIs, it is vital to consider leveraging federal funds to provide targeted initiatives for Latina/o students (Corral, Gasman, Nguyen, & Samayoa 2015). Issues with embracing the HSI identity also affect the initiatives that institutions will undertake (Coral et al., 2015; Cuellar, 2018; Garcia, 2016, 2017, 2019; Kouyoumdjian et al., 2017). It is essential to understand how HSIs embrace their history and their “Hispanic-Serving” identity to meet their Latina/o students’ needs and produce equitable outcomes, if at all.

HSI History

In the 1970s and early 1980s, political leaders recognized a set of institutions that enrolled large numbers of Latina/o students. These institutions were not receiving the same access to funding to support the growing number of Latina/o students (Valdez, 2015; Vargas & Villa-Palomino 2018). Community groups and educational leaders worked together for years to lobby and testify in Washington, DC, to access resources for the colleges and universities educating Hispanic students (Valdez, 2015). Addressing access to higher education and the lack of funding to support educational quality improvements, Congressional hearings were held in 1983 (Santiago, 2006), but not by the will to support Latina/o students. It
was because advocates were determined to convince congressional representatives that their districts were being cut out of potential funds (Valdez, 2015). According to Santiago (2006), the Higher Education Act of 1965, which was up for reauthorization in 1984, included several aspects of HSIs: Hispanics added as a definable group, the identification of those institutions that enrolled large numbers of Latino students, and the interest to provide targeted funding to these institutions. The proponents of HSIs discussed the fact that there were negotiations regarding identifying Hispanic Institutions, particularly on formulas to determine eligibility. Most important to them was that it was more than proclamations; it was about delivering money to institutions to educate Latina/o children (Valdez, 2015).

In 1986, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) was created, and the term Hispanic-Serving Institution was coined. In 1992, Senator Claiborne Pell introduced Senate Bill 1150 to authorize the recognition of HSIs, the identification and recognition of the Hispanic-Serving Institution became Federal law under the Higher Education Act. In 1995, the first appropriation of 12 million dollars was awarded for HSIs (Santiago, 2006).

**HSI Growth**

Since their creation and formal recognition in 1986, the number of HSIs has continuously grown in proportion with the Latina/o population. In 1990, there were 137 total HSIs; as of 2020-2021, that total grew to 569 HSIs, according to Excelencia in Education (Excelencia, 2021). There are also approximately 362 emerging HSIs, institutions that are in between the 15% and 25% Hispanic student enrollment mark (HACU, 2021; Excelencia, 2021). In all, these institutions represent
approximately 18% of post-secondary institutions (Excelencia, 2021) and enroll 67% of Latina/o students in college in the United States (HACU, 2021; Santiago, 2018). With the Latina/o population still projected to grow. With the high numbers of Latina/o children under 17 (52%) in states like California, the number and density of HSIs will continue to expand (Johnson, Mejia & Hill, 2016).

**HSI Types**

Since their formal recognition, universities in regard to HSI status have traditionally been classified in one of three ways: (1) a non-HSI, (2) an emerging HSI (eHSI), one that has between 15 and 24% Hispanic student enrollment, and (3) an institution that meets all the requirements to call itself a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). Current research on Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) has presented a new way to classify these institutions. Researchers have proposed theoretical models beyond traditional institutional typologies such as the Carnegie Classification system (Núñez, Crisp & Elizondo, 2016; Garcia, 2017). A new approach teases out distinctive institutional characteristics to better understand the similarities and differences that exist between HSIs.

Núñez et al. (2016) identified a topology for six different types of HSI’s based on cluster analysis of data in the Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System (IPEDS); they are Urban Enclave Community Colleges, Rural Dispersed Community Colleges, Big Systems 4-Year Institutions, Small Communities 4-Year Institutions, Puerto Rican Institutions, and Health Science Schools (Núñez et al., 2016). (1) Urban Enclave Community Colleges (p.68), exclusively public 2-year degree offering institutions most often found cities or suburbs with high numbers of
Latina/o residents. (2) Rural Dispersed Community Colleges (p.68), 2-year public, associate granting institutions located in rural or isolated areas, mostly in the south. (3) Big Systems 4-Year Institutions (p.71), had the largest Latina/o student enrollments, most of the 4-year campuses belonged to systems like the CSU, City University of New York, and the University of Texas. These were mostly public and broad-access institutions. (4) Small Communities 4-Year Institutions (p.71), mostly private 4-year, liberal arts colleges, several religious institutions as well; they had higher tuition with little government support. (5) Puerto Rican Institutions (p.72), the institutions of higher education in Puerto Rico, with high levels of Latina/o students and faculty; and (6) Health Science Schools (p.71) a small number of private medical focused institutions that were highly selective with low enrollment and high graduation rates (Núñez et al., 2016).

Garcia (2017) posited that we need to look at HSIs beyond enrollment percentages. Garcia (2018) proposed the examination of not only the outcomes but of the culture of the university. In doing so, one could determine to what extent a university was Latinx (Latina/o) serving. Latinx serving institutions moved beyond enrollment to produce equitable outcomes for Latinx students and create an institutional culture that enhanced the academic and racial/ethnic experiences of those students (Garcia, 2018).

Historically, at the national level, Latina/o graduation rates at HSIs were significantly lower than those at non-HSIs and emerging HSIs (Garcia, 2011). Scholars are challenging the conversation that stems from a deficit perspective that HSIs are underperforming and (re)framing them as the marginalized majority. They
serve one of the fastest-growing racial/ethnic groups, in Latina/o college students, across the United States. Given that most HSIs are Broad Access Institutions (BAIs) with a lower selectivity rate and broader acceptance rate, they genuinely reflect the communities in which they are located (Núñez 2018; Garcia 2017, 2018). Vargas and Villa-Palomino (2018) suggested that the HSI status is a racialized status that gains access to racialized federal funding for HSIs. Yet, some HSIs do not center Latinx students in their Title V programming to address educational inequalities, therefore failing the very students that permit their eligibility. The Vargas and Villa-Palomino (2018) study pointed out the similarity in how the majority of HSIs winning Title V grants classified their Latina/o students as “at risk, underprepared or low income,” while rarely contextualizing these descriptors from a marginalized perspective, therefore perpetuating the deficit perspective. HSIs are serving more Latinx students than ever while still maintaining the same level of government appropriations, demonstrates a difference from HBCUs, which automatically receive Federal funding, unlike HSIs, which must apply and compete for a set amount of funds (Vargas & Villa-Palomino, 2018). The formation of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and land-grant institutions are fundamentally different (LeMelle, 2002) than the history of HSI recognition by the Federal government.

Higher education institutions, in general, have made adjustments to support the students they serve, but what is strongly lacking is an institutional blueprint for a transformational shift in organizational practices (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). It is important to remember that HSIs were not born HSIs, unlike HBCUs, which were
created specifically to address legal racial exclusion in the late 19th and early 20th centuries; it is often presumed that HSIs were created during similar periods of racial exclusion (Vargas & Villa-Palomino, 2018). This is critical when the organization's identity is under transformation because of who is enrolled, and institutions need to analyze what it means to be “Hispanic-serving” (Garcia, 2018).

HSIs, under their current Federal designation, are characterized by their enrollment ratios, not their institutional mission (Garcia, 2018). The Hispanic-Serving Institution was not born an HSI but is designated as one as the demographics change with enrollment; it is a fact that the choices Latina/o college-going students made regarding college choice created HSIs (Santiago, 2017). In a recent study by Excelencia in Education, only one in four graduates polled knew that their alma mater is an HSI (Excelencia, 2018b). This supports the idea that many institutions do not emphasize their HSI identity (Garcia, 2017; Núñez & Bowers, 2011; Santiago, 2007). Likewise, scholars are asking whether our current understanding of HSIs is all-encompassing to accurately describe what truly is and what is not a Hispanic-Serving Institution (Marin, 2019).

This ongoing and ever-changing identity can create a complicated dynamic with the institution and the people it serves. Garcia (2017) untangled the paradox that higher education institutions face in trying to actually be a Hispanic-Serving Institution while their institution's historical mission did not explicitly call for the empowerment and liberation of racially minoritized students, which is what she argues it means to truly serve this group of students (Garcia, 2017). Garcia (2018) proposed a new organizational framework by which to measure Latinx-serving
beyond enrollment. Garcia (2018) created a four-quadrant matrix to organize the topology of HSI organizational identities, based on the extent that the institution produces desirable outcomes for Latinx students on one scale and the other, to what extent it enacts a culture that enhances Latinx student experiences.

Over time HSIs have grown to enroll 67% of Latina/o students in college (Excelencia, 2021); the make-up of the HSI profile has changed at the same time. While the majority of HSIs are still public 2-year colleges, more 4-year HSIs, which include more research and doctorate degree-granting institutions, compose 69% of the emerging or eHSIs, therefore changing the future look of what an HSI profile will look like (HACU, 2021). HSIs are not all homogeneous; they vary in size, structure, enrollment, sector, control, geographic location, and whom they serve (Núñez, 2016, Garcia, 2017). HSIs historically have and continue to be criticized for merely being “Hispanic-Enrolling” and not truly “Hispanic-Serving.” Scholars have examined university mission statements and the institutions’ commitment to serving Latina/o students (or lack thereof), developing the creation of a manufactured identity of a “Hispanic-Serving Institution” (Contreras, Malcom & Bensimon, 2008; Gasman, 2008; Santiago & Andrade, 2010). Doran and Medina (2017) discussed the journey and implications of a university transforming into an HSI and whether it was “intentional” or a “grassroots” effort (p.31). Marin (2019) added the belief that educational researchers should not merely focus on whether or not an institution is Hispanic-Serving, but to what extent the institution is Hispanic-Serving. Garcia explores old concepts and attempts to classify HSI identity based on the extent to which the institution produces equitable outcomes while still creating a culturally
engaging campus environment for its Latinx students (Garcia, 2017). In addition to enrollment numbers, Valdez (2015) reminded us that historically leaders of the Hispanic Higher Education Coalition (HHEC), a precursor to HACU, argued for evidence of significant staffing of Latina/os in the faculty and administrative levels of the university as well as demonstrated evidence of a serious commitment to Hispanic learners and the communities from which they come (Valdez, 2015).

HSIs add value to the Latina/o community, primarily by providing access to higher education while still needing to improve equitable outcomes for those students (Contreras et al., 2008). Latina/os, regardless if they are first in their family to attend college, have higher college graduation rates at Hispanic-Serving Institutions (Laden, 2004). Yet, there have been many criticisms and calls for improvement at HSIs. According to Medina and Posadas (2012), students have stated that HSIs are still challenged by not being welcoming, and mentors may not be prepared to work with Students of Color. Garcia (2017) explained how college experiences can be both positive and negative for students at the same institution and how non-academic outcomes should be considered indicators of a Latinx-serving identity, not just graduation rates (Garcia, 2017).

Even though enrollment trends for historically underrepresented groups have increased in recent years, it is essential to note that Minority Serving Institutions or MSIs play a significant role in serving these traditionally underserved students (Núñez, 2016, Valdez 2015). HSIs have mainly been the sites for the increase in recent years; Latina/o student enrollment grew to over 67% of those Latina/o students enrolled in college (Excelencia, 2021). HSIs can produce equitable
outcomes compared to non-HSIs regarding six-year graduation rates. (Garcia, 2016). Scholars have also shown that Latina/o students that enroll in HSIs tend to have better outcomes and more positive experiences (Núñez, Hurtado, & Galdeano, 2015). Previous research has made many comparisons of students’ educational outcomes at HSIs vs. Non-HSIs at a monolithic level, but not breaking down the institutional differences. Lack of resources and enrollment choices are an appropriate and significant reason why HSIs are seen as underperforming while comparing them via traditional academic outcomes (Núñez, Hurtado, & Galdeano, 2015).

Like many other institutions nationally, some Hispanic-Serving Institutions intentionally implement practices to improve persistence and graduation rates (Gagliardi, Martin, Wise, & Blaich, 2015). These practices often include High Impact Educational Practices or HIPS. Students of Color, specifically Latina/o students, have shown to benefit from the application of HIPs (Finley & McNair, 2013; Kuh, 2008a).

Conceptual Framework

There are many theoretical lenses through which we view the world. During this process, the theoretical and analytical lenses that guided the researcher came from a critical race in education perspective, supported by theoretical frameworks of LatCrit, the Servingness of Latinx students in college, and transformational leadership. Critical Race Theory in education centers the conversation on race and racism to identify and challenge racism, not to just observe and interpret its presence. I will examine the participant data for micro-aggressions and the
intersections of other forms of subjugation, such as gender, class discrimination, language, and immigration status. The proposed framework will center the student experiences as a form of counter-narrative to challenge traditional claims in the educational system towards objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001).

Garcia and Natividad (2018) proposed a transformative leadership framework for decolonizing leadership processes and practices. The framework consists of six processes: 1) “Understanding Own Identity in Relation to Coloniality of Power” (p.32), recognize that the identities of Latina/o students can be a complicated intersection of race, nature, history, time, and space, likewise the leader must explore their own identities as connected to coloniality of power; (2) “Accessing Decolonization Theory” (p.32), leaders of dominant groups can learn from indigenous communities and engage in alternative ways of learning and teaching, and recognize that humans have a relationship to land, labor, environment, and law, which are commonly ignored by dominant groups; (3) “Engaging in Critical Conversations about Colonialism” (p.32); understand that the politics of knowledge production and dissemination are modeled after the western world and are not inherently tied to the same centers of civilization for all communities, these ways commonly ignore conversation on race and racism and rarely discuss colonialism, institutionalized racism, and equitable outcomes; (4) “Recognizing Inequities in Outcomes and Experiences” (p.32), recognize that universities historically have been used as tools for acculturation that rely on dominant student development theories, and leaders should take responsibility for
inequitable outcomes rather than place blame on the students; (5) “Building Consensus in Decision-Making” (p.33), leaders need to rethink their relation to the production and dissemination of knowledge and how their policies and practices may not take others into consideration, therefore continuing the subjugation of Latina/o students at their institution and in their communities; (6) “Taking Action to Disrupt, Address, and Repair Inequities” (p.33), leaders must recognize that there is a difference in identifying and naming inequities and taking action to end them, setting specific equitable goals with disaggregated data along with reflection before action will assist leaders (Garcia & Natividad, 2018).

The practice of universities to implement dominant retention practices, such as High-Impact Practices, formed mainly by and for White groups largely ignores the processes mentioned above as it refers to transformative leadership. For this reason, the experiences of Latina/o students in dominant retention programs, namely High-Impact Practices, specifically, service-learning courses or projects, will be critically examined at a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). This work brings together research bodies that focus on creating opportunities for equitable academic outcomes for Latina/o students in college by transforming leadership. In doing so, I will examine the role that universities have in reproducing equitable and inequitable outcomes through a critical race in education lens (Solórzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005) and examine colonizing practices and colonial ways of being (Garcia & Natividad, 2018). Practices that may have long been in place within the university that have marginalized Latina/o students. Understanding racialized patterns in higher education those that reproduce inequalities via
structures, policies, and practices (Bensimon & Bishop, 2012) to critically focus on structural racism perpetuated in higher education institutions. University leaders acting as institutional agents can critically interrogate their practices and implicit theories about students and how they successfully enhance Latina/o student success. They can work to change the institutional culture, no matter what the practice or program is. Hopefully, the result will produce more equity-minded individuals who raise their awareness of exclusionary practices, call out institutional racism, and challenge power dynamics that influence (in)equitable outcomes for Students of Color, particularly Latina/o students (Bensimon, 2007). Likewise, the hope is that leaders transform their leadership practices to not only promote equitable outcomes but create liberatory environments and promote justice for Latina/o students (Garcia & Natividad, 2018).

In considering the following frameworks and theoretical lenses, I developed and conceptualized a new framework which I call the Student Engagement Ecosystem Framework or a (SEE) Framework as visualized in Figure 1 below (Figure 1.). My SEE Framework encompasses elements of Critical Race Theory in Education (CRTE) (Solórzano, 1998), Validation Theory (Rendon, 1994), Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005), and concepts from Hispanic Servingness (Garcia 2017,2018).

The Student Engagement Ecosystem Framework challenges leaders to look beyond the binary of educational practice and student competency. Leaders and educational practitioners should take into account the student, their individual microsystem, and their experiences. Likewise, the educational methods or practices
in the classroom need to be evaluated along with the agents implementing them and the institutional systems within which they live.

The student or individual is the focus, the subject, and the object of study in the ecosystem; they come with experiences both positive and negative in navigating, surviving, and thriving in their educational journey. The student is not alone in the course; they have a dynamic, immediate environment that influences every aspect of their persona. These factors include their family, access to resources, constraints, historical experiences, health, and well-being.

The practices in the classroom are not implemented in a vacuum; they are impacted by the agents that implement them as well as the systems in place that created them. Agents such as faculty, staff, classroom peers all play a role in how students experience engagement and belonging in the class and at the university. Likewise, the practices or course pedagogy needs to account for college norms, peer behaviors, the availability of support systems and groups. The institutions themselves need to be included as an object of study. Colleges and universities decide where to put human and financial resources, which course practices to support and develop, where to emphasize training and development, and maybe most importantly, how new faculty are recruited, hired, and retained.
Summary

Overall, Latina/os show the highest levels of being left behind at each level of educational attainment from high school graduates (67%) to advanced degrees (5%) (Bates et al., 2018). Research on the ongoing crisis in the education of Latina/o students in the United States has been one of critical importance for over the past 20 years (Gandara, 2010, 2015; Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Pérez Huber et al., 2006; Sáenz, 2009; Solórzano et al., 2005; Valenzuela, 1999). During that time, there have been improvements in some educational outcomes for Latina/o students. The Pew Center (2012) found that the improvements for Latina/os lowered the national high school dropout rate for all. Yet, Latina/os still remain the ethnic group with the highest high school dropout rate nationally (Fry & Lopez,
While college access has been improved for Latina/o students, there is still the challenge of graduating Latina/o students with equitable academic outcomes (Bates et al., 2018). Hispanic-Serving Institutions are the sites that enroll the majority (67%) of Latina/o students in college; two out of three Latina/o students attend these broad access, open enrollment, minority-serving institutions known as HSIs (Excelencia, 2021). Universities across the United States are aware of the changing demographics of higher education but are slow to change policies and practices to become “student-ready” (McNair et al., 2016). Critical research on how Latina/o students experience higher education practices for student retention, more specifically, High-Impact Practices (HIPs) at HSIs, may hold the key to changing institutional cultures that directly impact improving outcomes for Latina/os in all different segments of higher education.
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter presents a description of this study’s research design, including the research methodology I employed. First, I discussed the purpose and significance of the inquiry; then, I presented the research questions guided by the literature and conceptual framework outlined in the previous chapter. The remainder of the chapter discussed how I collected and analyzed data and discussed information related to the research site, sample, delimitations, limitations, and strategies involved to ensure that the research was trustworthy. In addition, the chapter discussed my positionality as a researcher.

Purpose Statement

This study explored the shared lived experiences of Latina/o students who have completed service-learning courses at a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). Service-learning courses or community-based learning are considered a High-Impact Practice (Kuh, 2008). Kuh (2008) listed the following as high-impact educational practices based on prior research in the field. Kuh’s list highlighted: first-year experiences, common intellectual experiences, learning communities, writing-intensive classes, collaborative projects or assignments, undergraduate research, diversity & global learning, internships, capstone courses and projects, and service-learning/community-based learning (Kuh, 2008). Previous research has demonstrated improved academic outcomes, such as persistence in college and
higher graduation rates for all students who participate in HIPs, specifically for Students of Color (Finley & McNair, 2013). Yet, there is little known about the experiences of the Students of Color in service-learning courses (Finley & McNair, 2013).

Research on persistence, or the continuation of school through graduation, focuses on low persistence rates and low four-year and six-year graduation rates that are faced by many Students of Color, low-income students, first-gen students, and other students that have entered college with less privilege and insufficiently prepared by the education system (Quaye & Harper, 2015). Although there are many skills and sets of knowledge that students acquire while attending college, the ultimate measure of a college’s quality is the level of student success, primarily measured by high graduation rates and low departure rates (Braxton, Doyle, Hartley, Hirschy, Jones & McClendon, 2013). Persistence is defined as the continuation of college through graduation. Much of the research from the dominant group views all students through a traditional college student lens, where White students are the dominant group, which is deficit-based and ignores persistent educational and economic inequalities for Latina/o students (Darder & Torres, 2014; Nora, Barlow, & Crisp, 2006). The work of Kuh (2008), Tinto (1975), Astin (1984), and Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) is ubiquitous and acknowledges that there are challenges when it comes to Students of Color (Finley & McNair, 2013), but does little to focus on how to solve for these challenges, and even worse often places the responsibility on the student rather than the institution (Gonzalez, 2017). Kuh was a part of the first design team that created the National Survey on Student Success
(NSSE), which measures student engagement quantitatively. Much research has been done that attempts to quantify student engagement and predict persistence in college (Kinzie & Kuh, 2018). Given that the last 20 years have given rise to student engagement and persistence research, less research has been done to explore experiences in retention programs, even less on Students of Color and minimal on Latina/o students’ experiences with high-impact practices, specifically service-learning courses (Finley, 2012).

Significance of the Study

This research was significant in order to inform the future implementation of practices and equity-minded policies at universities. Retention practices such as service-learning courses are a designated high-impact practice. Service-learning courses should contain two features: 1) they provide opportunities for students to work on real-world problems in the classroom, and 2) students have the opportunity to engage outside the classroom at a service site (Kuh, 2008).

According to Kuh (2008), the service projects include tackling “real-world problems” (Kuh, 2017, p. 10); examples of projects may be: conducting a community clean-up effort or assisting in a migrant labor camp. Madsen (2004) points out that issues of power and privilege will present themselves in this type of course implementation when the student body is not diverse in their social class or ethnic backgrounds. These issues may stem from deficit thinking or negative assumptions about the people or community that focus on the service project. In some cases, the re-enforcement of negative social stereotypes and power dynamics can result from a poorly implemented course that has not addressed
power inequalities or examined privilege in-class discussion or reflections (Madsen, 2004). Since universities are widely adopting service-learning courses as an accepted high-impact practice (Kuh & Kinzie, 2018), it is vital to understand how and in what ways Latina/o students experienced service-learning courses, and what, if any, is their influence on Latina/o college student persistence. The context of the experiences of Latina/o students in these types of courses at a Hispanic-Serving Institution was essential for two reasons; 1) HSIs enrolled the largest number of Latina/o students in college (Excelencia, 2021); and, 2) to understand the role the institution played in advancing educational outcomes for Latina/o students in college by removing or by re-enforcing systematic practices that perpetuated the gap in equitable educational outcomes for these students (Garcia & Natividad, 2018)

Research Questions
Building on the purpose listed above, the research questions that drove this study were:

1. How did Latina/o students see themselves reflected in service-learning courses, if at all?

2. What were the experiences of Latina/o students in service-learning courses at an HSI?

3. How and in what ways did Latina/o students who participated in service-learning courses developed a sense of belonging in college?

These questions helped me determine my research design and methodology, which I elaborated on in the following sections.
Research Design

This study was a qualitative research study designed to understand the lived experiences of 26 Latina/o students who have participated in a service-learning course at a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). Phenomenology "aims to provide concrete insights into the qualitative meanings of phenomena in people's lives" (van Manen, 1990, p. 40). A questionnaire was used to identify participants for the study. The questionnaire was distributed to current undergraduate and graduate students via faculty teaching service-learning courses. In addition, the flyer was distributed on different social media platforms, which prompted responses from recent graduates who were university alumni. There were 184 completers of the questionnaire. Of those completers, 62 had participated in a service-learning course, and 48 of those participants self-identified as Latinx. Of the 48, 34 were willing to participate in an interview. Of the 34, 26 were able to complete a single interview for the study.

Of the 26 students interviewed for my study at the time of taking their service-learning course, 21 of the 26 stated that they started college as first-time freshmen, and 5 were transfer students. 20 of the 26 worked either part-time (9) or full-time (11) while attending college. 19 of the 26 students were eligible for Pell grants or from a low socio-economic background. The majority, 16, self-identified as female and ten as male, which is consistent with university enrollment. For degree goals, 14 would finish college with an undergraduate degree; and 12 would finish with a graduate degree. Participation from different academic colleges was as follows: business, 11; arts & letters, six; natural sciences, five; social & behavioral sciences,
two; and education, two as well. Overwhelmingly 21 of the 26 were the first in their families to attend college or first-generation college students. The participants were asked to fill-in a field as to how they self-identified in their Latinx origin, all 26 self-identified as either Chicana/o, Latina/o, or from a Mexican background, which is consistent with students attending a public four-year university in the American southwest. Twelve of the study participants completed only one service-learning course, six had two experiences, five took at least three courses with a service-learning experience, and three participants identified having taken four service-learning courses at the university.

Dominant research on the topic of students in service-learning high-impact practices and their effect on student retention and persistence has mostly been quantitative (Kuh, 2008; Swaner & Brownell, 2008). Likewise, these studies often group Latina/o students with other underserved students, and little has been shared about the lived experiences of Latina/o students participating in these types of practices (Finley, 2012). Understanding Latina/o student experiences in retention programs, like high-impact practices, specifically, service-learning courses and how they interpreted these experiences at a Hispanic Serving Institution, the institutions that enroll most Latina/o students in college (Excelencia, 2019b), was central to my study.

Methodology

I examined the common lived experiences of Latina/o students who participated in a service-learning course (a high-impact practice) at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) aligned with a phenomenological study. My goal was to
understand and interpret what and how Latina/o students experienced service-learning courses – a course that may work to solve a “real-world problem” (Kuh, 2017, p.10) while at an HSI.

Descriptive phenomenology, as developed by Husserl (1970), was not appropriate for this study. It required the researcher to shed all prior knowledge to seek the essence of the student’s experience in a phenomenon. Instead, I employed critical hermeneutic phenomenology, a subset of interpretive phenomenology as developed by Heidegger (1962), a student of Husserl’s. It presumed that the researcher's expert knowledge and experiences guided the inquiry to make meaning of the phenomenon just as it led the researcher to choose the topic in the first place (Lopez & Willis, 2004). The interpretive approach was useful in examining how and in what ways Latina/o students experienced service-learning courses at an HSI. This had direct relevance to practice for equity-minded educators and policymakers; for those reasons, a critical hermeneutic phenomenological methodology was most appropriate for my study (Lopez & Willis, 2004).

Research Setting

Latina/o students at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) were the target sample group because HSIs enrolled 67% of all Latina/o students in college (Excelencia, 2021), and Latina/os as an ethnic/racial subgroup are still challenged with equitable outcomes both academic and non-academic at HSIs (Garcia, 2017). The research site is a public regional state university that enrolls approximately 20,000 students annually and graduates about 4000 students every year. The
university is a part of a large state university system. The university had a Latina/o student enrollment of over 60% (University’s Institutional Research website).

Likewise, approximately 217,000 (45%) Latina/o students enrolled in the State University System, where nearly all of the campuses are Hispanic Serving Institutions (System website, 2021). The campus offers opportunities for students to participate in programs that implement high-impact practices, specifically service-learning courses.

Participant Selection

Polkinghorne (1989) suggests that between 5 and 25 participants be interviewed for a phenomenological study; I interviewed 26 in this study. Van Manen (2016) advises that sample size is generally an issue of validity that pertains more to quantitative type studies and does not pertain to phenomenology. I planned on placing a recruitment flyer (Appendix H) in different university common areas such as classrooms and the university student union, but because of the outbreak of the Coronavirus, I was unable to do so. I had also prepared a version of the flyer to share via email and on social media outlets to help with recruitment; participants were from a variety of service-learning courses, not just one course. I greatly utilized snowball sampling, gaining referrals by participants who also self-identified as Latina/o and had also taken a service-learning course. I contacted the office that oversaw the university’s service-learning courses and service site programs. The office agreed to forward my recruitment letter to faculty members who had conducted service-learning courses to recruit students who were potential participants in the study.
Data Collection

The goal of qualitative research is not to secure confidence levels based on a high number of participants; instead, the goal is to interview broadly enough and deeply enough to ensure all the essential aspects and variations are captured in the sample anymore, and the study reaches saturation, where no new information emerges (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Creswell (2013) noted that interviews should be employed in phenomenological studies to bring attention to the experiences being explored. Van Manen (1990) stated that we could genuinely understand phenomenology through lived experiences.

The primary analysis method was the Interpretive phenomenological method, specifically Critical Hermeneutics (Lopez & Willis, 2014). Interpretive Phenomenology seeks to interpret how participants make sense or meaning of particular experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2004). Critical Hermeneutics is a particular application of Interpretive Phenomenology that fuses in a critical paradigm. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) encourages the use of purposive sampling, as opposed to random, to find a more tightly defined group for whom the question will be significant (Smith & Osborne, 2004). This type of sampling occurs before the data are collected based on the characteristics of a population and the study’s objective (Merriam, 1998). The purposive sample I targeted was Latina/o students who had participated in service-learning courses (a high-impact practice) at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI).

I used a brief online questionnaire (Appendix D) to identify potential participants for my study; the two primary selection criteria that I used in my
questionnaire were: 1) that the student had participated in a service-learning course at an HSI; and 2) that they self-identified as Latina/o, Latinx, Chicana/o or from any Hispanic background. Additional demographic information was collected for context and supporting information when I conducted the interviews. The contextual information collected was college generation status, work status during college, gender identity, Pell-eligibility, grade level at the time they took the service-learning course, current age, and parental education attainment information. I asked the students to fill in a field as to how they self-identified in their Latinx origin, students self-identified as Latina, Latino, Latinx, Mexican, Mexican-American, Hispanic, or Chicana/o, later in the interviews all revealed that they were from either a Mexican or Mexican-American origin. The research covered in the literature review chapter often pointed to these subject areas as points of interest when discussing Latina/os in education.

I utilized purposeful sampling (Creswell, 1998) to target Latina/o students who had participated in a service-learning course at an HSI. This study’s data came from semi-structured in-depth interviews ranging from 30-45 minutes, based on the interview protocol (Appendix A), which took place virtually over Zoom. Structured interviews place constraints on participants and deliberately limit what they can talk about (Smith & Osborn, 2004). For this reason, I selected the semi-structured interview as the primary method for data collection. According to DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006), semi-structured interviews contain organized, open-ended questions pre-formulated and serve as the foundation for the interview. It is common practice to conduct one per participant, which I had planned to do. The
semi-structured interview with open-ended questions did not constrict the interview; instead, it allowed me, the interviewer, to ask other probing questions that developed organically throughout the interview (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

Data Analysis

The focus of my study was the experiences of Latina/o students in a service-learning course (a high-impact practice) at a Hispanic-Serving Institution. The primary analysis method was the Interpretive phenomenological method, specifically Critical Hermeneutics (Lopez & Willis, 2014). Interpretive Phenomenology seeks to interpret how participants make sense or meaning of particular experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2004). Critical Hermeneutics is a particular application of Interpretive Phenomenology that fuses in a critical paradigm. It recognizes that it is common for the voices of members of non-privileged groups to be given less importance than those of the dominant group. The resulting analysis involved a critical approach that challenged dominant ideologies (Lopez & Willis, 2004).

I used an online service to create transcriptions of the semi-structured in-depth interviews; I then coded the data, organized those codes, and identified themes. Saldaña (2016) shared coding methods employed in analyzing qualitative data. For this study, I used Initial Coding or Provisional Coding that provided codes that emerged during the interviews that may have been modified or deleted during the analysis process (Saldaña, 2016). Following the initial coding, Axial Coding was used to group, sort, or reduce the number of codes generated in the first coding cycle (Saldaña, 2016). Other coding methods used were Emotion and Values
coding, which helped label the participants’ emotions, attitudes, or beliefs. In-Vivo coding was used if the participants provided words or phrases that consistently stood out in the transcripts (Saldaña, 2016). Following the code analysis, I categorized and themed the data (Saldaña, 2016); themes were constructed based on the codes that were identified in the previous step. Themes could be shared in the form of sentences to best capture possible participant meanings (Saldaña, 2016). After the themes were compiled, I then used them to describe the lived experiences of the Latina/o students who had participated in a service-learning course at an HSI. The descriptions helped my reader better understand students’ lived experiences who have participated in a high-impact practice at an HSI to inform practice and equity-minded policy.

Trustworthiness

Credibility as a construct pertaining to my qualitative research was discussed as trustworthiness (Creswell & Miller, 2010). Krefting (1991) shared two reasons that quantitative models should not be used to evaluate qualitative research: 1) the same strategies did not always work, and 2) the models were not always relevant. Throughout my study, I documented my thoughts, opinions, and reactions in reflective memos (Good, Herrera, Good, & Cooper, 1985), to describe my feelings as a researcher related to the phenomenon as they arose. This documentation was done throughout the interview process and maintained in a journal before and during the research process (Tufford & Newman, 2010).

To build trustworthiness, I offered an audit trail and field notes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) with details of the recruitment, interviews conducted, and data
analyzed to describe the experience of the phenomena accurately, not necessarily its generalizability (Morse & Field, 1985). Sandelowski (1986) suggested that credibility is present in a qualitative study when the researcher provides descriptions that are accurate interpretations of human experience that others who have also experienced the phenomena may also recognize.

Sandelowski (1993) tells us that repeatability is not essential. We should not expect researchers or respondents to arrive at the same themes, categories, or conclusions that we have as the researcher. The importance of qualitative research is to learn from the participants’ experiences, not to control for them (Krefting, 1991). I attempted to capture any pre-understanding that may have influenced my interpretation of the dialogue with my study’s participants. Gadamer (1989) tells us that each study is a unique connection between the participant and the researcher, along with the history, experiences, and ways of knowing for each or a fusion of horizons as Gadamer described it. I employed member-checking, not only for the accurateness check it provided of the transcribed interview but in addition, I also provided a synthesized report back to the participant to involve them in the interpretation of the data if it was needed, to enhance the trustworthiness of the research (Brit, Scott, Cavers, Campbell & Walter, 2016). The report included emergent themes and quotes that represented those themes; this provided an opportunity for participants to confirm, add, or change any of their responses; this member-checking method used a technique called Synthesized Member Checking (SMC), as proposed by Brit et al. (2016). My goal was to describe a range of experiences of students who had participated in a service-learning course rather
than the average experience, as each individual's experience was essential to increase our knowledge.

Limitations

Limitations of my study included access to all students who had participated in service-learning courses at the university. Even though I worked with the office that managed service-learning courses, I still needed to work with the service-learning faculty to gain access to the student participants. Likewise, I did not know from which faculty and service-learning courses students would be drawn. This was important because the courses selected, and the experience of the faculty could influence the outcomes. Learning the processes involved in assigning courses and faculty should also inform future educators and policy and procedures. Conducting in-class or on-site observations was also not possible due to the restrictions in place because of the Coronavirus pandemic. Future studies of this topic should consider this if possible.

Delimitations

Delimitations were the anticipated choices on what was and what was not within the focus of the research study, which guided the interpretation of the findings (Sampson, 2012). This study was intentionally limited to one of ten high-impact practices for student engagement (Kuh, 2008). I chose service-learning, one of ten High-Impact Practices (HIPs). In some studies, this HIP has been shown quantitatively to have a high impact on Students of Color. Yet, few studies had been conducted on the experiences of Latina/o students in that specific HIP (Finley,
Likewise, I chose to focus on the experiences of Latina/o students and not all students who had participated in service-learning courses at a Hispanic-Serving Institution.

Positionality of the Researcher

Descriptive phenomenological methods suggest that the researcher should attempt to suspend all prior knowledge of a subject to remain objective (Creswell, 2013). This method may be impossible because we all have prior experiences and knowledge; for this reason, I relied on my experience and knowledge to guide my interpretations of the experiences of Latina/os who participated in a service-learning course at an HSI. My experience as a higher education professional at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) had allowed me to see and experience how Latina/o students and Latina/o faculty and staff experienced working and learning at an HSI. My experience and perceptions guided me not only to choose the topic of my study, but they were also a primary driver for me to pursue my doctorate. I graduated with an undergraduate and master’s degree, a first-generation college student with few Faculty of Color in my primary field of study, and no Latina/o faculty in my undergraduate or master’s programs. I could not participate in specific programs like unpaid internships or study-abroad programs due to financial circumstances. The need to work to sustain myself while in college and the limited availability of financial support from my parents placed real limitations on what extra-curricular activities I could participate in as a student. Being a first-generation student did not afford me a close network of others to talk to in my family when it came to college. Likewise, working and living independently while navigating
college opened me up to a lot of hard learning when it came to financial management. I learned that I could easily overextend myself on credit and stretch out my student loans to survive, but it came at a cost. Working off-campus put real constraints on my schoolwork; there were always competing circumstances that placed my school and work at odds with each other. The pressure from family to work and make money to support myself were real; members of the family did not always understand what the commitment of college was all about and sometimes unknowingly pressured me to prioritize family over school several times during my college career. Fortunately, I found like-minded individuals in college who became my support group; they had similar backgrounds and experiences and could help me navigate the challenges that college presented me. Likewise, some mentors at the university looked out for me and were always there to guide and support me when needed. This was the primary driver compelling me to work at the university because it changed my life and my family’s future. I understood what education could do for others like it has for my family and me. These experiences placed me in close relation with many of the students currently enrolled at the university.

After graduating and beginning to work at the university that I attended, I found ways to stay involved with students to help them navigate college as I had to do also. I served as a mentor, club advisor, and employer to many students while working at the university. I always looked for ways to ensure that students remain engaged with the college and their education while never forgetting their community. While working on campus, I participated in committees or workgroups focused on student success. Too often to count, I recall being in meetings, explicitly
involving high-impact practices and their implementation, and watching faculty and staff leadership go in circles on whether the university should support those practices. They often asked the question of how we could focus on just Latina/os rather than all students. Likewise, I have witnessed students speak candidly to faculty regarding racial incidents that they have personally experienced in the classroom only to have those students minimized because the faculty member felt attacked and said they were experiencing “faculty micro-aggressions.” I have witnessed senior leadership at a university say that if they do something for all students, they are doing it for Latina/o students because they constituted the majority of students enrolled. My university had been a Hispanic Serving Institution as long as I could remember, and never once had I seen Latina/o students be put first when it came to targeted student success, most likely because it would be at the expense of some other group of students, be it from Title V grants meant to support Latina/o students at an HSI from the Federal government or creating retention programs or centers targeting those that were most vulnerable. I knew that HSIs were capable of doing more once the campus embraced the identity and truly chose to serve the students that enrolled at that campus.

I believed that Latina/o students had been and continued to be underserved when it came to equitable educational outcomes. Equitable outcomes in high school graduation rates, college-going rates, college completion rates had historically lagged behind those of White students, and it continued to hurt their communities. Educational institutions, in general, implemented programs or interventions to support student retention, but those efforts were designed based on research
primarily for White students. It was my view that the exclusion of Students of Color in High-Impact Practices by systems in higher education continued to perpetuate systemic inequities in educational attainment for historically underrepresented and marginalized groups, specifically Latina/o students, all while reinforcing dominant deficit narratives surrounding Students of Color, in particular, Latina/o students, absent critical frames by which to examine how those practices were implemented. This study’s purpose was to learn from the Latina/o students’ lived experiences in service-learning courses, a high-impact practice. The data analyzed should inform how Latina/o students experienced this type of program or those classes at a Hispanic Serving Institution. As higher education leaders, I felt that we must have growth and demonstrate deliberate actions with the students we served.

Summary

In this third chapter, I presented the study’s significance and purpose, the research questions that guided the research. I then described the qualitative methodology, specifically critical hermeneutic phenomenology, from the interpretive philosophy rather than the descriptive. These were the philosophical underpinnings that were utilized in the study to collect and analyze the data. I discussed the research site setting and the methods used for participant selection. I also included a section on my subjectivity as a researcher, as well as other methods employed to establish trustworthiness. Finally, I added the limitations and of my study and the purposeful delimitations in the research study.
In chapter four, I present the findings of the study. As a reminder, I utilized the interpretive approach of critical hermeneutic phenomenology to examine the experiences of Latina/o students in service-learning courses at a four-year public Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). I created my own framework called the Student Engagement Ecosystem (SEE) Framework which examines the application of classroom practices beyond the binary of the practice and the student. The SEE framework encourages practitioners to examine not only the student but their microsystem, which includes their family, access to resources, well-being, health and their life and educational experiences, both positive and negative. Likewise, practitioners need to examine their role in the application of the classroom practices, what are the norms in the classroom, amongst the peers and at the university itself. Identify institutional support, resources as well as barriers and systemic inequity where possible. This framework is based on theoretical frameworks that informed me during my research, such as Critical Race Theory in Education (CRTE) (Solórzano, 1998), Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) (Yosso, 2005), Validation Theory (Rendon, 1994, Rendon Linares & Muñoz, 2011), Transformational Leadership (Bensimon, 2007; Bensimon & Bishop, 2012), Hispanic Servingness (Garcia, 2017, 2018). Taken together this framework invites leaders and educational practitioners to see the whole student and their complex realities as individuals seeking belonging and validation in a system that may be foreign to them. The research questions guiding the study were: 1) How do Latina/o
students see themselves reflected in service-learning courses, if at all? 2) What are the experiences of Latina/o students in service-learning courses at an HSI? 3) How and in what ways have Latina/o students who have participated in service-learning courses developed a sense of belonging in college?

The findings are organized according to several themes related to one another and answer the research questions. The related themes are a) The ways in which Latina/o students see their ethnic culture reflected in the classroom, b) The negative and positive experiences of students participating in service-learning courses, c) Latina/o students’ sense of belonging as an indication of Hispanic-Servingness. These themes highlight the need for equity-minded leadership in the implementation of policy and practice on campus.
How Do Latina/o Students See Themselves Reflected in Service-Learning Courses, if at All?

Overwhelmingly, as participants discussed their experiences in service-learning courses, they noted that it was rare to find connections to their ethnic culture, even at a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI); This was true for 23 of the 26 participants in the study. All were asked to describe their connection to ethnic, cultural content, or faculty in the course or topics covered.

Cameron, a first-gen Biology major who had a Mexican ethnic background, expressed that she had yet to see her ethnic culture reflected in any of her courses, in particular, the service-learning course “…I don't feel like my culture is really reflected at all in the [service-learning] course”. Cameron, a freshman at the time of the interview, noted that the course did not reflect her culture, which was in line with the majority of statements made by the participants.

Stephanie, a recent Chicana graduate who started the university as a freshman and was a first-gen college student noted that she did not see her culture in any of her service-learning courses:

No, not much, actually. In the courses that I'm taking currently. I mean, we're speaking in regard to People of Color and the social issues and all the inequality, all the intersections. However, I'm not really seeing much talked about my [Latino] culture unless I'm specifically taking a class that is titled Latino…intro to Latino culture.

Stephanie stated that she had not experienced her ethnic culture in any class that was not labeled directly so, she also shared her experiences in a course she was taking in ethnic studies:
However, you would think that, well, that's what I think. Personally, I thought that taking an ethnic studies class was going to go ahead and touch at least some sort of a bit of all cultures. I mean, obviously, we don't have that much time. However, I still… we were still talking about People of Color and how they have all of the disparities, whether it's racial social so on. However, we talked more about the Muslim community. We talked more upon the African-American community. We talked about more about the Asian-American community, Islamic community. We talked about more of other communities, other than myself…

There was a clear disconnection from Stephanie, regarding the absence of her culture in an ethnic studies course. Stephanie then recalled an article she read in her class that made a connection for her, she recalled:

I think I was able to read one article of like that was representing me that I actually…am…I actually did, really a lot more than I did for other assignments because I felt like it actually related to my experiences. I was really excited for that assignment, and it was just one article, and I felt like…I felt like there was a lot more to it…like I felt… like I needed to elaborate a lot more than just that one assignment.

Stephanie was enthusiastic when recalling the assignment and proceeded to tell me about the article and how she related to it, and how glad she was that she was exposed to it. Stephanie noted that it had been the only assignment in her college career that she felt represented her and tied to her culturally. The experience left
her wanting more; she could not believe that the one assignment was the extent of her experience.

In addition, participants shared that they did not have a connection with faculty. By connection, participants discussed having cultural similarity or a rapport inside the classroom that went beyond the traditional faculty-student relationship. For instance, Alejandra, who self-identified as Mexican-American, was pursuing a master’s degree in communication studies at the same institution from where she received her bachelor’s degree. She had more time at the university and more experience in class than Cameron; as captured by Alejandra’s undergraduate and graduate experiences when asked about faculty connecting with her ethnic background in her courses, she shared, “No… actually… no, not that I recall.” Alejandra described no real connection with any faculty and specifically none that looked like her in her experiences in both degree programs. Alejandra elaborated on the possible disconnect by citing a perception she had accepted about her university early on, one that the campus was a “commuter campus.” This was why she felt that she did not connect with faculty or participate in more student activities at the university.

Likewise, Rene, a first-generation Mexican-American, business college alumni who began at Latinx State University as a first-year student, felt no connection to faculty. When asked about his experiences connecting with faculty that looked like him or courses that reflected his ethnic culture in his journey through his information technology bachelor’s degree, he responded, “…No, I can't say…just because it’s technology. So… it was not much about culture. It was more of information
technology is as far as like systems and programming and such...couldn't say much about that.” As expressed by other business students interviewed, Rene had the perception that there was little to no connection to his ethnic culture within his academic college, which was compounded by the fact that there were few Faculty of Color to connect with on an academic or personal level. Rene believed that topics in technology were completely separate from his ethnic culture.

Linda self-identified as a Mexican-American communications major who started college as a freshman and was the first in her family to graduate college. For many years, Linda had been on campus, exploring her options; she changed majors and participated in four service-learning experiences. When asked, Linda deeply searched for a connection to her ethnic culture in service-learning experiences. Within her first major of Journalism, she attributed the lack of awareness of her culture to it being early in her college journey, as Cameron mentioned above. Linda noted:

I think at the time I was very not aware or self-aware, aware really of the role that quote “my culture,” culture in general kind of played and especially in journalism…. When I just did this, this [culture] didn't really come into my thinking at all, and that at that point, I was freshman or sophomore because it wasn't really a priority for me….

Likewise, in her second service-learning course, in public relations. Linda expressed that she also had not seen her ethnic culture in the faculty or the course practices:
...and it was funny because in the second one [service-learning course] in the journey, the PR [public relations] one was where I met a [my faculty] mentor. So that's what kind of opened me up to... “like, whoa” ... all the stuff about, you know, cultural awareness and just education, and as a system...so it wasn't until after that course that I started kind of thinking that way. At that time, I really didn't consider... I also didn't see really connections that way either.... I'm thinking back to it. There was nothing really that culturally connected for me in a lot of my classes.

As captured by Linda’s experience, there was nothing that culturally connected her in her classes, specifically in her major. She admitted that she would have liked to have had that experience in her classes, but it was not explicit. “...in terms of the, the cultural part... I don't feel like I ever actually integrated cultural things into the work that I did like consciously.”

Several participants discussed that they did not see themselves or their culture in the coursework for their major. In particular, those that studied in the business, technology, and science fields. For instance, as expressed by Aaron, “...Oh yeah, no, yeah, of course, hmm.... No, not at all.” Aaron was a first-generation Mexican-American business school graduate who started college as a first-time freshman. He could not say that any of his major courses contained content or faculty that he could connect to his culture. He did share that a class he had taken on Latinx culture specifically excluded the Mexican-American/Chicano experience:
Okay, so this is which was so funny. I took a Latino culture class as a capstone, and I, I think that's the only class in my college career that I got a C in because I went in confident that I was going to learn about my roots my Mexican culture through the movement of society and the stuff that you know has brought us, especially here in Southern California. But that wasn't the case; we learned about Puerto Rico, we learned about Spain, and that was totally a disconnect for me.

Aaron did not connect with his ethnic culture in his service-learning courses and not in his major studies. Moreover, when he took a class intended to teach about his Latina/o ethnic culture, he still was disconnected from that experience because his specific Mexican background was ignored in the course material.

Fernando, an MBA graduate, who had great experiences in both of his service-learning courses, when asked about connecting to his ethnic culture in either experience, shared, “…I really did not in both those courses; see my Latino culture reflected in either, yeah, nothing directly like that.” Fernando was another business major who would earn two degrees from the same business school that did not see his Latino culture reflected in any of his major classes from the time he was a freshman.

Bella, a Chicana MBA candidate who changed her career because of a conflict in family values, shared about her lack of connection with her ethnic culture in her classes:
I didn't have a lot of… yeah, I didn't. It just, uh, I don't think it was a factor. It's not a factor in the course, or it wasn't like a part of the part of the course, I guess. I could say…

When asked if it would have made a difference to see her ethnic culture in her service-learning courses, Bella shared:

I think I could have gained something from it. I think because…given that, particularly my [undergraduate] degree or the business area around our [local] community is highly populated with our [ethnic] culture. I think it can be incorporated a bit better.

Bella had the opportunity to take courses that prepared her for the logistics career she went into after graduating with her bachelor’s degree. According to her, Bella’s workforce experiences could have been improved by discussing potential challenges in her future workplace like age and cultural factors.

Johnny was a first-generation Mexican-American child of immigrants who graduated from the business school and worked as a technology professional. In addition to not seeing a connection in their service-learning experiences or in their major, some participants shared views like Johnny:

In terms of my major, I don't think it really did, um, I don't think it really did right, especially with technology. I mean, I feel like technology can be maybe culture agnostic. Not that it’s biased one way or the other, but it doesn’t care. So that's, that's a good and a bad thing.

Johnny thought that his chosen field of information technology was culture agnostic. As such, he described the content of classes in his major as not being bias in one
way or another. This exemplifies the influence that the dominant culture can have on the teaching and learning of a subject and the lack of conversation on racial issues in technology.

Many of the responses from participants in the business and science fields are not uncommon, but there were also examples found in interviews from students in the field of education. Dora is a first-generation graduate student in Education administration who self-identified as Mexican-American. Dora completed her undergraduate coursework at a different institution and was already working in the field of education. When asked about seeing her culture in her course, Dora recalled:

No. None. And we took a cultural proficiency course, and in no point... I feel...maybe I missed it... was there any mention of the Chicano experience or the Mexican-American experience or that Latino experience in the educational system...so...and we live in California, Southern California, which is... we have a large Latino public...sort of... Latino population that wasn't a part of the conversation. The professor wasn't able to really facilitate discussions regarding culture and racism and prejudice biases, any of that; and I was, I was excited to take the course because I'm very passionate about social justice, but after the first class. I knew that it wasn't going to be what I expected it to be. In her first quarter to receive her education administration K-12 leadership certification, Dora was excited that they would be discussing social justice and cultural proficiency. She learned quickly that it was not going to be the case. The faculty member
could not moderate the discussion on culture and racism; likewise, the faculty member failed to integrate key information on the largest group of minoritized students in the K-12 education system in California, Latina/o children.

Many participants conveyed similar sentiments of not connecting with their ethnic culture through their service-learning courses; the majority discussed the fact that it was just not present. Some participants discussed feeling the presence of their culture through peers in their class. When the faculty did not provide a space for students to feel connected in their service-learning courses, the responsibility fell upon the students to find ways to create a connection or make their own space. Likewise, some were able to connect to persons at the course service site, like medical patients who shared their racial/ethnic background. Rarely did they ever share that cultural presence or background with their faculty member. However, there were discrepant data that did not represent the whole as a validity point. Three cases did demonstrate Servingness or a connection to their ethnic culture in a service-learning course implementation; they will be discussed later in this chapter. Next, I present the experiences of Latina/o students who participated in service-learning classes at an HSI.
What Are the Experiences of Latina/o Students in Service-Learning Courses at an HSI?

We know that most participants did not see their ethnic culture reflected in their service-learning courses. Participants experienced both positive and negative outcomes in their service-learning courses. According to the research, traditional service-learning, and community-based learning build on direct experience inside and outside the classroom while potentially addressing community issues. In the previous section, I shared the ways in which students connected to their culture in their service-learning courses. In the following section, I discuss the practices and implementation of service-learning courses with the hope of understanding the lived experiences of Latina/o student participants. To describe the experiences shared by Latina/o students in service-learning courses, I begin by addressing the negative experiences in the classes in my study to acknowledge them as deficit and racist practices. However, I do not elaborate upon them. The negative practices are a representative sample as experienced by participants, not every negative event experienced. Then, I highlight those program practices and experiences that contributed to beneficial outcomes for Latina/o students. Last, I discuss equity-minded, asset-based practices built into courses or programs that went above and beyond positive practices and truly served Latina/o students.


This section will discuss the negative course practices experienced by Latina/o students who took a service-learning course at an HSI. I have arranged the negative practices in two different groups, 1) poor implementation of service-
learning practices, 2) deficit practices in the classroom as experienced by the
students in the study. Students identified poor practices in the implementation of
service-learning courses; they included: a) the lack of group supervision in the class
or at the service-learning site; students were often left to fend for themselves to
navigate peer group dynamics; b) the use of the students to be more like workers or
staff and not creating a meaningful educational experience; c) the choice of a
service-site that the students did not connect with because it was not representative
of their community; d) faculty not tying a clear connection back to student learning;
e) disingenuous practices, such as performing the bare minimum, or not at all, in a
role such as a faculty advisor, program mentor, or institutional agent; f) faculty not
giving clear instructions and not setting expectations on required projects; g) the
assumption on the part of faculty or site-coordinator, that all students have the
experience and knowledge to navigate higher education systems; h) indifference
from the faculty to teach the same way and not take into consideration the students
in the class or the community in which they serve; i) students not feeling like they
belonged in the class or major.

The course practices that the students encountered often left them feeling
self-doubt, disconnected from their education, and created an environment where
they felt like they did not belong in the class or even at the university. In addition to
those poor service-learning practices listed above, the second group of experiences
highlights what some students shared as their experiences with negative practices
and the institutional agents that delivered them. Some participants in the study
shared personal experiences that exposed prejudice and racist practices either
present in the course environment or that the faculty imposed on them, which included: a) prejudice against students because of race, ethnicity, culture, heritage, and language; b) normative practices that primarily marginalize Students of Color; c) the accusation of plagiarism without any cause; d) in-group bias displayed as favoritism by the faculty for students that were from the same racial background, and bias against those that were not; e) insensitivity from the faculty towards Students of Color in matters of racial tension during the class. I begin with the poor implementation of service-learning practices in the course as experienced by the Latina/o students participating.

Poor implementation of service-learning practices does not imply ill-will or negative intent; it could be any series of reasons from miscommunication to poor training. No matter the cause, it is a missed opportunity to create a positive experience for the student in the service-learning course.

Cameron, the biology major, described the experiences that she had in her college honors program, another high-impact practice that had a service-learning component built-in for the year. Even though the course had built-in community experiences, Cameron made no connection with academic content to the service she was providing; she could not recall any meaningful service experiences from the course, she discussed:

It [the program] was really nice…to, like, get to know my classmates and stuff like that. But we also did like…community service-like activities. One was like packing food boxes like in the student center…like…I don't even remember where the boxes were going, but that's where we met and did for one of our
Fridays. Like he had us sign in, and then we packed boxes the whole time period.

Cameron described her experience as one where the students were being used for labor with no meaningful interaction or connection to the course material. The faculty member did not tie the service component of the course back to student learning. Cameron highlighted that the service experience provided good bonding time for her and other students in the program, which she found valuable.

Additionally, Cameron shared a challenge with scheduling her course’s service component because it created a work conflict. Managing living at home, working near home, and commuting to campus was challenging for Cameron, something familiar for first-generation students like herself. Cameron was excited about being in college, being that she was the first in her family to attend. Even though she had this negative experience in this high-impact practice, it may have been too early in her college career for her to understand the influence or decipher if it should have been any different.

Elena, a nursing major, who self-identified as a Mexican-American, began college as a freshman. Her chosen major, Nursing, is an impacted major; because of the high number of people who desire this university’s academic and career path. Impacted programs often practice more selectivity in program admittance than other non-impacted programs. Some are cohort-based and assign program resources such as nursing advisors. Elena described her experiences with her assigned advisor as a part of her coursework and program requirements:
I did have a nursing advisor, but I wouldn’t really say that she was much of a mentor. Yeah, also, just being like a first first-generation…like… Latina student, you know, and female. I just think that it’s always kind of been like a little hard to get there, you know, but having gotten into the [nursing] program and seeing a lot of other Latinas, it was very, very awesome.

Elena shared that even though she had an advisor, she did not create a mentorship connection with this person during the class. She described how it had been hard to make it into this program because she was the first generation in her family to attend college, as well as a Woman of Color in a STEM field. Elena expressed that even though she did not connect with her advisor, she felt validated because she was not the only Latina in the program, a case found quite often in STEM fields. She shared how seeing other Latinas in the program helped her not to feel alone, but once again, the responsibility falling upon the students to create their own space for support.

Aaron, a first-generation, self-identified Mexican-American business school graduate who started college as a first-time freshman, described his experience being the only Latina/o student in a business course, a course based at a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI):

I guess I’ll start with my marketing [service-learning] class, which was obviously…you put in practice, everything that you’ve learned in your marketing courses and business courses, all in one. Me and my group actually had to do a business plan for a company; a small company called [craft brewery]. Which is now an actual brewery in [nearby local city], and we
basically were there in the initial stages where the company was barely starting off.

Aaron described that the project focused on a semi-local business. He identified the location of the business being in a nearby city, not the same city as the university or his residential community, but one that had different demographic makeup, specifically, a community that he was not normally a part of, he continued:

…I was placed in a group, and obviously… I think, even though [the university], which is an HSI [Hispanic-Serving institution], I did feel like I was the only Latino in the in the class…in the course.

Aaron described the practice as being placed in a group instead of choosing his team to serve the business project demonstrated the first of two practices that lacked agency. The second was removing students' opportunity to find their own projects in their community and selecting the project or service site. Contrasting Elena’s experience, Aaron distinctly realized that he was the only Latina/o student in the course, despite being enrolled at an HSI; He shared:

But I…and to a certain extent, it was a little intimidating, just because it wasn't people like me and trying to do these types of businesses like learning models or whatnot. So, I definitely felt like I had to step up prove something...give my two cents, especially for a community like [local city] and with individuals who are in my group that were not People of Color. So, but it was all positive experience. I got to learn a lot of marketing skills, business skills, finance skills that I could later on use, and I'm still using in the field that I'm currently in right now.
Aaron used the pressure of being the only Latina/o in the class as motivation to stay engaged in the project. Even though being the only Latina/o in the course could be considered a negative experience, Aaron turned it into a positive experience; he used the opportunity to identify which business skills he implemented during the project and recognized their importance for his future career. He used the course experience to self-identify potential gaps and prepare himself for his future.

Linda, a communications major, shared a challenging circumstance that she faced in her path connecting with the faculty member teaching her service-learning course as well as the strategy she and her peers took to get through the course:

[In] the PR class. I didn't even feel comfortable looking at her [the faculty member]. She was very intimidating, very cut and dry wasn't really approachable. So, I really didn't feel comfortable going to her for anything. So, I relied more on my fellow students, and sometimes, you know, none of us knew what we were doing what… we kind of figured it out as we went along, and kind of relied on each other's resources. So it was, I would say, more peer-based support to get through the course.

Linda and her peers in the service-learning class relied on each other to navigate the course. As Linda indicated during the interview, some project instructions provided by the faculty member were unclear to the students. What Linda found especially challenging was the faculty member’s approach to teaching the class and the competition she instilled in the students. Linda felt intimidated and turned to her peers instead of the faculty member for questions. She went on to elaborate:
I definitely respected her a lot as a professional, but I think I tried to avoid taking that class because she was teaching it, because I'd had another run-in with her as my advisor, and she was really brash. So, I was really... nervous going into it. That I was just going to be, you know, uncomfortable in the class. ...

Linda had previous encounters with the faculty member as an assigned advisor in her academic program, so she knew about her approach. Linda shared that she attempted to avoid taking the required course with the faculty member because of their different styles but could not avoid it. Linda elaborated on the possibility of the teacher-student relationship for mentorship:

But again, I still didn't feel like... this is a professional that I can go to in the future; for that support... this isn't someone I can rely on as a mentor. Like I never felt that comfort from that instructor...I think that would have made a huge difference in me...like if...I felt like there was still like a little bit of a window for me to kind of follow what I majored in, and she would have had that supportive vibe to her.... I think that...that it could have been... it could have ended up differently for me, career-wise.

As captured by Linda’s experience, the faculty member was not one that Linda could connect to as a mentor. Linda had struggled with a feeling of being disconnected and lost in college; a chance connection with a different faculty member through this course is one that later helped her change that feeling and the lack in sense of direction. Linda noted that if she felt more supported, her academic pathway and career might have ended differently. This point is important because
Linda expressed that she felt that her education and passion were on two different paths but that it was too late for her to change majors again.

As described above, participant experiences are examples of poor practices that faculty could improve for future service-learning high-impact courses; changing aspects should change the students' experiences, thereby improving their academic and non-academic outcomes. Faculty should create clear connections to the service-learning component and the class information. Meaningful service interactions for students, not just using students as labor to complete a service project. Once again, creating a bridge for learning and the service component and providing oversight of the class or service projects ensures accountability. Ensuring guidance and mentorship are practiced authentically by advisors, not just because it is the program's duty, will help students engage in the class or program. The practice of student agency allows students to make choices regarding their service projects, not just assigning a location or business project. In the case of faculty, they could ensure that lines of communication are open early and that they are approachable for student inquiries or to provide clear instructions when needed.

**Deficit Practices That Create Invalidating Experiences in Service-Learning Courses.**

Service-learning should provide opportunities for students to learn inside and outside the classroom. When implemented by institutional agents like faculty or service-site coordinators with care, these classes can create opportunities for students to learn valuable skills, reaffirm their career decisions and see themselves as professionals. The participant experiences shared in the previous section can negatively impact when implemented poorly, and other course practices could be
detrimental when implemented with ill will. Next, I exemplify some of the detrimental classroom practices and the negative influence on the student experience.

Alexandra, a graduate student in the School of Education seeking her second master's degree and an administrative credential, realized that to affect change in her career, she needed to pursue a credential in K-12 school leadership, so she decided to attend Latinx State University. In her first quarter, she took three courses that focused on preparing teachers for K-12 leadership, two of which had a service component. Her experience in two of the three classes was less than desirable. Alexandra had originally returned to school as an adult learner with practical teaching experience, so she had a different perspective on education than her cohort peers. Alexandra recalled the experiences in her first course, a class that focused on cultural proficiency, and she shared the following:

This class... um, did nothing for me or for the rest of the students in that class. We all came to a consensus that...that we could have read the book and done without her [the faculty member] ...you know, for someone who’s teaching a cultural proficiency class, you need to be aware of who you’re in service to, right. You have students in there from all walks of life, and you know there’s a lot of privileged people in there. Alexandra felt as if she and her peers could have done better without the faculty member. Alexandra described a lack of the faculty member’s cultural proficiency in a class teaching cultural proficiency. She went on to describe an in-class experience that left her, and her peers traumatized when a situation unfolded during class that the faculty member did not handle properly:
We had a discussion about Mr. [George] Floyd and his murder. She [the faculty member] brought it up at the end of class...and one of the students was there polishing her nails and... her toenails during somebody's testimony [over Zoom]. Two people's testimony and another Black student said, “you know, you need to stop” ...she [the professor] put this other student in his place, the one who said his dad worked him like a slave, she called him out on it. But then this other girl who was polishing her nails and stuff, she didn't stop it. So, this Black student said, “you know, why did you do this, but you're not calling her on out on it, like, what are you doing?” ... this girl was like...very defensive, and you know, and then it just escalated... and I was just like, what are you doing? Like this is a cultural proficiency class, not what you're doing right now by being indifferent to someone's testimony. You know, anyway, on and on, but the professor did nothing. She did nothing!

Alexandra pointed out that the faculty member had different responses for different students; she suggested that it was because of their racial/ethnic backgrounds. Likewise, Alexandra expected that if a difficult subject, especially those that involved race, would be discussed in class, there should be ground rules and courtesy when dealing with difficult conversations. Her experience shared that the faculty member did not know how to maneuver these topics in a cultural proficiency course. Alexandra came from another local four-year public research university. She received two bachelor's degrees, one being in Chicano Studies, her master's degree in education, and a teaching credential from the same institution.

“...Dismissive, invisible” is how Alexandra described her experience with a faculty
member she encountered in her first quarter at Latinx State University. Alexandra shared her experience in a different course preparing for a required state teaching certification that had required service-learning observation hours in the field built-in. The class was taken with the director of the credential program; Alexandra described how the faculty member treated members of the class differently; her experience was as follows:

There's no support... right we're all getting this [certificate] done, and she comes in and tell us about her experiences, and then she says, “I have office hours” and her office hours consist of: “did you look at the rubric? Look at the rubric. Look at the rubric.”

Alexandra shared that reaching out to the faculty member could be difficult for her and her peers in general. Alexandra's experience attending office hours highlights why some students will not seek help from their professors. Echoing similar sentiments, another participant, Linda, recalled:

I never really got that sense of like... I'm here for you. It's more like... I'm teaching the class either get it, or you don't, and you fail or pass, and that's, that's it. There's not really like that sense of, you know, this is a service that I'm providing for your benefit. So, I think just that.

These examples demonstrate the ways in which a faculty member, acting as an agent of the institution, can point to systems that are put in place to address student questions and support. These normative practices can make assumptions about what students should know before taking a class. These practices often exclude
Students of Color and other historically underrepresented groups because they do not have the experience of navigating or challenging such systems or programs.

Alexandra went on to share:

Yes, we have a college degree, right? We've got bachelor's, we've got our masters...but some of us don't. Some of those are getting their first masters, but we don't have that support system in place outside of this campus, and so if we need your support, we'd like for you to treat us with respect and to understand, right? Have some cultural proficiency and understand that those of us of color may not understand everything. Maybe English isn't their first language. Maybe we have a different, a difficult time, you know, maybe we have different modalities of learning, you don't know. But be familiar and aware of that...you can't...you can't preach something that you don't practice.

Alexandra referred to practicing cultural proficiency, a tool often taught in K-12 leadership programs, to engage Students of Color. She questioned how she can be taught about the subject and how to use it when it is not practiced in the classroom, where she participated. Alexandra described this lack of cultural proficiency in both of her first two courses at LSU.

In addition, she described the professors as being a part of the dominant culture, she stated:

So, you have...it's, it's almost like...like stereotypes right where you have like this dominant culture, who's not really familiar with us and what we come from, is just going to teach the same way every time and has no expectations, like, oh, you don't get it...umm. Showing frustration... showing frustration with one
of the students who obviously her...her first language is not English and just being like she was just dismissive to her like 'Well, you got to get it in' like but the rest of us who speak English very well. ‘Oh yes, I understand...’ So that bias is like... it's there.

Normative practices, bias towards students with English as their second language created barriers for some of her peers. It was obvious to Alexandra that the same responses were not present for all students, just Latina/o students. Likewise, this created tension for Alexandra in the class.

Alexandra also shared her experiences witnessing faculty engagement with first-generation college students; she continued:

So, if you're, if this is a service-class where we're supposed to be in service to others. How about you be in service to us and show some respect because just because I speak the languages doesn’t mean I don't feel for my comadre over here, right? We all have the same struggle in terms of...we’re all in school, trying to get through it, but we all have different challenges in terms of life experience and color.

Alexandra’s experiences in her first two courses highlighted discriminatory and prejudiced practices that were unfair to her and her Classmates of Color, particularly those who had learned English as a second language. These experiences, as recalled by Alexandra, took place in the service-learning course; there was a different experience she shared in a different course that did provide validation. She recalled the experience of how she connected with the third professor in the non-service-learning course she was taking; this faculty member
was her only Faculty of Color during her first quarter at the university:

And then my third and last class with Dr. [faculty name] was amazing. She was structured, organized, all of her stuff was relevant to what we were... the material we were studying, it was leadership…and um, she respected us and guess what she's African-American.

Alexandra described how different the experience was in the third course compared to the other two courses. The first class had an inexperienced professor who was not prepared to handle challenging situations around complex topics. The second professor, who was also in a leadership role, had discriminatory practices, demonstrating a lack of empathy for her Latina/o students in the field of Education. This is critical because the education field should be preparing students to teach and engage with students from diverse backgrounds and cultures, in particular Latina/os in southern California.

Johnny, a technology major, entered the campus as a first-time freshman and lived in the dorms for several years. Johnny openly described his experiences creating connections with his professors:

I don't… I don't think I have a very personal relationship with any of my professors in [my major]. At least, on the front, from...the faculty point of view…

Johnny showed an immediate disconnection from positive faculty experiences during his interview; he struggled to remember faculty names or the value he received from certain courses. He was hesitant to discuss specific experiences because he did not want to complain or “snitch.” Johnny’s experiences inside the
classroom and some of those inequitable experiences replicated outside the classroom influenced his college experience. He continued to share:

there was, there was...there was some favoritism that I did see with [academic club in my major]. There, that I felt it affected People of Color disproportionately, and I can give you some specific examples where...I don't know...I don't want to throw any...anyone, any one person under the bus, but I'm not...I will say that...I felt like I was just as qualified to be considered for a program...I was involved a lot more on-campus than a lot of people in the [club], and because of that,...

Johnny described the inequality and structural racism that were present in his program experiences. He knew that he missed out on opportunities that could have helped him succeed because the systems favored the privileged amongst his classmates.

Johnny identified the selectivity and the sharing of resources as favoritism for students that were a part of the dominant group, which he was not a part of:

So, the thing that made the [academic club] so cool was that you could actually do this internship program and actually, you know, get funded to go to school and not have to worry about work. You know, you could spend your free time actually learning how to program [code].

The club that Johnny referred to was an academic club dedicated to supporting students in the same major. This club received support from the faculty and college resources to help the students succeed both academically and professionally.

Johnny described that the students who participated in the club came from
backgrounds where they were exposed to computer programming. Many club members knew each other from previous courses and some from high school.

You could actually participate in the club and throw events for the club, you know, these are things that I could have been participating in, and I couldn’t because I had to work. I had to work to actually, um, you know, pay my bills. Johnny wanted to participate in the academic clubs and take part in the activities.

Like many Students of Color, Johnny had to work to cover the expenses of college. He often had to choose between working so that he could eat or study for class. He further explained:

You know, the grant and the loans didn’t cover enough. So, I actually had to work, not only that, because I did so bad my first two or three years, you know that totally disqualified me from any qualification of that program because you needed at least a 3.0 GPA.

The choice of work over academics coupled with inadequate preparation for college from his high school created many hurdles for Johnny to overcome at the beginning of his college career. As a result of his grades at the beginning of school, he was excluded from the very type of academic program that could help him succeed because of selectivity. Instead, the same privileged students received more resources to succeed in the major.

An interesting belief that Johnny referred to often was assimilating in order to “make it.” He felt that a student needed to assimilate in order to succeed in college.
was enrolled with; therefore, Johnny felt like he needed to shed his identity and assimilate in order to be successful in college.

Johnny’s drive to not return to a hard life and still help support his family drove him to pick a major and career that he considered safe. A college major and career that he saw as an investment instead of something that was his passion.

I lived on campus for the first two years, and that helped me too, because for the first time ever it was like...whoa, there was White people around me, that was...that was wild...that was wild! and again, thinking back it’s like I can’t believe that it really affected me, you know going to [the university]. That was the first time I ever went to any school that had green grass. That was the first time I ever went to any school that had no tagging...that I felt safe.

Johnny’s motivation to succeed in school and change his life drove him and was a major motivation, to say the least.

However, Johnny, like many Latina/o college students, struggled with the feeling of belonging on campus; he knew it was up to him to find his way:

So, when...I mean, I’m coming from South Central, you know, I’m coming in from [city name], and I'm having drive-byes every other week, I'm...friends are dying, people are getting stabbed in high school. There’re sex workers down the street from my high school and my...my home. I happened to hang out with people that were slightly older than me, and they graduated before me, and I got to see how their life turned out a year after they graduated. Just as I was graduating and got to see that a lot of them were in jail. A lot of them were selling drugs; they had multiple kids with multiple… different partners; that
they were stuck in a dead-end job, and it was a state of depression that I tried to avoid at all costs. So even though I felt that I didn't belong. The college…I felt like… this was my best shot to not die, not go to jail, to have some type of future…something.

Johnny shared his urgency to navigate college and succeed to avoid having to go back to a life he knew he did not want. Even though he was made to feel like he did not belong at the university, he used the negative experiences as motivation and persevered not to give up and stay in college.

Despite Johnny’s classroom experiences and challenges navigating the university power structures, Johnny managed to find support in cultural organizations and institutional agents outside of the classroom. Opposed to his college’s faculty, he turned to people he trusted at his campus workplace, where he was learning and applying practical work skills for his future and receiving mentorship guidance about school and life.

Dora was a first-generation graduate student in Education. During our interview, Dora shared that she felt unprepared for college even though she had earned good grades in high school. After deep reflection and a critical review, because she was working in education, she realized that her K-12 schooling failed to prepare her and continues to fail her community. Dora encountered experiences in graduate school, which created growth opportunities for her but also not in the most pleasant way:
When I started [college]… being a Latina from the [The Valley]. I did feel like people looked down on me. Professors, my peers, other students… I didn’t feel heard or respected in classes.

Dora shared that she did not feel heard or respected, which made her feel looked down upon. These feelings often lead students like Dora to feel isolated and invalidated. She continued to share:

There was even an experience with a professor who, because of my demeanor… because I was quiet in class, questioned my ability to write, and that was very unfortunate. She didn’t have any proof of me not being capable or copying, but she did… kind of… accused me of plagiarism when she had no proof, and we even submitted our documents through an online program to check [for plagiarism].

Dora was hesitant to explain the situation; she demonstrated emotional pain when recalling her experiences. She described an experience where she was accused of plagiarism, even though there were mechanisms to prevent such activity. Dora attributed this accusation to racism and prejudice from her faculty member, a feeling she had experienced in college before. Dora shared how Latina/o students received different treatment in the classroom because English was not her first language. Dora was one of the few who described a negative experience at the service site. Dora explained that she had a difficult time finding opportunities to fulfill her service hours. Dora already knew the site director because she was working at the site at the time of the course. The site director assumed that Dora did not need to complete the hours because of her experience already working in the field:
I wish that they understood that we really want to learn that it's not just about them signing us off saying, oh, you completed the hours, but that we actually want that experience, and me personally, I want the experience.

Dora expressed that she still wanted a meaningful experience and not just a signature for the course. This, coupled with a lack of in-person opportunities because of the Coronavirus, made it difficult for Dora to complete a meaningful service-learning component.

In this section, I shared a small number of example of experiences that participants chose to share and the ways in which those experiences influenced them, particularly the invalidating practices and those practices that were race related. Overwhelmingly, negative experiences as described by the participants in the service-learning courses were attributed mainly to the faculty member, sometimes the advisor, both acting as agents of the institution. There were close to no experiences described as negative at the service site or by the service-site supervisor. It is important to pay attention to this dynamic as we look at how practices are being implemented and maybe, more importantly, by whom. In the next section, I discuss the positive implementation of service-learning HIPs and highlight elements of those practices that enhanced the implementation of practices that served Latina/o students both academically and by facilitating positive non-academic outcomes.

The Successful Implementation of Service-Learning HIPs

Service-learning courses are more beneficial to students when they have a real connection to their learning, building a bridge between theory and practice.
Brownell and Swaner (2010) pointed out that building this connection is essential to successful HIPs. The following section moves on from the deficit practices to discuss the practices and outcomes associated with a successful implementation of a service-learning course as observed in this study delivered at a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). The course practice themes that emerged included, but were not limited to: a) practical experiences that connected students to future careers, or as they labeled them “real-world” experiences; b) the course provided the opportunity for students to connect to the community in a positive or constructive way; c) the creation of a connection to their learning based on the experiences inside and outside of the classroom; d) developing positive relationships with institutional agents, including establishing good communication with their professor; e) pushing of a student’s comfort zone in a way that was constructive and developmental, building resilience and agency; and finally, f) visualization, the student participants seeing themselves as knowledge creators and visualizing themselves as the professionals they would be one day.

Outcomes from the students’ perspective of positive implementation of service-learning courses were often seen as beneficial. The themes that emerged on positive outcomes were: a) a real connection between the service-learning experiences and learning in the classroom; b) development of new perspectives by the students as a direct result of experiences in the service-learning course; c) personal growth attained through the reflection of the experiences and their application to the students’ lives; d) practical skills available for use in their
academic and professional careers; and, e) students not only feeling validation and belonging but feeling prepared for their future professional careers.

**Practical Career Skills Through Real-World Experiences**

Many of the students interviewed for this study shared the valuable practice of having practical, real-world experiences as a part of their service-learning course. These real-world experiences helped them develop skills that they saw as beneficial to their current and future academic and professional careers. These practical benefits included: a) professional networking and making real-world connections; b) connection to learning by bridging the learned theory into practice; c) the development of time-management skills; d) learning to work with teams efficiently, and e) having the confidence to reach out as a para-professional.

Maria, a first-generation, self-identified Mexican-American college student, who took two service-learning courses during her college career, discussed the value of real-world experience. One course she took required that she go out to the local community, K-12 school district, interact with teachers, and observe students in the field. Being that Maria was not local to the region and did not have local school ties, she found this aspect of the course extra challenging:

So, the one that really stuck out to me the most was the courses where I did my observation hours. That one, I found a lot of value because I had to go out and kind of establish…really relationships… in the community. So, they didn't give me like a list...my professor didn't give me like a list of schools or anything like that to go to and because I'm not a local area student. I didn't grow up in this area; I felt a little bit out of my comfort zone. Having to go, you know, to
certain schools and see how I could volunteer or if there was a teacher that was assigned, and I had to go through like a background check with the [local school district] ...

Maria was not happy that she had to engage the local educational community on her own. Maria started at the university as a freshman, and because she was not from the area originally, she did not have ties to the local community. This practice also pushed Maria out of her comfort zone to complete the service required for her course.

A number of the participants also discussed the pushing of their comfort zone to complete a course requirement. For example Maria recalled:

There were so many moving parts there. But I…you know, at first, it was kind of a frustration, but looking back at it now. I really appreciated it more because it allowed me to...When it came time to look for jobs after I graduated, I felt a little bit more comfortable because I kind of understood what I needed to do. You know, to get myself out there, especially not being from the local area and kind of where, to begin with, that it also kind of helped me identify...You know if what I was studying was really a career path that I wanted to do, because I was working with students.

In the end, Maria appreciated the effort that she had to put into the practice required by the course, although it may not have felt positive during the class; but reflection after the experience changed her perspective. The requirement to go out into a new community forced Maria to push her comfort zone to make professional connections in a community that she was not familiar with to complete the course.
Maria gained professional networking experience and made real-world connections; a skill Maria attributed to the course's practices. Maria later built on these experiences to guide her as she transitioned into her current professional career, where she found the networking practices applicable and valuable.

Jacob, a recent college grad with his bachelor's degree in business, had the opportunity to partake in multiple service-learning courses starting as a freshman. Taking these courses as a first-year student is rare; these courses are typically reserved for more senior students:

We produced a short segment...then be edited into a live TV segment that we record together and do a live show at the end [of the course] ...we do the editing, so aside from producing our own stories we also learn what it takes to be within a TV studio in terms of like audio production, editing, live acting in front of the camera, camera movement and such.

Jacob described the practical career skills he acquired as a result of the course. These experiences would be valuable upon graduation in a video production career where it would be necessary to utilize these skills. Students are not always afforded the opportunity to learn hands-on skills that will help them directly after college. Students must often learn these skills at their first job; meanwhile, they are challenged to acquire that first job because they lack those skills. Jacob recalled:

So, it was very like… hands-on and inside TV production, as well as working outside of the classroom and going out with equipment to local businesses or events that are happening that you feel like that. They're giving back to the community in some way. So, my experience with that was really like a great
experience because I have... I got to experience it when I was a freshman, so coming in fresh into the university experience, I had this great opportunity of actually going out and working with the community...finding stories out there to report on. So, what was really cool about it is that you get to connect with the city you're from... I'm from [local city], you know, I grew up here. So there's places where I can go where I've always seen, but I've never, you know, interacted with and...a service-learning course like this like a [program name] matters a lot to me the opportunity to really delve deeper into the place where I've grown up at, you know, so that was really like, been a huge part of like my experience in service-learning courses where I was able to produce and film shoot and act in front of the camera and for this program and to shoot for local stories in general.

Jacob related to the course differently because he could bridge his coursework with his community, the community where he grew up. This course practice is an example of offering students an opportunity to connect to their community, which is a method to serve historically underserved students. A course with this type of option uses equity-minded practices for the students to complete their projects successfully. In addition to the essential skills for a career in video production and editing, Jacob reflected on the other practical skills he acquired in the service-learning courses and what he took with him after the course:

So this taught you...like this taught me such...so much essential skills in terms of time management, you know, prioritizing, working together with the team efficiently and even having the confidence to actually call a business or a
place ahead of time and ask them for this local story for a class that's live,...It's just a small local channel that honestly, like rarely people watch, but something that brings you a lot of skills, you know, something like you have the confidence and courage to ask them...a business owner to give their time to do this for you.

Jacob was able to identify “essential skills,” as he called them. These skills included: time management, prioritizing, working with teams, and self-confidence. Likewise, the course allowed him to see himself as a professional, engaging with business owners from the community as a production team lead.

He went on to share that he used these essential skills later in his academic career.

It really touches those essential skills. So, leaving that program, you know, going after... after the program. You know, it can... it gives you that newfound confidence that you take to whatever course you have in the future because for me. I started as a freshman, taking it [the service-learning course] as a freshman, so having that strength and those newfound skills. I can take it to any...took it to any GE course I took afterwards.

Jacob was a first-generation college student from a Mexican family; he described how proud he made his parents being on television and helping to produce shows. Jacob shared that he did not realize the value of the experiences until long after the courses were complete but that he would be forever grateful for the skills that he gained. It is important to note that Jacob described the skills he acquired as a strength to navigate college.
Lucy, a self-identified Latina, and alum of the business school, who participated in three different high-impact practices, reflected on the practice of group work that she participated in during her service-learning coursework at the university.

It's the group aspect that was challenging because we don't all think the same, and I think that now that I'm in the real world, you realize...you know, that's...that is like a life lesson; the biggest life lesson; because you will always work with other people and having to collaborate with other people...was...was the...I think the biggest lesson of all.

Lucy pointed out that the outcome of team/group activities in her service-learning courses and other courses was so valuable to her. She reflected on how learning to work and collaborate with others was "the biggest lesson of all." This lesson has impacted her professional career now that she is in “the real world.”

Stephanie, the self-identified Chicana, and Psychology major, shared the value of learning hands-on in her community:

Personally, grasping going from just the structure of learning from a textbook to learning hands-on within my community. I think I struggled because I... for a long time... since I mean since I've been in school, since like preschool. We've always been... learned to... kind of like only... your learning has to do in a classroom setting with a teacher right in front of you, letting you know, and they are the ones that hold the knowledge.

This is an important realization by Stephanie. She learned through her service-learning experience that not only was she acquiring valuable hands-on
experiences, but Stephanie also learned that she too was a creator of knowledge.

Real-world experiences or practical career experiences were a significant part of meaningful practices in the service-learning courses that the participants described. The non-typical college class practice that encouraged students to challenge their comfort zone and leave the classroom or reach back into their community for a project, along with typical practices such as group work, all of which played a role in students’ professional outcomes by participating in service-learning courses. These outcomes included affirmation in their academic or career choices and the acquisition of valuable practical skills that could be applied to either their future academic or professional careers.

**Connection to Learning by Bridging Theory Into Practice**

As described by the participants, one key outcome was a newfound connection to learning due to their participation in the service-learning course. This connection was attributed to the bridging of classroom theory and implementing knowledge in the field. Often the students had described themselves as being disconnected from their education or just going through the motions to acquire a degree, not knowing the value of experiential learning combined with theoretical knowledge.

Aaron, the business school graduate as mentioned previously, described how his service-learning course experiences helped him connect to his learning by bridging theory into practice:

I think before my participation in service-learning courses. It was very... a disconnect with the reality of what the world is, you know, you have this
theory, you have this somewhat practical idea of what the real world is expecting of you and what the real world is supposed to be, but you don’t really get to experience it until you get your feet wet and definitely practicing and doing the service-learning courses and projects.

Aaron described the fact that his service-learning course experience helped to make practical sense of his classroom learning. Aaron went on to elaborate on how the experiences in the courses helped him understand the areas he needed to develop before he entered the professional workforce:

I think it really did help me prepare… really helped me solidify what aspects of me I needed to work on in order to get the job that I wanted and now that I have the job that I want…I'm…you know, striving to continue to be better and help those around me.

Aaron was able to affirm that he wanted a career in his field of study, and the course provided him a glimpse, a visualization, of what was required to be successful in that field. Visualization is important for many first-generation college students because they typically do not have a person in their family who holds a position in the career they are seeking. Aaron entered LSU as a first-time freshman and was a first-generation college student; he also described the importance of mentorship from those who supported him and how it created a sense of responsibility to do the same for others.

Jacob, the video production major, discussed the importance of choice and agency in service-learning projects. His experiences connected his interests and course projects for deep-learning experiences that went beyond the classroom;
Jacob recalled:

To find a story that you would want to do it makes the experience so much more beneficial... much more fruitful. Because now, not only did you enjoy the whole experience. But then you, you tend to retain much more of the information and skill that you learned during that time. You know, if you did a story that you weren't interested in, you're just doing it because you have to do it, you know, can't retain a lot what you've done, and that goes with anything really... in life, in general.

Jacob's experience of selecting the site of the application of the real-world skills was so valuable because he found the experience enjoyable. He was able to retain the knowledge acquired through the experience. This practice of bridging theory into knowledge and practicing agency led to a more fruitful experience for Daniel. Daniel shared that applying this practice is something that he continued to do after the course, searching for meaning to ensure he was applying what he was learning. As suggested here, the connection to learning provided more than just practical skills; they also helped Daniel and other students persist in their education.

Adan, a recent graduate from public administration, described his commitment to education, the desire to persist, and the transition in the connection to his academics after having participated in service-learning courses.

Yeah, I think, I think when I started participating in my first service-learning courses, that's when the momentum and drive... for my education picked up.... My first two years at the university, my grades were pretty average, they weren't the best, but it wasn't until... till I was able to start learning these things
and not only learning things but be able to apply these things in the real-world and kind of put one and one together. Where I really started to...to really immerse myself into my classrooms, into my textbooks.

Adan continues to elaborate on how theory and practical learning came together for him and changed his attitude towards engaging in his academic life:

Sometimes when I'm reading... doing my class readings...and I see a theory and I think about the work that I've done through service-learning, learning projects, or at my current job..., and I connect the theory with the kind of practice that I was doing and, you know, kind of a light bulb flicks on. Yes, like, well, wait, there's a name for that. I've been doing this the whole time. It's actually a real thing, right? So, it was when I started to connect those two things together, that's when my education and my...my academic life, you know, started to flourish and I started to find joy in reading the books and, you know, having a conversation in class. So, you can say, yeah, that my academic kind of... went... my interest from academics kept on growing with the more service-learning in the community that I did.

Adan described that his personal view of himself as an academic, a knowledge creator changed due to his experiences in service-learning courses. He went from achieving just average grades to the enjoyment of learning and engaging in educational activities inside and outside the classroom.

The value of finding a connection to learning by bridging theory into practice has been demonstrated to be a powerful tool to engage students that have disengaged from their academics. The research tells us that those students who
are disengaged will not likely persist in college. The benefits of finding a connection to learning extend beyond the implementation of the course to the rest of their academic careers, as Adan demonstrated.

**Personal Growth by Pushing the Comfort Zone**

As described here, service-learning courses provided participants more than just a connection to learning; they also provided opportunities for personal growth. Michelle, a self-identified Mexican-American alumni from the College of Social Sciences, who started the university as a first-time freshman, described personal growth as an outcome of pushing her comfort zone because of a service-learning course requirement. Michelle, when asked about which experiences helped shape her, shared advice for Latina/o students who come after her at her school on what they should do to succeed:

I would say to take charge of your own learning and put yourself in areas where you can grow and put yourself, I guess...like... yeah, like be uncomfortable; and that's where you'll grow. Because I was uncomfortable for a lot of those things...but that's where...that was the most challenging and best times from my college career.

Challenging herself to move beyond her comfort zone allowed Michelle to grow; she identified these pain points as the most challenging and best times in her college career. Although students may feel uncomfortable at the time of the class, many participants explained it was worth it later.

Echoing similar sentiments, another participant, Alejandra, a Mexican-American graduate of the communications program, reflected on her change in
perspective and personal growth as a result of her service-learning course experiences:

So before participating in this course. My connection to education was solely based on being, you know, textbooks being in the classroom and, you know, doing assignments and just being there. It didn't involve anything outside in the outside world related to the outside world. You know, I have this idea that, you know, you go to school and that's all you do. And then you graduate, and then you get experience that way.

Alejandra, unfortunately, had the idea that students were not supposed to gain work experience until after they completed their course work. The service-learning course experience triggered a connection for Alejandra, one where she did not have to wait to graduate to create professional experiences. She identified this as an area of personal growth as a result of taking a service-learning course.

Jacob, the video-editing student, also described the relationship between challenge and growth in respect to learning how to work with different people and personalities in his service-learning course, one of his newfound skills as a result of the courses:

You learn the best when you're most uncomfortable; that's where you grow the most, and so I definitely grew a lot. It was a challenge but definitely worthwhile, and in the end, I learned a lot from it. Yeah.

Jacob identified by getting comfortable with the uncomfortable is where he was able to develop the most, and likewise found these experiences to be the most valuable in finishing his academic career.
As evidenced in the cases of Michelle, Jacob, Alejandra, and Maria previously, the practical experiences gained in service-learning courses can challenge you to move out of your comfort zone. The participants often shared that when their comfort zone was tested and pushed, they reaped the greatest benefit by doing the very thing they did not want to do. These course practices demonstrated that the students who pushed their comfort zone due to the course appreciated it. They learned to challenge their perceived limits and move beyond their comfort zone, something many would have to do again as they moved into professional careers.

**Visualization as a Professional, Through Service-Learning**

Service-learning course participants highlighted the value in visualization, which they cited widely and described as being invaluable. When faculty are building their courses and include opportunities for students to see themselves in a professional role, students reap the most benefit in this visualization exercise. Many Latina/o students are first-generation college students and may be the first to obtain professional jobs outside of the service industry or jobs considered working-class. Sometimes the experiences that generate visualization in the students were the first professional experience that students could apply in their college careers.

Maria, the education professional, having participated in a course that required her to shadow and do observation hours, confirmed for her the idea that she wanted to work with kids. As captured by Maria:

> You know, to get myself out there, especially not being from the local area and kind of where, to begin with, that, it also kind of helped me identify...you know if what I was studying was really a career path that I wanted to do, because I
was working with students and that like I had mentioned that had two different schools, though I had kind of a, an elementary school perspective and then, you know, a middle school perspective. So, it allowed me to kind of really identify if the career that I was studying with something that I wanted to do. Through the experience, Maria confirmed her field of study and future career choice as the right choices for her. Likewise, another benefit Maria identified was other potential careers in education, not directly in the classroom.

Johnny, the first-gen, self-identified, Mexican-American IT expert, discussed the combination of working on campus and taking a service-learning course for credit that combined work in his chosen field with his field of study. The course requirement for him to find an experiential learning experience for course credits allowed for him to see the opportunity to have a career in his desired area of study:

At that time, I was a student assistant for the information technology [team], or that's what the name was back then...It was overall...just my experiences as far as a student assistant with that department. What I learned, what I...you know what I took from it, what I saw... that I could pursue as a career if I liked it. I liked it in that field, and it was something that I could do with my degree afterward. So, I thought that it was a good opportunity to fulfill...to knock out two birds with one stone as far as, you know, doing it [the service experience] and taking care of course as well. Earlier, Johnny explained the lack of connection with the faculty in his major and how he was feeling a bit lost at the university. The experience for credit helped him
academically and as captured by his experience, allowed him to see himself in a technical job.

Jesus, a graduate of the kinesiology program and a first-generation college student, described how his course experiences allowed him to see the total experience of being a physical education teacher in a K-12 setting. In describing the value of service-learning courses, Jesus noted:

it was cool because you know you're in college. The whole time you're learning how to try and be a physical educator and then when you get there, you're like, wow, this is how it's applied, or this is really how you know it takes you a step away from your, your college class and it shows you the real struggles of being out there in the field. You know, sometimes you have students who don't listen, sometimes you'll have…you know, one not want to participate that day and…that's some of the stuff that isn't talked about in the course because…because, you know, we're just simply…just talking about how to teach someone the activity or we're not really focused on that type of area…and so when you get there you're like okay, cool, like this is really what it's like, you know, and it opens up your eyes and for a lot of people that did the program…it's like, Okay, maybe I don't want to do this. Maybe I do. So thankfully, the good outweighs the bad and…, and I stuck with it.

Jesus was exposed to the reality of working with kids in the local community where he also grew up. The opportunity to experience his future job and see the impact of the reality of the real world, opened up Jesus’ eyes to what he would be doing daily. An important highlight here is that Jesus learns firsthand that the agent
implementing the practice impacts the outcome. Jesus pointed out that his coursework merely pointed out how to teach an activity, not all aspects that were involved with teaching the course.

Alejandra, the communications graduate student, shared that she developed a better connection with her education:

During this course, I would…my eyes opened up to understanding that a combination is good of both schoolwork, and getting a little bit of experience and, you know, by getting your foot in the water to see if you really like doing those kinds of things. Because you know school is one thing but being in a job and having the day-to-day tasks is a different thing and then after the course. I really, really appreciated that I went through that experience because it really allowed me to picture myself in that role and to at least confirm a little bit, you know, okay, I really want to go down this path or not, you know. These are aspects that I didn't know existed as part of this career.

Alejandra discussed a better connection with her education after participating in the service-learning class because it helped her confirm her academic and career paths. The experience of doing work outside of the classroom pushed her comfort zone. Still, it was an experience she appreciated because it pushed her to work harder to accomplish the goal of working in her desired career.

Angel was an adult student learner that came back to college after stopping out when she was younger. For her service-learning experience, she did observation hours for education leadership at her K-12 schoolwork site. Although Angel was familiar with the staff at her school site, her purpose for being there was
a completely different one than for her service-learning course. Angel described how she would often get questioned by people from work who knew her as to why she was doing what she was doing. Angel’s service-learning course created an opportunity for her to serve her school in a different capacity, to work with students, where her passion was:

It was that I felt...like...I felt proud to be able to say because it wasn't that I was getting paid to do this, it was...I was a representative of this institution that was outside of the school that I worked for. So, when somebody would ask, “Well, what do you do? Why are you staying after school? Why are you helping those students?” And I would say, “Oh, I'm doing my practicum hours for [the university].”

Angel described how the service-learning course's rationale to serve at the school in a different capacity changed her self-perception, one as an agent of the university. This agent status allowed her to see herself as a professional; she took pride in this. When others questioned her rationale for being at the service site:

Then I would explain it to them...I felt a sense of pride because I was doing something that I didn't, I guess, in a sense that I really didn't have to do with my job, but I was a representative for my university as well. I think it also made me feel accomplished because I am a non-traditional student. I felt that in my regular, normal life, I felt like I was that student that...that I am... when I come... when I stepped foot on the campus. So, it made me proud.

For Angel, a transformation took place; even though it was the same environment as work, she was proud to be doing the work she was doing, serving children.
Angel’s visualization as a professional serving these kids was valuable to her, as it was many of our other participants.

Aaron, who also previously shared that he was often the only Latina/o student in his business courses, described that a different service-learning course connected him to a campus job. Part of his duties in that experience challenged him to step out of his comfort zone and reach out to and work with the local community. Those experiences then prepared him when an opportunity he had always wanted presented itself:

I think that also obviously goes back to the previous class at the Career Center that gave me the courage to go out and do that within my community, within the whole SoCal region with a company that…that I've always wanted to work with, which was with Univision, which eventually after two years of volunteering got me a job there.

Aaron discussed that the support and encouragement he received, and the skills acquired in the service class on campus led him to work for his dream company in the entertainment industry, where he is working today doing what he had always dreamed of doing.

Isaiah, one of the few second-generation college students interviewed in the study, was a business college graduate. His experiences in a public relations service-learning course relied heavily on the experience of the faculty member to guide interactions inside and outside the classroom, giving him a taste of what a job in that field might look like:
I was kind of working on the logistics side of the [project] event. So, I got to kind of work with the venue, got to communicate what we needed for the actual event. What was the setup going to be like? So, it really gave me kind of a perspective of what it would be like to actually be working for a PR firm and hosting events for that PR firm.

Isaiah’s professor combined in-class and out-of-class experiences with real-world professionals to work on a real, professional event as a communications team. In describing the role of the professor, Isaiah noted:

So, my professor at the time…she really focused on letting us get that real-world experience in the classroom. So, we worked with the client directly she actually had someone from a PR firm that came in as…like the advisor for the class, she helped give a little bit of perspective on what she would do for these types of events. Then our professor would give us the academic side of it and the… the theory behind what we’re actually doing. It was a really cool then because we actually booked a space at LA Live in Los Angeles, it was a cool experience to really go out and set-up the event…go behind the scenes where you wouldn't really see it… if you went to just went to go see a performance or something.

Isaiah’s participation in the coordination side of the event planning led him to his first job out of college planning events and doing the same work at the university, where he gained experience in his service-learning course. This course outcome could be attributed to the experiences of the service-learning course. Isaiah was able to see himself doing the very thing he was studying to do; this affirmed his
direction and gave him the confidence to seek a job on campus doing the same thing.

Many participants conveyed similar sentiments as Isaiah; however, Linda, a graduate from the College of Humanities had a different outcome. Linda was a first-generation college graduate who took a similar course in public relations; the course caused her to push her comfort zone and exposed her to what it would be like to work in that type of career.

Overall, I think it exposed me to… I guess what the major… the kind of Career… the major could provide me with. I was PR [public relations major].

So, I was getting in touch with different media outlets and planning events and working within a group to get stuff done. Um, so I felt like I learned a lot, but it didn't really reinforce… like my career choice. I didn't really feel confident once I took that class that… that was really what I wanted to do.

Even though Linda did not reinforce her potential career choice, it also alerted her early that she might look into something different before she graduated and learned what type of work that career might have. Seeing herself participating in those roles allowed her to visualize herself doing that work or not doing that work in the future. The difficult part for Linda was that she had already switched majors, and she did not feel like she could afford to do so again.

In addition to the value of seeing themselves as professionals and affirming their academic career choice, many participants described the sense of community they got from others at the university, be it their peers or other institutional agents like faculty or staff. Those interactions with respect to building community will be
discussed in another section dedicated to relationships. A sample of participants experienced positive classroom or site experiences and or positive interactions with the faculty member as well. These positive experiences combined demonstrate the practice of implementing Servingness to Latina/o students. The next section speaks to those findings.

How and in What Ways Have Latina/o Students Who Have Participated in Service-Learning Courses Developed a Sense of Belonging in College?

When high-impact practices, specifically service-learning courses, were implemented from an asset-based perspective and in meaningful ways, students received benefits from participation in these courses inside and outside the classroom. As suggested above, service-learning courses have the opportunity to provide more than just service experiences; they provided practical skill development; they also produced benefits that went beyond short-term academic outcomes to enhance longer-term student success. These courses also created opportunities for students to create deeper connections to learning by integrating self-reflection and experience with theory and knowledge. According to the participant data, service-learning courses provided personal growth opportunities by pushing the students’ comfort zone. Finally, participants shared that the course created experiences that allowed them to see themselves as professionals, validating that they made the correct academic or career choices.

Hispanic Servingness in the Service-Learning Course

As mentioned previously, only three of the 26 study participants indicated that they did see themselves reflected racially/culturally in their service-learning
courses. Although it was a small number, it is critical to examine the experiences of these three participants. The first, Lucia, shared the experience of creating her own class by combining a healthcare practicum with her second major, Spanish. According to the other two participants that indicated seeing their culture reflected in the course, Freddy and Carlos, one faculty member in the College of the Humanities, went above and beyond delivering a successful and meaningful course and added elements that indicated equity-mindedness and Hispanic Servingness (Garcia & Koran, 2020). Next, I describe the elements present in those courses and practices delivered by the faculty members through the student participants' experiences.

Lucia, a senior in the Sciences, as mentioned before, was the student who completed her service-learning course in her own way; she was able to combine her academic language requirement with her second major of healthcare to create a unique service-learning practicum, which in turn helped to strengthen her career pathway:

So, before I had come into the learning course with an idea that I wanted to help support the Hispanic community. So, I was already, you know, kind of in that direction. During [the project] I just felt an overwhelming compassion for these people [the Latina/o community], you know, being a Latina myself. I know what the struggles are, and I've taken my parents to, you know, doctors’ appointments. I've translated for them. I've…you know, been a part of this, but to see this from an outsider’s perspective and to just feel that connection and
know that a stranger is feeling gratitude that you are there doing what you’re doing. That was amazing.

Lucia connected to her ethnic, cultural community through language and the geographic location of her service site within a community that was also Latino. Lucia had a connection to the community because she felt a responsibility to serve her community. Having served as an agent for her parents previously in the medical field, she was compelled to create an experience where she could assist those who may also struggle as her family did:

So after, after I saw that and I was able to reflect on, you know, using my Spanish in a healthcare setting and how much of it made a difference to the clients and just the population, the community in general, it really cemented what I want to do in my future career, which is you know, increase cultural competency and diversity and health literacy within the field of genetic counseling.

Lucia connected with her patients differently than other students and medical professionals at her service site. Lucia was able to use her dual-language ability as a strength to connect with the patients at a level that brought them comfort in an uncomfortable space. Likewise, because of her ability to communicate and relate, medical professionals sought Lucia’s help over others because of her ability to communicate with the community her site served, a community Lucia herself knew personally. Lucia’s ability to utilize the strength of language and communication and how it could help her community in her service-learning practicum provided a sense of validation to Lucia. The experiences “cemented the idea” that Lucia could be a
medical professional by allowing her to visualize and successfully navigate experiences in that career. After the course, Lucia knew she could be a champion for cultural competency in the healthcare field and continue to serve her community.

Freddy, the communications graduate student who had been recently accepted into a doctoral program for admission in the fall after graduating from LSU, described his service-learning journalism course as one that was centered on the community and challenged students to consider their educational experiences while engaging in the course and with the community:

The purpose behind that course was to prep students to kind of...how do I say it... to just kind of like unlearn the traditional ways of learning in higher education institutions...and then at the same time to learn new ways...

Freddy identified an example of an equity-minded practice, one where the faculty member employed decolonization methods by deconstructing "traditional ways of learning" while constructing new ways, where the students participated in the construction as knowledge creators.

...to do work helping each other and at the same time contributing back to the community, right. So that class was like... the focus was the community, so we were just kind of like... we were learning, learning to give back in multiple ways.

The course experience satisfied the typical requirement to work in the community, but as Freddy identified, they were learning and serving the community, learning to give back in multiple ways. Freddy expressed how valuable it was to be able to service his community with a skillset he brought with him; working together with
others in the service-learning course amplified the experience for him. Freddy shared that he was just going through the motions to complete his college before this class, unsure of his future career path. The experiences in this class were transformational for him. Being seen as a valuable part of society, which also helped his community, created a strong sense of validation and self-fulfillment in Freddy, a fulfillment that changed his life. After the service-learning course and creating a close mentorship relationship with this Latina faculty member, Freddy shared that he decided to pursue a doctorate in the same field.

The vision of the professor to craft the course, using decolonizing methods and creating the connection of the course with the local Latina/o community in mind, was a perfect example of going above and beyond a successful implementation of a service-learning course to one that had meaning and value that extended beyond the course. This practice is the precise definition of Servingness that Garcia (2020) described as one that goes above and beyond enrolling students to one that serves them and provides outcomes that surpass educational attainment. This experimental journalism class was unlike any course Freddy had ever taken. The experience challenged Freddy’s thinking, and his perception of the way college was supposed to be.

Freddy elaborated on the importance of the instructor to the course:

She [the faculty member] came up with everything from…from scratch and the purpose behind that course was to prep students to kind of…how do I say it…to just kind of like unlearn the traditional ways of learning in higher education institutions, basically and then at the same time to learn new ways
to do work, helping each other and at the same time, contributing back to the community, right, because of that, so that class was like the focus was to the community, so we were just kind of like...we were learning...learning to give back in multiple ways.

Connecting to the community was an important component for students in a service-learning class. He emphasized that creating multiple bridges from theory to practical application was important. Freddy described many of the traditional service-learning course elements that create a successful experience. Add to that a Latina faculty member that served as a role model, a guide, a sounding board; one who taught them to analyze their previous educational experiences critically and have agency in their own knowledge creation, one who empowered students to serve a community that looked like them, in a way determined by them, was invaluable.

Echoing similar sentiments, another participant, Carlos, transferred from a local community college to LSU. He had previously participated in programs that guided him from high school to community college. Carlos shared his experience of feeling lost once he transferred to the four-year university.

I'll be honest, when I transferred to the four-year [the university], I kind of lost my direction...of where I was going. I was still not entirely sure of what I wanted to do a lot of the time; you know, I would reach out for help in my department because I had no idea about like advising or anything like that until like... later...when I first got into the communications department. A lot
of professors were like open to helping, I would go to like…check the list of advisors and a lot of times my advisors were not accessible to the students. Carlos, having benefited previously from guidance from faculty and college programs, looked to do the same at the new university. However, campus resources like faculty and advisor support were not the same as the community college from which he transferred.

Carlos described how that meeting his future mentor, the Latina faculty member that was Freddy’s mentor, also changed his trajectory. Carlos shared many of the same experiences as Freddy; he elaborated on the role the same faculty member played in his life:

I feel like she gave me more of a sense of direction…where I needed to go and she ultimately…she was so…became a mentor, and she helped me maneuver all these other rules that academia has, right…she guided me towards getting into grad school like I had no idea I wanted to go to grad school. I just wanted to finish, you know, that was, that was my end goal, but she helped me like…she showed me the ropes, right. How to like maneuver academia, about conferences. She ultimately gave my first opportunities and almost everything in academia, my first teaching gig, you know, my like everything…she has she helped me, you know, she was my guide for everything.

Carlos struggled to encapsulate all that this faculty member had done to support him. Carlos described the faculty mentor relationship he developed with the Latina professor who guided him through everything when it came to academia. The
faculty member served as a role model and a guide to navigating the university.

I asked Carlos to elaborate on the ways in which the service-learning course he took with this faculty member influenced him. He stated:

In the course, we learned a lot of Gloria Anzaldúa, Franz Fanon and like we learned a lot about like how Latinos and People of Color, in general, have been like marginalized in the United States. The theory behind the course was to highlight...it was like to highlight those underrepresented communities right...to give them a voice, right... so in that class, we learned a lot about like Latinidad and like nation-building, and it's just all these like decolonial theories...definitely [the faculty member] always emphasized to always be proud of where we come from, and...

Carlos had never had a course where he related so much to the course content, and the practices of the Latina faculty member recognized him, and students like himself as knowledge creators.

The asset-based practice of recognizing the value in the community reinforced Carlos' sense of belonging at the university:

... in fact, I tell this to a lot of folks, like having a Latina as your professor... like that. Seeing someone who looks like you, teaching you. Like... it's really impactful because they can relate to your experiences, right, they can relate to being first-generation [college student] like or maybe queer right like it has a huge impact, and I feel like being a Latina professor, she got to choose the material... to like... we weren't reading a bunch of...for lack of a better term, old dead white people, you know. Like we were reading authors who also
look like us or who had the same experiences. So, it's like Gloria Anzaldúa, who's a queer Woman of Color.

Carlos connected in more than one way to the Latina faculty member. They were connected not only through the course experiences but through the content and course readings. This service-learning course enabled Carlos to explore intersectionality and apply the course material to his own life. Likewise, Carlos was able to visualize himself as a professional and relate to the Latina faculty member through their ethnic culture and experiences. Carlos’ Latina faculty mentor supported him both in his undergraduate career after transferring to the university when he felt lost and in the classroom through the service-learning course. Later, she supported him on the right path to finish college successfully by providing professional guidance. The faculty member continued mentoring him and guiding his educational journey into his early professional career in academia. Carlos shared after the interview how he was preparing to go to another university out of state to begin his Ph.D. program. Carlos also elaborated on how he attributed his success to his Latina faculty mentor, who provided leadership and guidance, and how this one service-learning course was a life-changing event.

Serving within the community is a major part of service-learning courses. This component bridges theory and practice at a site where one can see the real application of what is learned in the classroom. Participants in the study valued the course experience of creating a connection to the community. Moreover, participants highly valued the experience when the service took place in their own personal community, sometimes in the community where they were raised or where
their family lived. The link between learning and their home community was not typical for Latina/o participants. These findings speak to the importance, as captured by the experiences of the participants in service-learning classes based out of their community.

Likewise, the primary connection to learning through the institutional agent in the classroom, the faculty member, was also greatly influential when they were a person with whom the student could identify. All three students who recognized themselves in the service-learning classroom highlighted the personal connection to the Latina/o faculty member. Providing knowledge, guidance, and inspiration were but a few of the participants' faculty values; those values accompanied with positive validating course practices had a tremendous influence on the students and their engagement with the course content and their sense of belonging at the university.

**Meaningful Experiences with Faculty Members**

Outside of their service-learning courses, sometimes, students were fortunate enough to connect with a faculty member who shared their same cultural/ethnic background. Students connected with these faculty because they had the same racial/ethnic origin or shared the same Spanish heritage language. Other times students connected with faculty because they were from another underrepresented racial or ethnic background or had similar experiences.

Lucia expanded on the importance of connecting with such a faculty member and the excellent experience she had in creating her own service-learning course for credit. She combined a healthcare practicum with a language requirement she had for her Spanish major. Lucia was able to select her course advisor. Lucia chose
to work with her favorite professor, who was Latino as well. I asked Lucia to elaborate on what having that faculty member as her practicum course advisor meant to her:

He's my favorite professor in the entire university. He... the way he teaches. He's just so passionate about it really comes through in his teaching style because he doesn't... he doesn't force you to learn little tidbits, he wants you to think critically... and he wants you to be able to apply this knowledge. He usually teaches literature courses, so it's not usually something that directly correlates with your life, but he poses... you know, social issues and, you know, encourages people to talk about it. So, when I asked him to be my advisor for the service-learning course, I knew that he was somebody who could help me, you know, develop my ideas further about what I saw, and you know what I wanted to do about it; and he was just... he was great at helping me understand some of these social issues.

Lucia was comfortable asking a professor she trusted to serve as a faculty advisor to her in a service-learning practicum class that she structured herself. The course satisfied the requirements for both of her majors, Spanish and Biology. Even though this professor did not have a biology background, Lucia felt comfortable with his guidance in constructing her practicum. By engaging with this senior professor, Lucia knew that he could help her develop a better understanding and create a meaningful academic experience. Lucia highlighted elements of the faculty member’s practices that created a trusting relationship with him: passion, critical thinking, critical discourse, self-reflection, and guidance.
Freddy was the Latino graduate in communications, who transferred to the university during his undergraduate program and stayed for his graduate work. Freddy, was one of the three students who described the presence of Hispanic Servingness in the service-learning classroom, discussed the importance of having open communication with the Latina faculty member who taught his course. This practice made it easy for Freddy to reach out to the faculty member with any questions. Freddy recalled:

I typically had pretty strong communication with the professor. Yeah, she made herself pretty… frequently available through different platforms, even like social media, text message, and email and then whatever group, so I was in a group that I was assigned with, um, and typically those would be the people that I predominantly worked with. So, I at least knew that I had, like, my group members to go to, and then maybe if I had even like a question that we couldn't answer, then that's when we would go to the professor.

Freddy described that he primarily used the option to communicate with his peers first since it was group work but would not hesitate to reach out to the faculty member if necessary. He went on to explain how this was an experimental course; Freddy had reservations about what to expect in the course but appreciated the faculty member’s candor:

I kind of expected some challenges because the professor was quite frank and honest with us, right, and she told us from the very beginning. This is an experimental course, right; this is the first time I do this. ‘You guys get to test it out, but at the same time, we’re all learning together.’
Freddy understood that this course was new and he was willing to participate in the course because he trusted the faculty member. Freddy explained that because it was an experimental course, he was uneasy about not having a clear outline of what was to be done for the class. Freddy shared that he trusted the Latina faculty member because she had established a level of trust with him previously by advising him on his academic pathway when he felt lost at the university.

Like other service-learning courses, the experimental journalism course required students to work together and work in the community while using skillsets that the students brought with them. For Freddy, that experience was more meaningful because he was doing something of benefit for his personal community, one serving Latinas/os in the local community:

That class was actually very, very valuable. Um, I think it was so different and unique That it… kind of just, it really stood out and I think it was because of the component of that class that basically made us work together as a whole class, like…so if it was like I don't know 25 of us, we all played different roles. We had to collaborate with each other, and at the same time, we would apply whatever we were learning, or whatever we were working on, we would apply it to the community, right, so we… we actually got to see results from this course, right. It wasn't just like…oh, you learn this and now you leave my class, and you just learned something in this class…and we actually got to physically and mentally apply everything that we were learning.
Although the course had the same elements as other service-learning courses: group work, practical theory application, and real-world experiences, it was the act of combining these elements to perform a service in the community and the leadership of a Latina faculty member who made this course more valuable to Freddy. Freddy stressed that he was applying everything from the class to directly serve the Latina/o community had a major influence on him. Freddy discussed his previous experiences in multiple service-learning courses.

His first experience was good; the class required him to seek an interview with someone who had the career that he wanted. He talked shared that it was a great assignment and pushed him to get out in the community but was nothing compared to the special topic journalism service-learning class, which went above and beyond; there was no comparison for him:

I did take one other communication class. Where one of the assignments, was that we had to go out and like conduct an interview with someone that we wanted to like…work with, like a company or something like that. Or someone that was in the role that we wanted to be in but that really is more I, at least, I see that more as, like, it's an assignment part of the class, it's a really cool assignment, and it does kind of get you out there. But it doesn’t compare it to like a whole class that was literally built from the foundation to…to embrace and acknowledge the community. You don’t even know.

Freddy explained that the second course he took was built from the ground up with equity and servingness in mind; it was an experimental class that was built from
scratch for students like him. Freddy reiterated that the experiences of that course solidified his goals to pursue more education.

Similarly, Angel, the transfer student who was an adult learner and Spanish major, described the experience she had with a Latina faculty member with whom she felt connected:

I think I felt like I connected with her because she would ask, ‘Oh, how are your daughter's doing?’ and she didn't even know my daughters, and she would ask, 'well, how's your day going?' or like '[name] Como estas? and you know [name] how are you doing?', and just, it was like...it was... it was like...like she truly cared about me...

Through shared language and family values, the professor was able to create genuine connections with her students.

Even though the professor did not know Angel's family, she would inquire as to their well-being, something that connected her to Angel:

...and then she... so I felt that that when I walked into her class, I felt like I was...I wasn't just a student... like, I was a person...Like I was seen as the mom that I am, as the, you know, like and I, and I, and I... felt welcome... so that's... that's how I felt with specifically her. She’s not the only one, but she’s the first one that I would say made me feel like that. It didn't necessarily make me feel my age or make me feel... made me feel maybe slightly younger because somebody was... caring for me.

Angel noted that her role as a mother impacted her perception of the students she worked with, at her job, at her service site, and even her peers in the classroom. As
an adult learner, Angel shared how she had always identified as the motherly figure and carried that value of *familia* in all that she did. The relationship experience with her professor was different. This relationship was important because she felt as if she was cared for instead of always doing the caring. These participants described a connection they had with their faculty members because they shared similar ethnic backgrounds and cultures. Sometimes the students were able to bond with other Faculty of Color too.

In describing the importance of the faculty member’s role, Alexandra discussed that she wanted to drop out of the program after her invalidating experiences in the program’s first quarter. One of her professors convinced her to stay; she explained how critical it was for Alexandra to stay in the program because there was such a shortage of Leaders of Color in education.

We had discussions, but it was after I told her that I didn't want to be in the program. I talked to her, and I told her that this wasn't for me. That I can understand having to wear all the different hats, but I refuse to wear all those different faces, all those different masks, because that's not me. I couldn't be an effective leader if I was expected to pretend like these aren't issues, and I told her what I was about.

Alexandra suggested that leadership, as it was being taught, would force her to wear different faces in addition to different hats, in other words, be someone she was not while serving in a leadership role. Alexandra had a heart-to-heart with this professor, who encouraged her to stay engaged because students like Alexandra is what the community needed. Alexandra’s professor thanked her at the end of the
quarter for sharing her thoughts and feelings, and the faculty member expressed that the conversation lit a new fire in her that she had long forgotten about.

Alexandra ended with, “So she [the faculty member] became part of the system for a minute...and she came back.” Alexandra’s challenging quarter, which almost ended with her leaving the program, concluded differently. Alexandra created a connection with the only Faculty of Color who she knew in the program. Alexandra and the faculty member ended up serving each other in different ways. For the faculty member, Alexandra reminded her of why she wanted to teach in the program. For Alexandra, the faculty member reminded Alexandra of the necessity for leaders like her in both the field and program. This outcome was beneficial as a result of the negative circumstance that triggered the situation.

The role of the faculty member in the classroom is critical to successful outcomes for all students. When it comes to Students of Color create meaningful connections because of other factors like language, heritage, culture, and shared experiences. Faculty as agents of the university have a major influence on how Students of Color experience their courses. When students are not able to create a connection with the classroom agent, they sometimes turn to their peers for support and guidance. Next, I share the experiences of participants working with peers inside and outside the classroom.

Examples of Hispanic Servingness From Other Agents

Peers also played an influential role in the college trajectories of the participants. Peers in the classroom often shared similar challenges in the course, class experiences, and interactions with faculty. Some students went through programs
together in a cohort; this model brought students closer together as they navigated the program. Participants also described peer relationships outside of the classroom, which was also instrumental in their engagement and student success at the university.

Peer Support in Classes

Jesus described his experience with taking classes with a close friend. This friend was a fellow graduate from his undergraduate program; they enrolled in their graduate program together:

We took a lot of the same classes together. So usually, things that let's just say I might have days where I was off, he would be paying attention and vice versa. So, we kind of bounced off a lot of ideas...but mainly, I would go to my friend because we're elbow partners, and, you know, you kind of stick it out together a little bit more.

Jesus described that he did not exercise the best study habits for academic success when he began college. He recalled spending a lot of time with high-school friends who did not understand college life. He realized quickly that he could not remain in college if he did not make changes to pick up his grades. The practice of finding a like-minded peer was key for him to be successful. Jesus’ close friend became an accountability partner for him; they supported each other in learning the content and getting through the program together.

Bella described the unofficial cohort that she and her peers created for themselves as a result of a meaningful service-learning course. She shared her experiences:
I would say I wasn't all that engaged until that stage of my studies during that stage; it was a beautiful stage... It was a great stage because I got to work with my partners, so we had like... although it wasn't like a cohort that was like a specified cohort. It was more of a cohort we invented ourselves, I guess. There was other groups of students where we would take the same classes, and you kind of grow that bond with them and you interact... you gain a lot more from the program because you can you have people to study with, you have people to understand and can see things in different perspectives and share with you... I think that I've gained so much from that. Bella connected with her peers as a resource to navigate and succeed in college. When a faculty member is not available to students, they often rely on their peers for information and support. In addition, Bella, who had participated in a year of study abroad, shared that although that was an amazing experience, she felt a sense of loss when she returned because she was not taking classes with her peers like before. The absence of her peer group left her feeling lonely and disconnected from the university until she found a mentorship program that would change this for her.

As captured by her experience, Lucy reflected on the valuable peer community created with her classroom peers:

You feel a sense of belonging and within your class and your classmates. So, it's almost like it creates an environment... you want to go in and see your friends, and you know... do your project and be involved, and you talk to your friends, your classmates after... so it created like a... an environment
and it helped me meet more students that were taking other classes with me and then and helped me talk to more of them that I hadn't before. After that you...you leave with more of a connection, and I think your network expands from that..., but overall, you feel a sense of like... belonging more, you know, because you've made those friends.

Lucy discussed how the network she created became a support group in and out of class. Even though her major in the business school did not have a cohort model, Lucy described how they created an unofficial cohort to take classes to continue to support each other. The connection created to the friends in the course helped her engage in the course because she knew they had created a support group. Lucy also had described in her interview that she felt the ability to work with people was one of the most critical takeaways she learned in her business courses, a skill that she utilizes in her professional career now.

Alexandra, who previously described challenging relationships with her faculty in her first quarter of the new program for educational leaders, described the importance of peer support for resistance, Alexandra highlighted:

Find your tribe, find your tribe, become a collective power and continue to find your allies within the department or seek whoever it was that supported you before and along the way, because nobody makes it alone. But you're here for a reason. Somebody brought you here; continue to access those allies because you're gonna need it. It's not going to be easy.

Alexandra described the creation of a tribe with her peers for collective resistance. She recognized that it is difficult to make it without peer support, allies that can be
there for you. Alexandra was an adult learner with professional experience who returned for education credentials. Alexandra’s experience in her undergraduate and master’s programs had made her aware of the importance of peer support for student success.

Although peers often provided support for one another, that was not the case for every participant. Dora discussed some negative experiences that happened during her undergraduate schooling, not at the site of the study, which left her distrusting of both classroom peers and faculty:

It's those negative experiences that really do follow you, and just, so that's I mean, my overall experience has been improving, but it also has to do with my own confidence in myself, not necessarily because of the way people have made me feel professors and peers.

Dora described in-class interactions that made her feel less than and looked down upon by her peers because of her upbringing and accent. Dora carried those negative experiences with her into her graduate program. Dora described the challenges of starting the program under distance learning conditions because of the Coronavirus:

So, when I started, it was already...I started in April, March, April, so it was already through distance learning. It was online-only, and yeah, halfway through the quarter was when I started actually trusting my peers and building that sense of community, which made it easier, realizing that it wasn’t just me feeling that the professors are not being considerate to the fact that we’re going through a pandemic and online classes are not the
same as in person. That was very helpful; and understanding to… that… they were also confused with some of the assignments or… or with comments made during class. They were upset as well. So, it’s just very helpful.

Even though Dora had negative experiences with peers in her past, she still developed a relationship with the peers in her current program to resist harmful course practices and agents, specifically when dealing with challenging professors. Peers in the classroom are important because they can serve as a person who shares the same class experiences, a class resource, and most importantly, a friend.

Sometimes when participants began college, they did not have a peer network. Some were fortunate to have siblings or cousins to turn to with questions in the beginning if they are first-generation college students. Elena discussed how she first had relied on her cousin for advice, as she was the person that she knew who went to college. Also, she described that her college participation as a commuter student left her not feeling very engaged. It was not until she was admitted into the nursing program that she felt like she was a part of something at the university:

When I first started, I was commuting, and I know it's a high commuter school, but I just felt like my college experience wasn’t what I wanted it to be. So, I felt like I was just kind of detached from all kinds of school life, and so I was going to school, going to class, and then headed right back home because I had to go to work, and I was like 30-40 minutes away, which is not
far, but I just felt like I was not really a part of, you know, part of the school. Then once I got into the nursing program, and I started to make a lot of good quality friends, it just changed my whole experience, also having gotten into the program I think it also just influenced me to volunteer a lot more like socials, school functions and yeah, so that was a big turning point.

Elena described all of the other student organizations she became a part of and discussed the institutional supports the nursing program put in place, like a faculty mentor program and a student peer mentor program, “…I did have a nursing advisor, but I wouldn’t really say that she was much of a mentor. Yeah.”

Elena discussed how she did not have any faculty that shared her background and how the college's academic advisors were not people that she ever really visited. She commented on how beneficial the peer mentor program was since she saw others like her in the program.

Also, just being like a first first-generation…like… Latina student, you know, and female. I just think that it's always kind of been like a little hard to get there, you know, but having gotten into the [nursing] program and seeing a lot of other Latinas, it was very, very awesome.

Elena was not engaged in university life when she began school; she consulted with her cousin when it came to questions that she had about college. Her academic program advisor and faculty members were not people she connected with culturally. Her admittance to the nursing program with people who looked like her and shared her same background gave her a greater sense of belonging to the university. Despite being a first-generation college student, Elena was able to
engage with her peers through classes, the program, and clubs. Clubs can be an effective tool to connect with others at the university. Clubs can be beneficial to connect people across academic disciplines and different age ranges by finding common ground in interests or ethnic identity.

**Peer Relationships at the University**

Many of the students discussed their peer support networks in college, not necessarily in the service-learning courses specifically, but throughout college in general. In addition to the classroom networks created, these support networks included close friends, clubs, and organizations. Study participants shared how their peers helped them through challenging situations inside and outside the classroom. Likewise, they identified how they were able to connect culturally with people who shared the same language, ethnic backgrounds, or experiences as them:

Johnny, the first-generation and first-gen college student, described the community of peers he found by joining a fraternal organization and the valuable network to remain in college:

Okay, I'm gonna put myself around other people that understand this better than I do, and they're a Latino based fraternity...like okay I'm gonna be surrounded by other Latinos, I feel at home, and I'm going to reinforce myself...from dropping out... of failing out, so that really helped me out. That's when I started meeting people through community service projects through student-oriented projects. I'm just...in general just expanding my personal and professional network, and I found out that you know... that I'm not this small
person, eventually you know… we fundraise money for this event, and I’m like, oh my god, like we really did that. What if we tweak this, this, and this, and suddenly you know, an event that was okay became a great event. That really boosted my confidence and really translated to my grades as I ended…toward the end of my third year, and specifically my fourth and, even my fifth year, I started getting on Dean’s list; it was, it was pretty good.

Johnny shared many personal experiences in his interview that created a sense of urgency to stay in school for fear of returning to his home neighborhood, a place he did not feel safe. He built a support network in college, primarily from his fraternal network and the resources they connected him to at the university. Johnny discussed how engaging with his peers in his community boosted his confidence, translating to better grades for him. Likewise, his fraternity’s connections to mentors enabled him to connect to work opportunities, which led to his eventual career choice.

Fernando, a first-generation college student, immersed himself in school activities, using mentorship and peer resources on campus to also get involved:

I decided to be really involved, and I personally wanted to be.

I found mentors… because I had a lack of mentors before going to college.

While in college… I found the mentors that I needed through a fraternity that I wanted to join and through other organizations as well. After being a mentee, I continued to be a mentor to other incoming students, both as [a program] participant and in my fraternity as well.
Fernando recalled the power of mentorship, which was first introduced to him through his fraternal organization as a resource. Later he replicated this practice by being a mentor to the next generation. Many participants described the connection to campus resources through peer relationships that student organizations had with campus agents who cared. They valued these agents as a cherished resource of college knowledge for connecting with others and more opportunities.

Aaron reflected on his pathway to involvement on campus. For him, it started in a class as a freshman that required him to get out on campus and learn about clubs and campus resources:

So, the opportunity to take the freshman seminar course really opened my eyes to the resources that [the university] has to offer its students, the clubs, the organizations which inevitably led me to join the Latino Business Club and [my Latino fraternity], which really...like allowed me to involve myself in the recreational aspect of school, but also the learning and educational parts as we were to form study groups you know, and keep each other accountable in order to continue to succeed.

The freshman seminar course, a separate high-impact practice, was identified by participants as playing a role in their student success. In this case, because of the course requirements, Aaron was exposed to and later joined both an ethnic/cultural business club and a Latino Fraternity, both added to the social aspect of attending the university. Even though both clubs were primarily social, they also supported academics through study groups and access to valuable campus resources such as resource centers, academic support offices, and vital institutional agents who
helped navigate.

Johnny, Fernando, and Aaron all described the value of cultural fraternity and sorority groups like Maria. They, in particular, all joined cultural affinity groups; Maria tells us about the rewards she gained by getting involved in a Latina sorority:

I lived on campus for the first two years, and that's really where I kind of found my place; and after that, I lived near campus, but I got really involved. So, I worked on campus in the admissions office. I was involved in a Latina sorority. I did a lot of community service work as a student, and so I really felt...like I had a really big, positive college experience just from moving away from home and just having the opportunity to get to focus on my studies and get involved on campus.

Maria lived on campus and was closer to resources than students who commuted to campus. After getting more involved in clubs and organizations, Maria engaged in community service experiences with the organization, which drew her closer to the college. Many of the respondents that participated in campus affinity groups while in college shared similar sentiments to those cited above. Besides the primary cultural connection, they found friendships, support networks, access to campus knowledge, campus resource centers, and maybe most critical, a network of campus agents, faculty, and staff to guide them through college. Sometimes these staff members became more than advisors; they became trusted guides to navigate a new world for the students. Many participants described the importance of mentorship on their pathway to college success.
Campus Staff as Mentors

As demonstrated from the shared experiences of the participants; relationships are importance to student success. I have highlighted the experiences of faculty/student connections, both positive and negative, in the service-learning classroom. Participants have shared the critical role their peers play in their college experience. Moreover, participants shared the value of other relationships they had on campus with institutional agents besides faculty, outside the classroom, such as mentors, campus advisors, or caring campus staff.

Bella, the Chicana MBA graduate student, shared the value of a mentorship connection with a Chicano campus staff member. The mentorship connection was created through a mentorship program by a Latina/o faculty and staff affinity group. When asked what advice she would give to future Latina/o students, she shared:

Get involved to ensure that they find mentors because I feel like that's what changed my experience and until this day. I... I can't emphasize enough the... the whole... the day and night transition of when you start interacting with people that know what resources are out there. That can not only shape your experience but like your whole future. So, speaking to other people to understand that they're not the only ones that are going through this transition, that it's... everyone feels that way. So that that would be my advice, don't be afraid to express your frights and to search for those resources.

Understanding and connecting with the mentor helped Bella reconnect with the university. Bella took the opportunity to study abroad for a year, another high-
impact practice, during her junior year in college. She shared that the experience abroad was amazing; it changed her worldview and expanded her thinking. Bella did not know that many of her friends would have already graduated or been in a different part of their college career when she returned from studying abroad. Bella expanded her global network but lost contact with the local network she already had created in college. Bella elaborated:

that's the thing…that when I came back from studying abroad, I felt worse…when I had come back and the reason why…is…although I thought differently, I felt more excluded because I didn't know anybody. Any friends that I had made were either in a different stage in their career, about to graduate, or I just didn't know anybody anymore. I didn't even have my old phone number. So, it wasn't until… because of the mentorship program that was when I felt like I started belonging again.

Bella had participated in an amazing experience studying abroad, but she felt lonely and disengaged when she returned. The connection to a campus agent through the mentorship program reengaged her sense of belonging to the campus. The mentor, a Chicano campus staff member himself, supported her when she felt the disconnection. He encouraged her to join clubs and participate in Latinx affinity group events. He encouraged her to develop a new support network, like the one she had before in her business classes. The mentor was also present beyond the one year of the mentorship program. Bella shared that this mentor has continued to guide her where possible, even into the professional world.

Adan, the Chicano business major, who was also engaged in campus student
leadership, discussed how this university was his last choice and more of a backup school. He had applied to and planned on attending six other universities before this one, but the offers never came. He was disappointed that his last choice school was the only one to accept him. Adan decided to attend anyway with plans to transfer later. Adan recalled his early experiences:

I had in mind that I was going to just go in there, my first year, finish it up, get good grades and transfer out. But quickly, I learned that [the university] is a great place. I was quickly, you know, approached by different people who seemed to show a genuine interest in the success of the students. I really connected with those people, and they provided a great resource for me in the form of mentorship, something that I... that I really needed that I was desperate for, but I didn't realize it.

Adan planned on starting at the university and then transferring to another school after a year. He did not expect to find a mentor who cared about his success and checked in on him regularly. His thoughts and opinions of the university began to change; he went on to share:

I knew that I wanted to graduate college. I knew that I wanted to make my parents proud, but, you know, in the midst of my first and second years, you know the distractions...kind of, kind of, you know, took over...and it wasn't till I finally allowed myself to be mentored, and I finally allowed myself to learn new things that I really started to...really enjoy my time and really feel welcomed and feel like I belong at [the University]... after I started getting involved on campus, with mentors and different other clubs and organizations.
Adan’s experiences also demonstrate the connection to campus resources and other support networks such as clubs via a mentor relationship with a Latino staff member. Once Adan accepted the mentorship and, in turn, that he wanted to be at the university, he began to flourish. Adan had shared that engagement in a service-learning experience changed his connection to his learning. Now, this mentorship connection changed his engagement and sense of belonging to the university. Adan went on to be a leader in campus organizations and campus student life which he attributed to these experiences.

Most of the study participants described that they had little to no connection with the faculty in their service-learning courses and some in their academic major. Johnny shares his experiences of being in a service-learning course that also lacked a connection to the faculty member in his major. This combination created a real disconnect for him. When asking Johnny about his connection to his education through service-learning courses, he struggled to find the connection:

I personally don't think I got too much out of the service-learning part of it because we really were just walking through the motions and just kind of getting advice, but...not, I don't really feel like I learned too much from that.

I followed up with a question about what did influence his connection to his education since he did not feel it in the classroom:

I definitely felt like the...a lot of the...the staff, a lot of the staff on campus was a lot more impactful in my success than the faculty, which is crazy because they're not teaching me anything in class, which is why I'm there. So, it's the...staff were the ones that were...that made up for the network that I didn't
have and that, honestly, um, you know, the [fraternity] was just an avenue to that network, but I felt like that network made it for me. If [the university] did not have a good staff network of people that are going out of their way, doing stuff that has nothing to do with their job descriptions in terms of helping out students and pointing them to the right resources, you know. I don't think I'd be where I'm at...so I think the foundation of me building up my confidence and growing as a person and eventually graduating was definitely because of the staff at [the university].

I felt like the staff for me was hugely beneficial. Right…and I don't think people are giving them...give them enough credit.

Johnny exemplified the influence that campus staff provided in his student success. The mentorship effort, combined with a support group in his Latino Fraternity to connect him to a valuable campus network, resulted in his relationships with campus staff who were Latina/o that offered him more than he was receiving in the classroom. Johnny mentioned that this network afforded him a job on campus, doing what he was studying in technology. This opportunity provided him with the necessary experience to help him land his first professional job after graduation. This example demonstrates the power that institutional agents have on influencing the outcomes for Latina/o students, inside and outside the classroom.

Rene, the first-generation college IT graduate, described his early career aspirations to attend school then pursue a career in law enforcement. Rene shared that he had never seen people from his Latina/o heritage working in technology in his life. He thought that although he liked technology, that was not a career path for
him. Rene began working for a university technology team as a student early on in his college career, and the campus team he worked with guided him on his path to his current career in information technology:

I think as a culture; I think I didn't think it was a possible route for a career. Just because again, I planned on going into the criminal justice field; I didn't think it was a possible, you know, a route there. So, I think as a culture, I... we're kind of set on certain jobs or didn't expand on like what you could be or what you could do, so I guess it's limited there, but as soon as I got there...there was an idea that... there was more...so I got that. Yeah.

Rene shared how he looked up to the people he worked with as a student assistant, knowing that he could have that job one day too. Those Latina/o staff members served as mentors and guided him to more resources, and they looked like him. They helped him learn and develop an understanding of what was needed for a career in IT. He turned to his Latino work mentors more than he did his instructors because he felt like the instructors were too busy for him. In his experience, like Johnny, he found more connections with campus staff that were Latino than he did any of his faculty. When asked how he described:

Inspiration, I guess...inspiration is definitely one of them, but I guess encouragement that you could do it and believe in... you. I think...I think that's...even some guidance, of course, as well, you know, always if you had questions about some of the things or courses or, you know, just in general.

While trying to think of a faculty member Rene considered a mentor, especially in his academic major, he found it challenging. Rene named one professor but then...
retracted it, saying that he felt that he might have been able to reach out to him for advice but never did because he felt as if the professor was too busy, so Rene did not bother asking. In describing their faculty’s role in their development, both Johnny and Rene gained more from a network of Latina/o campus staff that were there to train, guide, support their development, and offer mentorship.

Aaron too described the value he gained through the relationships he developed with his mentors early in his college career; they provided encouragement and guidance. When asked, Aaron, elaborated:

I think that is the pivotal moment that really changed…changed who I was and got me to where I am right now, just because I had individuals… leaders who were Latina leaders, who were women. So, Latina leaders who allowed me to just explore my creativity in marketing and public speaking, they saw something in me; they saw that I was good at it.

Aaron described that the Latina mentors encouraged him to grow and develop skills in an area they knew he wanted to pursue. He did this for credit in a class and then worked with them in a campus resource office.

They saw that I had a passion for it, and they knew that my dream goal was to be on the radio…was to be in the entertainment industry. So, they [the Latina mentors] pushed me to strive… to do any event that we had… any event that I was able to experience and participate in… It was nothing but support; if I failed or did something wrong, there was always my mentors…people there…my supervisors who were like, it’s okay, this is the time to mess up…continue.
Aaron shared that he cherished his college experiences, mainly because he had the support from so many on-campus people that encouraged him and gave him opportunities. This support he did not feel that he had from his family, being the first to go to college, they were more risk-averse when encouraging him to select a career:

So, I think I leaned on them [his mentors] for moral support and for something that I didn't have at home, which was the believability… like my parents were very supportive of my dreams, but they always told me. Hey, it's hard. It's hard to get into entertainment... focus on business... focus on medicine... focus on something else. But my mentors really were like do it be that person. Be that person for yourself and for others. So, I think it was, you know, the believability that I was able to pursue this goal and dream. It wasn't necessarily a dream; it was it was a goal that they helped me obtain.

Aaron realized during his interview that it was because of his mentors that he could pursue his dream career. One he had previously thought was unattainable, even his family, who supported him, encouraged him to focus on a different career. He realized it was an achievable goal through his mentors, not just some dream that could not be reached.

Echoing similar sentiments, Paz, a transfer student, commented on her involvement in campus activities providing her access to resources, a practice she had acquired at the community college she attended:

So as a first-generation college student. I struggled for the first year just because they really didn't know who to go to… and, you know, if I had
questions. You know where what, where are the resources, and it wasn't until I started to get involved on campus. And that's when I, you know, started to network again and know more about you know if I have questions where to go, and who to talk to. So overall, once I started to get more involved. I mean, it brought a lot of opportunities to me.

Paz had positive experiences at her community college. She applied some of the concepts she had learned in a college bridge program that supported first-generation Latinx college students. She utilized the skills she acquired in the program to get herself connected at the 4-year university. Paz’s mentor from the bridge program also worked at the university she transferred to. Although she did not mention why she chose this university over others, it was clear that she maintained a mentorship relationship with the mentor after the program had finished. Paz’s mentor guided her to resources such as campus work, student groups, and other campus agents for support. Paz’s reuse of skills such as networking and seeking out mentors helped her successfully connect to valuable resources at the university as she did at her previous institution.

Access to faculty mentors sometimes happened in service-learning courses but also through the courses. In this excerpt, Linda elaborated on navigating college, going through the motions while disengaging, and then meeting her faculty mentor while in a service-learning practicum course:

I just think that I didn't really have a sense of direction...and there's no one who told me what to do, and you're supposed to make your own decisions, and you're supposed to find your own path is kind of like if you've never done
that before. Then it's like, where do I…where do I start and how do I know what I want, and I don't want to mess up…Um, so I spent years that way just going through courses and going to school, just because that's what I was supposed to do….

Linda recalled her feelings of being lost, not knowing what was required, just going through the motions of taking classes, she continued:

it wasn't until I met Dr. [faculty name] that that kind of shifted because he was kind of asking questions… “Well, what's your high school, elementary, middle school experience like?” It was kind of like I just did what I was supposed to. I didn't really question how intentional… certain things were or how certain experiences in school kind of affected me. So, I became… I guess I became engaged and learning why I was disengaged for so long.

Her future mentor expressed a genuine interest in her academic pathway and experiences, she continued:

And I remember even when he…when I met him, which was presenting at this practicum class that I was in, I was completely disengaged…. but he mentioned my alma mater, and I was like. Oh, I know where that is…and all of a sudden, because I could connect to the material, I became alert, then I connected with him after class about a research project.

She established an immediate connection to the future mentor. They graduated from the same high school, and she was now attending the same university he did for his undergraduate program. Linda later reached out to the Chicano Faculty
member and inquired about a research opportunity that he had offered to the students of her class.

Opportunities for undergraduate research with a faculty member are another high-impact practice. When I asked Linda what aspects of the research project influenced her to change direction in college, she recalled:

The people… you know, made a difference. I think we all clicked so quickly in the research project, and I think that culture probably had a big role to play in that as well. Um, but I just felt like comfortable. I felt safe...sharing things because we all shared what we've experienced in the past, and we knew all of us were coming from not only geographically, but our upbringing and stuff like that. So, it just became like a little family really quickly.

Linda found a new peer group that was going to be conducting research that mattered to her. None of the students in the group had ever participated in a college research project, so they learned from each other and the faculty mentor who trained them and explained his style of participatory action research.

Linda explained more about the trust relationship with the mentor:

I didn't really know anything about research protocol and what exactly he's going to do with that data or where he was going to take it or whatever or even what he'd been before, where he even taught…I felt safe with [my faculty mentor] as a leader. Because he…I could sense that he cared. He always checked in with me, and he didn't just ask me about work-related questions. He asked personal questions about what my goals were and what
drove me, and so I didn’t…I never had a teacher…you know, come at me that way, whether it was in the service-learning instructor or not.
The fact that the mentor cared personally made a difference to Linda; he demonstrated again that relationships matter. They matter to the students that are influenced by their practices and implementation of teaching techniques. Agents of the university inside and outside the classroom matter; how they interact with the student matters.
When I asked Linda, what changed in her as a result of the research project with a Chicano faculty mentor and new peer friendships who also shared her same ethnic background, she replied:
So, I think what really made the difference was just that connection; I felt the people that were in the research project and also the leadership that was there created a very safe environment, and also what we were doing was creating a safe environment for other people [at the project site]. So, I think just as a whole. It just kind of changed, like how I saw, I guess, working in a group and working in the classroom setting, it just created…it showed me a different learning experience than I had ever gotten…So I wanted to be able to provide that to other people, once I saw that emotion. You know, I was kind of like…why can’t we just recreate this everywhere else; you know?
In describing the role of mentorship and new peer connections, Linda noted the change in her perception of how learning should occur; as a result, Linda re-engaged with college. Linda proceeded to meet with campus advisors to get her on track to complete college. Linda then felt drawn to the education field instead of
communications, her declared major, but Linda was too close to being finished to make another major change. Linda shared that she is still in close contact with her friends from the research group, even after graduation.

As captured by the participants' experiences, Mentorship outside of the classroom provided more than just guidance; they also emphasized the connection to resources, engagement, caring, aspirations, and valuable skills that they may not have gotten in the classroom. Mentors could serve in several different roles at the university; they were faculty, advisors, staff, and administrators, all acting as the institution's agents. Mentors as institutional agents supported students in impactful ways, thus becoming high-impact agents.

Latina/o Students Sense of Belonging

This study draws on the diverse experiences of Latina and Latino college students who have participated in a service-learning course at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). Participants interviewed described their experiences of transitioning to college. Participants explained that they saw connections to their culture in service-learning courses. One key resource that participants described was their connection to the university through institutional agents. The institutional agents took many forms and influenced their sense of belonging to the university. In this section, participants shared examples of some of the experiences that created a sense of belonging.

Sofia, an undocumented student, found a sense of belonging in the resources available to her at her campus. Sofia was a business major learning
about income tax preparation and supporting her community from a financial services perspective:

I am a Latina, and I was born in Mexico, brought to the US. The language…I’m undocumented…Many people tell me I can’t study and get to college because of my status; being first-generation is hard because there is no one to help. I feel that it is important that when people tell you that you can’t go to school or go to college, you need to demonstrate that you can. At school, volunteering connects you to the school, and you can find a lot of help… find opportunities, help for undocumented students, programs you can apply for. You can find many connections if you want it… you can have it in this country…*todo se puede cuando uno quiere.*

Anything can be done when one wants it. Sofia discussed the challenges navigating the higher education system when English is your second language, and you don’t fully understand the culture. Sofia was engaged in her education and looking for opportunities to succeed. Sofia encouraged others to get involved, volunteer, meet people learn about campus resources; she saw this as a pathway to success. Sofia expressed that other students should take advantage of college opportunities as she did; this could help them feel like they belonged.

*Adan’s reason for an increased sense of belonging was in the classroom. He discussed being able to choose topics and the organizations he wanted to work within his service-learning course allowing him to create a greater connection with the university:*
I think it gave me a sense of belonging in a sense, where I was able to do whatever I… you know not, not do whatever I wanted. I mean, but it gave me a sense of belonging that I was able to immerse myself into things that I really cared about, right.

Adan felt a sense of belonging or connection to the university because he was able to connect his learning to topics that were of interest for him, which created a stronger bond:

Having that freedom to come into classroom and do the research on topics that I care about allowed me to really connect to the university for that same reason, right, because it, the university, it's showing that the university cares about me because it's giving me the ability to do the research on the things that I care about rather than imposing something on me. Okay, you know what, this is what you're…what you have to research, and this is what you have to learn. So having that freedom to do things myself… made me want to come back, made me want to be even more part of this university.

Adan shared that having the freedom to choose his assignments or demonstrate agency made him feel like the university cared about him. In turn, this sense of caring created a greater desire to engage more with the university, which he did.

Echoing similar sentiments, Bella elaborated on her sense of confidence and belonging based on her experiences as a first-generation student beginning college and how the experiences from within a service-learning course changed her early perceptions:
I think that this is a common feeling that I could speak on behalf of a lot of students that when you first walk on campus, and particularly as a first-generation [student], you don't have that confidence, you don't have the confidence to even step… like walk on campus. You're intimidated, you look at other people, and you think, like, what am I doing here? and your kind of like… just the confidence is not there as you start engaging in these types of [service-learning] courses. I feel like you start gaining that confidence to walk around…like I'm part of this, you know, it's not just like I don't belong here… or I own this, no, It's just like I'm part of this, and this is my home, and I can…like… this is where I come and exercise my brain so that for me, that's what that is.

Bella described how it felt walking onto campus as a freshman and the self-doubt on whether or not she belonged. Overwhelmingly participants discussed the lack of confidence and a sense of being lost. As Bella described, the participation in a formal mentorship program and engagement in service-learning types of classes allowed her to see herself as a professional, which increased her confidence, and she began to feel a part of the university, a place where she could develop and call home.

Linda, the communications major, described how her connection to college changed after meeting a Chicano faculty mentor and engaging in student research. Linda elaborated on the change in her college experience which reconnected her to school:
Overall, I would say I was a pretty lost. I mean, I had a pretty long undergraduate [career] because of that… I was there for about six or seven years. Mostly because I really didn't have any direction, or I was just kind of doing what I thought I was supposed to be doing. I didn't see any kind of advisor until probably my junior year. By that time, I was like, way over my units that I needed to have, but they weren't units in what I needed them to be in if that makes any sense.

Linda had navigated college on her own for the most part. She had a sister who was going to school as well; they were both first-generation college students. As a result, Linda explored college and had progressed slowly, but it was not where she needed to be to complete college. Linda had started at the university as a freshman as was not a part of any support programs. Linda attributed her turnaround to engaging with Latina/o mentors and the creation of a community for support, which all started with a connection to a single Chicano faculty mentor:

So, it was actually right around the time that I started, you know, getting mentors and people that were more aligned with what I wanted to work towards. So that's kind of gave me some direction and more structure.

…having a… building a sort of community…I guess of support, which was really what helped me kind of make it out of college, with some connections and some sense of..."Okay, I know what I'm doing."

As suggested here, the research community and mentor connections provided more than just a great academic opportunity; they provided relationships. These relationships also guided Linda to a sense of purpose which she specified as a
reason for completing college with a sense of direction. Linda took two service-
learning courses two times each for a total of four service-learning experiences.
Despite being actively involved in service-learning courses, Linda revealed a
disconnection from her choice in a post-secondary pathway, highlighting challenges
experienced in her college career.

Ultimately the chance opportunity she had to engage with her faculty mentor
through another class provided her access to research opportunities and a new
network, which she described as being like a family and safe:

I think that gave me a sense of purpose because it was something that I
cared about and something that I really wanted to work towards, and I really
didn't feel that about my major. I kind feel like well, we're planning a party, so
what, you know...what is the real cause like, what are we really trying to do.
The opportunity to engage in undergraduate research, another High-Impact
Practice, increased her critical consciousness about her educational journey. She
gained a sense of purpose distinctly different from her experience in other service-
learning courses within her own major.

So that kind of a… I guess it got me engaged back into school in general,
working on the research project because it was revolving around education,
and I kind of start thinking about what I was doing with my school because a
lot of times I would do badly in classes because I just didn't care. I was just
sitting there. I wasn't really learning. So, it really kind of motivated me to get
focused and to go back and retake classes that I need to retake and to really
actually care about my GPA.
In addition to safety and family, I asked her to share what other aspects helped with the sense of belonging she felt with her research group:

I was surrounded by people that were awesome as part of the project. So, it really motivated me want to be more awesome. So, I think that was really what got me on track to actually graduate...I probably would have been there longer... had it not been... in school longer... had it not been for that change of path, yeah.

Linda reflected on her choices and their influence on finishing college; creating a campus family that was safe and inspiring to her increased her level of self-efficacy and determination to succeed. Her experiences with faculty members impacted her direction and sense of worth; guided by a positive Chicano faculty mentor and a supportive group, she was able to accomplish her goal of finishing college. I highlight this experience because of the influence relationships with campus agents had on Linda. Regardless of the course practices she was experiencing, Linda was disengaged and probably on her way out of college. The personal connections bridged her academic work and worked on stitching together her experiences to complete college with a sense of direction and purpose. These connections are critical with institutional agents as they implement high-impact practices for retention and student success.

In chapter four, I presented the findings of the study. I examined the experiences of Latina/o students in service-learning courses at a four-year public Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). These data have direct relevance to policy and practice for equity-minded educators and policymakers. I highlighted how few
Latina/o students in the study saw themselves or their ethnic culture reflected in service-learning courses at an HSI. Those students that did see themselves reflected shared the major influence those experiences had on their college careers. I described how Latina/o students experienced service-learning courses at an HSI. Participants shared valuable outcomes as a result of taking part in service-learning courses, as well as the challenges they faced from invalidating practices in the classroom. In this chapter, participants shared elements of courses that were designed to serve Latina/o students with equity-minded practices and validating experiences built into the service-learning class. In addition to the positive practices in the service-learning course and the validation received from Latina/o faculty, participants described other ways they engaged with their ethnic culture at the university and support some in the transition to graduate school. They engaged through their peers and institutional agents who were contextualized as friends and mentors who helped them navigate the university and ultimately create a sense of belonging. The next chapter discusses the findings and provides recommendations for practitioners and leaders who seek to improve educational outcomes for Latina/o students.
CHAPTER FIVE:
RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This study explored the shared lived experiences of 26 Latina/o students who have completed service-learning courses at a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). Service-learning courses or community-based learning are considered a High-Impact Practice (HIP) (Kuh, 2008). Previous student success research demonstrated improved academic outcomes, such as persistence in college and higher graduation rates for all students who participate in High-Impact Practices, specifically for Students of Color (Finley & McNair, 2016). Yet, there is little known about the experiences of the Students of Color in service-learning courses (Finley & McNair, 2016). The present study can inform the future implementation of practices and equity-minded policies at colleges and universities as they relate to service-learning HIPs.

Latina/o Student Experiences in Service-Learning Courses at an HSI

Three primary research questions guided this study: 1) How do Latina/o students see themselves reflected in service-learning courses, if at all? 2) What were the experiences of Latina/o students in service-learning courses at an HSI? 3) How and in what ways have Latina/o students who have participated in service-learning courses developed a sense of belonging in college?

The theoretical lenses through which I viewed my data were from different frameworks. I used Critical Race Theory in Education (CRTE) and LatCrit to center the Latina/o student voice as a counter-narrative to the dominant discourse from
Likewise, I examined the service-learning course practices and their ability to demonstrate Servingness to truly serve Latina/o students at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) (Garcia, 2017, 2018). In this chapter, I provided recommendations to practitioners and policymakers to spotlight the need to create equity-minded policy and understand racialized patterns in higher education. Those patterns that reproduce inequalities through structural racism and are perpetuated at higher education institutions (Bensimon & Bishop, 2012). A goal is to produce more equity-minded individuals who raise their awareness of exclusionary practices, call out institutional racism, and challenge power dynamics that influence inequitable outcomes (Bensimon, 2007). Per my research findings, I provided recommendations for college leaders, institutional agents, and service-learning practitioners to foster conditions that enhance Latina/o student success and equitable outcomes for Students of Color.

For this qualitative study, I used a phenomenological approach. Specifically, critical hermeneutic phenomenology, because Latina/o students are not members of a privileged group, and their voices are often discounted (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Thompson (1990) stated that critical hermeneutics emphasizes the concept that the researcher may be able to interpret the role of institutional influences on the experiences that the study participants may not be able to see for themselves. Critical hermeneutics assumes that society influences “socially accepted worldviews” (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p.730) based on the values of the
privileged and frequently ignores the voices and experiences of those that are not a part of the dominant group. Any interpretation of the participants’ experiences from non-privileged groups must be prepared to challenge dominant ideologies and critically interrogate systematic power structures (Lopez & Willis, 2004), which aligned with a CRTE perspective. Critical hermeneutics served as an emancipatory tool to bring to light social or political actions that reinforce dominant ideologies or deficit perspectives. Specifically, I was interested to understand how Latina/o students experienced service-learning courses at an HSI; did the service-learning course reinforce any underlying dominant ideology or deficit thinking? How did the students experience service-learning courses, and how did they feel about their role as students in the course? How did the fact that the campus is a Hispanic-Serving Institution influence the service-learning courses, if at all? The answers to these questions may provide new perspectives and direct relevance for educational leaders and practitioners, specifically at an HSI.

To conduct the study, I interviewed 26 students at one Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). I began my recruitment by circulating an online questionnaire that 184 students completed. Of those survey completers, 48 self-identified as Latina/o and had participated in a service-learning course. Thirty-four of those respondents were willing to participate in a follow-up interview. Of the 34, I was able to interview 26 participants successfully. For gender identification purposes, 16 participants self-identified as female, and 10 as male. Most, 21 of the 26, participants were the first in their families to attend college or first-generation college students. Only one participant had a single parent who was a college graduate; most of the parents,
30, had less than a high school degree as the highest level of educational attainment. All 26 participants filled in a field to self-identify their Latinx heritage; all self-identified as either, Chicana/o, Mexican-American, Latina/o, or as Mexican. Of those respondents that self-identified as Latina/o and had participated in a service-learning course, 14 were current students, and 12 were alumni. For degree goals, 14 would finish college with an undergraduate degree; and 12 would finish with a graduate degree. Participation from different academic colleges was as follows: business, 11; arts & letters, six; natural sciences, five; social & behavioral sciences, two; and education; 2. Work status was either full or part-time for 20 of the 26 respondents during school.

This chapter discusses this study's findings and connects them to the existing body of research as outlined in chapter two. After connecting my research findings in the context of the existing research on service-learning courses and Latina/o student success, I present my research study's conclusions. Finally, I provide recommendations for university leadership and high-impact practice practitioners based on my conceptual framework and offer future research recommendations considering my study's limitations.

Discussion of Findings

Absence of Racial or Cultural Identity in the Service-Learning Classroom

Most participants made a clear distinction that they did not see their Latina/o identity present in their service-learning classes and even within most of their major courses. 23 of the 26 participants shared that their ethnic culture was not present in the faculty or course materials. Most students mentioned that their culture never
came up in class discussions or materials; others stated that there was no connection to their culture from the faculty. Some participants believed that culture was not a factor. For example, students from the business school believed intersections did not exist between their ethnic culture and technology; they felt the two were unconnected. A critical analysis shows that business courses in technology should examine the intersections of race and society in areas such as digital ethics, artificial intelligence, programmer bias, and reinforcement of racism (Noble, 2018), or how the digital divide impacts Communities of Color (Kormos, 2018). Faculty should be prepared to critically examine the lack of diversity in science (STEM) majors, which follows into careers in the technology sector. The absence of a discussion on these topics can be telling about courses and academic programs as well. In terms of critical conversations in the classroom, this lack of critical examination demonstrates the impact that the dominant culture can have on the teaching and learning of a theme like racial issues in technology, leading students to believe that technology cannot be discriminatory. These issues directly impact People of Color unequivocally through technology and should be addressed as global, economic, and societal issues, not just technology issues in the classroom.

Enacting Validation Theory to Build on High-Impact Practice Outcomes

This study highlighted the experiences of Latina/o students that participated in service-learning courses, a high-impact practice at an HSI, and how those experiences could be validating or invalidating. Rendón (1994) maintained that “nontraditional” students’ often faced challenges with developing strategies to
overcome feelings of alienation and self-doubt, all while resisting the pressure to assimilate into a new dominant institutional culture that was often different from their home cultures (Rendón, 1994). Rendon (1994) found that for these students, institutional validation could be a key factor in their college success (Solórzano & Yosso, 2000)

Validating outcomes that were produced as a result of positive course practices or faculty as validating agents included: a) a real connection between the service-learning experiences and learning in the classroom; b) development of new perspectives by the students as a direct result of experiences in the service-learning course; c) personal growth attained through the reflection of the experiences and their application to the students’ lives; and, d) students not only feeling validation and belonging but feeling prepared for their future professional careers. These outcomes were a result of positive practices in the implementation of the service-learning course that included but were not limited to: a) practical experiences that potentially connected to their future careers, or as students called them “real-world” experiences; b) the course provided the opportunity for students to connect with their community in a positive or constructive way; c) creating connections for students to learning by bridging theory into practice; d) developing positive relationships with institutional agents, including establishing good communication with their professor; e) pushing the students comfort zone in a way that was constructive and developmental, building resilience and agency; and finally, f) visualization, the students seeing themselves as knowledge creators and visualizing themselves as the professionals they hoped to be one day. These
practices, taken together, provided not only a sense of community, and belonging to the university, but a valuable connection between learning and experiences outside of the classroom, a key goal of service-learning courses.

Framing Service-Learning for Social Justice Amplifies Student Outcomes

Furthermore, some participants experienced a social justice-based, equity-minded service-learning course offering that was intentionally created to serve Latina/o students. This equity-based course was designed to embrace and acknowledge the Latina/o community and use decolonization theory in the pedagogy and course practices. Not only did the students experience the same validating outcomes as those listed above, but they also did so in a deeper way than a standard service-learning course that was not designed with Latina/o students in mind. In addition to reaping many of the benefits above, these students vocalized that the course changed their lives. For example, new life goals were developed due to participation in a course designed for them from the ground up. All three participants that identified these validating practices chose to strive for more educationally and professionally. It changed their aspirations, their drive, their perspective, and their dedication to their educational pathway. The participants embraced the value that a meaningful, equity-minded education could provide because they saw themselves as the creators of knowledge and agents of change, serving their community. The faculty member that created one of the courses embodied social justice leadership in the classroom. She developed equity-minded course practices and ensured that students were involved as knowledge creators, problem solvers, and community advocates. The course built on theory and
knowledge centered on the Latinx community's experiences and upheld a view that the community was valuable. Students were able to relate to this and see themselves as serving their community in the course. Open communication was practiced by the faculty member, making herself available anytime students needed questions answered. The course material was developed from a rich breadth of Scholars of Color with whom the students could identify. Students worked together with the Latina faculty member to develop the project guidelines and select the service to be completed, demonstrating agency. The students felt empowered to be knowledge creators and have discourse on the course topics and desired outcomes.

Invalidating Practices Experienced in Service-Learning Courses

Participants shared experiences that impacted them both positively and negatively. Negative practices experienced were not unique to service-learning classes. These practices were sometimes congruent with what the research highlighted as challenges with implementing successful service-learning courses. According to Brownell and Swaner (2010), successful HIPs should contain the following elements: 1) oversite of all activities 2) elements of self-reflection; 3) connections between the service and the course material; 4) service should be meaningful and worthwhile; 4) quality experiences over simple work. Participant data showed that the following were present in their negative experiences: a) a lack of oversight or group supervision in the class or at the service-learning site contributed to students often left to fend for themselves to navigate peer group dynamics or unfair situations; b) a lack of self-reflection built into the course to draw
connections between the service component, the subject matter, and the student’s experiences; c) a lack of connections that made a distinct connection between the course material and the service component for the students; leaving it up to the students to guess at the connection should be; d) a lack of quality experiences sometimes existed, like the use of the students to be more like workers or staff rather than having a meaningful experience tied to their learning; likewise, by choosing a service site with which the students did not connect; sites not representative of the students’ community or ones that reinforced a biased perception from the dominant culture in the superiority of other groups.

Sometimes participants shared experiences not addressed in the High-Impact Practice (HIP) literature. These practices, which frequently produced barriers, included but were not limited to: a) faculty instructions not being clear or not setting clear expectations on required projects; b) disingenuous practices, such as performing the bare minimum required in a role such as a faculty member, advisor, program mentor or other institutional agents; c) the assumption that all students are the same; the same as those from the dominant culture and have the experience and knowledge to navigate higher education systems; d) Indifference from the faculty to not vary in how they teach, not taking into consideration the students in the class or the community in which they serve, using language and culture as barriers to student success in the course; e) students who are a part of the dominant group being supported and uplifted by the faculty member who is also part of that same dominant group over those who are not. f) students not feeling a sense of belonging because of differences in race or cultural background. Students
expressed that these practices created barriers to their success in their service-learning courses and often left them feeling disconnected from their education. They created an environment where they felt like they did not belong in the class or sometimes at the university.

It is clear that the faculty member’s pedagogy and course practices directly influenced the students’ experiences in both the classroom and at the service site. In addition to the invalidating practices listed above, some students shared personal experiences that exposed prejudice and racist practices either present in the course environment or that the faculty imposed on the students, which included: a) prejudice against students because of race, ethnicity, gender, culture, heritage, language, and normative practices that primarily marginalize Students of Color; b) the accusation of plagiarism, because the faculty member did not believe that the student was capable of their demonstrated writing level; c) favoritism demonstrated by the faculty for students that were from the same dominant racial background, and bias against those that were not; d) Insensitivity from the faculty towards Students of Color in matters of racial tension during the class when sensitive discussions arose around the murder of Black men perpetrated by the police and the Black Lives Matter movement and some students were clearly being attacked. Even though students experienced these neglectful, racist practices, they were still resilient and found other validation methods to overcome these unprincipled institutional agents and sometimes racist environments.
Enacting Community Cultural Wealth as a Response to Invalidating Practices

Students quite often demonstrated resilience and resistance to invalidating practices by employing the knowledge, skills, and abilities present in the tools of Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) (Yosso, 2005). Participants employed the use of the CCW through the following capitals: familial, social, navigational, aspirational, linguistic, and resistant. While previous research conceptualizes the notion that community cultural wealth can serve as a protective factor against invalidating racialized experiences (Acevedo & Solórzano, 2021), the empirical findings presented in this dissertation exemplify ways in which this process can occur.

Maintaining Aspirational Hope While Facing Barriers

When students experienced a service-learning course experience that took them outside of their comfort zone, sometimes outside of their community, it often challenged students to add to their levels of existing resilience and identify skills needed to navigate their future careers. Students used obstacles as an opportunity to challenge themselves to aspire and rise above the challenges. Some faculty created fiercely competitive environments, which disadvantage minority or non-traditional students (Linares & Munoz, 2011). Other obstacles included students' challenges of being the only Latina/o in their class or not being a part of the in-crowd based on race and class. In these cases, students remembered their aspirations and persevered. This strategy demonstrated the use of aspirational capital as students maintained a vision of what they needed to succeed to complete their goals and prepare for their future careers.
Linguistic Capital to Connect With Ethnic Culture Away From Home

Participants often described connecting with peers and mentors through a shared ethnic culture and language. Students connected with cultural affinity groups and Mentors of Color who helped challenge deficit thinking and celebrated the cultural capital present within Communities of Color, specifically the Latinx community. According to Yosso (2005), Latina/o students arrive at college with multiple language and communication skills. Their new campus networks utilize cherished communication methods such as storytelling (cuentos), oral history, and proverbs (dichos). Linguistic capital can also take form through various artistic expression types like art, music, and poetry (Yosso, 2005).

Resistance as Existence

A few participants deliberately resisted and pushed back on the neglectful practices when confronted by faculty or course practices building on their skills to challenge these deficit practices. Participants used their critical consciousness to form bonds with course peers to survive invalidating faculty and their deficit practices. Students more versed in the structural nature of oppression and systemic subordination used transformative resistant capital to push back against racist structures and spoke up in opposition to racist practices by the faculty, even though by doing this, they exposed themselves to unfair treatment and targeting by the faculty. The students’ resilience was admirable; it can be observed that many have faced this type of interference previously in their educational lives and still managed to overcome the barriers and persist. However, there were cases where students described invalidating practices in the course but did not ascribe them to
malpractice or intentional neglect. This response shows that they may have become inured to the fact that these practices were not normal, or worse yet, they have become self-indoctrinated and believe that it is the way it is supposed to be, exemplifying self-defeating or conformist behaviors.

**Familia as Motivation and Support**

Students leaned on their families for support; they did not always have parents who attended college, but they reached out to older siblings or cousins for advice and guidance in the absence of support at the university. In some cases, when the family was not present in the student's immediate micro-ecosystem, participants created their own *familia* on campus through friends and trusted agents of the university. The presence of the *familia* as a support mechanism came up for several study participants. Some named older siblings as their first guides to college life, others close cousins. Yosso (2005) tells us that the concept of family extends to a broad understanding of kinship beyond the dominant groups understanding of the family unit. At times, the family was the motivation for a participant to finish college; the participant understood that they were critical to supporting the family and changing their family's circumstances.

**Employing Social Networks for Support**

Participants used their social peer networks to find resources in challenging situations, sometimes inside and outside the classroom. Whether it was a cohort or a single friend, participants had others with whom to share their academic experiences. Likewise, outside of the classroom, friends in social or cultural clubs, fraternities, or sororities became a network of support for students. These networks
sometimes acted as ad-hoc *familias* for support and knowledge sharing. According to Yosso (2005), social capital can be understood as networks of people and community resources to provide emotional support and assistance in navigating institutions.

**Navigating the University**

Historically many social institutions were not designed with Communities of Color in mind (Yosso, 2005); navigational capital refers to the skills to maneuver institutions like college. Many of the student participants were first-generation college students navigating the new spaces and systems unfamiliar to their families. Participants identified ethnic-cultural connections to peers at the university and institutional agents as sources of institutional support. The encouragement to attend campus cultural events, join ethnic-based clubs, professional organizations, or pledging fraternities or sororities were methods students used to engage with peer groups which helped them navigate college. Participants used their campus involvement to connect valuable resources such as institutional agents who were faculty, staff, and administrators. The agents guided and advised students on navigating different situations on campus and connected them to other resources. Sometimes interaction with students involved a single situation; other times, these agents became mentors. Some study cases showed participants turning to their mentors to acquire job and career skills as opposed to their instructors in the classroom. At times mentors were connected to the students through formal programs, other times as a referral from another student or mentor. Very often, the connection to these mentors extended beyond the program period if there was one
Recommendations for Practice

It is clear that the faculty practices directly influence the students' experiences in the classroom or service site. These experiences can both positively and negatively impact Latina/o students. First, negative, and invalidating practices in the implementation of high-impact service-learning courses should be eliminated. Instead, practitioners should combine what is known to work in service-learning courses with research on serving Students of Color. Research has been conducted on Critical Service-Learning pedagogy that details out course implementation (Mitchell, 2008). Likewise, Rodriguez and Oseguera (2015) shared a seven-principle model for Latina/o student success based on both theory and empirical research to change an organization’s institutional culture. The framework highlights methods that should be employed to learn from the student and involve them in creating cultural change at an institution.

Field-based experiential learning allows students to apply and reflect on their studies and learn that what they do impacts their lives and the communities within which they live and serve (Kuh, 2008). Brownell and Swaner (2010) pointed out that for service-learning HIPs to be successful, they needed to include the following: 1) have elements of structured self-reflection built into the course or program, 2) students needed to see connections between the service component and their course material or subject matter, 3) programs must have a service component long enough to be considered meaningful and worthwhile, 4) provide quality service experiences for the student, true interactions with the client not simple office work,
and; 5) ensure that the site leader oversees all activities at the service location. These elements are the basis of what some researchers are now calling traditional service-learning courses; at the minimum service-learning courses need to have these elements. In her research, Yeh (2010) found that participants in service-learning courses shared that their experiences were a vital part of their college experience. Four themes emerged from Yeh’s research which focuses on the outcomes of the student participant: 1) skill-building through the program, 2) development of resilience, 3) finding relevant personal meaning in the program, and 4) the development of critical consciousness.

**Equity-Minded Service-Learning Courses**

In addition to those elements pointed out by Brownell and Swaner (2010), to move beyond the successful implementation of traditional service-learning-courses towards meaningful, equity-minded experiences that are based on critical theory, I suggest that the courses include the following.

**Quality Experiences**

Creating opportunities for students to see themselves as knowledge creators is powerful and has a limitless potential upside. The service-learning course needs to include quality practices at the service site that are practical and connect students to their potential future careers through quality real-world experiences. These experiences should be rooted in development for the student participant but not at the expense of the community being served. Taking the opportunity to help students grow personally by pushing the students’ comfort zone in a way that is constructive and developmental has been demonstrated to create meaningful
experiences for students. Recognizing that family, culture, and community play a big part in who the students are and building on the cultural capital and community cultural wealth they bring with them. This connection in turn, enhances the students' sense of belonging in the classroom and at the university. Finally, creating more opportunities for the students to see themselves as professionals. This visualization goal places the students in a place they may have never been before. They may be the first in their families to go to college or to hold a position that is not considered working-class. These validating experiences create opportunities for students to see themselves in these roles not only enhances their sense of belonging to the university but also to the community and their future careers. Practitioners need to ensure that the course pedagogy is delivered in a manner that does not “other” the community or frames it as one from a deficit perspective. Faculty should use relevant literature on critical service-learning research to guide the course development around the concept of service as an ideal, or service for critical consciousness and not only individual gain (Boyle-Baise, 2007; Wade, 2000).

**Meaningful Community Partnership**

Practitioners should provide the opportunity for students to connect with their communities in a positive and meaningful way. First, a method would be to allow the agency of the students to select their service site instead of assigning one to them. When a service site is pre-selected, students may follow the perception of the dominant group that they are there to do charity work or fix a problem in the community. Instead, critical service-learning research challenges the practitioners to involve the community in addressing the needs and challenging the students to
examine the root or cause of inequity that created the challenge in the first place; again, challenging the notion that the students are better than the community where they are providing the service. Involving historically underrepresented or minoritized students in the planning and creation of projects and the community may shed light on how those students will interpret participation since they may have been beneficiaries of the same type of service being provided through the course.

**Preparing Practitioners for Critical Practice**

Because only three of the 26 participants of the study reported that they were able to see themselves or their culture in their service-learning course curriculum, it highlights a real challenge for faculty practitioners. This is the duty of the faculty teaching the courses to find ways to engage their students. This lack of culture in the curriculum further highlights a challenge in the existing research; the prevailing literature focuses on the practices and the pedagogy but does little to highlight the importance of the faculty or agent delivering the course. As expressed through the participant data: faculty should develop relationships with their students that go beyond the bare minimum necessary. This is crucial for the engagement and success of many first-generation college students and other Students of Color, primarily Latina/o students who may be the first in their families to navigate college campuses. This includes establishing frequent, positive, and open communication lines between the students and their professors.

Faculty should develop their courses based on a culturally relevant curriculum that is responsive and congruent with the lived experiences of the students that are being served in the course. They should engage authentically in dialogue with their
students to interrogate systems of inequity that create the problems they see in the community. Faculty should be active participants in the service-learning practices, not just the theoretical component in the classroom. They should not completely leave the service component of the course to another person or group at a site. For best results based on existing literature, faculty need to ensure that students engage in self-reflection through writing assignments and in-class sharing for transparency and understanding of the challenges and not reinforcing dominant societal perspectives rooted in domination and subjugation over Communities of Color. Service-learning practitioners and program coordinators should deconstruct oppressive practices and construct socially just and equity-minded practices that reproduce desired outcomes for marginalized Students of Color. To do this, faculty should build upon the tenants of community cultural wealth to strengthen their students' resilience and validation.

Crafting Service-Learning Courses to Celebrate Community Cultural Wealth

Service-learning courses may appeal to Latina/o students for reasons; one, several elements present in this type of class may invoke their desire to build upon the wealth that their culture brings. Second, students may seek “real-world” experiences to build on previous skillsets acquired as youth. Linguistic capital research talks about the resourcefulness that bilingual children build when they broker for their parents; they acquire valuable social tools through paraphrasing, navigating, and translating. These skills include audience awareness, cross-cultural awareness, “real-world” literacy and math skills, civil and familial responsibility, and social maturity ( Faultstich-Orellana, 2003). The affirmations that students receive
may set a foundation on which college experiences can build on. Students participating in service-learning courses also have the opportunity to make valuable connections to their community, a valued skill in the Latinx community. The acquisition of practical, real-world skills that will be used to fulfill their career aspirations is critical. Couple this desire with the affirmations they received by serving as brokers for their family in previous real-life situations that required those skillsets, which may create a connection to learning that validates who they are and the contributions they bring. When Latina/o children serve as language brokers, they develop aspirational capital (Yosso, 2005). Latina/o families build hope for their child’s future by encouraging the students to achieve more, even though they may lack the direct experience to do so. Through service-learning courses, Latina/o students can then begin seeing themselves as professionals, practicing their craft, and bridging their familia’s dreams into reality. Taken together, these recommendations for service-learning practices work to provide not only a sense of validation and belonging to their peer community, as well as a sense of belonging to the university, which leads to retention and eventual graduation. As presented in some cases in this study, such service-learning practices provided the first real connection between learning and experiences outside of the classroom for the students, a key goal of service-learning courses as a high-impact practice.

Recommendations for Policy

It is critical to understand racialized patterns in higher education, specifically those that reproduce inequalities via structures, policies, and practices (Bensimon & Bishop, 2012). We as leaders must critically focus on structural racism that is
perpetuated in higher education institutions. We must acknowledge that university leaders and faculty act as institutional agents. These agents are not as easily interchangeable as practice would have you think. They must critically interrogate their practices and implicit theories about Students of Color and how they can successfully enhance Latina/o student success. This critical examination, in turn, can begin to change the institutional culture, no matter what the practice or program. A goal would be to produce more equity-minded individuals who raise their awareness of exclusionary practices, call out institutional racism, and challenge power dynamics that influence (in)equitable outcomes for Students of Color, particularly Latina/o students (Bensimon, 2007).

Policymakers need to understand the influence that an equity-minded, well-implemented, meaningful service-learning course can have on students and their connection to learning. The outcomes of courses like this create benefits that extend beyond the class offering. Some student participants shared that their service-learning course was the first time they felt a real connection to their education during their college career. Other students shared that they were able to affirm that they chose the right path for a major or career; likewise, some learned that the major was not the right choice for them, which the participants were ok with because they learned before they continued in the major.

It is critical that offices that provide service-learning oversight ensure that an institutional transformation is taking place. This study recruited students through the faculty identified by the service-learning office. The service-learning office needs to work closely with faculty and university administration to ensure alignment and
equity-minded leadership in the classroom. Colleges and universities and their faculty should engage in a transformative service-learning framework to guide the implementation of service-learning courses and other High-Impact Practices.

A Transformative Service-Learning Framework

With this dissertation study, I contribute to both the areas of policy and research by developing the conceptual framework of Student Engagement Ecosystem (SEE). The frameworks and theoretical lenses described in the conceptual framework section of this paper pave the way for the proposed new Student Engagement Ecosystem or a SEE Framework. The SEE Framework that I developed encompasses elements of Critical Race Theory in Education (CRTE) (Solórzano, 1998), Validation Theory (Rendon, 1994), Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005), and concepts from Hispanic Servingness (Garcia 2017, 2018) as described previously. With the Student Engagement Ecosystem, I challenge leaders to look beyond the binary of educational practice and student competency. Leaders and educational practitioners should take into account the student, their individual microsystem, and their experiences. Likewise, the educational methods or practices in the classroom need to be evaluated along with the agents implementing them and the institutional systems within which they live. This is but the beginning of what it takes for a university to implement transformative service-learning.

The student or individual is the focus, the subject, and the object of study in the ecosystem; they come with experiences both positive and negative in navigating, surviving, and thriving in their educational journey. The student is not
alone in the course; they have a dynamic, immediate environment that influences every aspect of their persona. These factors include their family, access to resources, constraints, historical experiences, health, and well-being.

The practices in the classroom are not implemented in a vacuum; they are impacted by the agents that implement them as well as the systems in place that created them. Agents such as faculty, staff, classroom peers all play a role in how students experience engagement and belonging in the class and at the university. Likewise, the practices or course pedagogy needs to account for college norms, peer behaviors, the availability of support systems and groups. The institutions themselves need to be included as an object of study. Colleges and universities decide where to put human and financial resources, which course practices to support and develop, where to emphasize training and development, and maybe most importantly, how new faculty are recruited, hired, and retained.

Leaders of educational institutions and faculty in the service-learning classroom need to engage critically in the service-learning practices implemented in the classroom. The implementation of service-learning concepts does not blanketly apply to all students as they are not all homogeneous or a blank slate to be written on. Studies have shown that HSI faculty have adapted to the interests and needs of the student communities they serve to enhance engagement and improve student outcomes. Examining the complex ecosystems that the students exist in can give leaders and practitioners greater insight into the challenges and opportunities that lie within serving students from diverse communities. The greatest way leaders can engage in this dialog is to involve the students in the development of the practices
and listen to their feedback and create spaces for them to be creators of knowledge, not just consumers. This process will then help build a sense of belonging with the student, which supports them in their development and eventual success.

**Service-Learning Offices That Serve**

College leaders need to ensure that they have an established service-learning office, one that focuses on the implementation and pedagogy of the named high-impact practice. This office must be more than a community relations office that serves as a point of contact for community volunteer activities. A dedicated service-learning office could serve as a foundational pillar to provide faculty and service-site supervisors training on the best practices to engage students in service-learning. This differentiation may help ensure that students participate in meaningful ways and are not just seen as affordable or free labor for some in the community. Community partners can truly be partners in the students' success, not just the beneficiary of a benevolent charity service. A challenge with an office that is not only dedicated to service-learning could be that resources are not adequate, and expectations would be for that office to more than just service-learning.

This dedicated service-learning campus office should engage and listen to students' voices and relay back to campus coordinators best practices and outcomes specifically to service-learning. The service-learning office should identify which service site partnerships provide value for students and prioritize participation with these organizations. Fostering new partnerships and developing practices that are beneficial to both the students and the organization would also fall under the
purview of the service-learning office. The service-learning office should regularly
monitor student satisfaction and student outcomes and coordinate with academic
departments and faculty to ensure quality practices and experiences are being
implemented. The service-learning office should partner with a faculty development
team to provide an ongoing campus-based service-learning institute that focuses on
improving Latina/o student outcomes at the campus level by implementing critical
pedagogical practices in the classroom.

In addition to the campus-based service-learning office, a university system
could create a center of excellence around service-learning that could be part of a
larger set of activities outside of the individual institution’s office. The center of
excellence should coordinate with other campus service-learning offices across the
system to share information, knowledge, training, and best practices. Ideally, the
center of excellence would be faculty-led, guided by research, and regularly hold
professional development for faculty to enhance service-learning practices and
pedagogy. The center of excellence should be supported by a central system office
focused on service-learning, which enables collaboration between campuses on the
study and practices of service-learning and the service-learning classroom.

Transformation at the Institutional Level

Concrete steps that colleges and universities should take to ensure that
racial/ethnic equity gaps are eliminated include: 1) ensuring that the goal of
eliminating equity gaps is embedded in the strategic plan of the college or
university, 2) ensure that there is a shared responsibility of Latina/o student
outcomes between faculty and administration with the support given to the faculty to
lead the implementation of HIPs, 3) the creation of a center of excellence around HIPs, to nurture the growth and implementation of critical practices to assure high-quality implementation 4) instill a culture that uses data to assess and improve student learning outcomes, specifically for Students of Color, and if an HSI, specifically Latina/o students; 5) involve students from marginalized groups in the creation of solutions, intentionally create space for them to share their knowledge and experiences, more research needs to be done with these students and not on them.

Colleges and universities need to improve the demographic composition of faculty members to ensure that the faculty is representative of the student body it serves. I recognize this can be a long and difficult process as systemic structures and practices keep the faculty composition from changing.

Meanwhile, I recommend that existing faculty receive the opportunity for paid training and development opportunities to learn about the implementation and practices that produce meaningful outcomes, specifically for Students of Color. This training needs to be deliberate to understand the needs and serve Students of Color, first-generation students, and other historically marginalized groups at the campus. Specifically, this means at a Hispanic Serving Institution; such training needs to be based on research and tailored for Latina/o students, which historically does not happen, even at HSIs (Garcia, Núñez, & Sansone, 2019). Such training should be in conjunction with a program or administrative office that can support faculty and help coordinate service-learning opportunities. The university should dedicate programmatic funding for such training and ensure that participation in
equity-minded training practices is integrated into the evaluation and performance review process for tenure and promotion at the university. According to Excelencia in Education (2020), there are $123 million available annually in Title V grant funds from the U.S. Federal government, which allow for pilot programs to be created at HSIs. Meanwhile, the university administration needs to ensure that these pilot programs will be integrated into the university structure to live beyond their initial grant-funded period. A grants office dedicated specifically to the pursuit and execution of Title V funding and Latina/o student success could assist in the establishment of programs or offices that champion Latina/o student success.

The university should explore methods to implement HIPs courses earlier in the students’ academic career where they show more influence; many students remarked how they participated in classes later in their academic career; they wished they would have participated sooner. In particular, this study highlighted several cases where undergraduate research with Faculty of Color had a greater impact than any of their service-learning courses did alone. Research on HIPs suggests that students receive more benefits when they participate earlier in their college careers (Kuh, 2008).

For campuses that identify as Hispanic-Serving institutions, administrators must ensure that the needs of Latina/o students are not merely addressed at face value but ingrained in institutional policy and practices and truly serve these students (Garcia, 2018, 2019). It is vital that HSIs and emerging HSIs, establish an office of Latinx student affairs or the assignment of a campus vice president dedicated to equitable outcomes for Students of Color; this has been a successful
practice at universities on the cusp of becoming HSIs (Garcia, 2019). Campuses must move beyond the basic establishment of cultural centers and work to integrate Latina/o student success in academic and co-curricular activities and outcomes. University administration should strive for equitable graduation outcomes for all students. To do this, special attention needs to be given to those racial/ethnic student groups that have been historically marginalized, specifically Latinx students.

Finally, an additional recommendation for policymakers is for those non-profit organizations that advocate and conduct research on HSIs like the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) and Excelencia in Education. In addition to the great work they are already doing, I would implore these organizations to create a new designation that differentiates between enrollment and those universities that are truly serving Latina/o students (Garcia, 2020). Many universities that are recognized as HSIs were not born HSIs; they received a designation merely by reaching the specified enrollment numbers. Reaching the 25% enrollment threshold is not hard in some geographic regions, given those communities’ demographic makeup. With the creation of this new designation, those who are enrolling but not serving cannot and should not call themselves “Hispanic-Serving Institutions,” where the servingness is demonstrated in the student outcomes, not just the enrollment numbers (Garcia, 2019).

Recommendations for Future Research

For this study’s purposes, I was interested in the experiences of Latina/o students in service-learning courses. Service-learning courses are but one of many High-Impact Practices (HIPs) that could be employed on a college campus. Future
studies should explore the experiences and outcomes of more students in service-learning courses and other high-impact practices on campus. Likewise, this study focused on these students’ experiences at a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI); future studies could look at the experiences of Latina/o students enrolled at other institutions that implement HIPs as a tool for student success.

As the findings revealed, students that participated in a meaningful implementation of a service-learning course experienced validating positive outcomes. These outcomes directly resulted from positive practices in the course offering and relationships developed with the faculty member. These practices taken together provided validation to students through a course that often can connect learning to experiences outside of the classroom, a key goal of service-learning courses.

Furthermore, some students experienced a service-learning course that was equity-based and was intentionally created to serve Latina/o students. This course empowered students to be creators of knowledge and used decolonization theory in the course practices to create validating experiences. More in-depth study is needed on these equity-minded practices and their validating outcomes, specifically on Students of Color, to reproduce the positive outcomes that the students experienced. Likewise, the institutions themselves need further research; there is a difference between those institutions that enroll high numbers of Latina/o students and those that truly serve as their name implies. Outcomes and practices at institutions that eliminate gaps in academic achievement between different racial groups need to be studied so that those valuable practices could be identified and
Other areas for future research could address the following research questions: What aspects draw students to Service-Learning courses? Why are faculty drawn to teach these courses? What connections are there for Latina/o students to the acquisition of practical, real-world experiences through service-learning courses and the possible prior use of real-world knowledge that comes with assisting their families in navigating the world, serving as translators and interpreters? Most importantly, how can more faculty as agents of the university engage in transformative practices to eliminate inequity in educational outcomes between historically underrepresented groups. Participants of this study remarked on the tremendous influence that Women Faculty of Color had on their student success; it would be important in future studies to observe their practices inside and outside the classroom so that they could be replicated. Future studies should examine the mentorship relationship between Students of Color and Faculty of Color. Before the university can teach students to be agents of transformational change in the community through service-learning, they must take a long look at the invalidating practices in the classroom, and as my matriarchs would say, *practica lo que predicás* or practice what you preach.

Limitations of the Study

My study’s limitations included access to all students who have participated in service-learning courses at the study’s research site. The research process included coordinating with the existing campus office that manages both service-learning courses and student volunteer activities as well as other student support
functions. The service-learning office then connected me to potential service-learning faculty to recruit the student participants. I did not know which faculty and from which service-learning courses students would be drawn. This was important because the courses selected, and the faculty’s experience influenced the student experiences and outcomes. In addition, this study did not focus on the agents, or any development or training provided to faculty to teach service-learning courses, nor did it cover the institutional approach to assigning and supporting the courses that focus on service-learning or any other high-impact practices. Conducting in-class or on-site observations was also not possible due to the restrictions in place because of the Coronavirus pandemic. Future studies of this topic should consider these methods if possible.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the findings of my study of how Latina/o students experienced service-learning courses, a high-impact practice, at a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). I highlighted how the student-faculty relationship influenced student outcomes, positively and negatively. I described the practices within these classes and what outcomes they produced for these students. I also presented recommendations for both policy and practice, as well as areas for future research.

In order to meet the challenges of the future and to truly serve the community; Leadership at Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) need to walk the walk and find ways to support the students they enroll. For far too long have these institutions of higher learning ignored the challenges facing students in the Latinx community. These students bring amazing resilience and a strong desire to succeed. Through
proper engagement and validation as the future leaders, scholars, and knowledge creators that they are, universities will find the most fiercely loyal alumni that will fulfill the mission of university and transform communities and the future of this nation as a whole.
APPENDIX A:

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
Appendix A

A phenomenological study of the experiences of Latina/o students in Service-Learning course(s).

Interview Protocol

Interview description: Interviews will be semi-structured. The following interview protocols will guide the process.

1) Introductions between the researcher and the participant.
2) Share the purpose of the study and provide the informed consent form to the interviewee.
3) Provide interviewee the opportunity to express any questions or concerns.
4) Complete the consent form and begin recording the interview.

The following questions will guide the interview:

- Tell me a little bit about yourself.
  - How would you describe your overall college experience?
- Tell me about your experience being in service-learning course(s)?
- What did you find yourself reflecting on during the service-learning course?
- How meaningful did you find the service-learning course?
  - What was valuable to you in that course?
  - Were there any challenges?
  - Who did you turn to with questions about your course?
- What role did the instructor play in your service-learning course?
  - What role did the site coordinator play in your course?
  - What do you wish your faculty member/site-coordinator new?
  - Do you know others that share your experience?
- How would you describe your connection to your education before, during, and after you participated in a service-learning class(es)? Did the course influence your sense of belonging at the university?
- As a Latinx/a/o student, how did you see yourself or your culture reflected in the course, if at all?
- If you could make recommendations, what advice would you offer to other Latina/o students who come after you at this school? Any advice for instructors of service-learning courses?
- Is there anything I did not ask you that you would like to share with me?

The interview protocol was created by Felix Zuniga for the purposes of this study.
APPENDIX B:

RECRUITMENT EMAIL FOR FACULTY
Appendix B

Faculty Student Recruitment Email

January 21, 2020

Dear Professor X:

My name is Felix Zuniga, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership program at Latinx State University, in the College of Education.

Your contact information was shared with me by the director of the Office of Community Engagement at Latinx State University.

I am conducting a research study entitled, *These HIPs Don’t Lie: Examining the Engagement of Latina/o Students Participating in High Impact Practice Service-Learning Courses at an HSI*. I ask for your support in my research study by inviting your students to participate in an interview.

Attached, you will find a statement of Informed Consent, which details the parameters of your students’ potential participation. Essentially, I am inviting your students to participate in one interview, with the possibility of one follow-up interview if needed. Additionally, I have attached the proposed interview questions to inform you of the nature of the interview.

Please read the attached *Informed Consent* statement and let me know if you are willing to invite your students to participate. If your students agree to participate, I will schedule a day/time for their interviews at their convenience. Prior to the interview, I must receive a copy of the *Informed Consent* statement with their signature and date. On that form, they may also indicate if they will allow audio recording for transcription purposes.

If you have any concerns or need more information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

With sincerest gratitude,

Felix Zuniga
Latinx State University
Appendix C

Student Recruitment Email

October 26, 2019

Dear Student X:

My name is Felix Zuniga, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership program at Latinx State University, in the College of Education. Your contact information was shared with me by Professor X.

I am conducting a research study entitled, *These HIPs Don’t Lie: Examining the Engagement of Latina/o Students Participating in High Impact Practice Service-Learning courses at an HSI.*

**I am inviting you to participate in my research study.**

Attached, you will find a statement of Informed Consent, which details the parameters of your potential participation. Essentially, I am inviting you to participate in one interview, with the possibility of a follow-up interview for clarification purposes if needed. Additionally, I have attached the proposed interview questions to inform you of the nature of the interview.

Please read the attached Informed Consent statement and let me know if you are willing to participate. If you agree to participate, I will schedule a day/time for your interview at your convenience. Prior to the interview, I must receive a copy of the Informed Consent statement with your signature/date. On that form, you may also indicate if you will allow audio recording for transcription purposes.

If you should have any concerns or desire more information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

With sincerest gratitude,

Felix Zuniga
Latinx State University
APPENDIX D:

ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE
1. Did you participate in a **Service-Learning/Community-Based Learning** course at Latinx State University? *(This is typically a part of a class; students take topics and principles that they are studying in class and apply them to their surrounding community to help solve “real-world problems.”)*
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. If so, when (Quarter/Year) _______________

2. Are you of Hispanic, Latina/o, or of Spanish origin? (ethnicity)
   a. Yes
   b. No

3. Are you an undergraduate or graduate student?
   a. Undergraduate
   b. Graduate

4. Are you a full-time student?
   a. Yes, full-time (12 units or more for undergrads)
   b. No, part-time (less than 12 units for undergrads)

5. What is your age?
   a. ______

6. What is your major?
   a. ______

7. What is your gender status?
   a. ☐ Female
   b. ☐ Male
   c. ☐ Non-binary/ third gender
   d. ☐ Prefer to self-describe _______________
   e. ☐ Prefer not to say

8. Do you work in addition to going to school?
   a. Yes, part-time
   b. Yes, full-time
   c. No
   d. Other _______________

9. Are you (will you be) the first in your family to graduate and earn a college degree?
   a. Yes
   b. No

10. What is the highest level of education attained for each of your parents?
    a. Did not finish high school
    b. High-school graduate
    c. Some college, but did not graduate
    d. Associates Degree (AA/AS)
    e. College graduate (BA/BS)
    f. Advanced degree (MS, MBA, Ph.D., EdD)

11. Were you eligible to receive Pell Grants while attending college?
    a. Yes
    b. No
12. As a student at Latinx State University, I also participated in the following classes or activities (Check all that apply): The following list is from the American Association of Colleges and Universities:

a. **A Writing Intensive Class**: emphasize the importance of writing at all levels of instruction, often with the culmination of a final writing project.
b. **A First-Year Seminar/Experience**: are classes or programs that encompass the first year in college or specific seminars for incoming freshmen.
c. **A Common Intellectual Experience**: are themed programs and common experiences that require integrative coursework or participation in learning communities.
d. **A Learning Community**: made up of groups of students who take two or more courses together and work in a cooperative fashion with each other and with their instructors to take on the big questions that might matter beyond the classroom.
e. **Collaborative Assignments/Projects**: involve learning with two key goals: Listening to others and problem-solving in teams have been identified as key features of collaborative assignments or projects.
f. **Undergraduate Research**: supervised by a faculty member, students help create new knowledge in their discipline by embedding research into the curriculum to expose students early to the processes involved in working to solve important questions.
g. **Diversity/Global Learning**: to expose students to a world that continues to struggle with global issues such as racial or ethnic differences, gender inequalities, human rights, freedom, and power.
h. **Service-Learning/Community-Based Learning**: often a part of a course, students take issues and principles that they are studying and apply them to their surrounding community and potentially help solve “real-world problems.”
i. **An Internship**: internships are designed to provide students experience in the professional work setting.
j. **Capstone Courses/Projects** are the culminating experiences that students complete towards the end of their college journey that integrate and apply what they have learned while in college, or a program or a course.

13. Are you willing to participate in a follow-up interview?
   a. Yes,
   b. No

If yes, thank you for being willing to participate in a follow-up interview. Please provide your name and email so that I may contact you to schedule an interview at your convenience.
APPENDIX E:

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

(NO INTERVIEW)
[Date]

Dear [student],

Thank you so much for completing the online questionnaire for my research study entitled *These HIPs Don’t Lie: Examining the Engagement of Latina/o Students Participating in High Impact Practice Service-Learning Courses at an HSI.*

At this point, this concludes your participation in this study. My dissertation chair is Dr. [professor name], in the College of Education. If you should have any concerns or require any more information, please feel free to contact her.

Thank you again for sharing your time to assist me with my questions.

Felix J. Zuniga
Latinx State University
APPENDIX F:

THANK YOU MESSAGE UPON COMPLETION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

(INTerview REQUEST)
Dear [student],
Thank you for completing the online questionnaire for my research study entitled *These HIPs Don’t Lie: Examining the Engagement of Latina/o Students Participating in High Impact Practice Service-Learning Projects at an HSI*. 

I would like to schedule a time in which I may interview you to discuss your experiences participating in a service-learning course while attending Latinx State University.

Please indicate when you might be available. We will be able to complete the conversation either in-person, over the phone, or even over Zoom. If we meet in person, I would prefer to meet on campus, but if you cannot come to campus, another location that is convenient for you could be arranged.

Thank you again for completing the survey. My dissertation chair is Dr. [professor name], in the Latinx State University, College of Education. If you should have any concerns or require any more information, please feel free to contact her. Thank you for your time!

Felix J. Zuniga
Latinx State University, Doctoral Candidate
APPENDIX G:

INFORMED CONSENT
INFORMED CONSENT
These HIPs Don’t Lie: Examining the Engagement of Latina/o Students Participating in High Impact Practice Service-Learning Projects at an HSI

PURPOSE: Felix Zuniga, Doctoral Candidate in Educational Leadership at Latinx State University, invites you to participate in a research study. This study’s purpose is to improve my understanding of Latina/o student experiences in a service-learning course (a high-impact practice program) at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). The Institutional Review Board has approved this study at Latinx State University.

Expected results include an understanding of the experiences of students in college and in their service-learning course(s). Overall, this project addresses a wide gap in the existing literature. It also promises to inform the dialog on the program development and implementation of High-Impact Practices (HIPs) at colleges and universities. This study will highlight implications for policy and practice as well as areas for future research.

DESCRIPTION: I would like to ask you to participate in an interview. Your participation will require approximately 60 minutes. The interview will be conducted in a format preferable to you, either face-to-face, via telephone, or a virtual face-to-face remote conversation using Zoom. The date/time and interview location will be scheduled at your convenience, as well. A follow-up interview may be requested, if necessary. With your permission, all interviews will be recorded.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation is entirely voluntary. You do not have to be in this study, and you do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. You may skip or not answer any questions and can freely withdraw from participation at any time.

CONFIDENTIAL: I will do everything to protect your confidentiality. Specifically, your name will never be used in any dissemination of the work (e.g., articles and presentations). You, your college, and your courses will be assigned pseudonyms in order to protect your identity and tracking to your course participation. Lastly, in efforts to protect confidentiality, any data collected will be kept under lock and key and in a password-protected computer file. The audio recordings will be destroyed three years after the project has ended.

DURATION: The extent of your participation would include one interview, with the possibility of one follow-up interview, if needed. The interview(s) would last approximately 60 minutes each. Following the interview(s), you could be contacted via e-mail with follow-up or clarifying questions. Such an exchange would require no more than ten minutes time. Following the interview, you will receive a transcript of the interview, along with a scanned PDF of the signed consent form. All participants will be granted the opportunity to review their transcript, confirm, and/or withdraw the transcript.
from the study.

**RISKS:** I know of no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you by participating in this research study. Your identity, your institution, college, and course involvement will remain confidential.

**BENEFITS:** I do not know of any way you would benefit directly from taking part in this study.

**AUDIO/VIDEO:** I understand that this research will be recorded via audio/video. Initials ______

**CONTACT:** If you should have any questions regarding this study, please contact Felix Zuniga. For answers to questions about the research and research subjects' rights, or in the event of a research-related injury, please contact Dr. [professor name]. You may also contact Latinx State University’s IRB Compliance Officer.

**RESULTS:** This study will be published as a part of Felix Zuniga’s dissertation. Likewise, it may be disseminated through various outlets, including conference presentations and publications. Findings will be published online through Scholar Works, an online institutional repository for Latinx State University.

**CONFIRMATION STATEMENT:**
I have read the above information and agree to participate in your study.

**SIGNATURE:**

Signature: _____________________________ Date: __________________
APPENDIX H:

RECRUITMENT FLYER
PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR A RESEARCH STUDY

Have you participated in a Service-Learning Course?

Are you Latina/Latino?

take a brief questionnaire here:

Contact: FELIX ZUNIGA

FZUNIGA@EMAIL.EDU

CALL/TEXT 555-555-5555

A service-learning course (a high-impact practice) is a class where students tackle real-world issues inside and outside the classroom. This type of class often has a community project involved and takes you outside of the classroom.
APPENDIX I:

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER
March 24, 2020

CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Expedited Review
IRB-FY2020-237
Status: Approved

Mr. Felix Zuniga and Prof. Edna Martinez
COE - Doctoral Studies Program
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Mr. Zuniga and Prof. Martinez:

Your application to use human participants, titled “THESE HIPS DON’T LIE: EXAMINING ENGAGEMENT OF LATINA/O STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN HIGH IMPACT PRACTICE SERVICE-LEARNING COURSES AT AN HISPANIC SERVING INSTITUTION” has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The informed consent document you submitted is the official version for your study and cannot be changed without prior IRB approval. You are required to keep copies of the informed consent forms and data for at least three years.

The study is approved from March 23, 2020, through March 22, 2021.

Your IRB application must be renewed annually, and you will receive notification from the Cayuse IRB automated notification system when your study is due for renewal. If your study is closed to enrollment, the data has been de-identified, and you’re only analyzing the data - you may close the study by submitting the Closure Application Form through the Cayuse IRB system. You are required to notify the IRB of the following as mandated by the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) federal regulations 45 CFR 46 and CSUSB IRB policy. The forms (modification, renewal, unanticipated/adverse event, study closure) are located in the Cayuse IRB System with instructions provided on the IRB Applications, Forms, and Submission Webpage. Failure to notify the IRB of the following requirements may result in disciplinary action.

- Ensure your CITI Human Subjects Training is kept up-to-date and current throughout the study.
- Submit a protocol modification (change) if any changes (no matter how minor) are proposed in your study for review and approval by the IRB before being implementing in your study.
- Notify the IRB within 5 days of any unanticipated or adverse events experienced by subjects during your research.
- Submit a study closure through the Cayuse IRB submission system once your study has ended.
Keep your CITI Human Subjects Training up-to-date and current throughout the study.

The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risks and benefits to the human participants in your IRB application. This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional approvals which may be required. If you have any questions regarding the IRB decision, please contact Michael Gillespie, the IRB Compliance Officer. Mr. Michael Gillespie can be reached by phone at (909) 537-7588, by fax at (909) 537-7028, or by email at mgillesp@csusb.edu. Please include your application approval number IRB-FY2020-237 in all correspondence. Any complaints you receive regarding your research from participants or others should be directed to Mr. Gillespie.

Best of luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Donna Garcia
Donna Garcia, Ph.D., IRB Chair
CSUSB Institutional Review Board
DG/MG
COURSE INFORMATION

COURSE INFORMATION: Mondays 4:00-6:00 p.m. PL-015
INSTRUCTOR: Felix Zuniga, Ed.D
Latinx State University
555-555-5555 | fzuniga@latinx.edu
OFFICE HOURS: Wednesday and Thursday 4-6 pm PL-2106

CATALOG COURSE DESCRIPTION

Students will develop necessary academic and practical skills through the use of university support facilities, learning campus policies and procedures, strengthening study skills, understanding the community service-learning concept, and developing responsible academic and personal attitudes for student success. This course serves as an introduction to the university's history and its mission to enhance the intellectual, cultural, and personal development of each student. Application of the First-Year Student Success principles, which include: developing academic and intellectual competence; establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships; developing personal identity; deciding on a major, career, and lifestyle; maintaining personal health and wellness; and developing an integrated multicultural philosophy of life.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the culmination of this course, students will be able to:

- **Metacognition**: Understand how to reflect upon academic processes and take responsibility for learning.
- **Cultural Capital/Shaping Worldview**: Explain how their knowledge, strengths, and life experiences influence their worldview and relate that worldview to those of others inside the university and the community at large.
- **Information Literacy**: Students begin to develop a critical understanding of the information environment.
- **Integrative Learning**: Students will become aware of connections and differences across disciplines and learning experiences in order to frame and address ideas and questions they encounter in their lives.

COURSE READINGS and RESOURCES

Excerpts from the following materials will be used in class. All of the readings will be available in class.

- StrengthsFinder 2.0 - Tom Rath
- The Last Lecture – Randy Pausch
Recommended Reading:


**GRADING**

Grades will be based on understanding of the course objectives, as demonstrated by the completion of course requirements. Please do not lose points! Complete all assignments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Attendance</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Journal Reflections (7)</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library Research Assignment</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Reference Library</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Research &amp; Presentation Assignment</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Plan Project</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grading Scale**

- 1000-900 = A
- 899-800 = B
- 799-700 = C
- 699 and below = NC

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:**

Students are expected to attend each class, complete all readings/assignments and participate. Students are entitled to two excused absences. Please contact the professor if you will miss class.

**POLICY ON MISSED OR LATE ASSIGNMENTS**

Assignments will not be accepted more than four days after the due date. Items turned in after the due date will be penalized with a loss of one letter grade per day. Exceptions will be made at the discretion of the instructor and may require appropriate documentation.

**WITHDRAWAL, CHEATING, AND PLAGIARISM**

The university's policies on course withdrawal, cheating, and plagiarism can be found in the *General Regulations and Procedures* portion of the Bulletin of Courses. Each student is expected to abide by the honor system of the university. All students are expected to do their own original work. Academic integrity is a requirement of the school, and academic dishonesty
is grounds for failing a class, being dismissed from the class, and/or expulsion from the university.

**ACCOMMODATING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL LEARNING NEEDS**

In accordance with federal law, it is university policy to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If you believe that you have a physical, learning, or psychological disability that requires an academic accommodation, contact Services to Students with Disabilities by phone at (555) 555-5538, email at ssd@latinxu.edu, or visit University Hall Room 103. If you need the document upon which this notice appears in an alternative format, you may also contact Services to Students with Disabilities.

**STUDENT EXPECTATIONS AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

Students are expected to behave in a professional and ethical manner. Cases discussed in class, as well as personal disclosures, must remain confidential. Only when foreseeable harm could come to someone (harm to self or others, disclosure of abuse of a child or vulnerable adult) should confidentiality be breached. All concerns should be brought immediately to the instructor’s attention.

**ASSIGNMENTS**

**Weekly In-Class Discussion**

*What's Happening in the Real World, Timely Topics on Leadership, Diversity, and Education:* To keep abreast of current and emerging issues in education, diversity, and leadership, you will be required to introduce and discuss the latest news, trends, politics, and policies. The class will discuss the connection of news articles and their connection to the course readings and demonstrate understanding of them through oral participation in-class sessions. In a second step, these findings will guide students in addressing the critical review of the stories presented by reviewing them through a Critical Race Theory in Education (CRTE) lens. This weekly exercise requires that you visit periodicals such as The Chronicle of Higher Education, Education Week, Inside Higher Ed, and HuffPost Education. A list of additional resources is available in the recommended subscriptions section of the course on the LMS.

**Class Assignments**

*Assignment #1: Library Tutorial: Intro to Critical information Literacy:*
go to [http://library.latinxu.edu/](http://library.latinxu.edu/) select "Library Tutorials"
Complete: Tutorial 1: Beginning Researchers and take **TUTORIAL QUIZ 1**

You are to complete the online Library tutorial take the "Tutorial Quiz 1" at the end. Your grade for this assignment will be based on the percentage of questions you answer correctly on the online quiz. There is no penalty for re-taking the quiz prior to the deadline. The highest score will be used for your grade. Make sure to type in your first and last name when taking the quiz. Once completed, **print** out your results. A 90% or higher is required to receive credit.

*Assignment #2: Leadership Reference Library:*

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Develop a bibliography in APA format of at least 10 book chapters or scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles pertaining to a topic of leadership, college access, diversity, or choice. Five of the referenced publications must also include an annotated bibliography. The articles to be summarized should have been published in a refereed journal. Course readings cannot be included in this bibliography. This assignment will inform your final paper.

**Assignment #3: Career Exploration and Presentation Assignment:**

**OBJECTIVE:** To allow you to learn more about a career that is of interest to you. This career DOES NOT have to be related to your major but should be a meaningful career option based on your current academic achievement and plans to complete post-secondary education and training. You will receive further instructions and a handout in class.

**WHAT:**

A.) **Typed 5-page minimum career exploration research report** (with both questions and answers). Bibliography (min. of 3 reliable sources, use [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/media/pdf/20110928111055_949.pdf](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/media/pdf/20110928111055_949.pdf) and follow APA format). Include a title page.

B.) **Informational Interview and reflection:** interviewee must have been in a career for min. of 2 yrs. (See interview form). The student reflection portion and interview form must be submitted at the same time as the career exploration research report.

C.) **Class Presentation:** Create a minimum 4-minute presentation about your Career Research Assignment.

*Title page must include career/occupation name, your name, Professor's name, due date.*

*Your individual class presentation date will be selected in class on week 2 or 3.*

You must submit the written portions of this assignment at the time of your presentation. Each presentation must be at least 15 minutes. Presentations will be assigned an in-class presentation date.

**Projects and Presentations**

**The Leader in You Presentation**

Students will be responsible for picking a person that demonstrates leadership in their lives and giving a brief 5–8-minute presentation on them. The presentation should cover the values and characteristics of leadership that this person inspires in you. Feel free to use quotes and visuals in your presentation.

**Strategic Plan for Change Project**

This project is designed to expose the student to challenges facing a local organization or initiative of their choice. The student should look at an organization in their community, or one they may work for that has an initiative that involves creating a change in the local community. The student will work with a team and leaders of the community group or initiative to provide valuable analysis of the organization's plan to serve the community and likewise gain a better understanding of the types of challenges the organization is trying to overcome. The student should consult early with the faculty member to select or make contact with possible organizations.
Working in groups of 2 or 3, prepare a piece that will go into a strategic plan or a change management plan for an organization of the student's choice or local initiative that includes at least the following components:

- **Vision** – description of the ideal future outcomes for the organization or initiative
- **Strategic goals** – high-level goals related to the vision and mission that involve the community
- **Operational goals or objectives** – supporting activities for the strategic goals, including action items, timelines, and responsible parties
- **Alignment matrix** – table or chart showing a connection of strategic goals with other major organization goals
- **Environmental scan data** – demographics, labor market, and other relevant data regarding the geographic region being served
- **Target population data** – demographics, educational access and success, survey results, and other relevant data
- **Organization data** – descriptive data of the organization(s) involved in the initiative
- **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** or qualitative measures to support change analysis

The student groups are responsible for creating an executive summary and 3–5-page report that covers the above topics. Likewise, students should be prepared to give a project brief to the class highlighting the project and request feedback from their course peers.

**Leadership Journal Reflections:**

The reflection journal is a critical component to your success in the first-year seminar course. Reflecting on events and experiences in the class and in your life can be a powerful tool to help you better understand how your mind works and how you react to events in your life.

**Leadership Journal Reflection #1: My Educational Experiences**

Watch the TED Talk on "Do Schools Kill Creativity?" by Sir Ken Robinson. (19:21)

*Write a 1–2-page reaction paper on the video.*

Specifically, identify two events in your school career that made you feel empowered; additionally, please identify two events that made you feel disempowered.

**Leadership Journal Reflection #2: Educational Journey Reflection**

Given your experiences to date, discuss your empowering and disempowering events. Reflect upon the discussions in class regarding your educational journey.

*Write a 1–2-page reaction paper*

Writing Prompts: Did you find anything in common with your classmates? What do you expect to experience in college over the next 4-5 years? What areas do you feel you may have challenges with?

What strategies might you use to deal with these challenges?

**Leadership Journal Reflection #3: Campus Event Reaction Paper:**
The student is required to attend one (1) Latinx State university on-campus event. Students may attend theatre presentations, concerts, blood drives, guest speaker engagements, club events, career fairs, or sporting events. Visit the Student Union website (www.su.latinxu.edu) for upcoming dates and times. Also, simply keep an eye out for emails, flyers, posters, and bulletins for campus events! To receive points, students must write an event reaction essay. The essay should include:

- Title of the event
- Description of the event, the location
- What took place at the event? Did you benefit from attending? Why or why not?
- What you enjoyed and did not enjoy about the event?
- Would you recommend it to others?

Students must show proof of attendance for the event (i.e., attach a program, picture, ticket, or handout from the event to the reaction paper).

***Extra Credit Option (50 points):
Extra credit may be earned by attending an additional campus event and writing an additional reaction paper.

**Leadership Journal Reflection #4: Community Events Reaction Paper:**
The purpose of this assignment is for students to explore organizations in their community that they can connect to and are interested in working with. The student is required to attend at least one community event. Students may attend community meetings, do volunteer service, attend a local civic, political or public meeting. To receive points, students must write an event reaction essay. The essay should include:

- Title of the event
- Description of the event, the location
- What took place at the event? Did you benefit from attending? Why or why not?
- What you enjoyed and did not enjoy about the event?
- Would you recommend it to others? Why?

Students must show proof of attendance for the event (i.e., attach a program, picture, ticket, or handout from the event to the reaction paper).

***Extra Credit Option (50 points):
Extra credit may be earned by attending an additional campus event and writing an additional reaction paper.

**Leadership Journal Reflection #5: The Last Lecture:**
Students will complete the three TASK critical note assignment and summary. A handout will be given to you in class prior to the assignment.

**Leadership Journal Reflection # 6:**
Reflect on what you have heard from the leadership presentations and your experiences with the interviews with community groups this first semester in college. What did you learn about yourself? Would you going to incorporate into your life?
Leadership Journal Reflection # 7: Final Reflections
Reflect on what you have experienced this first quarter in college in all your courses. Was it what you expected? What was different? What did you find valuable this quarter? What did you learn about yourself? Would you recommend this class to other first year students who come after you?

COURSE SCHEDULE*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings/Activity</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Cover Syllabus</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 23</td>
<td>Class Overview</td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Educational Journeys</td>
<td><strong>Guest Speaker: Dr. Rodriguez</strong></td>
<td>Reflection #1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Educational Journeys</td>
<td>Student Presentations</td>
<td>Reflection #2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 6</td>
<td>Personality Assessment</td>
<td>Informal MBTI</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Myers Briggs (MBTI)</td>
<td>Career Exploration Handout</td>
<td>Assignment #1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 13</td>
<td><strong>Guest Speaker: Dr. Estrada</strong></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>School Stress and Psychology</td>
<td><strong>Guest Speaker: Dr. Andreas-Tan</strong></td>
<td>In-Class Strategic Plan Consultations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Community Cultural Wealth</td>
<td>Attend a community org meeting</td>
<td>Assignment #2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>StrengthsFinder 2.0</td>
<td>Strengths Discussion</td>
<td>Reflection #3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 4</td>
<td><strong>Strengths Finder handout</strong></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Personal Values</td>
<td>Personal Creed/Mission Statement</td>
<td>Reflection #4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 9</td>
<td>Leadership Development</td>
<td>Conduct leadership interviews</td>
<td>Reflection #5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 18</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 10</td>
<td>The Last Lecture</td>
<td>Randy Pausch Handout</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>Oct 25</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Nov 1</td>
<td>Global and Ethical Considerations for Leadership</td>
<td>Reflection #6:</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Class Discussion</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Nov 8</td>
<td>Leadership Presentations</td>
<td>Assignment #3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Veteran’s Day Holiday – Campus Closed November 11, 2021</em></td>
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<td>Week 13</td>
<td>Nov 15</td>
<td>Leadership Presentations – cont.</td>
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<td>Week 14</td>
<td>Nov 22</td>
<td>Leading for Change / Critical Issues in Education</td>
<td>Strategic Plan Consultations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Holiday</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Thanksgiving Holiday – Campus Closed November 25-28, 2021</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 15</td>
<td>Nov 29</td>
<td>In-class discussion on Strategic Plan Projects</td>
<td>Strategic Plan Project Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 16</td>
<td>Dec 6</td>
<td>Good luck with Finals</td>
<td>Final reflection</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Reflection #7: Final Reflection</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Finals Week – Dec 6-11</em></td>
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*Schedule is subject to change. Notice of any change will be given to the students.*
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